RUGBY AUSTRALIA JUNIOR RUGBY LAWS

U8

Laws and Game Management

RUGBY AU

JUNIOR · BAND 1 OF 6

U8

The first contact band. No scrum, no lineout and no kicking. A coach from each team is on the field for the full match.

COACH

Game Intent: Play and explore the game

Player Opportunity: Learn through play and participation

Development Priority: Fundamental movement and skills

Coaching Environment: Create fun, safe and inclusive experiences

Guide with care, model positive experiences

REFEREE

Officiating Intent: Introduce and explain the game

Referee Opportunity: Learn the role alongside coaches

Development Priority: Law basics, positioning and voice

Match Environment: Create fun, safe and inclusive experiences

Discover officating, build confidence and love of the game

U8 JUNIOR RUGBY

Law Set

What the law is, how it can be broken, the sanction, and how play restarts.

U8 Laws

Tackle — PK

Above the base of the sternum. No sling tackle, no squeeze ball

Fend or palm — PK

Must not be made to the face or neck

Tackle and ruck, World Rugby offences — PK

Sanctioned as they are in World Rugby Law

Tackle and ruck, junior variations — FK

Maximum 2 contesting per team. No halfback run, no pick and drive

Maul — NONE

Not permitted. Neutral restart, no infringement attributed

Offside, tackle contest — PK

Hindmost point. Move once the first receiver has the ball

Offside, restarts — PK

Defenders 3m back. Attackers behind the player tapping

Kicking in general play — FK

Not permitted at U8

Restart after every sanction. Tap and pass at the mark, in line with or behind it. Defenders retreat 3m and wait until the ball is in the hands of the first receiver. Advantage is not played for foul play, except in the act of scoring a try.

U8 Tackle and Contact

KEY LAW **Tackle height is below the base of the sternum at every age group, U8 to U18.**

Tackle

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 14, AND 9.13 FOR FOUL PLAY

Below the base of the sternum. No sling tackle. No squeeze ball.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Tackle contact made at or above the base line of the sternum (chest, shoulder, neck or head).
- **Sling tackle:** the tackler grabs the ball carrier and rotates or swings them, creating a dangerous spinning motion.
- **Squeeze ball:** the tackled player squeezes the ball back between their legs, or lays the egg, putting their body in a dangerous position.

Fend / Palm

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 9.24

A fend must not be made to the face or neck of the defending player.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A fend or palm directed at the face or neck of the opponent.
- A fend or palm delivered with excessive or disproportionate force, more than is necessary to hand off the approaching defender.

Tackle and ruck: World Rugby offences

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 15 AND 16

Sanctioned as they are in World Rugby Law. There is no maul at U8.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- The tackler fails to release the ball carrier or fails to roll away.
- A player enters the contest other than through the gate, that is, not from behind the hindmost point of their own players.
- A player in the contest is not on their feet, lying on the ground at or over the ball.
- The ball is played with the hand or hands after a ruck has formed.
- A player intentionally falls on or over the ball, or deliberately collapses the ruck.

U8 Junior Variations

Tackle and ruck: junior variations FK

NO WORLD RUGBY EQUIVALENT

A maximum of 2 players from each team may contest the ruck, excluding the tackler. A defender who jackals before a ruck forms may run or pass.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A 3rd or subsequent player from one team joins the tackle contest, not counting the tackler.
- The player acting as halfback runs with the ball once a ruck has formed.
- An attacking player picks and drives from the ruck.

Maul NONE

WORLD RUGBY LAW 16

The maul is not permitted at U8. If a maul forms, play restarts with a tap and pass by the attacking team.

HOW IT IS MANAGED

- No infringement is attributed to either team. This is a neutral restart, not an offence.
- The tap and pass is taken at the mark where the maul formed.

Kicking in general play FK

NO WORLD RUGBY EQUIVALENT

Kicking the ball during general play is not permitted at U8.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Any player who kicks the ball during general play, whether a punt, grubber, drop kick, chip kick, or any deliberate contact with the foot that propels the ball.

U8 Offside and Restarts

Offside: tackle contest

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 14.10 AND 15.4

The offside line is the hindmost point of the players in the ruck or tackle.
Where no ruck forms and a defender jackals, the defender may run or pass.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A defending player moves forward before the ball is in the hands of the first receiver following a pass from the ruck or a tap kick.
- Where the ball is not taken cleanly, a defending player moves before the ball carrier has taken clear possession.

Offside: restarts

PK

NO WORLD RUGBY EQUIVALENT

Defenders must be 3m back from the mark and must not move until the first receiver is in possession. Attackers must be behind the player tapping.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Players on the defending side not being back 3 metres when the ball is tapped.
- Players on the defending side moving up before the first receiver is in possession of the ball.
- Attacking players are in front of the player tapping the ball.

RESTART AFTER EVERY SANCTION

Tap and pass at the mark where the offence occurred, taken in line with or behind the mark.

Defenders retreat 3m and must wait until the ball is in the hands of the first receiver before moving up. If the ball is not taken cleanly, they wait until the player takes possession.

A restart is taken no closer than 5m from the goal line and 3m from the touch line.

Advantage is not played for foul play, except in the act of scoring a try, where a penalty try is awarded.

U8 JUNIOR RUGBY

Game Management

How the game is set up, run and managed on match day.

Team and squad numbers

ON THE FIELD

7

Players per side. Numbers must be matched, and teams share players to reach the maximum.

Law 3.1–3.2. Senior maximum is 15; a match organiser may authorise fewer.

MINIMUM TO PLAY

5

Players per team. Below five, the game does not take place.

Rugby Australia junior variation.

SQUAD SIZE

10

Suggested maximum match day squad.

Not a World Rugby Law. A participation guideline, not set by the Laws of the Game.

REPLACEMENTS

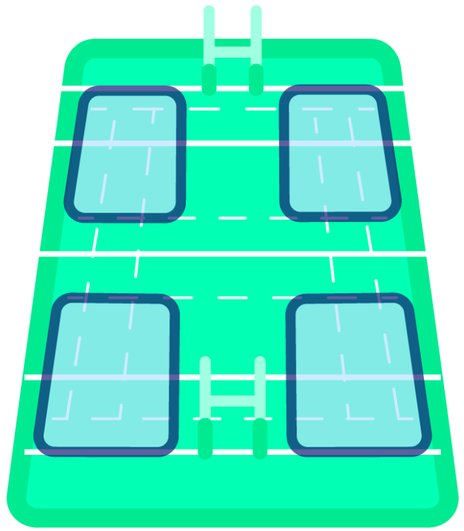
Unlimited

Movements at any stoppage, excluding a free kick or penalty.

Law 3.4–3.5. Under World Rugby Law, replacements are made when the ball is dead.

Match Set Up

PLAYING AREA · QUARTER FIELD



Quarter field. No scrum, no lineout, no kicking in general play.

Law 1.3. Senior field is a maximum 100m x 70m; 1.3(b) allows approved variations.

BALL SIZE
Size 3

Male and female.

Law 2.3–2.4. Smaller balls permitted for young players.

PLAYING TIME
30 min

Two 15 minute halves.

Law 5.1–5.3. The organiser may reduce match length.

WARM-UP
15 min

Maximum warm-up time.

Not a World Rugby Law. Match day logistics.

INJURY TIME
None

None is played. Applies U8 to U18.

Law 5.5(a). Senior: up to one minute.

SCORING
Try only

No conversions, penalty goals or field goals. Score kept, not published.

Law 8.1. The score must be known on the field.

The on-field coach

One coach from each team is on the field for the full duration of every match, across the season. They guide players and reinforce the match official's decisions.

Not a second referee

✓ The on-field coach may

- Give short, in the moment guidance to their own players, and to opposition players where it helps play continue safely.
- Explain a decision to players in language they understand, after it has been made.
- Reposition players and help them get set for a restart.
- Alert the match official to a safety concern at any time.

× The on-field coach may not

- Overturn, reverse, question or debate a decision of the match official.
- Award or signal any decision, sanction or score.
- Direct play from within either defensive line, or interfere with the ball, players or space.
- Coach the opposition's tactics, or delay a restart to give instruction.

ACCREDITATION · REQUIRED

- **Smart Rugby**
- **Season Ready**

ACCREDITATION · RECOMMENDED

- **Coaching Kids Rugby**
- **Junior Law Facilitation Workshop**

Cards and concession

Yellow card

Managed by the team coach, manager and referee. Time on the sideline while the coach explains why. The period is at their discretion. The player can be replaced.

Law 9.29. Senior sin bin is 10 minutes; reduced junior time penalties are a modification.

Red card

Same management as a yellow card: sideline time, the coach explains why, at the discretion of the coach and team officials. The player can be replaced.

Law 9.30.

Blue card

No blue card is shown at U8.

Managed by the referee with the on-field coach and the medic, first aid officer or trainer. The referee blue card applies from U13 and older.

Not a World Rugby Law. Governed under WR Concussion Guidance and the RA CMP.

CONCUSSION PROTOCOL · RA CMP

Applies to all rugby, at all ages.

Any player with signs or symptoms of suspected concussion must leave the field immediately.

The player can be replaced.

No person — medic, first aid officer, trainer, coach or doctor — can override this.

Graduated return to play: minimum 21 days for players aged 18 and under.

Regulation 10, Law 3.11 and the RA Concussion Management Procedure.

Game Balance Law

MAXIMUM POINTS DIFFERENCE

40

Once the threshold is reached, the coach of the losing team chooses one of three options.

Not a World Rugby Law. An RA specific mechanic with no World Rugby equivalent. The score must be known on the field at every age group so this law can operate.

OPTION 1

Mix the teams

Teams are mixed and players are shared.

OPTION 2

Play on

Play continues. No changes to teams.

OPTION 3

End the game

The game is ended.

The referee's authority to stop play for safety reasons is unaffected and exists independently of this law.

MOUTHGUARDS

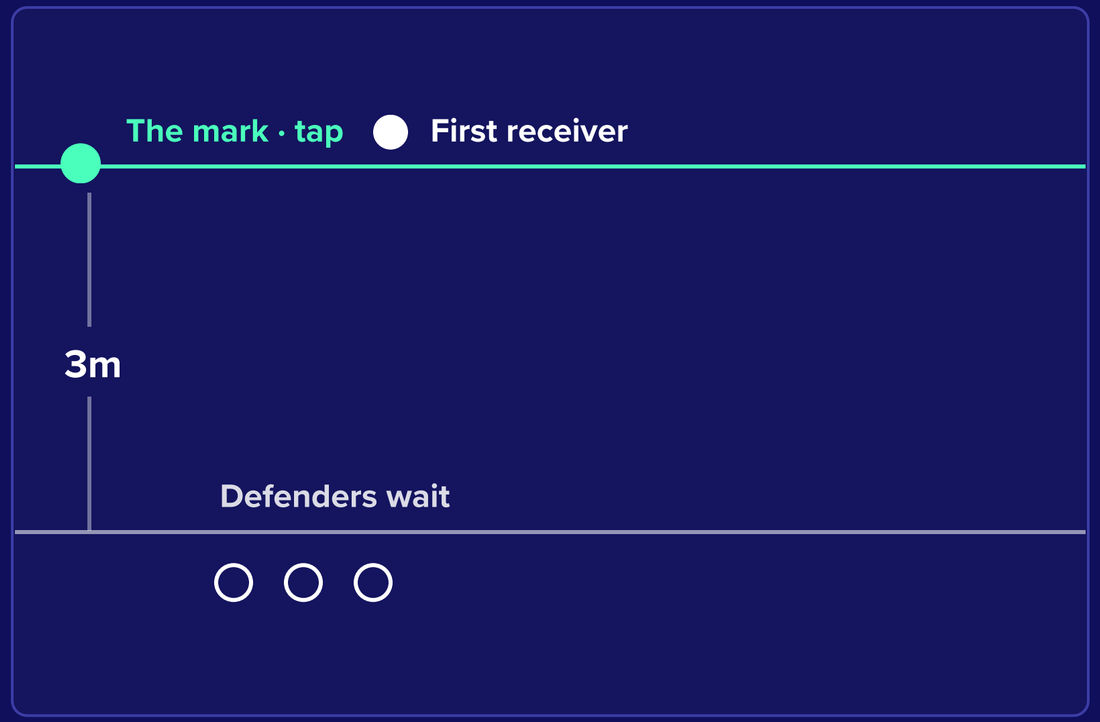
Strongly recommended

Not mandatory under RA junior law, but all contact players should wear a properly fitted mouthguard. Some competitions make them compulsory — check local rules.

Law 4.3(f). A mouthguard is a permitted item of clothing; the senior Law does not mandate it.

Every restart is a tap and pass

THE MECHANIC



Tap and pass at the mark, in line with or behind it. Defenders retreat 3m and wait until the ball is in the hands of the first receiver. If the ball is not taken cleanly, they wait until the player takes possession.

POSITIONING

No closer than 5m from the goal line and 3m from the touch line. Where the mark falls outside those limits, the restart is taken at the nearest permissible point.

Law 19.2–19.4 (the mark and position of the restart); Law 20 (penalty and free kick).

AN INCORRECT TAP

Brought back and retaken correctly.

ADVANTAGE

Not played for any foul play under Law 9 — except in the act of scoring a try, where a penalty try is awarded.

Where foul play occurs, stop play immediately and award the penalty kick. Advantage is played in all other circumstances, including knock-ons and forward passes.

Restart by situation

KICK OFF AND AFTER A TRY

Tap and pass by the non-try-scoring team on the middle of halfway. Defenders back 3m, moving once the first receiver has the ball.

Law 12.4 (restart after a score).

PENALTY AND FREE KICK

Tap and pass at the mark, in line with or behind it. Defenders retreat 3m. This is the mechanic every sanction refers to.

Law 20.3–20.4, 20.8, 20.12 (senior: retreat 10m).

KNOCK-ON AND FORWARD PASS

Tap and pass to the non-offending team, in line with or behind the mark. Defenders 3m back.

Law 11.1–11.2 (a knock-on is sanctioned with a scrum); Law 19.1 (which team throws in).

BALL CROSSES THE LINE OF TOUCH

No lineout at U8. Tap and pass to the team not in possession, taken 3m in from the touch line. Defenders 3m back.

Law 18.3–18.16 (quick throw mechanics and forming a lineout).

IN-GOAL

No drop out. Tap 5m from the goal line to the defending team, in line with where the ball was made dead. Attacking team back 3m.

Law 12.11–12.13 (22 metre and goal line drop outs).

50M / 22M KICK

Not applicable

There is no kicking in general play at U8.

Law 18.8(a).

Age and dispensation

AGE GROUP WINDOW **Players turning 8 in the calendar year can participate — actual age grade.**

Best practice

Play within a one year age window.

Acceptable practice

Play within a two year age window.

Exceptional practice

Three year window, following specific criteria in union policy, including consent and assessment.

World Rugby Player Welfare Guidelines, Age Differential Playing Guideline.

U7 TO U8 CONTACT

Dispensation with parental consent

Players turning 7 in the calendar year can request dispensation to participate in U8 contact rugby.

AGE GRADE DISPENSATION

Two grades up needs approval

Any player requesting to play two single age grades up requires Age Grade Dispensation approval.

SCHEDULE B

Front row assessment

No applicable in U8s

Gender participation

Mixed gender

Boys and girls may be selected in the same team and play with and against each other. The RA Participation Policy starting position: males and females may participate in mixed gender rugby up to and including the calendar year in which they turn 12.

MIXED GENDER DISPENSATION

Not applicable at U8

Mixed gender participation is the starting position at this age group, so no dispensation is required.

Not a World Rugby Law. Governed by the RA Mixed Gender Dispensation Procedure.

GENDER IDENTITY

Play in the gender you identify with

Where the age group is played as mixed gender, dispensation is generally not engaged. Where a single gender competition is offered, the Gender Identity Dispensation Procedure applies.

Not a World Rugby Law. Governed by the RA Gender Identity Dispensation Procedure.

RUGBY AUSTRALIA JUNIOR RUGBY LAWS

U8 JUNIOR RUGBY LAWS SET