

UNDER 9s RULES OF PLAY (Transitional Contact)

Players and match officials must ensure that the following Rules of Play and RFU Regulation 15 <https://www.englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulat...> are observed when playing rugby at Under 9.

These Under 9s 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 9s Rules of Play are:

- Team numbers: a maximum of 7-a-side
- Maximum pitch size: 60 metres x 30 metres
- Ball Size: 3
- Maximum minutes each half: 15
- Introduction of the tackle only but no rucks, mauls, lineouts or scrums

1. General:

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 an infringement by the defending team.

2. Teams:

- **a)** Under 9 Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, containing a maximum of seven players on the pitch at any one time.
- **b)** Rolling substitutions are permitted and substituted players can return at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is dead and always with the referee's permission.
- **c)** 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 60 metres by 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in- goal area.
- **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. Passing:

The ball may only be passed sideways or backwards. If the ball is knocked or passed forwards towards the opponents' dead ball line, then a free pass 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 possible.

5. Free Passes:

- **a)** A free pass is awarded:
 - **i.** To start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch.
 - **ii.** When there has been an infringement.
 - **iii.** For a forward pass.
 - **iv.** For a knock on.
 - **v.** After a try is scored, to restart the match by the non-scoring team from the centre of the pitch.
 - **vi.** When the ball or ball carrier goes into touch. The free pass is 5 metre from touch, level with where the ball or ball carrier went into touch.
 - **vii.** When the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp.
 - **viii.** When the tackler makes contact at or above the base of the sternum.
- **b)** At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. At a free pass, the passer must start with the ball in both hands and, when the referee calls "Play", pass the ball backwards through the air to a member of their team. For safety reasons, no player may run until the pass is made.

6. The Tackle:

- **a)** 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. The tackle must include the use of arms.
- **b)** Where the ball carrier remains on their feet the referee must call "Tackle" (allowing approximately 3 seconds to establish whether the ball carrier is held). Where the ball carrier is taken to ground, the referee must also call "Tackle- Release".
- **c)** The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend off or hand off using their hands or the ball. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier's hands at any time.
- **ACTIONS BY THE BALL CARRIER in the tackle:**
- **d)** When the referee says "Tackle" the ball carrier must pass the ball to a supporting player from their own team, either from standing or from the ground within 3 seconds of the call.
- **e)** Once "Tackle" has been called the ball carrier can continue to go forward (if on their feet), but must pass within 3 seconds.
- **f)** The ball carrier cannot score a try once "Tackle" has been called and must pass to a supporting player.

- **g)** If the ball carrier is within a metre of their opponents' goal line the referee should allow the 3 seconds before calling "Tackle". If the player touches the ball down on or over the goal line within that time, a try will be awarded.
- **ACTIONS BY THE TACKLER:**
 - **h)** The tackler must grip and hold the ball carrier below the base of the sternum (the area of the tummy or belly and below). The tackle must include the use of arms. 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.
 - **i)** The tackler may not contest the ball (grabbing it, blocking the pass), but may attempt to stop the ball carrier attempting to gain ground.
 - **j)** More than one defender is allowed in the tackle, but must allow the ball carrier to pass the ball.
 - **k)** Once the referee has called "Tackle", the tackler can continue to keep hold to prevent further forward movement of the ball carrier, but must release the ball carrier and re-join the game once the pass has been made. If the tackle is made to ground, the tackler must release and get to their feet as soon as possible, they must not contest the ball nor block the pass and must get into an on-side position between their goal line and the tackled player.
 - **l)** If the ball carrier has not been held for 3 seconds and the referee has not called "Tackle", the ball carrier is allowed to score a try or in one movement (if on the ground) place the ball over the goal line.
- **ACTIONS BY THE TEAM IN POSSESSION:**
 - **m)** The supporting players may not assist the ball carrier in moving forward by either driving with the shoulder or binding on.
 - **n)** Any player that is passed the ball before, during or after contact may run with it.
 - **o)** A supporting player may rip the ball from the ball carrier but must then pass the ball immediately to a team mate.
 - **p)** Supporting players must not deliberately stand either side and in close proximity to the ball carrier to prevent defenders from making the next tackle.
 - **q)** A supporting player may pick the ball up from a tackled player or ground, but must then pass the ball immediately to a team mate. This player who passes the ball cannot be tackled.
- **ACTIONS BY THE TEAM NOT IN POSSESSION:**
 - **r)** When the tackle is made other opponents cannot prevent the ball carrier from passing the ball.
 - **s)** At the tackle, opponents must stay 1m behind the hindmost foot of the hindmost player. This represents the offside line and opponents must retreat and stay behind the offside line or the goal line (if closer) until the pass is made, otherwise they will be considered to be offside.

7. Transitional Rugby Variation:

TO BE AGREED BY BOTH COACHES & REFEREE PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MATCH.

Where the players are confident and proficient and to challenge them further: To reward good defence and to promote the ball carrying team keeping the ball alive by passing the ball before being tackled, the team in possession of a ball will only be allowed to be tackled a maximum of 6 times before scoring a try. At the 7th tackle, the referee will stop the game and give the ball to the other team by awarding a free pass at the point that the tackle took place. If the 7th tackle takes place one or more metres from the goal line and the ball is grounded, the try will be disallowed and the opposition will be given the ball for a free pass 7 metres out from the goal line, in line with the point the goal line was crossed.

If the coaches and referee do not agree, the rules variations set out in point 7 above shall not apply.

8. Offside:

Offside only occurs at the time of the tackle. If a player, in an offside position, intercepts, prevents or slows down a pass from the tackled player to a team mate, a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending team. A player can, however, run from an onside position to intercept a floated pass before it reaches the intended receiver.

9. Infringements:

There is an emphasis on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier and passing; and for the opponents on tackling the ball carrier, prevent them going forward and to get back into the game. In Under 9 rugby the following are not permitted:

- **a)** Contact above the base of the sternum. If contact is above the base of the sternum, the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, reminded of the contact rules and a free pass awarded to the non-offending team.
- **b)** Kicking of any kind.
- **c)** Hand off or fend off with a hand or ball.
- **d)** The ball must not be pulled from the ball carrier's grasp by an opponent.
- **e)** Contact with players not in possession.

10. Ball on the Ground:

- **a)** Players must play rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand. 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.
- **b)** If the ball is lost forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending team unless advantage occurs to the non-offending team.
- **c)** 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 free pass will be awarded at five metres in from the touchline to the opposition team.

