

UNDER 14s RULES OF PLAY

Players and match officials must ensure that the applicable Rules of Play and RFU Regulation 15 <https://www.englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby> are observed when playing rugby at Under 14.

These Under 14s Rules of Play set out below are part of the Playing Pathway that aim to equip players with the skills they need to safely enjoy rugby union. The Age Grade Rules of Play detail the level to which children of each can play to, coaches and match officials are encouraged to discuss necessary or desired pre-game and in-game modifications that reduce the playing level with the view to provide more appropriate learning opportunities.

Any terms defined in these Rules shall have the meanings set out in the World Rugby Laws of the Game.

The key elements of the Under 14s Rules of Play are:

- Team numbers: a maximum of 15-a-side
- Maximum pitch size: 100 metres x 70 metres
- Ball Size: 4
- Maximum minutes each half: 25
- Contested 8 player scrum – the No.8 can pick up the ball from the back of the scrum
- Introduction of the uncontested lineout
- Sin Bin: 5 minutes

1. General:

- **a)** The object of the game is to score a try by grounding the ball on or behind the opponents' goal line. A penalty try will be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for foul or prohibited play by the defending team.
- **b)** Only infringements that affect the oppositions' play should be sanctioned. If there is no effect, advantage should be played wherever it is safe to do so.

2. Teams:

- **a)** Under 14 Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, containing a maximum of fifteen players from each team on the pitch at any one time.
- **b)** Eight of the players on each team will be forwards and form the scrum, with the remaining players forming the back line.
- **c)** Rolling substitutions are permitted and substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is dead and always with the referee's permission.
- **d)** Coaches are not permitted on the pitch when the game is in play and the referee is encouraged to advise and guide the teams and players.

3. Pitch Size:

- **a)** The maximum pitch size is 100 metres by 70 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area, representing a full size pitch
- **b)** The referee and coaches may agree to reduce the pitch sizes provided that they agree it is safe to do so.
- **c)** Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.

4. Starts and Restarts:

- **a)** A drop kick from the centre of the half way line will be used to start each half of the match, and for all restarts after a score. After a score, the opponents of the team who scored will kick to the opposing team.
- **b)** The kicker's team must be behind the ball until it has been kicked and the non-kicking team must be at least 10 metres back from the half way line.
- **c)** If the ball does not travel 10 metres but is first played by an opponent, play continues.
- **d)** If the ball does not travel 10 metres or is played by the kicking team before reaching 10 metres or is kicked directly into touch, the non-kicking team will have the choice of;
 - **i.** A throw in to a scrum at the centre of the half way line.
 - **ii.** The kick to be re-taken.
 - **iii.** A throw in from touch.
 - **iv.** Accept the kick.
- **e)** Where players of the kicking team are in front of the ball at the kick-off the non-kicking team shall have a throw in to a scrum on the half way line.
- **f)** If from the kick-off the ball is kicked into the in-goal, without having touched or been touched by a player and is then immediately touched down or made dead, or the ball goes into touch in goal, the non-kicking team has the choice of:
 - **i.** A throw in to a scrum by the non-kicking team at the centre of the half way line.
 - **ii.** The kick to be re-taken.

5. Free Kick:

- **a)** Following the below offences a free kick will be awarded to the non-offending team:
 - **i.** In the event that a ball carrier uses the 'squeezeball' technique.
 - **ii.** If a player voluntarily falls on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in their possession or voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them, or near them.
- **b)** A free kick is a kick from hand. The kick must move the ball a visible distance out of the hand or along the ground. This can either be a tap by the player to themselves, or a kick to gain ground. The opponents must be 10 metres back, towards their own goal line and cannot start moving until the ball has been played.

6. Penalties:

- **a)** Following the below offences, a penalty will be awarded to the non-offending team:
 - **i.** Foul play.
 - **ii.** Offside.
 - **iii.** When a player prevents an opponent from passing the ball immediately after a tackle.
- **b)** When opponents are within 10 metres of the mark when a penalty kick is taken.

7. Passing:

The ball may only be passed sideways or backwards. If the ball is handed to another player who is in front of the ball carrier or passed or knocked forwards towards the opponents' dead ball line then a scrum is awarded to the non-offending team, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending team. In order to keep the game flowing, referees should play advantage wherever it is safe to do so.

8. The Tackle, Maul and Ruck:

- **a)** Only the ball carrier can be tackled.
- The tackler must grip and hold the ball carrier below the base of the sternum (the area of the tummy or belly or below). The ball carrier must not go into contact with an opponent with their shoulders below their hips, or dip down late and low or otherwise place their head into the head space of the opponent.
- **b)** Support players must not stand either side and in close proximity to the ball carrier to prevent defenders from making the next tackle.
- **c)** When the ball carrier is held in contact and remains on their feet they may continue to progress forward. Once forward momentum has been stopped, the ball must be played away from the contact area.
- **d)** When the ball carrier is not taken to ground, the opponent may contest the ball by grabbing it.
- **e)** A "Tackle" occurs when the ball carrier is held by one or more opponents and is brought to ground. A ball carrier who is not held is not a tackled player and a tackle has not taken place. Opposition players who hold the ball carrier and bring that player to ground, and who also go to ground, are known as tacklers. Opposition players who hold the ball carrier and do not go to ground are not tacklers. The tackle must include the use of arms. Where the ball carrier is taken to ground, the referee will call "Tackle-Release".
- **f)** When the ball carrier is taken to ground, the tackler must immediately release the ball carrier and must get to their feet as soon as possible before they are permitted to contest the ball or block the pass.
- **g)** If the ball carrier is taken to ground and the referee calls "Tackle-Release", the ball carrier must pass the ball immediately, roll away or place the ball towards their own team.
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- **h)** When the tackle is made and the ball carrier is on the ground, supporting players may:
 - **i.** pick up or rip the ball and run or pass away from the contact area; or
 - **ii.** if a ruck is not formed, pick up the ball and run; or
 - **iii.** join to form a ruck but must do so from their own side (i.e. from the direction of their own goal line) and drive over the ball, in an attempt to take their immediate opponents away from the ball.
- **i)** if i) iii. above has taken place, the next arriving player can pass the ball to another player or run with it.
- **j)** A “ruck” is a phase of play where one or more players from each team, who are on their feet, in physical contact, close around the ball on the ground. Open play has ended. Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play.
- **k)** When the ball has been clearly won by a team at a ruck and the ball is available to be played the referee will call “Use it” after which the ball must be played within 5 seconds. If the ball is not played within 5 seconds the referee will award a scrum and the team not in possession of the ball at the ruck is awarded the throw-in.
- **l)** A “maul” begins when a player carrying the ball is held by one or more opponents and one of the ball carrier’s team mates bind on the ball carrier. A maul therefore consists, when it begins, of at least three players, all on their feet; the ball carrier and one player from each team. All the players involved must be bound to the maul and must be on their feet and moving towards a goal line. Open play has ended.
- **m)** When a maul is formed and forward momentum is lost the ball must be made available within 5 seconds. The referee should call “Use it” and the ball should be moved away from the contact area. If neither team can pass the ball away, a scrum should be awarded to the team not in possession when the maul began, unless the maul is formed immediately after a player has caught an opponent’s kick in open play.

9. Kicking:

- **a)** Kicking the ball when it is on the ground is allowed (known as a “fly-hack”).
- **b)** Box kicks and Drop goals are permitted.
- **c)** If the ball is kicked from outside of the 22 metre line directly into touch, a lineout is awarded to the opposing team who last touched the ball in line with where the ball was kicked unless they elect to take a quick throw in in compliance with 9(d).
- **d)** Where the kick goes into touch the non-kicking team has the option to take a quick throw in preference to the lineout unless it has been touched by anyone other than a player. It must be the same ball that was kicked into touch. For a quick throw- in, the player may be anywhere outside the field of play between the line of touch and the player’s goal line. If the ball is brought back into the field of play, or players from the kicking team are in close proximity before the throw can be taken the referee should award a free-kick in accordance with the rules above.

- **e)** After a try is scored, the scorers attempt to score a goal by taking a kick at goal. This kick is a conversion kick: a conversion kick can be a place kick or a drop kick in line where the try was scored. If a penalty try has been awarded, no conversion is required.

10. Actions Inside the 22 Metre Line (the “22”):

- **a)** If the ball is kicked from within the 22 by the defending team and goes directly into touch, a lineout will be awarded to the non-kicking from where the ball crossed the touchline unless it has been passed back into the “22” and there has been no subsequent tackle, ruck, maul or the ball had touched an opposition player, in which case a restart will be from where the ball was kicked. Alternatively, the opposing team may elect to take a quick throw-in in compliance with 9(d).
- **b)** A drop out “22” will be awarded:
 - **i.** when the ball is kicked into in-goal by the attacking team and grounded by a defender; or
 - **ii.** when the ball is kicked, sent or carried into in-goal by the attacking team and the ball touches or crosses the in-goal touchline or dead ball line.

11. Ball to Ground:

- **a)** Players must play rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand.
- **b)** If the ball goes to ground, players should be encouraged to pick it up. If they dive to recover the ball they must either get up with the ball, pass the ball or release it immediately and be allowed to do so by the opposition.
- **c)** If the ball is lost forward, a scrum is awarded to the non-offending team unless advantage occurs.
- **d)** If the ball is passed other than forward and goes to ground, play will continue and either team may pick up the ball. If the ball rolls into touch, a lineout will be awarded level with where it crossed the line to an opponent of the player who last played or touched the ball before it went into touch.

12. Scrums:

- **a)** A scrum will be awarded for:
 - **i.** a forward pass; or
 - **ii.** a knock on; or
 - **iii.** where the ball does not emerge from a maul or ruck; or
 - **iv.** when the ball becomes unplayable.
- **b)** The scrum will consist of eight confident and competent players from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker forming the front row, two locks forming the second row, and three players forming the back row.
- **c)** The referee will call “Crouch” and then “Bind”. The front rows crouch and using their outside arm each prop must bind onto the body or side of their opponent and the second rows crouch and bind onto the prop in front of them.

- **d)** Following a pause, the referee calls “Set” only when the front rows are ready. The front rows may then engage.
- **e)** If a team cannot field such suitably confident and competent players because:
 - **i.** they are not available; or
 - **ii.** a player in one of those eight positions is injured or has been sent off for Foul Play and no suitably confident and competent replacement is available then the referee must order uncontested scrums.
- **f)** Front rows must not charge at each other. If they start to set too close together and with their necks and backs bent, the scrum must be stopped and the scrum reformed. Props’ body positions must be parallel to the touchline, their head and shoulders must be no lower than the hips and there must be no downward pressure exerted.
- *Note: Referees and coaches MUST be aware of the following: If the scrum collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate sanction awarded or the scrum reset. If a player is persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding, they must not take any further part in the scrum or if a player’s lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced. All players, including replacements, should be suitably trained and experienced.*
- **g)** The scrum half can pass the ball or run from the base of the scrum
- **h)** The back line of both teams must remain at least 5 metres behind the scrum until the ball emerges or the opposing scrum half lifts the ball from the ground.
- **i)** The non ball winning scrum half may start directly alongside their opponent. However, they must not move beyond the middle line of the scrum until the ball has emerged from the scrum.
- **j)** If a scrum is awarded within 5 metres of the goal line, the scrum is to be taken at a mark such that the middle line of the scrum is 5 metres from the goal line. In this case, the backs of the defending team must stay on or behind the goal line until the scrum is completed.
- *Note to referees: Referees should pay particular attention to ensure that the scrum half throwing the ball into the scrum is not “feeding” their own players: the scrum half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground/the touchline, midway between their knees and ankles. The scrum half must release the ball from outside the tunnel so that it lands midway between the two front rows and beyond the width of the nearer props’ shoulders.*
- **k)** The No. 8 is permitted to pick up the ball from the back of the scrum.
- *Note: Scrums can only be pushed 1.5m, scrum numbers must be balanced and there should be a reset if the scrum wheels more than 45 degrees with possession remaining with the team throwing the ball in as per World Rugby U19 law variations.*

13. Offside:

- **a)** In general play, anyone who is in front of a team mate who has played the ball is liable to sanction unless they return to an onside position (i.e. behind the team mate who played the ball).
- **b)** At the tackle, offside occurs at the time of the tackle where the offside line is the hindmost part of the tackled player and tackler. All the other players from the defending team must retire towards their own goal line until they are behind the hindmost part of the tackled player and tackler.
- **c)** At the maul, the offside lines are at the hindmost point of any player in the maul.
- **d)** At the ruck, the offside lines are at the hindmost point of any player in the ruck.
- **e)** At the scrum, a player is offside if they are less than 5 metres from the scrum before the ball is out of the scrum, unless the player is the scrum half or participating in the scrum.
- **f)** At the lineout, a player is offside if they are less than 10 metres from the lineout before the lineout is over, unless the player is the receiver or hooker.
- **g)** When kicking, a player is offside if they are in front of the ball when it is kicked or within 10 metres of an opponent waiting to play the ball (or the place where the ball will land).

14. Infringements:

- **a)** The tackler can only make contact with the ball carrier below the base of the sternum.
- **b)** The ball carrier must not place their head into the head space of the tackler.
- **c)** No player shall use the technique known or referred to as "Squeezeball" and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of rugby may teach or coach to encourage the use of the "Squeezeball" technique.
- *Note: "Squeezeball" is a technique where the ball carrier goes to ground, head forward (touching or close to the ground), irrespective of immediate contact with opponents, usually keeping parallel to the touchline, holding and protecting the ball close to the chest and, when on the ground, pushing the ball back between the legs.*
- **d)** No player shall voluntarily fall on or over a player lying on the ground with the ball in their possession or voluntarily fall on or over players lying on the ground with the ball between them, or near them.
- *A player is assumed to have fallen voluntarily unless the referee is absolutely certain the fall was accidental.*
- *In the very rare instances when the fall is accidental, play must be stopped and a scrum awarded to the team previously in possession. The object is to keep players on their feet and to prevent them from falling to the ground, thus removing a dangerous area of play. This will create proper rucks and mauls through encouraging players from each team to remain on their feet.*
- **e)** Foul play
- *Note to referee: No advantage shall be played.*

15. The Lineout:

- **a)** The lineout will be awarded from the touchline level with where the ball crossed the line, to the opponents of the player who touched the ball before it went into touch (other than a penalty kick directly into touch).
- **b)** The ball must be thrown down the middle of the channel. If the throw is not straight, a lineout will be awarded to the opposing team. If this throw is not straight, a scrum will be awarded to the (team originally awarded the line out) on the 15m line.
- **c)** The lineout will be uncontested by up to 13 players from each team
- **d)** No lifting or supporting of any kind is allowed.
- **e)** Players not involved in the lineout must remain 10 metres behind the mark and must do so until invited forward by the referee.
- **f)** The lineout ends when the ball or a player carrying it leaves the lineout or the ball goes beyond the 15m or into the 5m channel or when the attackers support players bind on the catcher

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If a player is temporarily suspended in an Age Grade match, the duration of time in the Sin Bin shall be 5 minutes.