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Coaching provides a rich and rewarding experience for you and the players you coach. Tag Rugby offers an ideal medium for introducing you to coaching sport and more specifically to coaching rugby in an enjoyable, simple and safe way.

Tag Rugby is a fast-moving, non-contact invasion game suitable for boys and girls to play together. The key to the game is enjoyment, with running and handling skills to the fore.

The interchangeable nature of possession, leading to rapid switching from attack to defence, means that a range of skills is developed. Team work – co-operation, integration, collective responsibility and communication – in addition to opportunities for individuals to demonstrate a range of skills and attributes – handling, evasion, defence, determination and individual responsibility – are key elements of the game.

Tag Rugby is the Rugby Football Union’s (RFU’s) officially recommended version of rugby for Under 7s and Under 8s. It is also used in primary and secondary schools as either an activity in its own right, or as an introduction to rugby. In addition to this, tag is used at many recreational rugby events by adults and children, including beach tag.

**THIS RESOURCE**

This resource has been developed as a support to your coaching. It has been written in a way that will enable you to explore and discover skills, tactics and rules with the players. There are no ‘drills’ and no apologies for this. Most of the skills and techniques involved in tag can be developed in fun, game-related activities, and small-sided and conditioned games. They can also be developed through an experiential approach.

All the warm-up activities and coaching games are included on the DVD for you to print extra copies.

**ENTRY REQUIREMENTS, COURSE ARRANGEMENTS & LEARNING OUTCOMES**

There are no course entry requirements other than an enthusiasm to provide young players an experience of, and desire for, physical activity which is fun, challenging and safe.

The Start Coaching – Tag Rugby course lasts for approximately three hours and is practically-based. There is no formal assessment, and the course is delivered by an accredited deliverer.

The course will be delivered through a game sense approach, which is described throughout this resource and the supporting DVD. At the conclusion of the course you will have gained:

- an understanding of how to deliver a safe and enjoyable practical session
- knowledge of how to coach and improve skills through games
- an understanding of the application of a game sense approach
- knowledge of the rules of Tag Rugby
- the ability to apply of the rules of Tag Rugby (refereeing).
Section 2 - WHAT CHILDREN WANT

In research undertaken with young children, 5-11 year olds were asked what they would like in a coaching environment. The most popular answers were:

• Fun, fun, fun
• More time to play
• Being with friends
• More games, more competitions, less talking
• More variety
• Don’t shout!
• Use more “cool stuff”

It is interesting to note that, despite many adult assumptions to the contrary, children rarely mentioned winning as a reason for participating in sport.

The reasons given above offer you, as coach, real scope to engage and challenge children, and to achieve success against the objectives set by children. Winning may indeed be a bi-product, but is not a prime indicator of success or, as we have seen, a motivator for children.

There is more good news for you in that “more time to play” and “more games, more competitions, less talking” can be achieved through your sessions, and will lead to the achievement of many of the other aspects which children clearly want.

This course and supporting DVD will give you many ideas for devising and developing games and activities in which you, and the children you coach, will be challenged to find solutions, improve skills and gain a greater understanding of games in general, and Tag Rugby specifically.
Coaching young players can be a rich and satisfying experience. It is also a tremendous responsibility. The young people in your care are the next generation of players, referees and volunteers and the attitudes they learn from you can affect every aspect of their lives. Your work can help give them confidence – or undermine the little confidence they have.

As coach, you should aim to improve the following in all players:

- social development – using team games, co-operative skills and fair play
- mental development – establishing and reinforcing confidence and self esteem
- physical development – using healthy, enjoyable exercise
- skill development – helping children improve performance levels.

The age, ability and confidence of your players may determine the order in which you prioritise these aspects – but each should be included in your coaching plans as important in the development of young players.

Good coaching requires that you get the best out of all the players by continually striving to improve them all. There will be players who will appear to be naturally talented, whilst others may have difficulty in grasping techniques, skills or game understanding. Patience is a virtue and improvement is relative. The skill for you as coach is to set the challenges for each player at different levels – within a practice it might be that the challenge for the less able player is to be in support, go forward, tag, pass, catch, etc., while for the more able player it might be to get into a position to get another touch, to vary the range of passes, to run different lines to confuse the defence, etc.

Setting challenges at which players have to work, but in which they can be successful, will get the best out of all your players and will improve them and make the sessions rewarding and successful for all.

The core of this resource concentrates on developing players’ skills through an understanding of the game. It is recognised that players may require less pressure to master a new technique. This can be achieved through small-sided, conditioned games (e.g., 3 v 3, defenders must retreat 5 metres after each tag – this gives the ‘receiver’ more time to catch the ball).
The good coach:

1. **Sees what is right** and praises it
2. **Sees what is wrong**
3. Recognises **why it is wrong** and...
4. Knows how to **correct it**

It is not anticipated that through the attendance of this course, or by reading this resource, you will acquire all the answers – or become able always to accurately execute the above points. However, by coaching through games and by using a questioning approach, it can be expected that you and your players will explore the challenges and discover the answers together. For further development of your coaching skills, an RFU Level 1 Course in Coaching Rugby Union is recommended.

The nature of tag is that you are likely to have players for a maximum of two years before they move on to a different type of game (contact rugby), or a different school (secondary) or perhaps a different coach.

If, by the end of your time with them, your players can:
- see try scoring opportunities
- create try scoring/stopping opportunities
- execute try scoring/stopping opportunities

you will have served them well in their start in rugby.

If they:
- have experienced success
- have confidence and high self-esteem
- can co-operate within a team
- have had lots of fun

you will have served them well in their start in life.
Section 4 - COACHING TIPS

“You can’t microwave coaching”
Tom McNab
Former Great Britain Athletics Coach & RFU Fitness Adviser

There is no quick fix to becoming a good coach, but by taking the time to read this resource and by making the effort to attend a course, you are already displaying some of the attributes which will help towards achieving that goal.

It is important that you challenge yourself as much as you challenge your players. How will you know if a practice, conditioned game or different approach will work, unless you try it out? Be prepared to make mistakes - the important thing is to recognise those mistakes, acknowledge them, learn from them and avoid repeating them.

The tips in this section provide some further advice to assist you along the way.

PLAN YOUR SESSION

A session plan should include warm up and a conclusion. Have a contingency plan for more players, fewer players and odd numbers. Be confident enough to change your plan as you work – to reinforce something that is going better than expected, or to change direction if it is going less well. Keep the following in mind and try to plan sessions which are:

• Active – keep all the players involved at all times; don’t let them get bored
• Purposeful – ensure that there is a clear objective in each coaching session
• Enjoyable – make the session varied and fun
• Safe – you are responsible for the safety of young players in your care.
LOOK LIKE A COACH

How you look is the first impression you will make on your players. If you look like a coach and act like a coach, the players see you as a coach, and it will take far less time to establish yourself.

ARRIVE EARLY

This will help you to prepare the area and be ready to receive the players. It sets an excellent climate and reflects your enthusiasm, interest and professionalism.

PREPARE FOR THE SESSION

This will enable you to engage and focus the players in activity immediately, rather than making them wait for you to set up and potentially allowing them to become distracted as a result. Ensure that you have more than the appropriate number of balls (already inflated) tag belts and bibs (in case numbers are higher than expected). If you plan for and prepare transition activities, this will avoid the need for players to wait.

ORGANISE THE ACTIVITIES

It is very important to have the activities planned and well organised, and the players involved as much as possible. Poor organisation and lack of activity = poor behaviour and lack of attention.

USE YOUR VOICE TO GOOD EFFECT

Vary the tone, volume and pace of your voice. Inject energy and enthusiasm; make it sound interesting. Stay positive with the players and encourage them. Do not shout at the players – mistakes will happen and are a natural and necessary part of learning, so expect them to occur.

THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT INTERVENTIONS

Intervene in the session sparingly (unless there are safety issues, in which case do not hesitate). Allow the players to work for 2/3 minutes before making coaching points. When you stop the session make only one or two points at a time (research has shown that players are unlikely to retain more than this) and try to stop only for a very short period of time. Allow the players to focus on the points you have made through activity before moving on to the next point. Remember, if there is a safety issue, stop the session immediately – use your whistle.
USE QUESTIONS

Use questions to heighten the players self-awareness, and your awareness of them. Rather than ‘telling’ them what they have done wrong, ask them what they will need to do to improve. This will increase their understanding and willingness to practise. And by asking them “What did you see? What did you do? What options were available to you?” you will be able to understand why players made the decisions they made, which will then assist you in helping them to improve.

PROVIDE FEEDBACK

At times you will be required to provide feedback to the players on their performance in the coaching session. How many times have you heard coaches say “good”, “concentrate”, “bad luck”, “well done”? Although it is good for the players to receive praise or be encouraged to work hard, it is important to qualify this praise.

Scenario 1
Coach: “Charlie, that was great – you had your hands out ready to receive the ball – I want all of you to work on this.”

Scenario 2
Coach: “Sam, I liked the way you ran forward onto the ball – but what could you have done that might have helped you to catch the ball?”
Sam: “I could have come in close”
Coach: “Yes, good, and what else could you have done to help the ball carrier to pass slightly earlier?”
Sam: “I could have called for the ball”
Coach: “Yes, good answer – so there are two things for you to work on.”

In both cases, the coach has recognised good practice (Charlie’s hands were out, Sam was running forward) and reinforced it. In scenario 2, the questioning approach has allowed the coach to correct a mistake, whilst remaining positive (Sam’s distance from the pass, and the lack of a call for the ball).

Try and give substance to your feedback – what made it good, how may it have been improved.

MOVEMENT

Move around and attempt to keep all the players within your field of vision. Also allow them all to see you - this reinforces their perception of your interest in them and what they are doing. If you are using grids and channels, stay on the outside so that you can see all the players. Avoid having your back to them.

USE A WHISTLE

Use a whistle to make your players stop, look and listen. The whistle is an aid to help you to get the attention of the players. If you use the whistle to stop players in the practice sessions, this will reinforce the use of the whistle in a game.
BE A ROLE MODEL

“Competition is great if children see it to be successful. Success does not mean winning, instead it means enjoying the experience and learning... because young children do not really understand competition, they will listen and act the way adults do.”
Kidman, 2005

If you have the opportunity, go to a children’s sports festival or game (it doesn’t have to be rugby) and observe the coaches. Watch carefully. Are they enthusiastic, positive and constructive or solemn and critical (of players and officials)? Then have a look at the players they are coaching. Very often the players reflect the attitude of the coach. When the coach is positive and constructive, the players are also positive and openly appear to enjoy the experience - whatever the result. Disappointment at a loss is secondary to the enjoyment of participation.

When coaches are results-driven, negative and critical, observe how the players react. They often look at the coach after every refereeing decision, and are upset at a defeat and ungracious in victory. The fun of participation is a poor second to the outcome of the game.

As coach you are in a position to influence children and be a role model to them. Amongst the many reasons that children give for stepping out of sport, the coach being ‘mean’, the sport being ‘no longer fun’ and ‘a lack of participation’ (i.e. not being picked) are the most common. Children play to win - but participating is the greatest motivator.

Children first - winning second!

DEAL WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

By implementing the points in this section, poor behaviour can be avoided, as it is normally indicative of a poorly planned or prepared session and consequent lack of activity. Occasionally, players may react negatively when challenges are set too high or too low, hence the importance of a contingency plan and a willingness to change from the original plan. It should be recognised, however, that despite your best efforts, one or two players may behave in a way which disrupts the enjoyment and learning of others.

Physical activity (e.g. running round the pitch) should never be used as a sanction. Have a quiet word with the player – away from, but in sight of, the group - and explain that their behaviour is disrupting others. If the player does not respond favourably, ask them to stand or sit to the side of the activity, explaining that they may return when they feel able to behave responsibly. If that fails, sit the player to the side of the session until you can speak to them again, and decide when/whether to include them. Most children attend the session because they want to be there, and really want to be involved. If poor behaviour persists, you may need to arrange a meeting with the parents to discuss that player’s continued involvement.
**Section 5 - SESSION PREPARATION**

**GRIDS AND CHANNELS**

Grids and channels are a quick, easy and flexible way to manage your session. They can be set out like this:

### Grids

The size of the grids should be determined by the age and ability of the players, and the type of activity being performed. These are good for small-sided games and activities.

### Channels

Channels are particularly good for practising passing and 1 v 1, 2 v 1, 3 v 2 activities, etc.

### Pitch

By removing the central cones, a larger area is created for bigger group games.
Section 5 - SESSION PREPARATION (continued)

EQUIPMENT

Ensure that you have:
• a tag belt and tags for each participant
• one ball each (ideally, although one ball between two or three is adequate – and remember for many of the activities they don’t have to be rugby balls – others such as footballs, netballs or volleyballs can be used)
• cones to mark out playing/practice areas
• bibs
• fully-stocked first aid kit
• water bottles (though ideally children should bring their own).

USING TAG BELTS

The tag belt is a belt worn around the waist to which two ‘ribbons’ (tags) are attached by Velcro. One tag hangs down each side. The belt is worn on the outside of the clothing. Shirts should be tucked in, or on a hot day, can be worn outside the shorts with the tag belt on top of the shirt. Tags are positioned one on each hip and teams are distinguished by the colour of tags they wear.

A tag belt with tags

Don’t allow shirt or bib to obstruct access to the tags

Don’t allow loose excess belt to hang down

Wrap any excess around belt

Tag belt should always be over the top of shirt or bib

Belt and tags fitted correctly
The principles of play are ever present ‘foundations’ of the game which never change. These principles apply to attack and defence and to all versions of the game - from Tag Rugby, to contact, from 7-a-side to 15-a-side, from children to adults and from community rugby to international rugby.

The principles of play are:

**THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY APPLIED TO TAG RUGBY**

**Attack**
- Contest possession – retain the ball (through good passing and handling)
- Go forward – through running, in order to score
- Provide support – so that the tagged player has support to whom to pass
- Create continuity – keep the attack flowing by having that support to pass to quickly so that the defence cannot reorganise after tagging an attacker
- Apply pressure – by applying the above principles, pressure will be created which should result in a score, which will lead to the opposition having the ball, which will lead to...

**Defence**
- Contest possession – by tagging the opposition and making them pass
- Go forward – defend going forward to prevent the opposition from gaining ground
- Provide support – defenders support each other by not leaving any spaces for attackers to run through
- Create continuity – maintain the tagging of attackers which will then lead to...
- Apply pressure – by applying the above principles, pressure is created, which cuts down the attacking team’s thinking time and puts pressure on their skills which may lead to mistakes and prevent a score, thus leading to possession for the defending team who can then turn defence into attack.
The principles of rugby are underpinned by, and maintained through, good communication.

As you devise and develop your games and practices, these principles should be reinforced. This process will be explored and explained throughout the course and throughout this resource.

**THE RULES OF TAG**

The rules of tag will be explained throughout this resource and are concentrated on in Section 10. There is one rule, however, which is fundamental to, and which has a major impact on, Tag Rugby.

It is important that when the ball carrier is tagged, *neither the ball carrier nor the tagger can rejoin the game until the ball has been passed, and the tag returned and re-attached.* This takes both the attacker and defender momentarily out of the game at the same time, which then creates space for others, allowing for a flowing and attacking game. This replicates the contact game in which the tackler and tackled player are out of the game for a short period after the tackle, whilst the ball is played.

If the tagger is allowed to continue, either by keeping the tag, or discarding it, the situation arises where there are more defenders than attackers, and consequently the game will not flow.

This crucial rule also has some important tactical implications, which will be dealt with in Section 8.
The warm up is an important part of the session in that it prepares players to take part in physical activity. However, those who have children or who have taught them will know that children can often sit still for a good length of time and then get up and indulge in very rigorous activity, without incurring any muscle injury. Primary school children will play chase, tig, and skipping - and even children at secondary school will sit in a lesson and then play a full-on football game with their classmates, and will possibly do this three or four times a day. There are very few incidents of pulled or strained muscles. So why warm up?

The answer is that the warm up prepares the players (and coach!) mentally for the session or game, establishes ground rules for the session and introduces the session objectives. Players will get into the habit of warm up, and come to expect it as they mature and develop to an age where they do need it to help avoid injury. The warm up will:

• raise the heart rate
• increase the flow of blood to the muscles
• prepare the muscles for the demands of exercise
• help to prevent injury.

Both mental and physical preparation can be achieved through small-sided games and activities. These will engage the players immediately in an enjoyable, relevant and challenging way.

Included in this resource are several warm up activities which can be used at the start of a session. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and as coach you are encouraged to invent your own games or activities, or add different rules or conditions to the games listed. These activities are demonstrated on the support DVD which is fixed inside the back cover of this resource.

The following pages contain some warm-up activities. Each activity contains the following information:

Pitch size – the area you need to conduct the activity.
Tag rules – shown in red, the rules of Tag Rugby which are relevant to this particular exercise. By concentrating on one or two key rules for each activity, you’ll soon become familiar with all of them.
Penalty in Tag Rugby – the sanction which would apply if these rules were broken in a game of Tag Rugby.
Description of activity – a brief description of the setup.
Questions for players – shown in green, some example questions are given for you to put to the players after each activity, to check for understanding and reinforce the key points. These are only examples, and of course some questions are applicable to other activities too. Make one or two quick points, then get back into the next activity. The answers you might expect to get back from the players are shown in blue.
Coaching points – from both player skill and tactical understanding viewpoints, some coaching points are given to help improve both you and your players.

HOW IS A PLAYER TAGGED?

In order to get started on the first exercise, you’ll need to understand how one player ‘tags’ another. If a player from the team who is not in possession removes one of the tags from the ball-carrier’s belt, then the ball carrier has been tagged. That player must then pass the ball to a team mate.
### Activity - TAG

**Equipment**
Tag belts each, ball each (optional)

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### Pitch size
Dependent on numbers - can be whole group or split into smaller games (grids/channels)

### Tag rules
- Tagger must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play
- The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way
- Similarly, the ball carrier or a potential tagger must not deliberately make contact with an opponent. If such contact is made, the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, and reminded of the non-contact rules of tag - the ball must not be pulled from the ball carriers’ grasp

**Penalty in Tag Rugby:** Free pass to the non-offending team

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### Description of activity
One person is allocated as the chaser. Players use the set area. When a player is tagged by the chaser, he/she joins the chase. Chasers are identified by either removing their tag belts OR by placing their ball out of the set area (therefore not being in possession of a ball). Players also join the chasers if they go outside the defined area.

### Questions
- How did the players avoid being caught?
- Once the number of chasers increased, did they work together or on their own? What might be the best and why?
- How did the players carry the ball (if appropriate)? What is the advantage of carrying the ball under one arm? (Speed)
- What is the possible advantage of carrying the ball in two hands? (Prevents fend off, balance, increases options - explored further in later activities)

### Skills coaching points
**Running with the ball**
- Evasion:
  - change of direction
  - change of pace
  - side step
  - swerve (moving hips away from tagger)

**Running without the ball**
- Tagging:
  - focus on the ball carrier
  - removing tag

### Tactical understanding coaching points
- Spatial awareness
- Teamwork v individual work (chasers)
Activity - **TAG** (cont'd)

**Equipment** - Tag belt each, ball each (optional)

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**Starting position**

The yellow player is the chaser who tags the other players - tagged players join the chaser until everyone has been tagged.
Activity - **BULL DOG TAG**  

**Equipment** - Tag belt each, ball each (optional)

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<th>Pitch size</th>
<th>Tag rules</th>
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| Either one pitch or two, depending on numbers – area 30 x 40 metres | - The defender must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play  
- The ball carrier is not allowed to ‘fend off’ the tagger by using their hands or the ball  

**Progression**  
- Passes must go backwards  
**Penalty in Tag Rugby:** Free pass to the non-offending team

<table>
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<th>Description of activity</th>
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| Start with one defender in the middle of the designated area. All other players start from one end of the ‘pitch’ and on command “go” must try to get to the other end of the pitch without being tagged. Once they have been tagged they must stay in the middle and assist to catch the others until all the players have been caught. If there are enough balls for each ‘attacker’ to have one, then the defenders can be identified by simply not having a ball. Otherwise, just get the defenders to remove their tag belts.  

**Progression**  
Start with 3 or 4 defenders and one ball between 2, 3 or 4 attackers. The same rules apply, but only the ball carrier can be tagged, so tagging can be avoided by passing to a team mate. If a pass goes astray, and the ball touches the ground, the passer has to join the defenders. Initially allow the players to pass in any direction, and then - as a further progression - introduce the principle of passing only backwards.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Questions</th>
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| • How did the players avoid being caught?  
• What were they looking for before they started running? (Where the defender was or went, where the space was – who was in front of them – and whether it was a slow defender or quick defender)  
• How did they defend once the numbers of defenders grew? (Formed a flat line, like a curtain)  
• How did that affect where the attackers ran – what did they have to be aware of? (Where the space was, who was defending the space, if the ‘curtain’ was broken, if the defender was busy tagging someone, which then took them out of the game)  

**Progression**  
• What is more accurate – a long pass or a short pass?  
• Where are support players trying to get to?  
• How has it affected the defence (is the curtain defence still relevant when they pass in any direction?)  
• What is the best way to carry the ball and why? (Two hands gives more options)
Activity - **BULL DOG TAG** (cont’d)  
**Equipment** - Tag belt each, ball each (optional)

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<th>Skills coaching points</th>
<th>Tactical understanding coaching points</th>
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<td>• Spatial awareness</td>
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<td>• Run forward</td>
<td>• Run forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use your vision</td>
<td>• Tactics of running (when the defender is occupied with someone else)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evasion</td>
<td>• Defence – establishing a line of defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>- change of direction</td>
<td>• Team tagging</td>
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<tr>
<td>- change of pace</td>
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<td>- side step</td>
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<td>- focus on the ball carrier</td>
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<td>- removing tag</td>
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**Starting position**

One defender starts in the middle. The attackers attempt to reach the other side of the grid without being tagged.
**Activity - BALL MANIPULATION**

**Equipment -** Ball each or 1 between 2/3

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<th>Pitch size</th>
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| Either in small grids or one area depending on numbers age and ability of players (younger and less able players may require more space) | - No diving to score a try  
- No diving on the ball on the ground - players must remain on their feet  
Penalty in Tag Rugby: Free pass to the non-offending team |

### Description of activity

Players have a ball each (this doesn’t necessarily have to be a rugby ball). Firstly, have them run around the set area and get used to ball. As they run, have the players perform the following exercises with the ball:
1. Pass the ball from hand to hand  
2. Throw the ball in the air and catch it  
3. Throw the ball in the air, clap three times and catch it  
4. Swap the ball with any passing player  
5. On the coach’s instruction, place the ball on the ground and continue running. On a second instruction, pick up nearest ball as quickly as possible - who will be last?  
6. Any combination of these five exercises

### Progressions

1. With just one ball for every 2nd or 3rd player, have the players pass to any player who does not have a ball. Players who have a ball should look to pass as soon as possible, and players who haven’t a ball should want one as early as possible  
2. Pass high and pass low  
3. Have the players touch the ground with the ball when they have caught it  
4. Have the players touch the ground and then pass from high, arms stretched above head

### Questions

- Why are we doing these activities? (Stretching, getting used to the ball, fun, warm up)  
- What are the benefits of carrying the ball in two hands? (More control, in a game it gives more options – can pass, can run, can dummy pass)  
- What can you do if you carry the ball in one hand? (Run)  
- What is the easier to defend? (In one hand - the defender knows you are running and not passing)  
- When is the ball placed down? (Scoring a try)  
- When is the ball picked up? (When it has been dropped)  
- What are you not allowed to do? (Dive on the ball)  
- What is the best way to pick up the ball? (Step over the ball, to claim it, - look up through eyebrows to be aware of others, bend at knees, both hands on ball, and move away quickly)

### Progressions

- Which is an easier pass to make, short pass or long pass?  
- What sort of pass should it be and why – lobbed in the air? (takes too long), very hard? (too hard to catch), sympathetic? (gets there quickly, but easy to catch)  
- Whom should you pass to? (Someone in space, ready to receive the ball and calling for it)  
- How do you make the ball carrier aware that you want the ball? (Hands out to make target, look at the ball carrier, call for the ball)  
- Why else would you have your hands out? (Make a target, helps to get ball early)
### Skills coaching points
- Ball in two hands
- Dynamic stretching
- Hand-eye coordination
- Running skills
- Ball familiarisation
- Placement of the ball (e.g. to score)
- Picking ball up (e.g. when dropped). Players must remain on their feet, step over ball (head up), bend at knees to pick up

### Progressions
- Hands out to make target
- Passer look at receiver
- Receiver look at passer
- Passing and catching whilst moving
- Communication, calling for the ball
- Pass for the player, not to the player
- Height, speed, and direction of pass
- Catching the ball arriving from different heights

### Starting position
Players move around the grid becoming aware of the space and players around them while developing ball handling skills

### Tactical understanding coaching points
- Spatial awareness

### Progressions
- Support
- Passing in front of receiver so they don’t have to slow down and can therefore exploit space
Activity - **STICK IN THE MUD**

**Equipment** - Ball each, bibs, cones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch size</th>
<th>Tag rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Area – 30 x 40 or smaller depending on age, ability and numbers of players | • The defender must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play  
**Penalty in Tag Rugby:** Free pass to the non-offending team |

**Description of activity**

Set up teams of 3, 4 or 5, without a ball and with bibs. The other players, each with a ball, run around and avoid being tagged. When they are tagged, the tagger returns the tag, and they must stand still with their arms straight above their heads. They are ‘released’ when they are touched with the ball by another ball carrier. A variation is that they are released when another ball carrier crawls through their legs.

**Questions**

- When you are carrying the ball what are you looking for? (Defenders, own team mates who have been caught)
- What are you looking for as a defender? (Ball carriers who haven’t yet been caught)
- What else might you look for? How can you try and catch them all? (Assign 2 or 3 as ‘catchers’ and the others as ‘guards’ of the ones who have been caught)

**Skills coaching points**

- Ball in two hands
- Running with the ball
- Evasion
- Defending
- Communication
- Tagging

**Tactical understanding coaching points**

- Spatial awareness
- Support
- Teamwork
- Defensive strategy – working together, not just defending the ball carriers, but anticipating what might happen next (cause and affect)

**Starting position**

The yellow players work as a team to try and ‘catch’ all the ball carriers.
Activity - **TEAM TAG**

**Pitch size**
Area – 30 x 40 or smaller depending on age, ability and numbers of players

**Tag rules**
- The defender must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play
- The ball carrier is not allowed to ‘fend off’ the tagger by using their hands or the ball

**Penalty in Tag Rugby**: Free pass to the non-offending team

**Description of activity**
Split the group into teams of 3, 4 or 5. One team is designated as chasers, and the other players have a ball each. On your “Go” command, the chasers try and tag the ball carriers. When the ball carriers are tagged they step outside of the playing area and take no further part – until either all players are caught or two minutes have elapsed (in which case, you then count the number of players still remaining). The next team has their turn as chasers until all teams have had a go. Give each team either a time (in which they tagged all the players) or a number of players remaining (if some players remained untagged within two minutes) to establish the winning team.

**Questions**
- What are the ways to catch the ball carriers? And what are the plus and minus points of each? Individually? (May be ok early on as there are so many ball carriers, but may be limited later as faster attacker is likely to beat slow defender) As a group? (May be limited early on as concentrating on one player may slow down the time, however when there are fewer players it might be better to work together) By splitting into two teams? (Again might be disadvantageous early on, but will help slower players to ‘trap’ faster players)
- Where is the best place for the defenders to get the ball carriers? (At the corners – this limits the directions in which they can go to evade the tagger)

**Skills coaching points**
- Running and evading with the ball in two hands
- Defending
- Communication
- Tagging

**Tactical understanding coaching points**
- Spatial awareness
- Support
- Teamwork
- Defensive strategy – working together

**Starting position**
The yellow players (there may be more than three, depending on number in your group) have to ‘clear the area’ by tagging the blue players, who exit the area when tagged.
Activity - **KEEP BALL**

**Equipment** - Ball each, bibs, cones, tag belts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch size</th>
<th>Tag rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Area – 30 x 40 or smaller depending on age, ability and numbers of players. Can also be played in smaller areas with 1 v 3, 4 or 5, or 2 v 5 or 6 | • The defender must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play  
• The ball carrier is not allowed to ‘fend off’ the tagger by using their hands or the ball  
**Penalty in Tag Rugby:** Free pass to the non-offending team |

**Description of activity**

As for team tag on page 23 – but in this game the ball becomes the focus. A tagged ball carrier must place the ball (dead ball) outside the playing area, but then can rejoin the game. That player can then help other ball carriers by being available to receive passes. Play until the final ball is ‘dead’.

**Progression**

If the ball touches the ground or is touched in flight by the defender, it is a ‘dead’ ball.

**Questions**

• How does this game change as the number of balls decreases? (Defenders have to be more aware of not only ball carrier but also the potential receiver – you have to look to anticipate)  
• How might you anticipate where the ball might be passed? (Where the ball carrier is looking – who is ready to receive the pass, who is in space)  
• What skills do the ball carriers use at the start of the game? (Evasion, spatial awareness)  
• What skills do they add as they lose rugby balls? (Passing, catching, dummying, moving into space to receive the pass)  
• What do they have to be aware of as the game progresses? (Initially just the defenders – but they then have to be aware of their support and where they can support others)  

**Skills coaching points**

• Ball in two hands  
• Running with ball  
• Evasion  
• Defending  
• Communication  
• Tagging  
• Passing & catching – type of pass

**Tactical understanding coaching points**

• Support  
• Ball in two hands  
• Teamwork  
• Spatial awareness  
• Attacking strategy  
• Defensive strategy  
• Type of pass
**Activity - MICE & MONSTERS**

**Equipment -** Tag belts, cones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch size</th>
<th>Tag rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Line of cones about 20 metres apart</td>
<td>• The ball carrier is not allowed to ‘fend off’ the tagger by using their hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Penalty in Tag Rugby:</strong> Free pass to the non-offending team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description of activity**

Split the group into two teams - the mice and the monsters. Each player has a tag belt. The mice stand side-by-side facing one line of cones, and the monsters do the same, back to back with team mice, facing a separate, opposite set of cones. Both teams have their hands on their heads. On your call of “Mice!” or “Monsters!” players from the team called try to get to their line of cones without being tagged by the other team before they get there. Count how many players made it and how many were tagged. Then go back to the middle and change places of players, so as to avoid a slow player being paired with a fast player on every go. To keep the teams guessing, feel free to call the same team two or three times in succession rather than alternating every go.

**Questions**

- How can you prepare yourself to move forward or to turn quickly to tag? (Be on toes, low position and leaning slightly forward)
- How can you avoid being tagged? (Run fast, don’t run straight (especially if slower))

**Skills coaching points**

- Evasion
- Running
- Turning
- Tagging
- Listening

**Tactical understanding coaching points**

- Be prepared to attack or defend with very little notice

---

![Diagram of Mice & Monsters activity](image-url)
Activity - **HARE & HOUNDS**  

**Equipment** - Ball per pair, cones, tag belts

---

### Pitch size

- Approximately 30 x 30, depending on numbers

### Tag rules

- The defender must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play
- **Penalty in Tag Rugby:** Free pass to the non-offending team

### Description of activity

Arrange the players in pairs— one player in each pair with a ball. The players stand next to each other, inside an area with the rest of the group. On your call of “Go” the ball carrier tries to lose his partner. After a short while, blow your whistle to stop all the players. If the chaser can tag the ball carrier (without moving feet) the chaser gains a point – if not, the ball carrier gains a point. Change roles.

### Questions

- What skills does the ball carrier use to get away from the chaser? (Evasion)
- What types of evasion skills are used? (Change of direction, change of pace, footwork using feints (make it seem you are going one way, then accelerate the other way – sidestep)
- What skills do you use as the chaser? (Anticipation – look at feet, head where other players are, space, try to first guess movements – observation)

### Skills coaching points

- Ball in two hands
- Running
- Evasion
- Tagging

### Tactical understanding coaching points

- Spatial awareness
- Anticipation

---

**Starting position**

Lots of pairs within the area, one the ‘hare’ and one the ‘hound’. The area must be full enough to pose an evasion challenge for the hare.
Activity - **PIGGY IN THE MIDDLE**

**Equipment** - 1 ball between 4/5, cones, tag belts

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch size</th>
<th>Tag rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8 x 8 or 10 x 10 metre grids | • The defender must return the tag to the tagged player before resuming play  
**Penalty in Tag Rugby:** Free pass to the non-offending team |

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of activity</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The old classic! In groups of four, 3 v 1, three attacking players have the ball and pass it around to each other trying to keep it from the defender. If the defender intercepts the ball the intercepted passer becomes the defender. Variations:  
- how many times can the group pass without it being intercepted?  
- ball given to defender if it touches the ground or goes outside the area  
- players able/not able to move with ball  
- players only allowed to hold the ball for 3 secs  
- defender able to tag ball carriers to change role  
- no passes over head height  
- play 5 v 2 rather than 3 v 1 | • Where is the ball carrier looking to pass? (Player in space, ready to receive the ball)  
• What prevents them from passing? (A defender in the way)  
• Is it easier to keep the ball when the defender is closer or further away? (Easier when further away)  
• Why might a defender want to force the player to pass? (Force a bad pass, make them pass to someone in a worse position)  
• How can the defender force a bad pass? (Apply pressure – cut down time and space available)  
• How might the ball carriers create a little more time and space ? (Movement, quicker passing) |

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills coaching points</th>
<th>Tactical understanding coaching points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Passing  
• Catching  
• Communication  
• Evasion  
• Movement | • Spatial awareness  
• Applying pressure – in defence and attack |

---

**Starting position**

Groups of four with one piggy in the middle
Activity - **EGGS IN THE NEST**

**Equipment** - 8 balls, cones

**Pitch size**

15 x 15 grid

**Description of activity**

Arrange the players into four teams – one team at each corner of the grid, in a line facing into the centre. Place a ring of cones (the empty nest) close to each corner. In the centre of the grid, place a larger nest containing 8 balls. On your “Go” command, player 1 in each team runs out, takes a ball and places it back in their nest, then touches player 2. Player 1 joins back of line, and player 2 gets a ball. Players can now take a ball from the centre or from another team’s nest. This continues until one team has three balls in their nest – that team is deemed to be the winners. Teams may not defend their nest, and must remain outside the playing area until it is their turn. Players can only take one ball at a time.

**Questions**

- What do players have to be aware of? (How many balls other teams have, which team is close to winning)
- Who can help the runner? (The rest of the team)
- How should you pick up the ball?
- How should you place it?

**Skills coaching points**

- Running with the ball
- Picking up
- Placing the ball

**Tactical understanding coaching points**

- Teamwork
- Observation
- Communication

**Starting position**

Four groups each ready to build their nests
OVERVIEW

It might seem strange to place this section before coaching games. But by studying tactics here, you will be able to understand, encourage and reinforce them through the coaching games described in Section 9.

Players, when left to their own devices, will often discover new tactics and, as they gain more experience and develop skills, they will add to them. The more skilful the players, the more complex the tactics may become – however, Under 7s and Under 8s may require very basic tactics (e.g. run until tagged).

Outlined below are some tips which may assist you in establishing some tactics or patterns of play with your players. These are quite deliberately not provided in great detail, or in a large number. You and your players can discover others together – through play. By ‘listing’ too many tactics there is a danger that both coach and players can be constrained by what they know – rather than evolve and develop their own ideas.

A) BALL IN 2 HANDS

TAG RULE – The ball carrier is not allowed to prevent the defender from tagging by using their arm or the ball to fend away the tagger’s hand or arm.
This may not seem like a tactic at all – but it is an important part of every player’s attacking play. Not only does it lessen the opportunity for the player to ‘fend off’, but it also provides options. If the ball is carried under one arm it is obvious that the ball carrier will, in the immediate term, run. If the ball is carried in two hands, the ball carrier may be about to run, pass or dummy (pretend to) pass.

B) SPACES NOT FACES

TAG RULE – Once a player has been tagged, he/she must pass the ball. The tagger must return the tag, and the tagged player must reattach it before re-joining the game.
Players should be encouraged to look for space and either run or pass the ball into it.

By attacking the space between two defenders, both defenders might be drawn to the tackle – which will create even more space for the next receiver. If two defenders make the tag (one on each side), this effectively takes two defenders out of the game.
When the defence is bunched, the ball should be moved to attack the spaces out wide.

When the defence is chaotic, this offers many more options to the attacking team with far more ‘gaps’ or spaces.
C) MAGIC DIAMOND - GIVE THE BALL CARRIER OPTIONS

Attackers should try to give the ball carrier options – this will keep the defence looking. In diagram 1 below, the attacker has players only to the right – this is easier for the defence to read as the ball can only be passed one way.

In diagram 2, the ball carrier has options either side and behind. The deepest player, player B, can support to the left or right, depending how the defence reacts. This makes it more difficult for the defence to read the situation before them – if they start to move left, the attack may go the other way.
D) TAKE THE METRES NOT THE TIME

**TAG RULE** – when tagged, the ball carrier must either stop and pass the ball within three seconds, or keep moving and pass within three steps.

**TAG RULE** – when the ball carrier has been tagged, all players in the defending team must try to get between the ball (which becomes the off-side line) and their own try line and cannot prevent the ball carrier from passing the ball.

By taking the three steps (roughly 3 metres) the attacking team maintains the forward momentum and can therefore make the pass behind the defence (diagram 3). If they stop and take the three seconds, this makes it easier for the defence as it enables them to keep the attack in front of them (diagrams 4 and 5). Younger players may have to take the three seconds until they become more familiar with the game – although a habit learned is harder to change!
E) SHORT PASSES AFTER THE TAG

Often, short passes after a player is tagged can be more productive than attempting the long pass. Defenders tend to cover the wider spaces, seeing the ‘space’ close to the tagged player as being filled, and therefore often ignore it. However, that space is filled with two players who are, momentarily, out of the game – the ball carrier and the tagger.

C tags A and the support players attack the ‘space’ close to the ball carrier.

OTHER TACTICS TO CONSIDER

It is also worth bearing the following issues in mind when building team tactics:

• If the ball carrier can pass to a player in space without being tagged, he/she can then become a support player and support the ball carrier. If possession is kept until the ball carrier is tagged, the ball carrier can’t then become a support player and he/she is out of the game until the tag is replaced.

• Once players pass they should be encouraged to get into a position to support and ‘get another touch’. This will help to maintain the magic diamond.

• Players (and coaches) should be allowed to explore and discover their own tactics, both in attack and defence. Left to their own devices – with encouragement from the coach – players will discover attacking and defensive tactics and new skills in order to execute them.
A reminder of what children (particularly 5 – 11 year olds) want from sport:

- Fun, fun, fun
- More time to play
- Being with friends
- More games, more competitions, less talking
- More variety
- Use more “cool stuff”

The games used in this resource and the support DVD provide all of these desired outcomes, whilst also improving understanding and skills. The skill of the coach is to change and adapt these games to suit the needs of the children. If children are struggling with some of the skills, condition the game to give them more time and space, and if they are more able, increase the pressure or change the rules (e.g. a dropped pass equals lost possession).

Aims and objectives have been deliberately omitted to avoid rigidity. All of the games have ever changing objectives which depend on the skills, age and experience of the players, and the focus of the particular session.

The games are framed to include relevant full Tag Rugby rules, refereeing tips, and potential questions to raise awareness and increase understanding of the coach and the players. These, and additional games, are also shown on the supporting DVD.

You’ll need one or two rugby balls for each of the following games, while the size of the pitch depends on the number of players. The games can be adapted to be small-sided or have larger numbers. Obviously, the larger the numbers, the less often players will have possession of the ball, and vice versa.

The games are in order of progression, though they can all be delivered as alternative warm up activities or as a reinforcement of previously learnt skills or tactics.

The recommended restarts can be used, though if you notice that players are not being passed to, or that there is a need to help the players get the idea of running and using space, you can pass the ball to a particular player after a score, almost immediately, and whilst the defence is disorganised to exploit time and space.

**REFEREEING PRINCIPLES**

Refereeing – like coaching – is not an exact science, and safety and enjoyment are paramount. Although the rules should be applied, it should not be to the detriment of the game, and discretion can be used. The advantage rule is key to this.

As with coaching, as you become more experienced, refereeing will become easier, though you will continue to make mistakes. The important thing is to recognise them, acknowledge them, learn from them and try hard not to repeat them.
In order to let games flow and to prepare both the players and yourself for tag festivals and tournaments where other teams will be involved, it is important that the principles of refereeing are applied. These three principles can be applied to all levels of refereeing, just as the principles of play (described earlier) can be applied to all levels of play.

1. Safety

- Check the pitch for hazards (holes, broken glass, etc.)
- Ensure the players are appropriately dressed (tag belts tucked away)
- Stop the game immediately if there are any safety issues (potential or real)
- Stop the game immediately if there is foul play (intentional contact)
- Apply the relevant safety-orientated rules to the game (no diving, no contact)
- Make sure you have a spare whistle; players will stop on the whistle immediately – that won’t happen if you only have one and it breaks!

2. Enjoyment

- Communicate with the players to prevent unnecessary stoppages. Try to predict what will happen. Remind the players to get on side, return the tags, etc.
- Play advantage – does applying the rule cause a stoppage which prevents the flow of the game to the detriment of the non-offending team? For example, a defender who is offside but not interfering with play, or an attacking player who is missing a tag but doesn’t touch the ball
- Be unobtrusive in your positioning, but stay close to the play. Being close to the action will enable you to make the right decisions. As you gain experience, you will become less obtrusive as you begin to read the game
- Praise good play
- Keep the score – players like to know how the game is progressing. A note pad and pen are essential for competitive games

3. Rules

- Know them (see Section 10) and their variants (as they apply to the conditioned practice games)
- Be decisive, look like a referee, always be neutral, look confident and once a decision is made, stick with it
- Apply the rules consistently and objectively, though it is also important that Principle 2 (enjoyment) is applied. If one side is clearly going to win, the odd minor transgression by the losing team can be overlooked (e.g. a slightly forward pass). This should not affect the result, but may positively affect the margin of victory and therefore the morale of the losing side

The warm up activities described in Section 7, and the coaching games on the following pages, will assist you in gaining experience in refereeing and applying the rules.
Section 9 - COACHING GAMES

PITCH DIMENSIONS

The pitch dimensions for Tag Rugby (and variations) are shown below. The length and width of the pitch are flexible, but it is important to note that width is far more important as it provides more space.

Pitch dimensions for breakout tag
Game - BREAKOUT TAG

Pitch size

Mark out a 15 metre outer square and a 10 metre inner square (see diagram on page 36)

Rules and adaptations

• The outer square is defended by 2 players in each section
• The inner square contains 6, 7 or 8 attacking players
• Attackers can pass in any direction in the inner square, but only backwards in the outer square
• Attackers aim to score a try by placing the ball beyond the outside line
• If an attacker is tagged or the ball is dropped in the outer square, the attack is over and the ball must be returned to the inner square
• Players have one or two minutes to score, then the teams change roles

Questions

• What is the attacking team looking for? (Space, slow defence, ‘dead’ defenders (i.e. defenders who have not yet returned the tag)
• What skills do they need to improve to play this game better? (Quick passing, spatial awareness)
• What are the defenders looking for? (Anticipate the pass, direction of attack)

Skills coaching points

• Handling - passing
• Running
• Evasion

Tactical understanding coaching points

• Looking for weaker defenders – or ‘dead’ defenders
• Support
• Spatial awareness
• Moving defenders – creating space

Refereeing tips

• Position yourself outside of the grid and look in - that way nothing happens behind you
• Depending on the ability of the group, be less strict at first and more as they get used to the task
**Rules and adaptations (full Tag Rugby rules shown in red)**

One player from each team stands behind the line at the end of each pitch (the try line) and acts as the ‘try scorer’. The blue team plays towards their try scorer, and the yellow team towards theirs. The aim of the game is for players to get the ball to their ‘scorer’ by means of passing only - no running with the ball.

- Players are not allowed to move with the ball
- No physical contact (penalty: free pass to the opposition)
- If the try scorer drops the ball it is no score and the ball is given to the opposition
- After a score, the game is restarted by a free pass from the try line to the team who has just conceded a try
- If the ball goes out of play, the game restarts with a free pass to the team who was not in possession when the ball went out, one metre in from the sideline
- Rotate the try scorers after each score or after one minute (whichever comes first)
- Players may not dive on the ground or on the ball on the ground, either to score or to recover the ball (penalty: free pass to the opposition)

**Progressions**

If the players are fairly able:

- A dropped pass results in the opponents gaining possession
- No over head passes
- Reduce the scoring area to a 3x3 metre box (use cones)

**Variation - Rugby Netball**

The same rules apply as for End Ball except there is no designated scorer – to score any player can receive a pass on or over the try line to score. As a progression, introduce a second ball.

**Questions**

- How did players avoid being caught?
- What is more accurate, a long pass or a short pass?
- Whom should you pass to? (A player in space)
- What sort of pass should it be and why? Lobbed in the air? (Takes too long to get to its target) Very hard? (Too hard to catch) Sympathetic? (Gets there quickly, but easy to catch)
- Where are support players trying to get to? (Into space)

**Skills coaching points**

- Handling
- Passing
- Receiving
- Communication

**Tactical understanding coaching points**

- Spatial awareness
- Short pass v long pass
- Movement off the ball
- Support
- Defending

**Refereeing tips**

- Remind the players (and yourself) that the game is about fun
- Explain decisions briefly (this will become briefer as you and the players become more familiar with them)
- Be vocal – but do not shout at the players. Say please and thank you. Respect for the players will engender respect for the game and for you as the referee
**Game - ANY DIRECTION TAG**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules and adaptations (full Tag Rugby rules shown in red)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules as for Rugby Netball, but now players are allowed to run with the ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Once tagged, the ball carrier must first pass the ball – either within three steps or three seconds – and then reattach the tag <strong>before playing on</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The tagger must return the tag before playing on - it must not be thrown on the ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No ball carrier who has been tagged can score a try unless they are within 1 step of the scoring area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce a second ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use a smaller scoring area (5 x 5 square)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A dropped ball means a free pass to opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No overhead passing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The ball can only be passed backwards (this starts to introduce Tag Rugby)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are the benefits of carrying the ball in two hands? (More control, in a game it gives more options – you can pass, run, or dummy pass)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What can you do if you carry the ball in one hand? (Only run)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the easier to defend? (In one hand – defender knows they are running and not passing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When is the ball placed down? (When scoring a try)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When is the ball picked up? (When it has been dropped)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are you not allowed to do? (Dive on the ball)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills coaching points</th>
<th>Tactical understanding coaching points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Running with the ball</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ball in two hands</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evasion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Defending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tagging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Passing and catching – type of pass</td>
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<td>• Call “Pass” after each tag</td>
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<td>• Encourage players to pass within three seconds or three metres</td>
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Players are allowed to run in any direction (although you should encourage them to run forwards according to the Principles of Play). Introduce rules gradually, and build on them (all the full Tag Rugby rules introduced so far in other games also apply here).

(i) Ball carrier can only pass backwards
   - If the ball carrier passes forward it is a free pass to the opposition
   - If the ball is knocked forward to the ground or a player of the same team (knock-on) a free pass should be awarded to the opposition

(ii) From all free passes the defenders must be seven metres back
   - To score, the ball carrier must place the ball over the opposition try line (no diving)
   - If the ball carrier is tagged within one metre of the try line, they can go on to score

(iii) Tagged players must either pass by stopping and passing within three seconds, or by running and passing within three steps
   - After each score, the team who has conceded the try takes a free pass from the centre

(iv) No free passes can be taken within seven metres of the try line

Progression
Introduce the offside rule:

(v) When the ball carrier has been tagged, the defending players cannot prevent the pass by blocking it, or by obstructing or blocking an intended receiver
   - When the ball carrier is tagged, the ball becomes the off-side line. This means that all defending players must attempt to get in front of the ball until it is passed. If they are unable to do this, they must not interfere with play, until the ball has been passed. If they break this rule a free pass should be awarded to the attacking team

Progression
- A dropped pass results in a free pass to the opposition
- After five tags, possession is awarded to the opposition (the number of tags can be higher or lower, depending on the ability of players)
Questions

• If you are only allowed to pass backwards what is the best direction to run when you have the ball? (Forwards) Why? (To get in front of your support players and to take the space in front before the defenders do)

• If you personally are not in possession of the ball but your team is, what can you do to help your team? (Stop running forward – otherwise you will still be in front of the ball carrier; possibly run back to get behind them)

• As the defending team, what would be the best way to defend if you have to be seven metres back? (In a straight line across the pitch to form a ‘curtain’ of defence. Mark player for player)

• Which is better – three seconds or three steps (metres)? Why? (Three metres is often better because you are still going forward and can get behind the defenders)

• When might you need to take the three seconds rather than the three metres? (If the defender is in front; if you cannot see anyone to pass to or the support is too far back)

• If the ball is the offside line, what should the defenders try and do? (Get back in front of the ball as quickly as possible)

• Why do we have the offside rule? (So that the defence cannot prevent the pass – which would make for a slower, duller game)

• In the progression, how does the number of tags allowed before possession switches influence the game? (You have to pass more, be aware of the numbers of tags, even more important to go forward and take the three metres; puts pressure on and affects skills levels)

Skills coaching points

- Familiarisation with the game
  - Handling
  - Evasion
  - Running
  - Tagging
  - Communication
  - Scoring

Tactical understanding coaching points

- Spatial awareness
- Team work
- Support
- Attack
- Supporting behind the ball
- Value of running forward
- Defending – forming a defensive curtain
- Getting behind the defence
- Awareness of support

Refereeing tips

- Remind the players (and yourself) that the game is about fun
- Explain decisions briefly (this will become briefer as you and the players become more familiar with them)
- Don’t be too strict with the players at first – but as they get used to the activity apply the rules more strictly (this can be applied to most activities). Explain why you have done this
- Call “Pass” after each tag
- Be seen to be fair
- Be vocal – but do not shout at players. Say please and thank you, e.g. “Defending team seven metres back please!”. Respect for the players will engender respect for the game and for you as the referee
- Get in line with the pass (be unobtrusive)
- Praise players
Game - BONUS POINT TAG

Rules and adaptations

The rules are as for Tag Rugby (pages 40/41) – but to encourage good technique and habits, rules and/or tactics bonus points can be added. Tries are rewarded with three points (scoring tries should always be the focus for players). Once teams have reached 20/30 points, either start the game again (emphasising coaching points) or change the emphasis by adding a new component to the skills.

Players are awarded a bonus point if they:

a) Carry the ball in two hands

Progression
- run forward (towards try line) with the ball in two hands
- run forward into space with the ball in two hands

b) Get past defender (one point for every defender beaten)

Progression
- pass the ball behind the defender (i.e quickly)

Progression
- receiver has hands out to meet the ball
- receiver has hands out and calls for the ball
- receiver has hands out, calls for the ball and is running forward
- ball carrier passes slightly in front of receiver (so they can run onto it)

d) Pass the ball and then get into a position to receive another pass

e) Support to left, right and behind the ball carrier (team point) – magic diamond

f) When defending, get in front of the line of the ball after a tag is made

g) Keep a defensive line
MILK SHAKEN UP

Game - BONUS POINT TAG (cont’d)

Questions

- In what direction do you want to run? (Forwards)
- When you have the ball what are you looking for? (Space, where the defenders are, where they are going, who the defenders are)
- What else might you want to be aware of? (Where your support is, where the try line is, side lines)
- Why might we want to pass the ball behind defenders rather than in front of them? (So they are facing the wrong way and not looking at where the support players are running)
- How does the ball carrier know we want the ball? (Because we will call, make eye contact, have our hands out ready (make a target)
- Why else do we have our hands out? (To receive the ball early – then we can make earlier decisions (pass, run, change angle, etc.))
- What is best – to have the pass at us or for us – and why? (Better to have it for us – as it will be slightly in front we don’t need to slow down to catch it)
- If we want to run onto a pass where would be best for us to stand in relation to the ball carrier? (Deep, i.e. far enough back to be able run onto the ball)
- What might be good about being in a position to get another touch on the ball? (Keeps us in the game and gives the ball carrier more options – which will keep the defence guessing)
- Where do we want our support players? If the support is only to the left where would we have to pass? (Left – easier for the defence to read) To the right? (Right – easier for the defence to read) To the left and right? (We can pass either side which makes it more difficult for the defence to read)
- What will a player behind add? (That player can support either side, and is in a position to see where the space is)
- What do we want to try to do as defenders? (Keep a defensive wall)
- How might we achieve this? (Move together; talk to each other; arms out wide to give illusion of smaller space between defenders)

Skills coaching points

- Running forward
- Ball in two hands
- Evasion
- Making targets for the ball
- Communication
- Pass for the player
- Run onto the pass
- Support
- Pass and support

Tactical understanding coaching points

- Receiving the ball early to increase options
- Spatial awareness
- Support awareness
- Running onto the pass to maximise pace and ‘go forward’
- Pass and support to create extra attacking options
- Giving options to ball carrier – magic diamond
- Defensive formation

Refereeing tips

- Keep the score – use a notebook and pen, or ask a co-coach or parent to assist you
- Call out each score as you see it – reinforce it with why, e.g. “Ali called for the ball, one point”
- Say please and thank you; respect for the players will engender respect for the game and for you as the referee
Game - NUMBERS TAG

**Rules and adaptations**

- Same rules as for Tag Rugby
- Each team member for both teams given number 1, 2 or 3
- As the teams play, call out a number – e.g. “One!”
- All the number ‘ones’ in the defending team must get on one knee until you then shout “Up!”, at which point they can re-join the game

**Progression**

- Use more numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Use fewer numbers (1, 2)

**Questions**

- What are you looking for as the ball carrier? (Where the space is; where the space is filled with an ‘inactive’ defender (a kneeling one); where the support is in relation to these. Where the defence will be coming from)
- What should the support players look for? (As above)
- What else do you have to be aware of? (When the defenders are back into the game and where they will be coming from)

**Skills coaching points**

- Handling
- Running
- Evasion

**Tactical understanding coaching points**

- Spatial awareness
- Support
- Defence

**Refereeing tips**

- To encourage the understanding being coached by this game, apply the conditioned rules strictly – make sure the correct number kneels
- Say please and thank you; respect for the players will engender respect for the game and for you as the referee
## Game - BROKEN FIELD TAG

### Rules and adaptations

- Same rules as for Tag Rugby
- Number teams as team 1 and team 2
- Ensure the pitch is marked out by a variety of different-coloured cones along the side lines and try lines
- You restart the game by calling two colours, e.g. “Green and blue!” – members of team 1 run around nearest green cone, members of team 2 run around nearest blue cone
- You then give the ball to any player once they are running towards the ball, and the game continues

### Variation

- Only the defenders run around cones and the attacking team are given the ball either immediately or on a count of 3 (for example)

### Questions

- As the receiver of the ball what do you have to be aware of? (Where the defenders are, and where they are coming from; where the support is and where it is coming from; where the space is, where it is likely to be)
- When should you look where the defence/support is? (As soon as you come around the cone)
- If the ball carrier receives the ball behind you what can you do? (Slow down, stop, run back)
- If you are disorganised as a defence, what can you do? (Work hard to get into a line – be aware of where your support is – do not race ahead of other players)
- Which is better, receiving the ball after a count of 2 or 5? (2) Why? (Because the defence haven’t time to organise themselves)
- How does this relate to a proper game of tag? (If we can play the ball quickly from tag situations, the defence may be less well organised)

### Skills coaching points

- Handling
- Running
- Evasion (using the direction in which the defender is running against them)

### Tactical understanding coaching points

- Spatial awareness
- Awareness of support and defence
- Anticipation of where defenders are running, and the space they are leaving
- Defensive strategy – what a curtain defence provides against a broken field defence
- Quick ball vs slow ball

### Refereeing tips

- Call “Pass!” after each tag
- Be vocal – but do not shout at players. Say please and thank you; respect for the players will engender respect for the game and for you as the referee
- Get in line with the pass (be unobtrusive)
Game - MISMATCH TAG

### Rules and adaptations

- Same rules as for Tag Rugby
- Two teams
- 1 or 2 players identified from each team (different bibs, or no bibs if the other players are wearing them)
- When those players are defending they can only walk
- All other tag rules apply
- Coach rotates the players who can walk

### Questions

- What is the ball carrier looking for? (Space, weak defenders, support)
- What are the support players looking for? (Same)
- Where is the best place for the defence to deploy their slower players, and why? (Maybe in middle and defend close to them, which will allow faster players to cover the outside, forcing the attackers to try and play wide which will make them pass, and perhaps make mistakes)
- Now the attackers are aware of this, what will they try to do? (Attack space between fast and slow defenders to take both out of the game; attack the outside space of fast defenders – if they tag they will be out of the game, leaving space on outside of slow defender)

### Skills coaching points

- Handling
- Running
- Evasion

### Tactical understanding coaching points

- Looking for weaker defenders
- Defensive patterns and strategy (where to put slower defenders)
- Controlling the attack
- Controlling the defence

### Refereeing tips

- To encourage the understanding being coached by this game, apply the conditioned rules strictly – make sure the nominated players don’t run
Section 10 - THE RULES OF TAG RUGBY

As mentioned in the introduction of this resource, Tag Rugby can be played by children and adults, and there are many variations of the game – size of pitch, numbers of players, limitless tag tackles to defined number of tag tackles. The following section explains the recommended rules which can be applied to most forms of Tag Rugby. For the full, precise and specific rules for Mini Tag Rugby for Under 7s and Under 8s, please refer to www.rfu.com and follow the links through Community Rugby.

1. OBJECT

The object of the game is to score a try by placing the ball with a downward pressure on or behind the opponents’ goal line.

For the sake of safety, the ball carrier must remain on their feet at all times and they are not allowed to score a try by diving over the goal-line. If a player grounds the ball while on their knees, the try should be allowed but, afterwards, all players should be reminded that they should stay on their feet. A player may not be prevented from grounding the ball by any physical contact (including placing a hand between ball and ground).

For safety reasons, where Tag Rugby is played indoors or in restricted areas, a try can be scored by the ball carrier crossing the vertical plane of the goal-line without grounding the ball. This allows players to have their head up and be aware of their surroundings at all times.

When a try is scored, the game is restarted by a free pass from the centre of the pitch by the non-scoring team.

2. TEAMS

Tag Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, each team containing five to eight players (agreed beforehand). Each side can have an agreed number of substitutes. Substituted players can be re-used at any time.

For Primary Schools, most festivals require that teams are comprised of mixed gender, and this should be encouraged in all variants of Tag Rugby.

3. TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The maximum pitch size is 60 metres x 30 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal (scoring) area.

The size of the ball should be size 3 for Under 7s and Under 8s, and size 4 for other age groups up to and including Under 14s.

Although Tag Rugby is a non contact game, the RFU strongly recommend the use of mouth guards and shin pads in the case of accidental collision. Ideally mouth guards should be custom made from a dental impression of the teeth.
Section 10 - THE RULES OF TAG RUGBY

4. DURATION OF GAMES

It is understood that each festival will be different. The pitch size, size of squad and numbers of teams in the festival should be taken into account. However no player should participate for more than 50 minutes (Under 7s and Under 8s) and 70 minutes (Under 9s to Under 11s).

Where games are clearly one sided (6+ tries difference) they should be shortened. The emphasis should be on enjoyment.

Further details of single match and triangular tournaments can be found through www.rfu.com

5. PASSING

The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards through the air, not handed to another player. If the ball is handed to another player or passed or knocked forwards (towards the opponents’ goal-line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side. In order to keep the game flowing, referees should play advantage wherever possible.

6. FREE PASSES

(a) A free pass is used to start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch, from the side of the pitch when the ball goes into touch at the point where the ball went out of play and from where the referee makes a mark when an infringement has taken place.

(b) At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. For safety, the receiver must be stationary and within 2 metres of the passer prior to the pass, but can start moving forward before the ball leaves the hands of the passer, to receive the ball whilst moving forward. At a free pass, the player must start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee who will call “PLAY”, pass the ball backwards through the air to a member of their team. For safety reasons, no player may run until the pass is made. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball when the referee calls “PLAY”.

(c) If an infringement takes place or the ball goes into touch over the goal-line or within 7 metres of the goal-line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non-offending side 7 metres from the goal-line. This gives more space for both attacking and defending teams to play in.

7. THE TAG

(a) All players wear a tag belt around their waist with two tags attached to it by Velcro positioned over each hip. Tag belts are to be securely fastened and any excess belt is to be tucked away so that this cannot be pulled by mistake. Tag belts are to be worn outside of shirts and not obscured in any way. Referees are to be watchful for tags being wrapped around the belt preventing them from being pulled off.

(b) The standard dimensions for a tag are 38 cms in length by 5 cms in width although slight variations of a few millimetres should not be cause for concern. They should be made of a flexible plastic or plastic/canvas material. Tags are generally provided in red, blue, green and yellow. Colours should be chosen so that they stand out against the player’s strip e.g. teams with yellow shirts or shorts should not use yellow tags. Coaches are reminded that the tags are to be positioned on the hips, not at the front or back, which may require the belt to be adjusted slightly for players with particularly small waists. Placing a knot in between the two Velcro pieces on the belt often brings the tags into the correct position.
Section 10 - THE RULES OF TAG RUGBY

Note: These dimensions and colours are only guidelines to try and achieve uniformity. Tag Rugby games can continue to be played with tags that do not comply with these guidelines but, for fairness, in such case both teams should be wearing the same design of tag belt and tags.

(c) A “TAG” is the removal of one of the two tags from the ball carrier’s belt. Only the ball carrier can be tagged. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier’s hands at any time.

(d) If a player does not have two tags on their belt, one on each hip, they will be penalised if they become a ball carrier or if they tag an opponent and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

(e) Actions by the ball carrier:

(1) When the ball carrier is tagged, the ball must be passed to a team mate within 3 seconds. This includes stopping time. The ball carrier must attempt to stop as soon as possible; within 3 strides is a reasonable guide for referees, but the ball can be passed in the act of stopping. If the pass takes longer than 3 seconds or the player takes more than 3 strides they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place where the tag occurred.

(2) After the ball has been passed, the player must go to the tagger, retrieve their tag and place it back on their belt before re-joining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without collecting their tag, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

(3) Players are however only allowed one step to score a try after being tagged.

(4) If the ball carrier is tagged whilst standing inside the goal area they must ground the ball immediately in order to score. Referees should help this part of the game along by advising the ball carrier “Touch the ball down and I’ll award the try”, or similar.

(5) If the ball carrier dives to ground to score a try if will be disallowed and a free pass will be awarded to the defending side 7 metres out from the try-line.

(f) Actions by the tagger:

(1) When a tag is made, the tagger must stop running, hold the tag above their head and shout, “TAG”. At this stage the referee must shout, “TAG - PASS”.

(2) If the ball carrier stops running within 1 metre of the tagger, the tagger must move back towards their own goal-line, at least 1 metre, to allow room for the ball to be passed. If the tagger fails to retire at least 1 metre before rejoining the game, they are to be considered “offside” and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.

(3) Once the ball has been passed, the tagger must hand back the tag to the player and cannot re-join the match until this has been done. If a tagger continues to play and influences the match with an opponent’s tag in their hand, or throws it to the floor, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.
Section 10 - THE RULES OF TAG RUGBY

8. OFFSIDE

Offside occurs only at the time of the tag where the offside line is through the centre of the ball except for the tagger for whom it is 1 metre further back. When a tag is made, all the other players from the tagger’s team must attempt to retire towards their own goal-line until they are behind the ball. If a player, in an offside position, intercepts, prevents or slows down a pass from the tagged player to a team mate, a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side. A player can, however, run from an onside position to intercept a floated pass before it reaches the intended receiver.

9. OBSTRUCTION

(a) The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way.

(b) Similarly, the ball carrier or a potential tagger must not deliberately make contact with an opponent.

(c) If such contact is made the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, reminded of the non-contact rules of tag and a free pass awarded to the non offending side.

(d) If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier’s grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier’s side.

10. BALL ON THE GROUND

Players play Tag Rugby on their feet, with the ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players can pick it up but they must not dive to the floor to recover the ball. Penalty: free pass to non-offending side and the following rules will apply:

(a) If the ball was lost forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.

(b) If the ball carrier falls to the ground with the ball then a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side.

(c) If the ball is passed other than forward and goes to ground, play will continue and either side may pick up the ball. If the passed ball rolls into touch a free pass will commence from the touchline to the non-passing side.

11. NO CONTACT

The only contact allowed between the two teams is the removal of a tag from the belt of the ball carrier. Any other type of contact on the ball carrier, such as shirt pulling, running in front of or barging the ball carrier, forcing the ball carrier into touch, etc must be penalised with a free pass and the players concerned reminded of the rules.
THE GOOD COACH’S CODE

In rugby union, coaches of young players should:

• recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching young players. Most learning is achieved through doing.
• appreciate the needs of the players before the needs of the sport.
• be a positive role model – think what this implies.
• keep winning and losing in perspective – encourage young players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.
• respect all referees and the decisions they make (remember it could be you refereeing next week) and ensure that the players recognise that they must do the same.
• provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner, to all young players, both during coaching sessions and games.

In rugby union, coaches of young players must:

• provide experiences, which are matched to the young players’ ages and abilities, as well as their physical and mental development.
• ensure all youngsters are coached in a safe environment, with adequate first aid readily to hand.
• avoid the overplaying of the best players, by using a squad system, which gives everybody a satisfactory amount of playing time.
• never allow a player to train or play when injured.
• ensure good supervision of young players, both on and off the field.
• recognise that young players should never be exposed to extremes of heat, cold, or unacceptable risk of injury.
• develop an awareness of nutrition as part of an overall education in lifestyle management.
• recognise that it is illegal for young players under 18 to drink alcohol.
• ensure that their knowledge and coaching strategies are up to date and in line with RFU philosophy.
• be aware of, and abide by, the RFU recommended procedures for taking young people on residential tours at home and abroad.
• be aware of, and abide by, the policies and procedures outlined in the RFU Child Protection Guidance Booklet.

Important note:
Coaches working with young players up to the age of 12 must follow the guidelines laid down by the RFU Rugby Continuum.

Coaches working with young players aged 13+ must be aware of the Under 15 and Under 19 law variations, including those that apply to cross border matches.
THE GOOD PARENT’S CODE

Parents are encouraged to:

• be familiar with the coaching and training programme in order that you can ensure that your child is fully involved and the coaches are aware of their availability.
• be familiar with the teaching and coaching methods used by observing the sessions in which your child participates.
• be aware that the club has a duty of care and therefore, where appropriate, assist coaches with the supervision of the young players, particularly where numbers are large and there is a need to transport youngsters to away games.
• be involved with club activities and share your expertise.
• share concerns, if you have them, with club officials.
• be familiar with the Good Coaches Code. In particular:
  - coaches should recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when coaching young players.
  - coaches should keep winning and losing in perspective, encouraging young players to behave with dignity in all circumstances.

It is important that parents support coaches in instilling these virtues.

Parents should:

• remember that young people play rugby for their own enjoyment not that of their parents.
• encourage young people to play - do not force them.
• focus on the young players’ efforts, rather than winning or losing.
• be realistic about the young players’ abilities; do not push them towards a level that they are not capable of achieving.
• provide positive verbal feedback both in training and during the game.
• remember that persistent, negative messages will adversely affect the players’ and referee’s performance and attitude.

• always support the rugby club in their efforts to eradicate loud, coarse and abusive behaviour from the game.
• remember young people learn much by example.
• always show appreciation of good play by all young players both from your own club and the opposition.
• respect decisions made by the match officials and encourage the young players to do likewise.
THE GOOD PLAYER’S CODE

Players are encouraged to:

• recognise and appreciate the efforts made by coaches, parents, match officials and administrators in providing the opportunity for you to play the game and enjoy the rugby environment.
• understand the values of loyalty and commitment to adults and team mates.
• recognise that every young player has a right to expect their involvement in rugby to be safe and free from all types of abuse.
• understand that if an individual or group of young players feel they are not being treated in a manner that is acceptable, then you have a right to tell an adult either at the rugby club or outside of the game.

Players should:

• play because you want to do so, not to please coaches or parents.
• remember that skill development, fun and enjoyment are the most important parts of the game.
• be attentive at all training and coaching sessions.
• work equally hard for yourself and your team - both will then benefit.
• recognise good play by all players on your team and by your opponents.
• be a sportsman - win or lose.
• play to the Laws of the Game and accept, without question, all referees’ decisions.
• control your emotions. Verbal or physical abuse of team mates, opponents, or match officials is not acceptable.
• treat all players, as you would like to be treated. Do not interfere with, bully or take advantage of any player.
The Good Spectator’s Code

Spectators are encouraged to:

• act as positive role models to all young players.
• be familiar with, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidance in relation to verbal and emotional abuse.
• respect the rugby club with regard to spectator behaviour.

Spectators should:

• remember children play sport for their enjoyment, not yours.
• acknowledge good individual and team performance from all youngsters irrespective of the team for whom they play.
• respect match officials’ decisions. Remember - they are volunteers providing an opportunity for youngsters to play rugby.
• never verbally abuse young players, match officials, fellow spectators or coaches. Such behaviour can create a negative environment for young players and their behaviour will often reflect this.
• acknowledge effort and good performance rather than the ‘win at all costs’ ethic.
• verbally encourage all youngsters in a positive way. If you do want to shout make sure it is ‘for’, not ‘at’ the players.
• encourage all youngsters irrespective of their ability - never ridicule any individual player, regardless of the team for whom they play.
THE GOOD MATCH OFFICIAL’S CODE

Match officials should:

• recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment when officiating young players.
• provide positive verbal feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner during games.
• emphasise the spirit of the game.
• appreciate the needs of the young players before the needs of the sport.
• understand the physical, social and psychological development of young players.
• be a positive role model. You set an example, and as such, comments you receive should be positive and supportive.
• look to self-improvement e.g. participation in the Entry Level Referee Award or Referee Education Evenings.

Match officials must:

• recognise that the safety of young players is paramount.
• explain decisions - all young players are still learning.
• always penalise foul play.
• play advantage whenever possible in order to let the game flow.
• show empathy for the age and ability of young players.
• be consistent and objective.
• ensure that verbal abuse from players, coaches or spectators is not tolerated and is dealt with by club officials immediately.
• be aware of, and abide by, the RFU Child Protection Guidance policies and procedures.
Section 12 - Child Protection

We have already seen that children engage in rugby for a wide range of reasons. We all have a duty to make the rugby environment safe, secure and unthreatening in order to support the benefits that young people have identified. Unfortunately even within the sport of rugby there are welfare and child protection issues. Child protection goes further than the more publicised areas of physical and sexual abuse. Overplaying, criticism, unsupervised groups and unsafe coaching can also be included and are covered within this section.

Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Rugby

The organisations involved with providing services to children - including rugby - have a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm and help them achieve what they want in life.

The key principles of providing that service in rugby are as follows:
• Recognising abuse in rugby
• Recognising and preventing poor practice
• Procedures to manage allegations
• Responding to suspicions
• Taking appropriate action
• Recruitment and training of welfare staff (including coaches and other volunteers)
• Encouraging, promoting and developing good practice in rugby
• Reporting abuse
• Out of hours support.

Codes of Conduct – The First Steps to Preventative Measures

The codes of conduct in Section 10 provide a template for clubs to use and to add to, and should be included in club and school handbooks and handouts to all concerned. They are a good term of reference if people do not conform to acceptable behaviour, but they are only beneficial if they have been made public as part of an ‘agreement’ between individuals and the club/organisation. This forms part of good practice for young people.

Good practice for young people ensures the safety and welfare of others through measures to ensure that individuals are safe when playing rugby.

Identification of Issues
Categories of Abuse

Emotional Abuse
This occurs when individuals (coaches, volunteers or parents):
• persistently fail to show young people due care with regard to their emotional welfare
• constantly shout at, threaten, taunt, or subject young people to sarcasm and unrealistic pressures
• over protect, preventing young people from socialising
• bully youngsters to perform to high expectations
• provide repeated negative feedback
• repeatedly ignore a young player’s efforts to progress
• repeatedly demand performance levels above the young player’s capability
• over emphasise the winning ethic.

As a consequence of this the young person may lose self-confidence and may become withdrawn and nervous.
Section 12 - CHILD PROTECTION

Neglect
Neglect occurs when a young person’s essential needs for food, warmth and care both physical and emotional are not met. The following are forms of neglect and should never occur in a sporting/rugby environment:
- young players are left alone without proper supervision
- a young player is exposed to unnecessary heat or cold
- a young player is not provided with necessary fluids for re-hydration
- a young player is exposed to an unacceptable risk of injury.

Physical abuse
Physical abuse can occur when individuals (including other young people) deliberately inflict injuries on a child or young person, or knowingly do not prevent such injuries. It includes:
- injuries caused by hitting, shaking, squeezing, biting or using excessive force
- young people being given alcohol, or inappropriate drugs, or there is a failure to supervise their access to these substances
- exposing young players to exercise/training which disregards the capacity of the player’s immature and growing body
- exposure to overplaying, over training or fatigue.

Sexual abuse
Girls or boys can be abused by adults, (both male and female), or other young people. This may include encouraging or forcing a child or young person to take part in sexual activity. Sexual abuse may occur when:
- an adult uses the context of a training session to touch young people in an inappropriate sexual way
- coaches, managers or volunteers use their position of power and authority to coerce young players into a sexual relationship
- coaches or managers imply better progression of the player in return for sexual favours.

Bullying
Bullying can be defined as the use of aggression with intention of hurting another person. It results in pain and distress for the victim. Bullying can be:
- emotional e.g. being unfriendly, excluding
- physical e.g. pushing, kicking, hitting, punching
- racist e.g. racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, texting
- sexual e.g. unwanted physical contact
- homophobic e.g. focussing on the issues of sexuality
- verbal e.g. name calling, teasing, spreading rumours.
Bullying is not always easy to identify and will not always be an adult abusing a young person. It is often the case (but not always) that the bully is a young person. However, bullying can also occur when:
- a coach adopts a ‘win at all costs’ philosophy
- a player intimidates other players
- an official is over officious.
Section 12 - CHILD PROTECTION

DEALING WITH ISSUES

The vast majority of people involved in rugby are concerned with the welfare, safety and protection of young people - that's why so many youngsters take part. However, there may be times when you may be concerned that a child is being abused. It is important that coaches and volunteers understand that it is not the responsibility of those working in the sport of rugby union to decide that abuse is occurring but it is their responsibility to act on any concern. If coaches are aware of behaviour which makes them feel uncomfortable and if the behaviour is contrary to the Club or RFU’s Welfare Policy and Procedures and young people are at risk then action must be taken. Adults must also be alert to any unusual incidents or activities which take place where staff, coaches or volunteers are putting young people and themselves in a vulnerable position.

The flowchart on the right will assist you in making the right decisions and in following the correct procedure.

Key contacts
The following contacts can assist you in dealing with any concerns you might have, in support of the actions highlighted above.
Club Welfare Officer – club handbook
Constituent Body Welfare Officer – county handbook/web site
RFU Welfare – website (www.rfu.com and follow links to ‘Community’ and ‘Schools & Youth’)
NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk and local directory)
Child Line (www.childline.org.uk and 0808 800 5000 or local directory)

SUMMARY

The welfare of young players is of paramount importance to the game and should be at the forefront in all that we do. Although it is unlikely that you will ever be in a position to be concerned about the practice of others it is an unfortunate fact of life that the forms of abuse outlined in this section do occur. Prevention is certainly the best options and sharing conduct or welfare codes with parents, coaches and volunteers will assist in highlighting acceptable and unacceptable behaviours and attitudes.

If you do have concerns it is important to understand that is not disloyal to the players, your club or other coaches to express those concerns. The behaviours you have identified might well undermine or jeopardise the fundamental principles of safety, protection and welfare. Your loyalty is to those principles.
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