

Youth Rugby



Initiative



FLAG RUGBY

GUIDELINES



Youth Rugby



Initiative

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GAME SET UP



THE FIELD

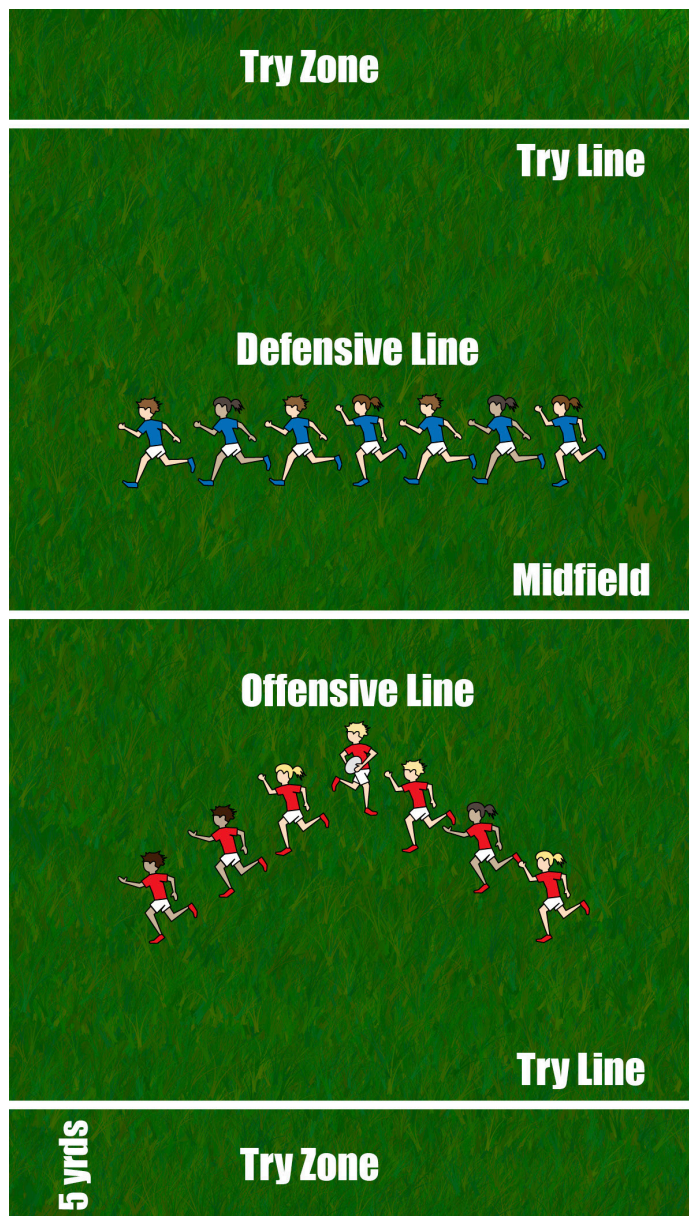
Rookie Rugby can be played in any open space of any size. You can play on grass, in a parking lot, even inside a gym! A field no larger than 60 meters in length and 40 meters in width is recommended. The size of the field can be adapted to suit the age and ability of the teams participating. The try zone should be 5 yards deep from the try line and clearly marked with cones or lines.

TIME OF PLAY

A game is made up of two halves. It is recommended that each half last between 5 and 15 minutes, depending on player's age and ability. Halftime should be between 2-5 minutes in length.

TEAM COMPOSITION

Rookie Rugby is played between two teams with equal numbers of players on each team. Each team contains no more than seven players and no less than four. Each team may have an agreed number of substitutions. Substituted players may return to play but only when play has stopped. Each player is encouraged to play every position on the field. Remember, keep team numbers at or below 7v7! Rookie Rugby is about learning and participation. More players on the field means less opportunity for each player to pass, run, catch, defend, and score.





WEARING FLAGS

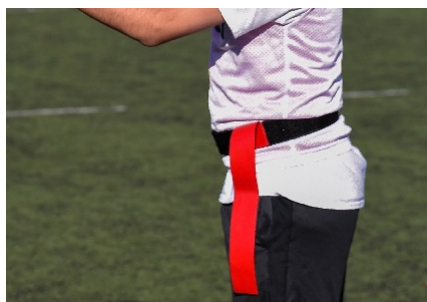


In Rookie Rugby, pulling a flag should be simple, as it simply moves the offense to their next phase. As such, rules around flags help promote flag tackling and make it easy on players:

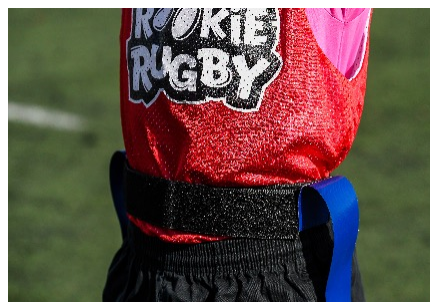
- 2 flags are worn, one on each hip
- Jerseys or shirts must be tucked into the flag belt, with no overlap.
- No knotting or tucking flags into belts or pockets

It is helpful to instruct participants to place flags upside down when play starts, so that the flags dog-ear and stick out from the hips. This can be difficult to enforce during open play. Once players have established a routine, however, the practice becomes second nature.

CORRECT



Flags on hips, upside down



Jersey tucked into belt

INCORRECT



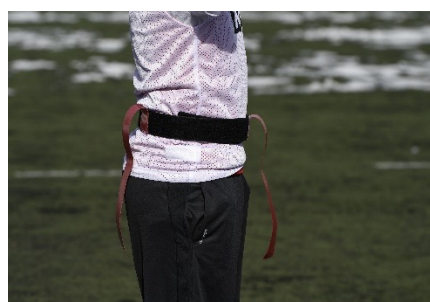
Flags knotted



Jersey untucked, covering flags



Flags tucked into pockets



Flags not on hips



OBJECTIVE OF THE GAME

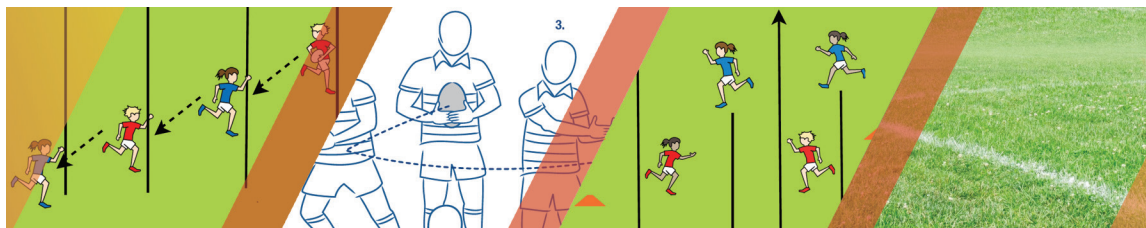


SCORING

The objective of the game is to score more points than the opposing team. To earn points, the offensive team will work to move the ball forward until one player can run over the goal line and touch the ball to the ground with two hands. This action is called grounding the ball and will result in a score, which is called a 'try' in rugby, worth 5 points.

MOVING THE BALL

Players move the ball forward by running the ball towards the opposition's try zone. Players run forward, passing the ball from one player to another. All passes in rugby must be thrown sideways or backwards, much like a lateral pass in football.





THE GAME OF RUGBY

Being successful in rugby is a combination of offensive and defensive play. Ensuring success on the field means teaching your athletes the basics of both.

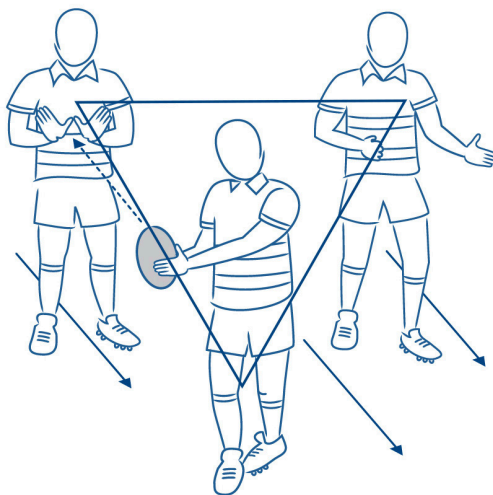
OFFENSE

Offense in rugby is centered on two main principles: **Go Forward** and **Support**.

Go Forward means that in order to score, all offensive players, including support players, should be moving toward their opponent's try line. The easiest way to teach this concept is by using shapes, specifically triangles. Players will naturally run from sideline to sideline in order to avoid a flag pull. Get them moving forward by placing them in an offensive shape.

Support in rugby means that players are "following" the ball carrier in the proper position to receive a pass. Players should work to support their teammates and always be ready to receive a pass.

The most effective shape in rugby is a "triangle" because it provides the ball carrier multiple options. Since ball carriers can only pass laterally or backward, these players will be to the right and left, and a step behind, creating a triangle.



When a defensive player removes the ball carrier's flag, the defensive player is 'removed' from play until they return the flag. This creates a large open space in the defense, which is vulnerable for attack. Positioning players in support positions will enable them to take advantage of this situation. In order to be successful, support players must move forward into these open spaces.



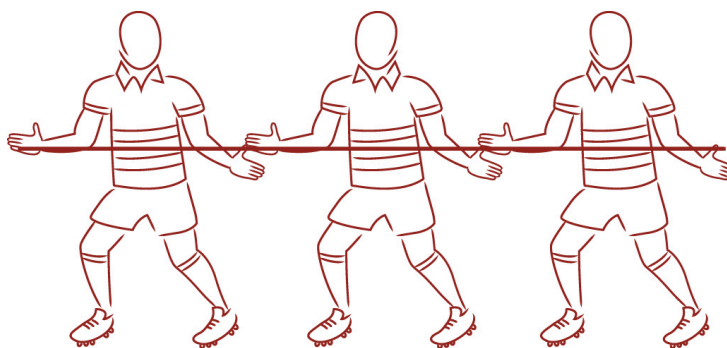
OPEN PLAY



DEFENSE

Defense prevents the opposing team from scoring. Similar to offense, defense is also taught in a basic shape, in this case a flat line. A flat line defense is similar to a solid wall without space or gaps. Space in a defensive line will create places for the offense to run through and score.

A great way to practice defense is having your team work together as a moving unit. When adding in an offensive team, move the ball up and down the field, as well as around to different players. Your defensive team will have to react and continue to get into position to maintain their flat line. Once players can understand the basics of defensive movement, you can introduce more advanced defensive concepts to defend more advanced offensive movements.



Before teaching defense to players, it is helpful to inform them of how defense moves with the offensive team. We have outlined some key questions that your players may ask, an explanatory answer, and a defensive command that can be used to help players get into position.



OPEN PLAY



DEFENSIVE QUESTIONS	DEFENSIVE EXPLANATIONS	DEFENSIVE COMMAND
Where should I stand on defense?	All players are encouraged to “cross the street” in defense, making sure to look to their left and right. Players should be in line and “flat” with their teammates. This will help them be in the right position and ready to pull a flag.	Although there is no set command for being in the correct position, players tend to understand the command “FLAT”. Both teammates and coaches can communicate this during games.
Do I have an opposite player that I guard?	Sort of. When positioning yourself on defense, it is smart to line yourself opposite from another player on the opposing team. This will help ensure that all offensive players are covered. Defense in rugby is a combination of man-to-man and zone defense.	There are no main commands for finding an opposing player while on defense. The best thing a player can do is count the offensive players and find the open person who has a clear path in front of them.
When do we move forward as a defensive line?	Remaining in a flat line is just one part of defense; moving as a team in the same direction is the other part. A defensive line will move forward or “up” towards the offense when the first pass is made after a penalty.	A common command that is used for moving forward on defense is “UP”. This can be signaled by teammates and coaches.
When do we move back as a defensive line?	Similar to other movements, moving backwards as a team is important for maintaining a flat line. Players will need to move back when a penalty takes place and a free pass is awarded.	A simple command of “BACK” will help all players know that they need to back up to get in position.
Will the defense move left and right?	Yes! The defense will move in conjunction with the offensive team in order to contest possession. As play moves across the field, the defense will need to react and move as a team in their flat line.	The most common command for moving across the field are “SLIDE RIGHT” and “SLIDE LEFT”. Whenever a player recognizes that the offensive play is moving in one direction, they can call out their teammates to slide.



ADVANTAGE RULE

The rules of rugby were invented to keep play fair and continuous. An advanced concept of rugby, which features both ideas, is called Advantage. This rule comes into play after an infringement of the rules occurs. Although advantage can be found in many places during a regular game of rugby, we keep it simple in Rookie Rugby. The chart below outlines a few advancements for players to progress.

GAME SCENARIO	ROOKIE RUGBY RULE	ADVANTAGE PROGRESSION
A pass is dropped and fumbles forward and picked up by the defense.	Turnover to the other team.	Allow the defense to pick up the ball and play on without blowing the whistle.
A pass is dropped and fumbles forward and picked up by the offense.	Turnover to the other team.	Turnover to the other team. Restart play with a free pass.
A pass is dropped and fumbles backwards.	Play on.	In this case, the ball was not advanced forward. Either team can pick up the ball and play on without blowing a whistle.

FLAG ETIQUETTE

While the offensive team attempts to move the ball forward, the defensive team will attempt to slow them down by pulling the ball carrier's flag, simulating a tackle. Once the ball carrier's flag is removed the game will continue by using the following flag etiquette:

1. Defender removes the flag, holds it up in the air and yells, "FLAG!"
The defender is now out of play and should stand still.
2. The ball carrier must pass the ball to a teammate within three steps or three seconds. After the pass, the player with a flag missing is out of play.
3. While play continues the defender must return the flag to the offensive player before they can return to play.
4. The player whose flag was removed must replace their flag on their belt before returning to play.





PENALTIES AND RESTARTS



STARTING THE GAME AND RESTARTS

At the start of the game or after each score, the team who did not score or is starting the game takes a free pass from the center of the playing field. A free pass is an uncontested pass allowed from one player to a teammate. Remember it must be lateral or backwards.

LINEOUTS

If the ball is passed or carried out of bounds a free pass is used to restart play. In Rookie Rugby, the free pass should be one yard in field from the sideline.

PENALTIES

PENALTY	DEFINITION	RESULT
Forward Pass	In rugby, passes can only be made laterally or backwards. If a player passes the ball forward to a teammate it will result in a penalty.	A turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty.
Knock-On	A knock-on occurs when a player fumbles the ball forward.	A turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty.
Obstruction, Blocking, or Fending Off	Players must not obstruct a defender from pulling a flag.	A turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty.
Diving	Players must not dive when attempting to score a try. They must remain on their feet at all times.	A Try will not be awarded, and a free pass will be given five yards from the try line.
Deliberate Contact	Rookie Rugby is a non-contact game. If a player pushes or hits another player, it will result in a penalty.	A turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty.
Failure to Release the Ball	If a player fails to pass the ball within three seconds/ steps of getting their flag pulled it will result in a penalty.	A turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty.



YOUTH FLAG RUGBY PROGRESSION



Once players are comfortable with the basic play of Flag Rugby, progressions of the game can be added. These progressions should only be introduced after players have mastered the intro game. They can be very useful for preparing players to move into higher-level rugby leagues.

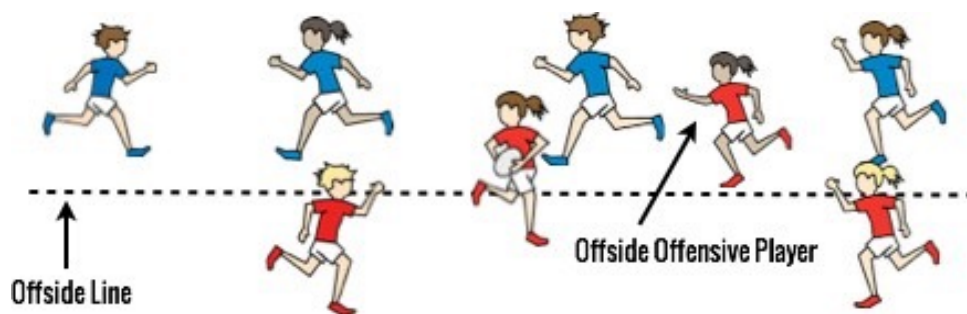
OFFSIDES

Offside is one of the most difficult sporting concepts for players to understand. Flag Rugby begins without an offside line as a simple way to introduce the game. Players are encouraged to take their three steps after their flag is pulled so that that create open space for passing to a support player. Support players are encouraged to always move forward.

Once players are advanced enough with the game, you can introduce an offside concept that resembles offside in rugby. It is split up into both offensive and defensive offside.

OFFENSIVE OFFSIDE

In Flag Rugby, passes can only be made laterally or backwards. Because of this, offside occurs when teammates are in front of the ball carrier. Keep in mind that a penalty will only occur if the offside offensive player receives a pass.



DEFENSIVE OFFSIDE

Defensive offside is in place to ensure fairness of play. There is an imaginary line drawn through the ball once a flag is pulled which indicates where the defense must be in order to play the ball. As indicated in the image below, all defensive players must be in front of the ball and must not prevent the first pass from being made after a restart.

