

B) UNDER 9s RULES OF PLAY (Transitional Contact)

Players and match officials must ensure that the following Rules of Play and RFU Regulation 15 www.englishrugby.com/governance/regulations are observed when playing rugby at Under 9.

Club Rugby: From 1 September 2013 onwards, the Under 9s Rules of Play set out below are mandatory and replace the previous Under 9s Rules of Play in their entirety in respect of all club rugby.

School Rugby: The Under 9s Rules of Play set out below are discretionary only in school rugby but the RFU will continue to work with IAPS and the ERSFU with a view to eventually converge the schools' Rules of Play with those of club rugby. The previous Rules of Play that can still be played by schools can be found at www.englishrugby.com/governance/regulations.

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: 6 or 7-a-side
- Maximum pitch size: 60 metres x 30 metres
- Ball Size: 3
- 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 placing the ball with a downward pressure 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.

2. Teams:

- a) Under 9 Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, containing six or seven players on the pitch at any one time.
- b) Rolling substitutions are permitted and substituted players can be return at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is dead and always with the referee's permission.

3. Pitch Size:

- a) The maximum pitch size is 60 metres by 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.
- b) Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches do not materially increase the risk of injury to players.
- c) Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.

4. **Passing:**

The ball may only be passed sideways or backwards (but not forwards). If the ball is knocked or passed forwards towards an opponent's 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 may play advantage wherever possible.

5. **Free Passes:**

- a) A free pass is used:
 - i. To start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch.
 - ii. When there has been foul play.
 - 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. If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp.
 - viii. If the tackler makes contact above the shoulder.
- b) At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. At a free pass, the player 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" is any contact below the arm pits of the ball carrier which results in the ball carrier being held by one or more opponents. 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".
- b) Only the ball carrier can be tackled. 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:

- c) The ball carrier, on hearing “Tackle” from the referee 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.
- d) Once “Tackle” has been called the ball carrier can continue to go forward (if on their feet), but must pass within 3 seconds.
- e) The ball carrier cannot score a try once “Tackle” has been called and must pass to a supporting player.
- f) 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:

- g) The tackler must grasp the ball carrier below the arm pits, on the shirt, shorts or around the legs.
- h) The tackler may not contest the ball (grabbing it, blocking the pass), but must simply work to stop the ball carrier from gaining ground.
- i) More than one defender is allowed in the tackle, but must allow the ball carrier to pass the ball.
- j) Once the referee has called “Tackle”, the tackler can continue to keep hold to prevent further forward movement of the ball carrier, but must not prevent the ball carrier from passing the ball and 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.
- k) 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 ATTACKING TEAM:

- l) When a tackle is made the attacking team should support from behind.
- m) The supporting players may not assist the ball carrier in moving forward by either driving with the shoulder or binding on.
- n) The supporting players must be in a position to receive a pass.
- 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 DEFENDING TEAM:

- r) When the tackle is made other opponents cannot prevent the ball carrier from passing the ball.
- s) The tackled player represents the off side line and opponents must endeavour to retreat to stay between their goal line and the tackled player until the pass is made (off side).

7. Transitional Rugby Variation:

TO BE AGREED BY BOTH COACHES & REFEREE PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MATCH. Where the players are confident & proficient and to challenge them further: To reward good defence and to promote the attacking 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 where the offside line is the hindmost foot of the hindmost player. At a tackle, all the other players from the defending team must attempt to retire towards their own goal line until they are behind the hindmost part of the tackled player. 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. Prohibited Play:

There is total emphasis for the attack: on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier and passing; and for the defence: on running to tackle 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 armpits: The tackler must only make contact with the ball carrier below the arm pits. If contact is above the armpits, 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 (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tackle).
- d) The ball must not be pulled from the ball carrier's grasp by an opponent.

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 or play the ball (pass) immediately and be allowed to do so by their opponents.
- b) If the ball was 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 passed ball rolls into touch a free pass will be awarded at five metres in from the touchline to the opposition team.