

Introducing Children Retaining Players Developing Talent



The New Rules of Play for Rugby at Under 7, Under 8 and Under 9

A Guide for Parents and Coaches

For further information go to:
www.rfu.com/newrulesofplay



As parents we all wish to see our children enjoying themselves, getting involved in activities and developing as people.

The New Rules of Play have been trialled in three counties with the express aim of increasing all 3 of those elements.

The project was based on research evidence and recommendations made by Exeter University, which was commissioned by the Rugby Football Union.

The Principles of the project were

1. **The Child First**
2. **Maintain rugby as a game for all shapes and sizes**
3. **Increase enjoyment**
4. **Increase involvement**
5. **Retain Players**

More information can also be found on the following link:
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PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST

Children are not young adults and require a good deal of nurturing, care and guidance as they progress through the formative years, especially, and beyond.

This appears to be an obvious statement, and thankfully the vast majority of parents and adults adhere to this. However there are times when adult rules, expectations and views are imposed on children with the best intentions, but possibly not always with the best outcomes.

This is particularly evident in sport, and rugby is not an exception to this. The Continuum rules to which rugby is played in England from Under 7 to Under 12 have been in place for 20 years and have not been significantly revised since then.

Although they were considered to be forward thinking and innovative in 1990, the needs, experiences, expectations and aspirations of children, like everything else, have changed since then and the continuum was due for a review.

The core values **TEAMWORK, RESPECT, ENJOYMENT, DISCIPLINE and SPORTSMANSHIP** remain central to development of the game. However the fall in numbers from Mini and Youth game (235.4 thousand) to participating adults (72.5 thousand) suggest that things are not quite as they should be. There are a range of reasons for this and many sports suffer from significant drop out, however there is no room for complacency.

The New Rules of Play relies on research evidence and child development expertise to put the child at the centre of development, using rugby as the tool. This includes inclusion, the gradual introduction of new rules, a simpler game, and a focus on growing confidence and self-esteem. The development of the person goes hand in hand with the development of the game.

Rugby Union is a great game, and that is why we are all involved in it, whether we are players, coaches, parents, spectators, referees or volunteers. **ENJOYMENT** is key to keeping people in the game longer.

Children enjoy playing, exploring and discovering. Leave them on their own and they will invent activities or games, or perhaps play existing ones – often without any adult supervision. It is only recently in developed countries, that children’s activities have been largely supervised by adults.

The research has shown that in the large part, for children Under the age of 12 there should be limited focus on structure and drills, as children learn best and gain more enjoyment by doing and taking part. They gain most of their skills by playing small sided games with limited rules and regulations.

Small sided games also assist in increasing **INVOLVEMENT**. The fewer players there are the more involved they are, either in attack (ball carry, passing, receiving, supporting) or defence (tackling, running, supporting).

To enable players to learn and develop it is essential that they have opportunity to practice – not just in coaching sessions but also in games. By simplifying the rules (less start/stop and more continuity/activity) and reducing numbers involvement will be increased in the core elements of the game.

Increasing involvement, playing small sided games and gradually increasing new rules, children will develop their **GAME UNDERSTANDING**. They will be able to identify where space is, how to create it and utilise it. They will become more aware of simple tactical plays building to more complex ones. Moreover, they will be able to create, explore and discover them for themselves.

Through this they will be provided with more **DECISION MAKING** opportunities- when, where, who, how, what, why.

More touches of the ball, support, running and activity will also aid and hasten **SKILL DEVELOPMENT**. Children practice to play, and it is little wonder that some children enjoy practice more because they touch the ball more. The new rules provide a greater chance of players being involved more frequently , touching the ball more often, making decisions regularly and developing skills continually, all of which will increase enjoyment and assist with the long term **RETENTION** of players in the game.

THE NEW RULES

Under 7

This is an introduction to rugby at the earliest years, and as such should be a simple & easy to understand game with minimum intervention from the referee. Children are not penalised for attempting to catch the ball and dropping it (knock-on). Smaller pitches and simpler rules mean more pitches and more players playing.

Main differences

Current	New Rules
7-a-side Coach allowed on pitch Knock-on penalised 60m x 30m pitch	4-a-side Referee as coach Knock-on not penalised 20m x 12m pitch

Under 8

Increasing the numbers by two, to provide more of a team “feel” whilst maintaining the principles of low numbers and increased involvement. The players are able to go to ground to score – which introduces the element of contact with the ground

Main differences

Current	New Rules
7-a-side Coach allowed on pitch No going to ground 60m x 30m pitch	6-a-side Referee as coach Can go to ground to score 45m x 25m

Under 9

The tackle is a skill which requires a good deal of coaching, encouragement and confidence building and is the only new element introduced for this age group so that it can be coached properly. However it is also recognised that some children lack confidence.

Under 9 (continued)

The intent to tackle is rewarded, with the tackle being redefined as a grip on the ball carrier below the arm-pit. This enables confident players to **continue to tackle low** and less confident players to hold on and contribute to the defensive effort.

Main differences

Current	New Rules
9-a-side Introduction of: ○ Tackle ○ Ruck ○ Maul ○ Scrum ○ Line-out 60m x 35m pitch	7-a-side Introduction of Tackle Re-define Tackle 60m x 30 pitch

Under 10

This sees the introduction of the scrum to develop tactical awareness for all players and the first stages of competition for the ball, with the ball carrier, tackler and one from either side able to compete for the ball in the tackle area

Main differences

Current	New Rules
9-a-side Introduction of ○ competitive scrum ○ competitive line-out (early specialisation) 60m x 35m pitch	8-a-side Introduction of ○ competition for ball ○ mini maul ○ mini ruck ○ scrum (nearest 3 players) 60m x 35m pitch

Under 11

The Under 11 rules see a continuation of the principles of child development and the incremental introduction of new rules which are within the capabilities of the players, enabling them to be successful. This sees an increase of the numbers competing for the ball in the ruck & maul

Current	New Rules
12 a-side Introduction of kick 5 forwards 60m x 43m pitch	9-a-side ○ 3 player scrum ○ midi maul ○ midi ruck ○ Introduction of kick 60m x 35m pitch

