

GET INTO  
**RUGBY**

**RUGBY**  
**AU**

**KIDS  
PATHWAY  
SKILLS  
BLUEPRINT**



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



### AIM OF THE BLUEPRINT

Junior Rugby participation should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for all those involved in the game. The aim of this paper is to ensure coaches can identify the skills associated with each relevant age grade.

### KIDS PATHWAY

#### Aim and philosophy of the Kids Pathway

The aim of the Kids Pathway for U6 to U12 players is to provide a series of age-specific modified rugby games. These modified rugby games progressively develop the individual skills, fitness and teamwork of all players in accordance with their physical maturity and understanding of the game.

The philosophy is child-centered and ensures all players receive the greatest possible **participation and enjoyment**

from playing the game of Rugby.

#### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The Kids Pathway for U6 to U12 players has been developed to:

- ☐ Increase activity levels for maximum participation and enjoyment.
- ☐ Meet the developmental needs of young Rugby players in line with the safety focus of the modern game.
- ☐ Provide an integrated and consistent approach to the development of U6 to U12 players, coaches and referees across the country.

#### WANT MORE INFORMATION?

The website [www.rugbyaustralia.com.au/coaching](http://www.rugbyaustralia.com.au/coaching) provides numerous education resources for clubs, schools, parents and volunteers.

This includes targeted courses and resources for coaches to help provide the best environment for children to learn, develop and enjoy the game.

Just go to the coach resource videos under the Learn and Play headings:

<https://australia.rugby/participate/get-into-rugby/club-resources>



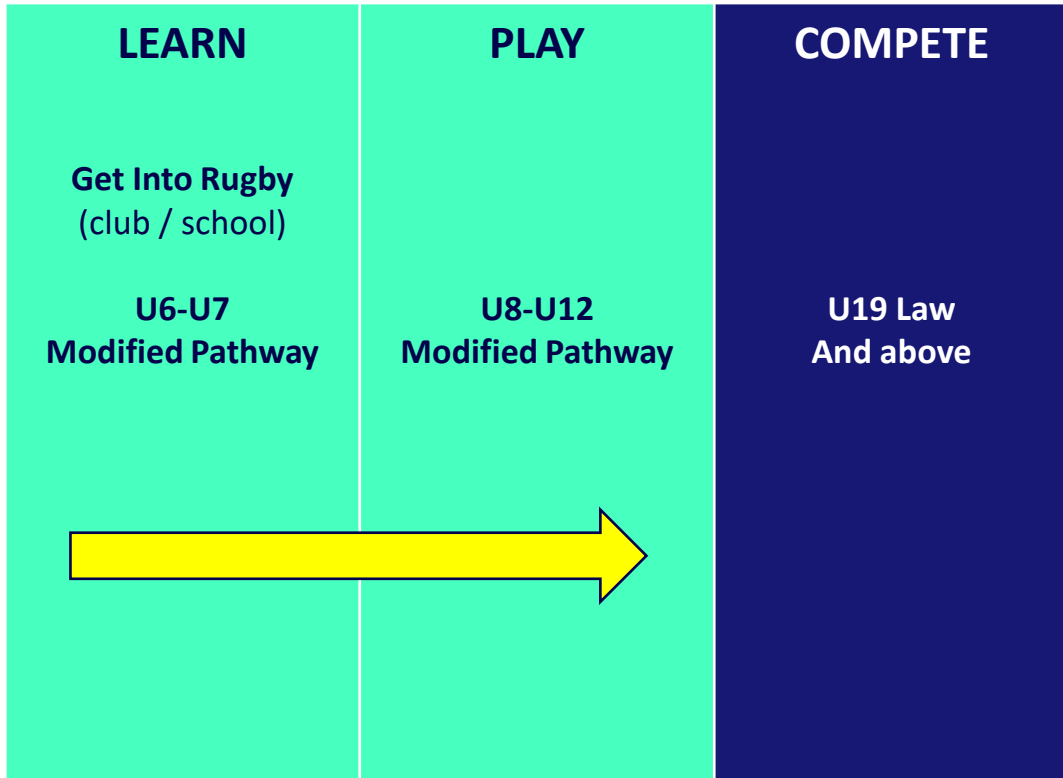


# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



The **Kids Pathway** allows entry into either the **non-contact** versions of the game or into the **contact** games. The diagram below provides a clear picture within the **Learn, Play and Compete** environments.



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
Game Style	Small-Sided Games	7-a-side Tag	7-a-side Tackle	10-a-side Tackle	12-a-side Tackle		15-a-side Tackle
Skills Focus	Evasion and Tag Catch and Pass Running Scoring Tries Enjoyment		Tackle Ruck Maul	Attack Defence	Kick in General Play Contested Scrum and Line-out		Positional Awareness
Playing Area	1/4 field		1/2 field		Full field less 10m width		Full field
Playing Times	2 x small sided games, then 2 x 10min tag game	2 x 15 mins	2 x 15 mins	2 x 20 mins	2 x 20 mins		2 x 25 Mins



# CHAPTER 1

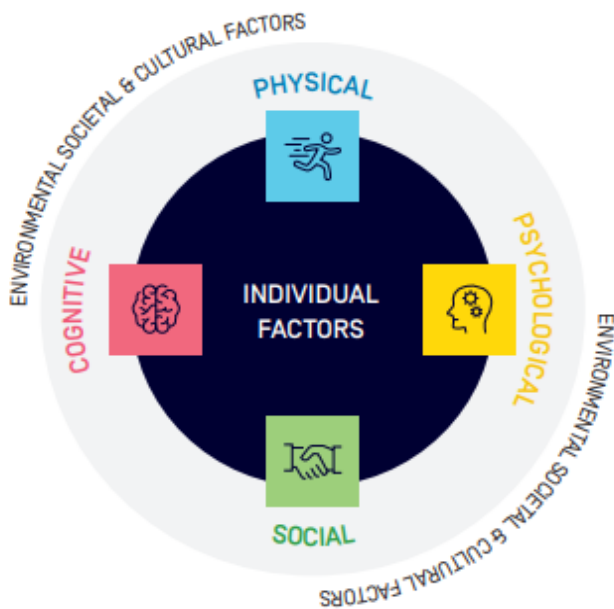
## INTRODUCTION



### BUILDING A CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

The **Kids Pathway Skills Blueprint** has been designed to assist coaches in the U6-U12 age groups by providing clear focus areas that underpin the development of physical literacy competence.

Rugby Australia has new framework called '**Learn-Play-Compete-Perform**' with the focus of the Kids Pathway being the Learn and Play environments. This framework compliments SportAUS **Physical Literacy** framework (below):



Coaches need to look to develop, not only the **physical** competency of their players, but work to build the **cognitive, psychological** and **social** areas of the team.



# CHAPTER 2

## U6-U12 NATIONAL LITERACY



This table should be used when planning what skills should be taught at the different age groups. Development of skills should be sequential with the level of task difficulty increasing with competency.

The **Principles of Team Play** helps to provide players with the necessary skills that are fundamental to rugby. An important concept for all players to understand is **Space** and more specifically where the space is and how to utilize it.

PRINCIPLES OF RUGBY	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Possession</b> – Winning the ball and being able to keep the ball	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Go Forward</b> – Move the ball forward through play.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Support (Reload)</b> – Always try to be behind the ball in attack.				*	*	*	*

**Decision Making** is a key skill that all players need to develop. Being able to develop an awareness of what to do with a ball and when are intrinsically linked to the Principles of Rugby. Players must be allowed to learn through trial and error so that the choices they make get more proficient with age.

Moreover, as rugby is a team sport communication is paramount to the decision-making process. Players must be able to develop the skills of saying the right words, at the right time and reacting positively to information they are given on the field.

DECISION MAKING	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Options (Awareness)</b> – Develop an awareness of where players are on the field, where the space is and how to move the ball to that space.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Choice (Action/Reaction &amp; Communication)</b> – Develop an understanding that actions have consequences on the field and that players should be able to make different choices in different situations on the field.				*	*	*	*
<b>Talk (Information Feed)</b> – Develop positive on-field communication that focuses on positive outcomes.				*	*	*	*





# CHAPTER 3

## COACHING ATTACK



The key components of **ATTACK** are **Alignment, Running (Evasion), Catch/Pass/Support and Kick**. Each of these components will be broken down to provide coaches with the necessary understanding to develop the attacking skills of their players.

**Alignment** is the first of the attacking skills. Coaches should look at where these skills can be developed and use the correct cues when coaching.

ATTACK	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Alignment</b> - Contains four key components:							
<b>Eyes Up</b> – Players should learn to look at what is in front of them	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Depth</b> – Players must be behind the ball so that they are always moving forward and in a position of support			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Width</b> – Players need to be spaced so that they can undertake attack skills (running, catch and pass, kick) and maintain their ability to provide support					*	*	*
<b>Timing</b> – Players need to develop the ability to perform skills at the right time. They need to learn when to slow down and when to speed up.						*	*





# CHAPTER 3

## COACHING ATTACK



**Running (Evasion)** is the second of the attacking skills. At a Kids Pathway level, these skills should be developed through mini-skills and challenge games

ATTACK	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Running (Evasion)</b> - Contains four key components:							
<b>Fast Feet</b> – Players should develop the ability to have fast feet, especially when moving into or avoiding contact situations. Players will need to develop how to slow or speed up, step and swerve.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Grip</b> (run with the ball in two hands) – This is a fundamental skill all players must do within the game. To hold the ball in two hands allows the attacker to run, pass or kick.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Eye Contact</b> – Players need to have eye contact with their direct opponents. This allows them to develop their decision-making and choose the correct attacking option.				*	*	*	*
<b>Body Shape</b> – When running players need to keep their feet under their hips. This allows a player to step and swerve opponents in a safe manner.				*	*	*	*



# CHAPTER 3

## COACHING ATTACK

**Catch/Pass/Support** is the third of the attacking skill. The skills players learn at this level become the cornerstone of the game in later years. Use of the coaching cues is extremely important for catch/pass/support.

Coaches are encouraged to develop cues that players can relate to. For example, to provide a **target** players must **meet and greet** the ball with their **fingers to the ball** shaped as a 'W' to welcome the ball!

ATTACK	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Catch/Pass/Support</b> - Contains four key components:							
<b>Target</b> – refers to players having their (1) hands up towards where the ball is coming from. Players must have (2) hip tilt and (3) keep their hips square to assist with them running forward.	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
			*	*	*	*	*
					*	*	*
<b>Fast Hands</b> – refers to players having (1) hands above elbow (hands up), the correct (2) grip on the ball for either a lateral or spin pass, ensuring they (3) finish with hands to target after throwing the pass, and keeping (4) hips square to assist both the pass and the player's support line.			*	*	*	*	*
			*	*	*	*	*
	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Keep Moving Forward</b> – is a key component of catch and pass. Players must be encouraged to run forward when passing as this allows the pass to be thrown into space, which can then be run onto by the support player.							*
							*
<b>Support</b> – refers to players both inside and outside the ball carrier. These players must learn to maintain space and alignment so that the ball carrier can utilize all options available.				*	*	*	*
				*	*	*	*



# CHAPTER 3

## COACHING ATTACK



**Kicking** is the fourth attacking skill players will learn in the Kids Pathway. All players should learn how to kick and be given the opportunity to practice this skill in pairs, mini-groups and through games.

ATTACK	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Kick</b> - Contains four key components:							
<b>Grip</b> – players need to learn to grip the ball either side of the seam (like lateral pass grip)					*	*	*
<b>Release</b> – refers to pointing the seam of the ball directly downwards through hip height to contact with the foot.					*	*	*
<b>Contact</b> – refers to players having (1) head over the ball and (2) hips to target.					*	*	*
							*
<b>Follow Through</b> - is key to gaining accuracy and distance on a kick. Players need to learn to land on their kicking foot and continue to move forward.							*



# CHAPTER 4

## COACHING DEFENCE

The key components of **DEFENCE** are **Tracking** and **Contact (Tag and Tackle)**. Each of these components will be broken down to provide coaches with the necessary understanding to develop the defence skills of their players.

**Tracking** is fundamental to developing effective and safe contact. As most tackles (and tags) are missed through poor positioning coaches must separate the skill of tracking, which permits a tackler to gain the correct field and body position to execute a tackle, from the skill of tackling.

DEFENCE	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Tracking</b> - Contains four key components:							
<b>Align</b> – players need to learn to align correctly on their (1) opponent (shoulder to shoulder) and on their (2) teammate	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
							*
<b>Approach</b> – refers to the players denying opponents 'time and space' to play the ball	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Balance</b> – ensures that the players can slow their feet (shuffle/paddle) whilst moving close to the attacker			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Contact</b> – players must have their eyes forward (eyes to thighs) and ensure they have a good, strong body-shape (foot in hoop).		*	*	*	*	*	*





# CHAPTER 4

## COACHING DEFENCE



The **Contact** element of defence must be taught sequentially and players allowed to develop confidence through repeat efforts. Player development through the three key focus areas is imperative for a safe and enjoyable game by the participants.

DEFENCE	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Contact (Tag/Tackle)</b> – There are three key components to developing ‘Confidence in Contact’:							
<b>Active Feet</b> – refers to maintaining a balanced body-shape with feet moving forward into the contact		*	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Shoulder On</b> – refers to the ‘grip, stick and squeeze’ required to make a tackle. Having a shoulder on also allows the player to get their head in the correct position (cheek to cheek)			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Release &amp; Roll/React</b> – refers to the laws of the Tackler/Tackle Assist. All players must learn to let go of the Tackled Player once the tackle is made and move away from the area the ball is being played					*	*	*



# CHAPTER 5

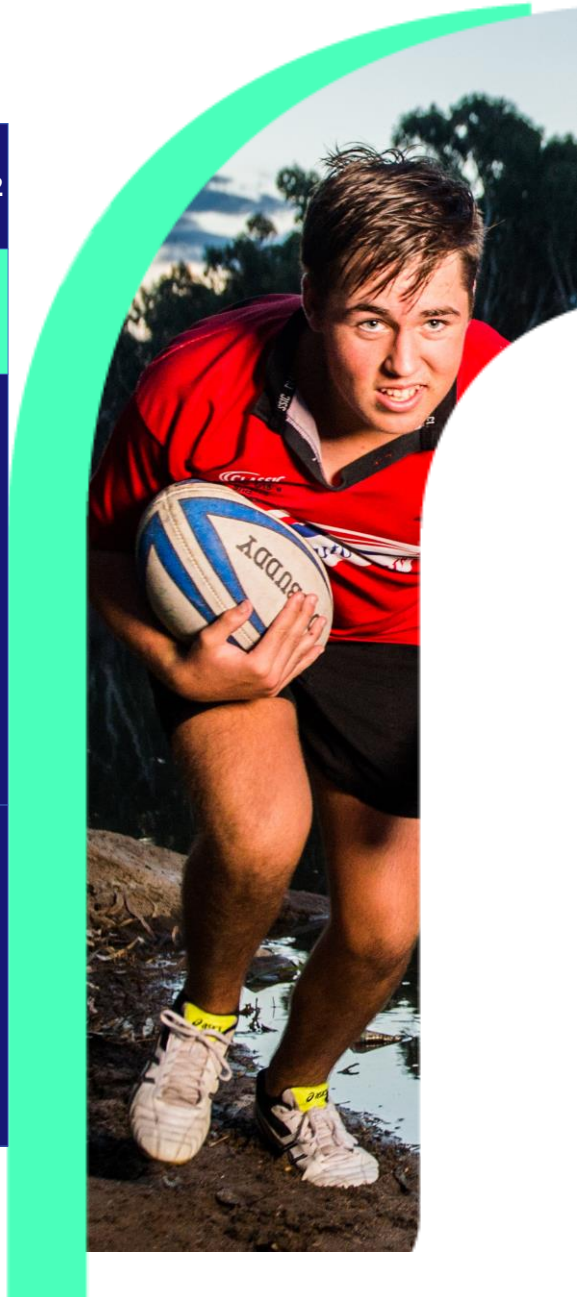
## COACHING TACKLE CONTEST



The key components of **TACKLE CONTEST** are **Target**, **Control** and **Adapt**. Each of these components are the same whether the team has the ball and wishes to maintain it or are defence and are trying to recapture it.

The **Contact** element of the Tackle Contest ensures players become proficient so that they are always safe in contact. This is especially true when tackles become rucks.

TACKLE CONTEST	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Target</b> - Contains two key components:							
<b>Eyes Up (Look)</b> - refers to players identifying threats in the tackle area and ensuring that their body gets into a safe position			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Speed Up / Slow Down</b> - refers to the player entering a tackle contest safely and with strong body-shape.				*	*	*	*



# CHAPTER 5

## COACHING TACKLE CONTEST



The **Control** element of the Tackle Contest allows players to maintain a positive body position through contact. It is important that players control their body so that they (1) remain safe and (2) be effective.

TACKLE CONTEST	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Control</b> - Contains four key components:							
<b>Skim &amp; Win Space</b> – refers to taking the space over and past the ball before an opposition player does			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Drive Up (Airplanes Taking Off)</b> – refers to the body-shape of the player entering the tackle contest. Players need to develop the skill of having their shoulders under those of the opposition and then driving up and forwards			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Keep Moving Forwards</b> – is the key to winning the tackle contest. By doing this players will win the space and possession.			*	*	*	*	*
<b>Strong Body-Shape</b> – allows players to be always safe. Coaches should look to ensure that players are sequentially strong through feet, knees, hips, chest, chin and eyes.			*	*	*	*	*

The **Adapt** element of the Tackle Contest that players utilize to ensure they remain in the contest for possession.

TACKLE CONTEST	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Adapt</b> - Contains the key component:							
<b>Pump the Legs</b> – refers to keeping the (1) feet active and under the body, plus being able to (2) fight for position past the ball.			*	*	*	*	*
					*	*	*





# CHAPTER 6

## COACHING SET PIECE



A strong and stable body shape is essential for safe scrummaging. Players must face their opponents in an offset position, always lining up to the left. This enables both players to come together and scrummage with their heads adjacent to one another.

SCRUM	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	SCRUM	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12
<b>Individual shape – ‘The Six Principles’</b>								<b>1 v 1 Positioning</b>							
<b>Feet</b> – Shoulder width apart with one foot slightly ahead of the other.			*	*	8	*	*	<b>Crouch</b> – Follow the Feet-Knees – Hips, Chest-Back-Head setup, then hinge forward through the hips.			*	*	8	*	*
<b>Knees</b> – Bent and over toes.			*	*	8	*	*	<b>Bind</b> – take your right arm and bind onto your opponent’s jersey on their back – not on the arm or shoulder.			*	*	8	*	*
<b>Hips</b> – Square with slight tilt forward in the lower back (i.e., “Duck ass”).			*	*	8	*	*	<b>Set</b> – Pull your opponent towards you and hold. Remember to keep chin and chest as forward as possible			*	*	8	*	*
<b>Chest</b> – strong through the chest by pushing the chest out.			*	*	8	*	*	<b>Engagement</b> – It is very important for players to keep their heads straight with eyes forwards, as flexion and rotation of the neck increases the risk of injury.			*	*	8	*	*
<b>Back</b> – Flat back bending forward through the hips.			*	*	8	*	*								
<b>Head</b> – neutral position with eyes looking forward.			*	*	8	*	*								





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The Kids Pathway Skills Blueprint is supported by:

