

JUNIOR RUGBY

GAME DAY GUIDE

U11-12

KEY

-  MATCH OFFICIAL
-  COACHES
-  BOTH COACH & M.O
-  PENALTY
-  FREE KICK

SKILLS FRAMEWORK RUGBY AU



CATCH & CARRY

Body Tilt
Early Catch
Ball Above Hips
Hands to Target



CARRY & CONTACT

Scan Early
Forward Move Onto Ball
Footwork
Keep Ball Alive or Long Quality Place



GROUND SKILLS

Ball Two Hands
Ball to Chest
Hips Square
Land On Ball Score the Try
Prawn (Ball to near Toes)



TRACK & TACKLE

Align
Approach
Balance
Contact
Punch, Wrap, Squeeze, Drive



TACKLE CONTEST (WITH BALL)

Eyes on Threats
Win the Race
Shoulders above Hips
Leg Drive



TACKLE CONTEST (WITHOUT BALL)

Eyes on Opportunities
Win the Race
Shoulders above Hips
Leg Drive



SCRUMMAGE

Feet
Knees
Hips
Chest
Back
Head



GAME SPECIFIC SKILLS

LINEOUT

Throw
Jump
Lift (Shorts & Legs)
Speed

SCRUM

Hooker Communication
Set Up
Binds (Crutch & Waist)
Connection

DROP KICK

Push/Pull own
bodyweight (plank,
crawl, animal walks).

CLEARING PASS

Set Up
Ball Drop
Ball Strike
Follow Through

PUNT KICK

Set Up
Ball Drop
Ball Strike
Follow Through

GOAL KICK

Set Up
Ball Drop
Ball Strike
Follow Through



PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES

SAFE BODY SHAPES

Stable base in contact
(low stance, bent knees,
neutral spine).

SPEED MARKERS

Acceleration over 5–10m,
ability to chase or
retreat quickly.

STRENGTH FOUNDATIONS

Push/Pull own bodyweight
(plank, crawl, animal walks).

AGILITY

Maintain balance through
tag/tackle contact.



PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS

PERSISTENCE

Keeps trying after
errors or contact.

LISTENING & RECALL

Can remember and
apply a simple game
rule or law.

BASIC PROBLEM SOLVING

Chooses between two clear options
(passing or running).

COURAGE

Demonstrates willingness to make
first tackles or carry into contact.



SOCIAL & LEADERSHIP SKILLS

COMMUNICATION BASICS

Calls for the ball ("here!",
"pass!") in small sided games.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Begins praising teammates
("good job").

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR

Shakes hands, thanks
opponents / referees.

TEAM BELONGING

Identifies with team colours / values.



ON FIELD PLAYER NUMBERS

Teams must match numbers / Teams must share players to reach maximum playing number (unless a team receives a YC/RC sanction)



PLAYING AREA FULL FIELD IN 5M

Field comes into the 5m line on each side

Game play at the U11 and U12 age groups continues to focus on learning and developing the fundamental elements that make rugby unique. At this stage, the lineout is introduced, including the skills of lifting and jumping to receive the ball.

Through continued modified game play, players develop the three core areas of the game; tackle, scrum and lineout, building their understanding and execution of these fundamentals in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.

The home club is responsible for ensuring the field is correctly marked, using different coloured cones to identify sidelines, try-lines and dead-ball lines, with corner posts marking the halfway and try lines.



2 x 25min halves

PLAYING TIME (MAXIMUM)

Where associations play 'Gala Days', playing time may be modified to ensure that teams do not play more than 90 minutes of rugby a day.



BALL SIZE

Size 4 ball

A Size 4 ball supports improved object manipulation and enhances the development of catch and pass skills.



SUBSTITUTIONS

Sideline marked on the 5m line on each side



SCORING

Try and Conversion

After a try is scored, as players are returning to halfway to restart the game, this is an opportunity for coaches to highlight one key work-on for the next passage of play.

After a try is scored, the referee returns to the field of play, positioning themselves in line with where the try was scored, or on the 15-metre line if the try was scored outside the 15-metre area.



CONVERSIONS

If try scored outside the 15m lines, ball place on the 15m line for attempt



POST TACKLE CONTEST

Maximum 2 players per team (not including tackler/s) are allowed in the tackle contest.

A "RUCK" call signifies that a ruck has formed (1 player from each team in contact over the ball).

"RUCK CONTEST" signifies that there is a maximum number of players in the tackle contest.

The post tackle contest is about a contest and therefore players need to remain on their feet. Using communication is key to manage and allow continuity in the game.

Defenders: First arriving players can still attack the ball with a positive 'lifting action' or take space at the tackle contest, to cause a turnover.

Attackers: Need to remain on their feet at the tackle contest and should look to be taking space and cleaning out the defenders.

A maximum of two players from each team can compete for the ball. If there are additional players, **the referee should first look to manage those players out of the tackle contest.** The last resort should be sanctioning the offending team.

Identification: Players need to be scanning to identify the numbers of players already within the tackle contest.

Attacking: Coaches should teach players to fall forward when 'scoring the try', protecting the ball while also landing safely. Players arriving at the tackle contest should keep their shoulders above their hips and drive past the ball.

Defending: Arriving players need to keep their shoulders above their hips and drive past the ball.

Once a player from each team is over the ball, the ball cannot be played by the players with their hands.



SANCTION - Penalty



OFFSIDE



Defending team moves when the ball is in the hands of the first receiver after set piece (scrum and lineout).

If ball is not caught cleanly, defensive team must wait for player to take possession.

Defenders may otherwise move when the ball leaves the tackle contest, or following a tap, or kick off.

To support the ongoing development of set-piece skills and enable players to transition effectively into general play, this phase is modified to reduce pressure on the first receiver.

At the set piece (scrum and lineout), the 'halfback' must pass the ball to a designated first receiver.

They are not permitted to carry or kick the ball and must focus on accurate distribution.



Match officials are encouraged to manage the players to be onside through communication, with only those players who have impact on continuity of the game to be penalised.

SANCTION - Penalty



TACKLE

Below sternum
No slinging tackle
No squeeze ball

All training sessions should have a focus on AABC and learning the 'Punch, Wrap, Squeeze & Drive for 5' method to making safe, effective tackles.

Players, once they have made the tackle, must roll immediately away to the side.

Safety First: Scan for tackle height, head position and if the arms are wrapping.

Additionally, referee can look at the speed and intent of the tackler.

Tackler: Once the tackle has been completed safely, has the tackler rolled east or west to allow for the tackle contest to occur?

Managing Players: This can be done through verbal guidance first and explanation if play needs to be stopped.

Think: Teach → Reset → Play



FEND / PALM

To the body below the shoulders.

Players being taught to fend, should focus on using their arm to push away on the chest of the defender.



GAME BALANCE LAW: 60 POINTS

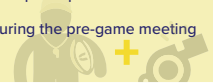
Once the maximum points difference is reached:

- The match result is finalised and recorded as at the moment the threshold is achieved.
- No further score is to be added to the official match record.

This aspect of the game should be managed collaboratively between the coaches (in the first instance) and the match official.

Once agreed, teams are encouraged to adjust player numbers where necessary to ensure even teams and maximise participation.

These arrangements should be confirmed during the pre-game meeting between coaches and the match official.



YELLOW CARD

5 mins - actual game time
Player cannot be replaced.

Match officials should follow their escalation process and clearly explain to the captain or player the reason they are receiving the yellow card.

The referee is responsible for tracking time on the yellow card.

In the U11 and U12 age groups, players are introduced to the concept of accountability, with clear consequences applied if they receive a yellow or red card.



RED CARD

10 mins - actual game time
Red carded player cannot return.

Player can be replaced by another player after the 10 minute time limit expires.

Match officials should follow their escalation process and clearly explain to the captain/player the reason they are receiving the red card. Referees are to work with coaches/team managers to ensure that players are replaced after 10 minutes.

The referee is responsible for submitting the red card report in Rugby Xplorer as soon as possible post game.



SCRUM

SET UP

6x players per team

2x Props, 1x Hooker,
2x Second Rowers
and a No 8.

Safety is the number one priority.

Match officials should ensure the correct safe set up takes place and numbers of players always match in each scrum.

When coaching the scrum, remember to use the 6 principles: feet, knees, hips, chest, back, head.

PUSH LENGTH

Maximum 1m push.

Using **CROUCH - BIND - SET** - look for a controlled engagement with pressure on but no active pushing.

The purpose of applying pressure is to help players become familiar with the fundamental scrum shape and physical demands of the position, within a safe and controlled environment.

Proactive management of the 1m push is encouraged by using communication with the players.

BINDS

Crutch or waist

Binds should be safe and not compromise the integrity of the scrum.

Binds need to include:

- Both props binding on the back or side of the opposing players jersey, ideally reaching to grab the jersey
- Props have their elbows up
- Binds must stay on for the duration of the scrum, until the ball has left the scrum

OFFSIDE LINE

5m from the last feet of the scrum.

Coaches can help manage this to allow for continuity. Using activities at training, support players to watch and move forward once the ball is in the hands of the first receiver.

Offside at the scrum should be managed appropriately with impact on play being the deciding outcome.

Proactive management and finding opportunities to play advantage prior to penalising, allows for continuity in the game.

BALL USE OPTIONS

Half back must pass or the No 8 can run.

By having the player pass the ball to the first receiver, this supports development of ball movement across the backline and into space.

Coaches need to develop players ability to effect the 'clearing pass' to ensure minimal steps to move the ball.

Due to the 1m push there should be ample opportunity for a stationary scrum to allow an unaffected pass to be made to the first receiver. Communication to the players through "no more push now" can help manage this.

Encourage ball use through "use it" to the player, playing in the halfback position.

SANCTION - Free Kick

If a player drops their bind, does not have their elbows up, or does not keep their binds for the duration of the scrum, a free kick is awarded to the non-offending team.



SANCTION - Penalty

The mark for the penalty shall be at given at the point of the offside line.



SANCTION - Free Kick

If the player does not pass the ball from the back of the scrum, a free kick is awarded to the non-offending team.





LINEOUT

OFFSIDE LINE

Defenders and attackers each back 10m from line of touch.

Defending team moves when the ball is in the hands of the first receiver following set piece.

Proactive management is required to ensure players remain outside throughout the lineout.

Receivers are encouraged to pass the ball without delay, allowing play to continue smoothly once it is secured by the first receiver.

SANCTION - Penalty

If a defending team does not listen to the referee's preventative communication and does not retreat back 10m, they should be penalised for being offside.



BALL USE OPTIONS

Half back must pass to the first receiver

Coaches and match officials should proactively manage the team passing the ball in to ensure there is no delay.

SANCTION - Free Kick



SET UP

6x players from both teams

Attacking:

1x thrower
5x receiver half back

Defending:

1x hooker in the "channel"
5x in lineout halfback

Front of line out is 3m in-field from the line of touch.

Coaches should use training sessions to ensure players understand how to set up and execute a lineout, including the specific roles and responsibilities of each participant.

Where throws are not straight and the defending gathers the ball, we encourage players from the defending team to gather the ball and perform a tap on the 15m line.

Match officials are encouraged to keep the lineout moving as quickly as possible.

A player from the team awarded the lineout must stand on the touchline where the ball went out.

Clear identification of roles during this phase is encouraged to ensure an effective setup while creating space where needed.

For throws that are not straight but the attacking team can catch the ball and get it to the halfback, we play on to keep continuity in the game.

SANCTION - Free Kick

If teams continue to have issues in matching numbers and getting the set up correct to maintain game flow, a free kick can be used.

If the throw is not straight and results in the ball being thrown over the top of the lineout or cannot be caught by the jumping player, a free kick is awarded to the defending team.

If the throw is not straight or is thrown over, the defending team needs to gather the ball and moved to the 15m line, for a tap to restart play.



LIFTING OPTIONS

Shorts or Legs

Defending team cannot complete for the ball.

Safety is paramount when teaching players to lift in the lineout.

Progression from learning to lift on shorts to moving into lifting on the legs is recommended.

Players must be lifted straight up and down, without being held off the ground for an extended period.

The jumper may deliver the ball to the receiver either by passing it at the peak of the jump or by bringing it to the ground and popping it to the receiver for the pass.

SANCTION - Penalty

If the defending team competes for the ball by jumping or interfering with the attacking team in any way, the attacking team will receive a penalty at the back of the lineout.



PLAYER REMOVED FOR YELLOW/RED CARD

Teams must match numbers in the lineout at all times

Ensuring even numbers in the lineout creates space on the field, promoting passing and running with the ball.

SANCTION - Free Kick

If teams continue to have issues in matching numbers and getting the set up correct to maintain game flow, a free kick can be used.





MAUL

Only in general play

The maul can only occur in general play, not from the lineout.



Match officials should encourage the players to use the ball to try and create continuity in the game.

Once a maul is clearly formed, the referee should call "use it", allowing the team 5 seconds to use the ball.



ACTION - Scrum

Scrum to the team that is not in possession at the start of the maul.



COACHING ACCREDITATION (RECOMMENDED)

Junior Coach
(Junior Coach
Course)

Match Official

Smart Rugby
Mandatory

Referee Course
Recommended

Season Ready
Recommended



ON FIELD SUPPORT

U11 and U12 represents an important transition point in junior rugby. For many coaches, this will be the first time they are not permitted to be on the field during live play. It is also the first time match officials will operate without coaches alongside them on the field. This creates a more authentic game environment and supports the development of both players and referees.

Our focus is on equipping coaches to coach before and after moments, using training design, questioning, and structured feedback at breaks, rather than directing play during the game.

This approach builds player decision-making, resilience and game understanding, while maintaining a safe, supportive and developmentally appropriate environment.

Similarly, match officials will be supported to manage the game through clear communication, preventative refereeing, and well-timed education moments, guiding players without over-coaching them. The aim is to help referees build confidence in controlling the game independently, applying law consistently, and fostering a positive learning environment.



KICK OFF / RESTART

Drop Kick

Try Scoring Team Restarts

Contest for possession of the ball from the kick off or restart is allowed.

In the U11 and U12 age group, kicking is introduced in general play for the first time.

This allows players to kick for the line from penalties as well as use kicks as an attacking or clearing opportunity.

In the U11 and U12 age groups, restarts and kick-offs are contestable and must be taken as a drop kick.



Ensure players are onside and that there is a fair contest for the ball. Referees should proactively manage offside players and provide guidance where appropriate, before resorting to a sanction.



SANCTION - Free Kick

If the restart is kicked dead, does not travel 10m, or goes out on the full, play restarts with a tap on halfway, with the defending team back 10m.





GENERAL PLAY KICKING

Match officials need to encourage players in front of the kicker to retreat; this will allow for greater space for the receiving team to catch the ball and counter attack.

Where possible play advantage for those players in an offside position.

PENALTY/ FREE KICK OPTIONS

All options other than a penalty goal attempt.

Players are encouraged to play on quickly and have the ball in play as much as possible. The tap can be taken within 1m of the mark, but not in front.

The match official is encouraged to make the mark as quickly as possible to allow the game to continue.

SANCTION - Free Kick

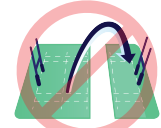
Penalty where the player was offside or a scrum where the ball was kicked from.



GOAL LINE DROP-OUT

If the ball is put in goal by the attacking team or held up, it is a tap on the 22m line.

If the ball is put in goal by defending team, 5m scrum to attacking team.



50 - 22

50 - 22 is not applicable in this game format.

Players are encouraged to play on quickly and have the ball in play as much as possible. The tap can be taken within 1m of the mark, but not in front. The match official is encouraged to make the mark as quickly as possible to allow the game to continue.

If a tap is taken incorrectly, the player is bought back and a correct tap is taken.



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