RUGBY AUSTRALIA YOUTH RUGBY LAWS

U15 & U16

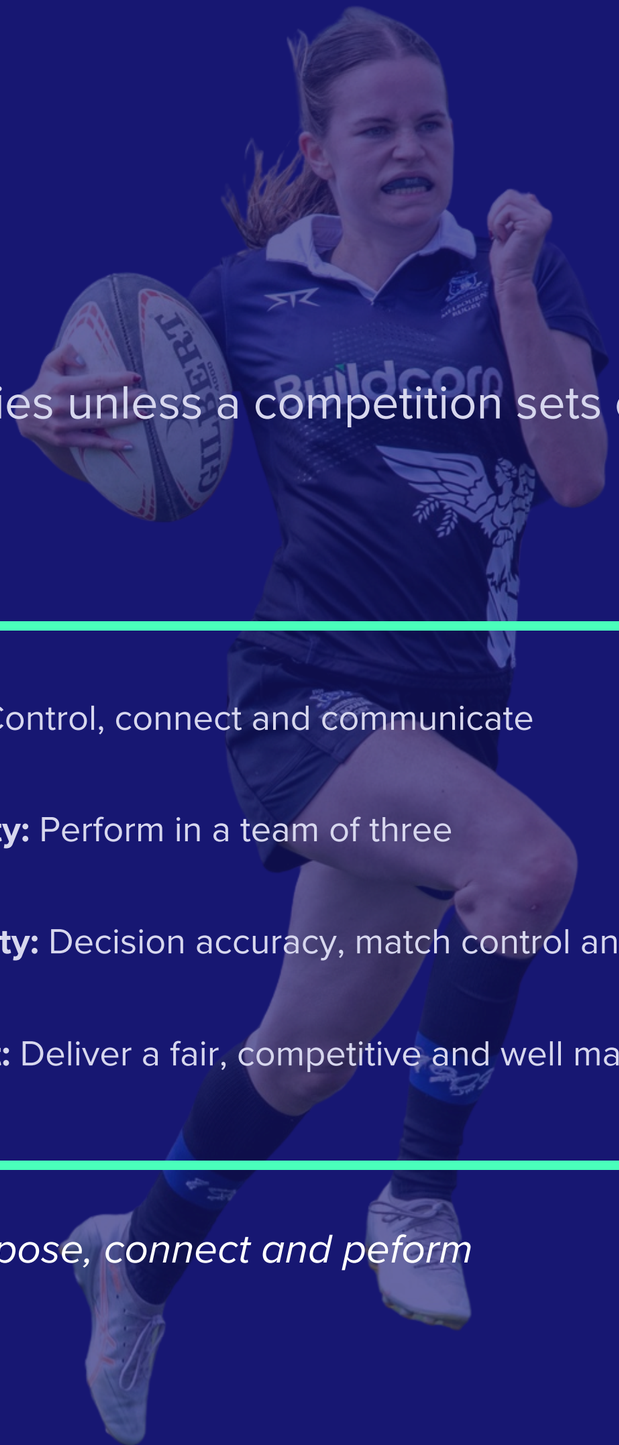
Laws and Game Management

RUGBY AU

YOUTH · BAND 5 OF 6

U15 & U16

Longer matches and a size 5 ball. The Game Balance Law no longer applies unless a competition sets one, and mixed gender dispensation finishes after U15.



COACH

Game Intent: Connect, compete and execute

Player Opportunity: Perform in team environments

Development Priority: Tatical awareness, performance and consistency

Coaching Environment: Create high challenge, high support environments

Prepare players for higher level competition

REFEREE

Officiating Intent: Control, connect and communicate

Referee Opportunity: Perform in a team of three

Development Priority: Decision accuracy, match control and consistency

Match Environment: Deliver a fair, competitive and well managed contest

Officiate with purpose, connect and peform

U15 & U16 YOUTH RUGBY

Law Set

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

RUGBY AU

U15 & U16 Sanctionable Laws

CONTACT AND OPEN PLAY	
Tackle	PK
Fend or palm	PK
Tackle and ruck, WR offences	PK
Maul	PK
Offside	PK
Kicking in general play	N/A

SCRUM	
Engagement	FK
Push, 1.5m	FK
Binds	FK
Ball use	PK
Use it call, 5 seconds	FK
Crooked feed	FK
Offside line, 5m	PK

LINEOUT	
Lifting and support	PK
Throw, RA variation	FK
Ball use	N/A
Offside line, 10m	PK

Penalty Kick Restart: Any option per WR Law. Advantage can be played unless YC or RC offence (act of scoring a try can be played as advantage)
Free Kick Restart: Tap only. Scrum option not available (WR Law).

U15 & U16 Contact and Open Play, 1 of 2

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

Tackle

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 14, 9.13

Below the base of the sternum. Sling tackle and squeeze ball dealt with under WR Law.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Tackle contact made at or above the base line of the sternum (chest, shoulder, neck or head).
- Dangerous play in the tackle under Law 9, including a sling tackle or a dangerous body position on the ground.

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.

Tackle and ruck: World Rugby offences

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 15 AND 16

Sanctioned as they are in World Rugby Law.

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.
- A player attempts to kick the ball out of the ruck.

U15 & U16 Contact and Open Play, 2 of 2

Maul

WR

WORLD RUGBY LAW 16

Players abide by World Rugby Law and the Game Management Guidelines focus areas. A Maul can only occur in general play.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Deliberately collapsing a maul.
- Joining a maul other than through the gate.
- A player on the ground in or around the maul while the ball is being used.
- The tap and pass is not taken at the mark where the maul formed
- Obstruction: preventing opponents from reaching the maul without binding.
- Pulling an opponent into the maul who is not already in contact.
- Failure to use the ball within 5 seconds after the referee calls “use it”.
- A team takes the ball into a maul and the ball does not emerge.

Offside

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 14.10, 15.4, 16.4, 18.30

The offside line at the tackle contest is the hindmost point of the players in the ruck or tackle. In general play, the defending team may advance once the ball is played.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A defending player advances beyond the offside line before the ball has been played from the tackle contest, scrum or lineout.
- A player in front of the ball participates in play.

Kicking in general play

N/A

NO WORLD RUGBY EQUIVALENT

World Rugby Law applies in full. Kicking in general play is permitted, including the 50/22 and drop goals.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Not applicable. Kicking is not restricted at this age group

RESTART MECHANICS

Penalty Kick. Non-offending team may choose any penalty option.
Defenders retreat 10m.

Free Kick. Free kick to the non-offending team.
Defenders retreat 10m.

U15 & U16 Scrum Laws, 1 of 2

Scrum: Binds

FK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 19.7

Crutch binding is allowed in all junior and youth age groups. Any team may choose to waist bind, but the opposition may continue to crutch bind.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Bind other than by an approved crutch bind or waist bind on the prop immediately in front of them.
- Players within the same team do not use the same bind.
- A player drops or releases their bind before the ball leaves the scrum.
- Elbows are not maintained in an upward position during the bind.
- A player binds with only one arm rather than a full two arm bind.

Scrum: Engagement

FK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 19

World Rugby Law engagement sequence: crouch, bind, set. Hookers must have a 'brake' foot position to help stability and to avoid axial loading.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A prop does not crouch, bind and set correctly before engagement.
- A team engages early
- The scrum is not stable at engagement.

Scrum: Feed

N/A

WORLD RUGBY LAW 19.15

The ball must be fed from the left hand side of the scrum, and fed so that it can be hooked back by the hooker.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- The halfback throws the ball not straight, directing it towards their own hooker's side rather than down the centre of the tunnel.
- The ball fails to touch the ground first in the middle of the tunnel before the hooker plays it.
- The ball is not hooked by the attacking hooker.

U15 & U16 Scrum Laws, 2 of 2

Scrum: Push

FK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 19, 19.19

Maximum 1.5m push. Both teams must stop driving once 1.5m has been reached. The scrum must not be wheeled through more than 45 degrees.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- The scrum is pushed or driven forward more than 1.5m.
- A team does not push straight.
- The scrum is unintentionally wheeled through more than 45 degrees.

Scrum: Offside Line

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 19.27

The offside line is 5m from the last feet of the scrum. The defending team must wait until an attempt is made to catch the ball from the scrum.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A defending player advances beyond the 5m offside line before the halfback plays the ball or the No.8 runs.
- A defending back row forward breaks from the scrum before the ball is out.
- The defending halfback does not start at the mid point of the scrum.

Scrum: Ball Use

FK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 19.36

From the back of the scrum the halfback may pass, run or kick, or the No.8 may pass, run or kick. No other player may lift the ball from the base of the scrum.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A player other than the halfback or the No.8 picks up the ball from the back of the scrum.

U15 & U16 Lineout Laws, 1 of 2

Lineout: Lifting and Support

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 18.19

World Rugby Law applies in full. The lineout is contested. Both teams may jump and lift.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Lifting occurs other than by the legs or shorts.
- A lifted player is not brought safely back to the ground after the ball has been played.
- A player levers on or pulls down an opponent who is jumping or supported.

Lineout: Throw

FK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 18, 18.23

Rugby Australia variation. World Rugby Law applies to the lineout except as set out below. The throw must be straight down the middle of the lineout and must travel 5m.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- The throw is not straight and the defending team lifts to compete.
- The throw is deliberately not straight.
- The throw does not travel 5m.
- The throw is directed to a player outside the lineout. Where the ball is not taken cleanly and goes forward, this is a knock on and the restart is a scrum.

Lineout: Ball Use

N/A

WORLD RUGBY LAW 18

World Rugby Law applies in full. There is no restriction on the receiver (halfback) at this age group.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- Not applicable

U15 & U16 Lineout Laws, 2 of 2

Lineout: Offside Line

PK

WORLD RUGBY LAW 18.30

Players not in the lineout stand 10m back from the line of touch.

HOW IT CAN BE BROKEN

- A player not in the lineout advances beyond the 10m line before the lineout has ended.
- A lineout participant steps forward across the line of touch before the ball has been thrown in.

U15/16 YOUTH RUGBY

Game Management

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

RUGBY AU

Team and squad numbers

ON THE FIELD

15

Teams must match numbers, unless a player is sanctioned with a yellow or red card.

Law 3.1–3.2 (team numbers). Law 3.1 sets the senior maximum at 15 players.

SQUAD SIZE

23

Suggested maximum match day squad.

Not a World Rugby Law. An administrative and participation guideline.

REPLACEMENTS

Unlimited

Movements at any stoppage — the whistle, the ball in touch for a lineout, or an unsuccessful conversion. No replacements at a free kick or penalty until the ball is made dead.

Law 3.4–3.5. Law 3.34 caps rolling and tactical replacements at 12 where permitted.

MINIMUM TO PLAY · AND THE SCRUM THAT FOLLOWS

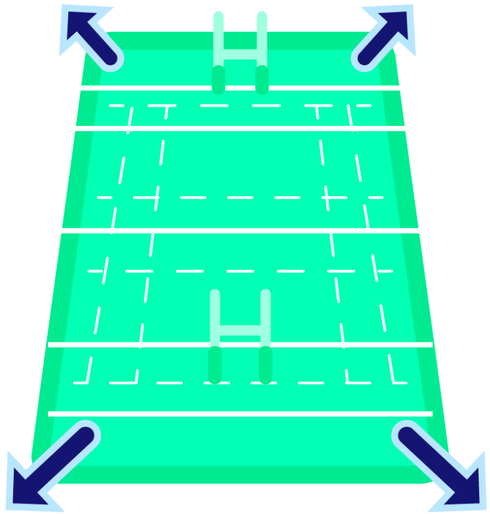
Minimum numbers for a game is 10 players per team.

10 players 5 person scrum	**11** players 5 person scrum	**12** players 6 person scrum	**13** players 6 person scrum	**14** players 6 person scrum

A five person scrum is front row plus second row. A six person scrum adds the No.8.

Match set up

PLAYING AREA · FULL FIELD



Full field. All field markings are used and referred to as painted.

Law 1.3. Senior field dimensions are a maximum 100m x 70m, minimum 94m x 68m.

BALL SIZE
Size 5

Male. Size 4.5 female.

Law 2.3–2.4.

PLAYING TIME
60 min

Two 30 minute halves. Maximum 100 minutes in a day across all matches.

Law 5.1 (senior 80 min); 5.3 allows a reduced match length.

WARM-UP
30 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
World Rugby Law

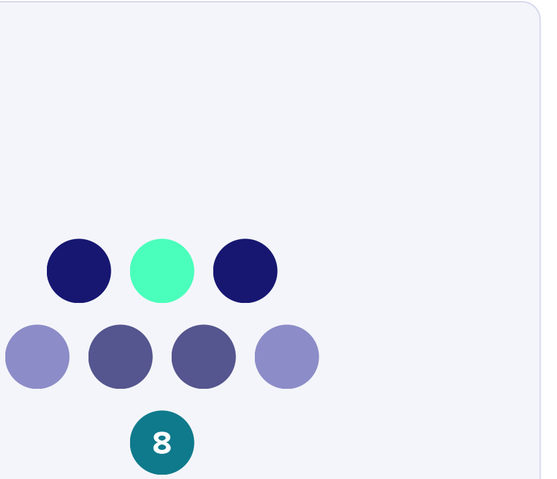
Try, conversion, penalty goal and dropped goal all apply.

Law 8.1: try 5, conversion 2, penalty goal 3, dropped goal 3.

Scrum set up

SET-UP AND NUMBERS **CONTESTED**

8 players per team · 3-4-1



- 2 props
- 1 hooker
- 2 second rowers
- 2 flankers
- 1 No.8

8 players per team. World Rugby Law.

Law 19.5–19.6 (8 players in the senior game).

THE PUSH

Still capped at 1.5m

Pathways competitions may apply for a variation case by case.

FORMATION

3-4-1

The single player, normally the No.8, shoves on the two locks. The locks pack with their heads either side of the hooker.

Law 19.6 U19 Law Variation. All three front row and two lock positions must be filled by suitably trained players.

Uncontested scrums

THE REFEREE ORDERS UNCONTESTED SCRUMS WHERE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLIES

1. The scrum is reduced through injury or a card and the team is left with no suitably trained front row players available to take the field.
2. The team does not have suitably trained front row players to start the match.
3. The referee determines that the scrum must be uncontested on safety grounds.

Law 3.15–3.20 (uncontested scrums following a card or injury). Once ordered, uncontested scrums are played with eight players per side, reducing in line with Law 19.6 to a minimum of five. Where a team has twelve players, six per side are required.

INCOMPLETE SCRUM FORMATIONS · LAW 19.6 U19 VARIATION

Where one team reduces, the other reduces to match.

3-4

7 players

No number eight.

3-2-1

6 players

No flankers.

3-2

5 players

No flankers or number eight.

Going uncontested costs a player

Where a team can start the match with a contested scrum and then needs to go uncontested due to injury or foul play, the team must drop a player.

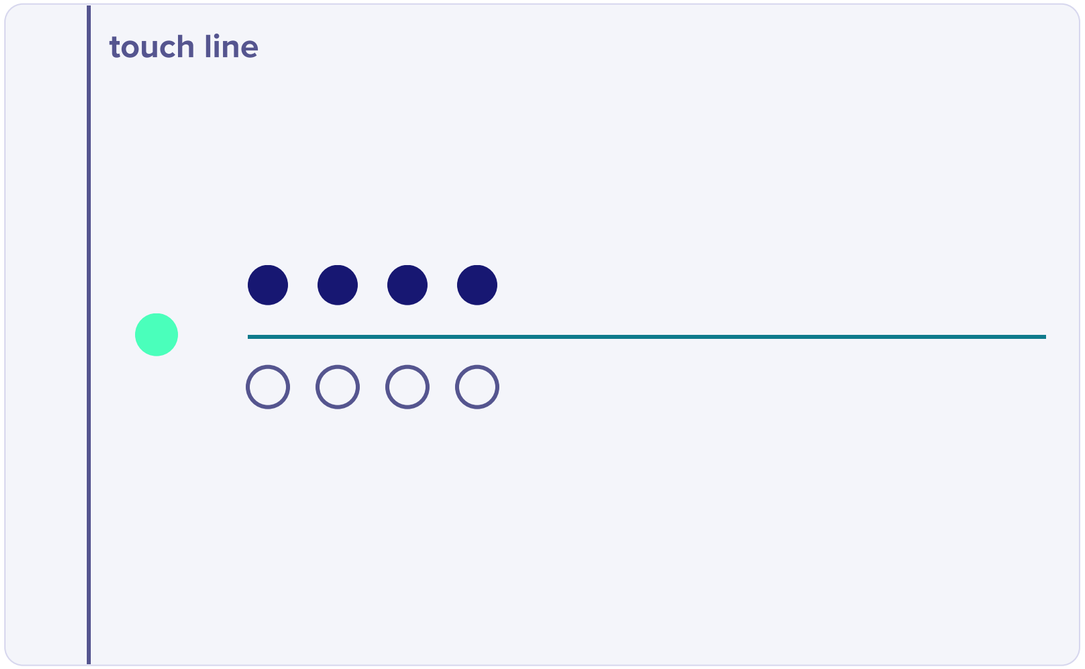
Rugby Australia recommendation. Not law, applied through competition rules.

Lineout set up

SET-UP AND NUMBERS **CONTESTED**

The throwing team sets the number

The non-throwing team cannot exceed it. Minimum of 2 players per team. World Rugby Law.



Law 18.10–18.16 (forming a lineout; minimum of 2 players per team).

LIFTING

Permitted for both teams

The lineout is contested. World Rugby Law.

Law 18.19 and 18.29(c).

PLAYERS REMOVED FOR A CARD

World Rugby Law applies

The non-throwing team cannot have more players in the lineout than the throwing team.

Law 18.13–18.14.

Coaching and field support

No on-field coach

On-field coaching applies at U8 to U10 only.

Coaches may coach from behind the player's bench or outside the playing enclosure.

Not a World Rugby Law.

COACHING ACCREDITATION · RECOMMENDED

- Community Coach (either Essential Coaching Skills or Community Coach courses)
- Smart Rugby
- Season Ready

Not a World Rugby Law. A coaching accreditation and workforce matter.

Cards and concussion

Yellow card

Any player shown a yellow card in a XVs match is suspended for a period of playing time:

5 min match of 50 minutes or less

10 min match of more than 50 minutes

Law 9.29. Senior sin bin is 10 minutes.

Red card

Immediately suspended until they attend a judicial hearing. They may be replaced after:

10 min match of 50 minutes or less

20 min match of more than 50 minutes

Law 9.30.

Blue card

Managed by the referee in consultation with the medic, first aid officer or trainer.

All blue cards must be recorded in Rugby Xplorer.

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.

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

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

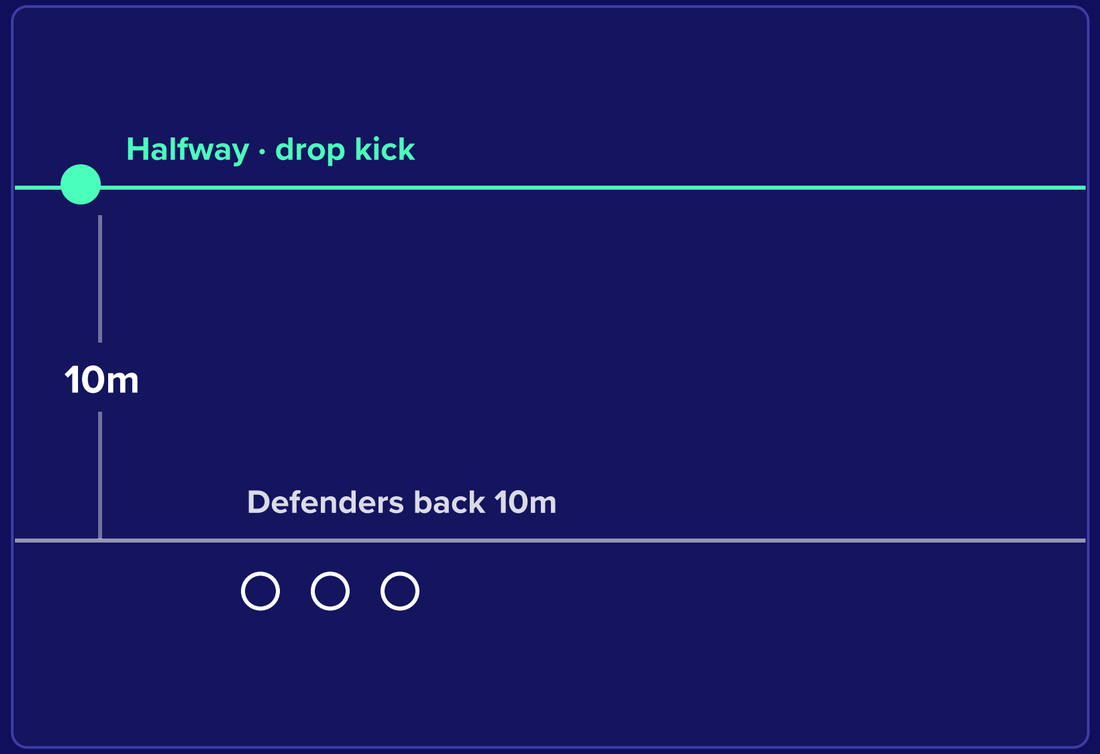
The player can be replaced.

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.

Restarts and match mechanics

KICK OFF AND AFTER A TRY — CONTESTED



Non-try-scoring team restarts the game by drop kick, under World Rugby Law. A contest for possession is permitted.

Law 12.4 (restart after a score).

ADVANTAGE · TWO THRESHOLDS

Where foul play meets the penalty kick threshold, the referee may play advantage to allow continuity and flow. If in doubt, award the penalty.

Where foul play meets the yellow card threshold or higher , including dangerous play (Laws 9.11–9.25) and misconduct (Laws 9.27–9.28), advantage is not played. The referee stops play immediately, except in the act of scoring a try.

Law 7 (Advantage).

GOAL LINE DROP OUT

Applies from 2027

World Rugby Law.

Law 12.11–12.13.

50M / 22M KICK

Permitted

World Rugby Law.

Law 18.8(a).

Game Balance and mouthguards

GAME BALANCE LAW

Not applicable

The Game Balance Law does not apply from U15 onwards, unless set by local competition rules.

Not a World Rugby Law. This is an RA specific mechanic.

MOUTHGUARDS

Strongly recommended

Not mandatory under national law, but Rugby Australia strongly recommends all contact players 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.

Age and dispensation

AGE GROUP WINDOW

Best practice

Play within a one year age window.

Acceptable practice U15 & U16

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.

U15 **Players turning 14 or 15 in the calendar year can participate. Acceptable practice, eligible age grades.**

U16 **Players turning 15 or 16 in the calendar year can participate. Acceptable practice, eligible age grades.**

SENIOR RUGBY DISPENSATION

Exceptional circumstances only

Players turning 16 in the calendar year could seek a request for dispensation to senior rugby, including Colts. Approval rests with the Head of Game Development for the Member Union, usually a GM or CEO role.

SCHEDULE B · FRONT ROW ASSESSMENT

Required for any player intending to:

- **play two single age grades up in a front row position;**
- **play in the front row with an approved Mixed Gender Dispensation;**
- **play senior rugby in a front row position.**

Gender participation

Single gender by default

Boys and girls play in separate competitions. Mixed gender participation is available by dispensation at U15 only. It is not available at U16.

Not a World Rugby Law. Governed by the Rugby Australia Participation Policy.

MIXED GENDER DISPENSATION

U15 available | U16 not available

A girl may play in a mixed gender team up to and including the calendar year in which she turns 15. Dispensation is not available at U16.

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

GENDER IDENTITY

Play in the gender you identify with

Rugby Australia supports a player's participation in the gender competition with which they identify. A player wishing to play in a gender competition different to the sex listed on their birth certificate must follow the Gender Identity Dispensation Procedure.

Approval rests with the Competition Manager.

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

RUGBY AUSTRALIA JUNIOR RUGBY LAWS

U15/16 YOUTH RUGBY LAWS SET