

JUNIOR RUGBY

GAME DAY GUIDE

U8

KEY

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

SKILLS FRAMEWORK RUGBY AU



RUN & EVADE

Fast Feet
Ball in Two Hands



CATCH & CARRY

Target
Early Catch
Hands Above Elbows
Hands to Target



TRACK & TACKLE

Align
Approach
Balance
Contact
Punch, Wrap, Squeeze, Drive



FALL & PLACE

Land On Ball Score the Try
Prawn (Ball to near Toes)



2v2 TACKLE CONTEST

Identify Players at Contest
Enter Square
Shoulders Above Hips
Feet Past Ball



PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES

MOVEMENT LITERACY

Run, Hop, Skip, Jump,
Roll, Land safely

AGILITY & EVASION

Ability to sidestep and
dodge tackles

BALANCE & COORDINATION

Single-leg balance
Change of direction
without falling

BASIC ENDURANCE

Continuous play for short
bursts (2–3 mins)



PSYCHOLOGICAL SKILLS

ENJOYMENT & ENGAGEMENT

Shows excitement to play
Smiles
Wants to return

CONFIDENCE IN TRYING

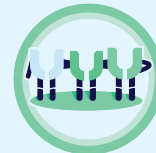
Attempts new skills without
fear of failure

FOCUS ON SIMPLE TASKS

Can follow
1-2 step instructions

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

Can re-join activity after
mistakes or collisions



SOCIAL & LEADERSHIP SKILLS

SHARING & TURN-TAKING

Waits in line, takes turns
in activities

RESPECT

Listens to coach
Follows whistle

BASIC TEAM WORK

Passes to a teammate
when prompted

INCLUSION

Welcomes others into play



ON FIELD PLAYER NUMBERS

7 x players on field

Prior to the match, coaches from each team are to meet and introduce themselves to the appointed match official or game facilitator.

- Ensure teams have equal player numbers before the game commences.
- Where necessary, coaches should share players to maximise participation (7 per team).
- Coaches are to work collaboratively with each other and the match official to deliver a safe, positive, and enjoyable rugby experience for all participants.
- Ensure all players receive equal playing time.



SUBSTITUTIONS

Unlimited movements throughout the game



PLAYING AREA 1/4 FIELD

33m wide x 35m long



Size 3 ball

BALL SIZE

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.

A size 3 ball supports improved object manipulation and enhances the development of catch and pass skills.



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 - Free Kick

If more than 2 x players from a team join the tackle contest, a free kick against the offending team will occur.

Non-offending team will need to retreat 5m from the mark.



PLAYING TIME (MAXIMUM)

2 x 15min halves

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.



SCORING

Try Only

After a try is scored, the referee should encourage players from both teams to make their way back to half way to restart the game.



CONVERSIONS



OFFSIDE

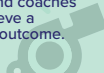
Defending team moves when the ball is in the hands of the first receiver after pass.

Teaching players to line up and identify (point at) the player they are defending, as well as being slightly offset will allow for safe and effective tracking into tackling.



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

Proactive management with teams and coaches will achieve a positive outcome.



Penalty to the non-offending team.

Offending team will need to retreat 5m.

SANCTION - Penalty



GAME BALANCE LAW:

40 POINTS

- **Maximum Points Difference**
- **Trigger Point**
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.

The Game Balance Law exists to promote fairness, safety, enjoyment, and meaningful participation.

- Referees and coaches must apply this law consistently and without judgement or stigma toward either team.
- Communication to players should focus on maintaining a positive experience (e.g., "We've reached our Game Balance threshold - let's keep playing for fun and development.")

Once the threshold is met, the game will continue however the coaches are encouraged to do the following:

- Positional rotation between the teams, providing an opportunity to challenge better players.
- Modifying conditions to support skill development, for example, applying constraints to the stronger team, such as requiring a minimum of three passes from the ruck before they can score.
- Introducing scenario based opportunities to develop the weaker teams understanding of the game.



TACKLE

Below sternum
No sling tackle
No squeeze ball

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 (towards the sidelines) 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.

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.



SANCTION - Penalty

Penalty to the non-offending team.

No advantage can be played for foul play in Junior Rugby.



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



YELLOW & RED CARD

Player management by Coach & MO

In USs, the management of foul play is a shared responsibility between the match official or game facilitator and the on-field coach, with the primary focus on player safety, learning and positive behaviour.

The match official retains full authority to identify, manage and sanction foul play in accordance with the Laws of the Game. On-field coaches are not present to challenge decisions or influence sanctions but to support effective management of the situation.

Coaches can then manage the player by having a conversation to reinforce standards of respect, control, and safety, or by asking the player to spend some time on the sideline reflecting on their actions.



SCRUM

Tap and pass restarts play following a knock on

Defending team 3m back from mark

It is recommended that players from the defending team are encouraged (where possible) to pick up a knock-on and play on; this keeps continuity in the game and results in less stoppages.

If a restart is required, help the match official by retreating 3m and provide a mark for your players to line up to defend.

You can provide verbal cues to help your players to know when it is time to move forward.

Encourage players to make multiple passes and to find space to run into, rather than passing to one person to run the ball up.

If a knock on occurs, advantage can be played for the team that was not in possession of the ball. This allows continuity in the game and less stoppages.

If a restart is required, mark the spot for a tap.

Play resumes with a tap and pass to the team not in possession of the ball; the player who taps the ball must pass to a teammate. The defensive line cannot move forward until the ball is in the hands of the first receiver.

ACTION - Tap & Play

Tap to the team that was not in possession of the ball.



LINEOUT

Tap to the team not in possession when the ball left the field of play, 1m in from the sideline.

Defending team 3m back from mark.

If the ball leaves the field of play, support the match official to get the players into a position to restart the game as quickly as possible.

You can provide verbal cues to help your players to know when it is time to move forward.

Encourage players to make multiple passes and to find space to run into, rather than passing to one person to run the ball up.

If the ball leaves the field of play, either through a player running into touch, or a pass missing the target and rolling into touch, the game restarts with a tap.

To restart the game, find the place where the ball crossed the line of touch and take two steps in field and create a mark for the team not in possession of the ball when it crossed the line of touch.

The defending team must be 3m back from the mark and waiting for the ball to be in the hands of the first receiver before moving forward.

Restart the game when each team is ready.

ACTION - Tap & Play

Tap to the team that was not in possession of the ball.



MAUL

Coaches should aim to have the ball carrier driving their legs through the tackle contest and then finding their front by "scoring the try".

Defenders should aim to make a chop tackle and to bring the attacking player to the ground as quickly as possible.

ACTION - Tap & Play

Tap to team that is in possession of the ball when the maul is formed.



COACHING ACCREDITATION (RECOMMENDED)

Junior Coach

(Coaching Kids Rugby)



ON FIELD SUPPORT

The role of the on-field coach is not to undermine, overrule, or provide feedback to the match official or game facilitator. Match officials or game facilitators retain full authority over the application of the Laws of the Game at all times.

On-field coaches are present to:

- Support the flow and continuity of the game.
- Assist players' understanding of the laws and expectations in real time.
- Reinforce safe, positive behaviours, particularly in tackle technique and the contest.
- Encourage learning, build confidence, and promote enjoyment for all participants.

Any guidance provided by on-field coaches should be instructional, neutral and player-focused; it should be delivered in a manner that supports the match official and the spirit of the game.

This approach recognises the developmental nature of rugby in these age groups and ensures a safe, fun and inclusive environment where players can learn while playing.

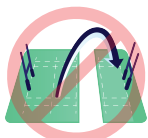


GENERAL PLAY KICKING



KICK OFF / RESTART

Tap by non - scoring team to restart the game



50 - 22



GOAL LINE DROP-OUT

Tap 5m from try line for the team that was not in possession of the ball

Kicking has been removed from the U8 game to maximise ball-in-play time and create a developmentally appropriate environment for young players.

Eliminating kicking reduces stoppages, keeps the game flowing, creates more opportunities for all participants to handle the ball, and ensures a more controlled environment where players learn to track and tackle safely.

This change supports the key skill priorities for U8s; catch and pass, track to tackle, and tackle contest, by increasing the number of meaningful repetitions players experience in each match.

Overall, this adjustment aligns with Rugby Australia's player development framework and best-practice junior sport design, helping young players develop the fundamental skills and confidence for future progression.

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



SANCTION - Tap & Play

If a kick occurs in the game, the non-offending team will receive a Tap and Pass from the mark where the ball was kicked.

The offending team must be 5m back from the mark.



RUGBY AU

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
THE JUNIOR LAW REVIEW,
PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE

