



Return to Rugby Age Banding Factsheet

(updated 17 May)

Introduction

The age at which a player is eligible to participate in specific age group or adult rugby is determined by their date of birth on the 1 September. For safety and to allow young players to develop in the best environment within clubs and schools, they should be training and competing with others of the same age and physical maturity.

Therefore, the youth game is divided up by the age of the players involved (age-grade rugby) with associated law variations. Regulations specify the age grades within which children should be grouped for training and playing. The grades are selected to minimise disparities in physical maturity and experience, while allowing meaningful player development to take place.

SUMMARY TABLE

SEASON 2020-21 Up to 30 June 2021	SEASON 2021-22 From 1 July 2021
<p>ADULT RUGBY 2020-21 Age 18+ on 1 September 2020 Players aged 17 cannot play adult rugby and must remain in U18 age group.</p>	<p>ADULT RUGBY 2021-22 Age 18+ on 1 September 2021 Those turning 18 in July or August 2021 can apply for dispensation to play up into Adult rugby.</p>
<p>TRANSITION TO 2021-22 SEASON</p>	
<p>U18 RUGBY 2020-21 Age 16+ on 1 September 2020 Players aged 15 cannot play U18 rugby and must remain in U16 age group.</p>	<p>U18 RUGBY 2021-22 Age 16+ on 1 September 2021 Those turning 16 in July or August 2021 can apply for dispensation to play up into U18 rugby.</p>

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1. Season dates

Due to the relaxation of restrictions around friendly fixtures taking place over the summer months, there is a need to clarify when season 2020-21 ends and season 2021-22 begins.

Season	Dates	Notes	Example
2020-21	Finishes on 30 June 2021	Up to and including 30 June 2021, players should remain in their 2020-21 age groups based on their age as of 1 September 2020.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player A turns 18 in June 2021 = can remain in the U18 age group for the remainder of the 2020-21 season (which ends on 30 June 2021), or choose to transition into adult rugby once they turn 18.
2021-22	Starts on 1 July 2021	As of 1 July 2021 players should transition into their season 2021-22 age groups based on their age as of 1 September 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player B turns 18 in August 2021 = can seek dispensation to play adult rugby as of 1 July 2021 or can choose to play U18 rugby until they turn 18. Player C turns 18 in October 2021 = they remain eligible for the U18 age group for the entire 2021-22 season, or can choose to move into Adult rugby once they have turned 18 (only in level 0-2 areas).

2. Covid-19 Return to Rugby age group implications

Due to the way the Scottish Government categorise children (11 and under), youth (12-17) and adult (18+), there are certain situations where players may not be permitted to participate in their traditional age groups.

As of 17 May (assuming that all areas of the country are living within Level 2 restrictions), players will be able to participate in their traditional age groups (e.g. 12 year olds will be able to train/play in their P7 age group).

It is only in the following circumstances where a player may be required, due to Scottish Government guidance, to transition temporarily into a different age group:

IN LEVEL 4 AREAS

- Only players aged 11 and under are permitted to take part in contact activities. Therefore, players who are 12 years old, will be required to participate in non-contact (physically distanced) activity.
- Players aged 12+ can participate together whilst undertaking non-contact (physically distanced) activities.

IN LEVEL 3 AREAS

- Only players aged 17 and under are permitted to take part in contact activities. Therefore, players who are 18 years old will be required to participate in non-contact (physically distanced) activity with adults.
- Players aged 18+ can participate together whilst undertaking non-contact (physically distanced) activities.

IN LEVEL 0-2 AREAS

- No restrictions on age groups, other than the activities set out in the return to rugby guidance.

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3. Play-up dispensation policies

Based on medical recommendations, for the remainder of season 2020-21 and for the start of season 2021-22, all 'play-up' age band dispensation processes (e.g. U18 into adult rugby) have been suspended (exemptions apply).

This decision serves to prevent underage players from being exposed to an increased risk of injury when returning to rugby after a lengthy spell of inactivity caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This position will be reviewed in December 2021.

Players who had previously been cleared will have their clearance withdrawn (unless they meet the exceptions below) and should return to playing in their default age group.

Exemptions:

1. A player who turns 18 in July or August 2021, but before the 1st September 2021, can seek dispensation to participate in adult contact rugby from 1 July 2021 for the duration of the 2021-22 season.
2. A player who turns 16 in July or August 2021, but before the 1st September 2021, can seek dispensation to participate in U18 contact rugby from 1 July 2021 for the duration of the 2021-22 season.
3. A player who turns 18 after the 1 September 2021 and is involved in a performance programme (e.g. National Age Grade) can seek dispensation to play adult rugby during 2021-22 season. This will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the Scottish Rugby medical team.

Please note that for non-contact rugby (e.g touch), the age banding guidance does not apply. Mixed age group teams are permitted.

For the exemptions highlighted above, an application form is required to be completed which can be found [here](#).

All enquiries regarding age banding should be sent to ayrtrp@sru.org.uk.

4. Summary of Age Banding Policies

U18 Eligibility

- Players must be 16 or 17 to play U18 rugby either in the remainder of the 2020-21 season, or for season 2021-22.
- Players aged 15 are not permitted to play U18 rugby during season 2020-21.
- Players who turn 16 in between July and August 2021 (and therefore are eligible for U18 rugby in season 2021-22) have the following options:
 - Continue to participate in U16 rugby until they turn 16.
 - Seek dispensation to train and play U16 rugby whilst aged 15 (all positions except front row) - only applicable for those who turn 16 in July and August 2021.

Adult Eligibility

- Players must be 18 to play adult rugby either in the remainder of the 2020-21 season, or for season 2021-22.
- Players aged 17 are not permitted to play adult rugby during season 2020-21.
- Players who turn 18 between July and August 2021 (and therefore are eligible for Adult rugby in season 2021-22) have the following options:
 - Continue to participate in U18 rugby until they turn 18.
 - Seek dispensation to train and play adult rugby whilst aged 17 (all positions except front row) - only applicable for those who turn 18 in July and August 2021.



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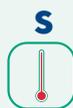
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5. Dispensation to play in a younger age group

In exceptional cases a player may be given dispensation to participate in rugby at a level below their true age grade. This could be due to an existing or previous medical disability (physical or behavioural). Any dispensation, if granted, would only be valid for one season, and would only allow players to play down one age grade, in a specific team.

If a club or school wishes to apply for such a dispensation for a player, they must complete the [application form](#) and email it to ayrtpr@sru.org.uk, including any supporting evidence of the player's condition.

Submissions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by Scottish Rugby's medical team.

For further information please visit <https://www.scottishrugby.org/rules-and-regulations/player-welfare/age-banding>



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