

REGULATION 15 – AGE GRADE RUGBY

15.1 General

- 15.1.1 This Regulation 15 relates to youth rugby known as Age Grade rugby from the Under 6 (U6) to Under 18 (U18) age groups.
- 15.1.2 This Regulation 15 applies to both genders up to and including U12s, from which point there are specific regulations applicable to girls' rugby for the U13 to U18 age grades in relation to playing out of age grade and these are set out in Regulation 15.5 below. Regulation 15.5 overrides all others in relation to girls' rugby between U13 and U18.
- 15.1.3 This Regulation 15 relates to training, matches and all variations of rugby permitted within the relevant age grade.
- 15.1.4 This Regulation 15 is supported by the Best Practice Guidance document available at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance that sets out best practice principles and the RFU Safeguarding Policy available at www.rfu.com/managingrugby/safeguardingchildren.

15.2 Determining a player's Age Grade

- 15.2.1 A player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31st August at the beginning of each Season and that age grade applies for the whole season. At England U17 and U18 elite level only the player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31st December of that Season.
- 15.2.2 Players must only play contact rugby with players of their own age grade unless the player is permitted to play outside their age grade as set out in Regulations 15.3 to 15.5. An assessment should be carried out to assess whether a player should be permitted to play outside their age grade. Best practice as to how to carry out an assessment is set out in the Guidance available at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance.

15.3 Playing with other Age Grades

- 15.3.1 Players who are in the U6 age grade (but not U5s or below) are permitted to train with U7s and U8s. A player in the U6 age grade or below is not permitted to participate in fixtures or festivals with U7s and U8s until they have reached the age of six. Players under the age of six are not permitted to participate in any types of fixtures, matches, competitions, tournaments or festivals.
- 15.3.2 U7s and U8s can train and play together in fixtures and festivals if recommended by the Club or School. U7s and U8s are not permitted to play contact rugby.
- 15.3.3 The following age grades are permitted to participate together in contact rugby training (which includes playing contact internal training matches):
 - (a) U9s with U10s;
 - (b) U10s with U11s; and

- (c) U11s with U12s.
- 15.3.4 In respect of Schools and Clubs with an insufficient number of players, U9s can train and play with U10s, U10s can train and play with U11s, and U11s can train and play with U12s, in fixtures and festivals subject to satisfying the following conditions:
- (a) the School or Club does not have a sufficient number of players to make up a team in the single age grade;
 - (b) the School's CSU or the Club's Constituent Body provides written approval (such approval to be valid for up to one season only);
 - (c) No more than half the players on the pitch at any time should be from the older age grade; and
 - (d) The team plays to the rules of the younger age grade.
- 15.3.5 U12s to U15s can train and play up one age grade if recommended by the player's Club or School provided that: (a) in respect of club rugby, consent is obtained from the parents, guardians or carers of the player; (b) in respect of Schools' rugby, consent is obtained from the School's Head Teacher; and (c) in each case an appropriate assessment is carried out. Best practice on carrying out an appropriate assessment is set out in the Guidance www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance.
- 15.3.6 U16s and U17s can train and play up one age grade (including in the front row of the scrum) or two age grades (but not including in the front row of contested scrums if an U16 player is playing 15 a-side rugby), if recommended by the player's Club or School provided that: (a) in respect of club rugby, consent is obtained from the parents, guardians or carers of the player; (b) in respect of Schools' rugby, consent is obtained from the School's Head Teacher; (c) the parent, guardian, carer or the School's Head Teacher (as applicable) is informed that it is possible that this dispensation may result in the player playing with and/or against one or more U19 players who are playing down in accordance with Regulation 15.4.3; and (d) an appropriate assessment is carried out. Best practice on carrying out an appropriate assessment is set out in the Guidance www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance.
- 15.3.7 A player can play adult contact rugby, or train with other adults in contact rugby, when they reach their seventeenth birthday provided: (a) they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults; (b) the RFU's Playing Adult Rugby Form has been duly completed and signed; and (c) the player does not train or play in the front row of the scrum. Once a player has reached the age of 18, the player may play in any position.
- 15.3.8 In respect of England Academy Players:
- (a) an U16 England Academy Player can play up two age grades in the front row of the scrum provided that in each case the prior written consent of the RFU Head of Regional Academies is obtained;

- (b) a 16 year old England Academy Player can play adult contact rugby, or train with other adults in contact rugby, if the written approval of the RFU Head of Regional Academies has been obtained;
- (c) a 17 year old England Academy Player can play adult rugby and train with adults (including in the front row of the scrum) if the written approval of the RFU Head of Regional Academies has been obtained. Such consent may be given for playing or training.

15.4 Restrictions on Playing Down

- 15.4.1 In respect of any fixtures and festivals, the Club or School must inform match officials, organisers and the opposing team of all players playing down an age grade in a reasonable time prior to the fixture.
- 15.4.2 If a player is permitted to play down as set out in these Regulations, that permission is valid for up to one Season only and the player must remain in that lower age grade for the entire Season save that if appropriate the player is entitled to move back up into the original age grade provided the player does not play down in the lower age grade again during that Season.
- 15.4.3 U9s to U19s (inclusive) can only train and play down one age grade in exceptional circumstances (and subject to competition rules) if:
 - (a) the player is in a younger academic year at School than the player's academic birth year; or
 - (b) the player's safety may be compromised due to their small stature in comparison to other players in the same age grade or due to a developmental or behavioural issue:

provided that in each case:

- (i) an assessment is carried out. Best practice as to how to carry out an assessment is set out in the Guidance available at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance.
 - (ii) for U12s and below, the Club's Constituent Body's approval is obtained or, in respect of Schools' rugby, the player's Head Teacher's approval is obtained;
 - (iii) for U13 and above, the player's parent or guardian approval (as well as the approval of the Club's Safeguarding Officer or Youth Chairman/Secretary) is obtained or, in respect of Schools' rugby, the player's Head Teacher's approval is obtained; and
 - (iv) if consent is given, the Club or School must notify the opposing teams within a reasonable period of time in advance of the game.
- 15.4.4 U9s to U19s can only train and play down two or more age grades in exceptional circumstances and only with the written approval of the RFU Legal and Governance Director to whom application must be

made. Any requests for approval must be accompanied by such documentary evidence and/or signed statements as may be necessary or requested by the RFU Legal and Governance Director.

15.5 Girls' Rugby

- 15.5.1 This Regulation 15.5 sets out the specific regulations applicable to U13 to U18 girls' rugby in relation to playing out of age grade. The remainder of Regulation 15 shall continue to apply in relation to girls rugby save to the extent that it is varied by Regulation 15.5.
- 15.5.2 The U13 girls' age band is permitted to include U11s, U12s and U13s girls. U13 girls are not permitted to play mixed contact rugby. For the 2014-15 Season any female players aged U13 and registered as an U12 player on Rugby First in 2013-14 Season can apply for dispensation to play within the U15 age band by contacting the Competitions Executive responsible for Women's Rugby.
- 15.5.3 The U15 girls' age band is permitted to include U14s and U15s.
- 15.5.4 The U18 girls' age band is permitted to include U16s, U17s and U18s.
- 15.5.5 Players who are aged 17 may play adult rugby and train with other adults as part of the RFU's Women's Elite Rugby programme where the RFU Head of Performance (Women) has given specific consent. Such consent may be given for playing or training.
- 15.5.6 From their 18th birthday players may elect to register as a senior player and may participate in senior training sessions and matches as well as U18 sessions and matches. It is recommended that players do not play more than one match a week to avoid injury and player burnout. It is expected that coaches involved should pro-actively communicate on the development of an appropriate competition plan for 18 year old players to ensure their duty of care responsibilities are fulfilled.

15.6 Season

- 15.6.1 In Age Grade rugby the Season shall be:

Season 2014-2015 will run from Saturday 30 August 2014 until Monday 4 May 2015 (inclusive)

Season 2015-2016 will run from Saturday 5 September 2015 until Monday 2 May 2016 (inclusive)

- 15.6.2 During the Season, U5s and U6s can participate in training but can only play in fixtures and festivals when they reach the age of 6 years old, as permitted in Regulation 15.3.1. Outside of the Season, U5s and U6s can participate in the Pre-Approved Activity (as set out in Regulation 15.6.5).
- 15.6.3 U7s to U12s can participate in training and Pre-Approved Activity only (as defined in 15.6.5 below) up until and including the fourth Saturday after the start of the Season and can participate in training, Pre-Approved Activity, fixtures and festivals from the fifth Sunday after the start of the Season.

- 15.6.4 During the Season, U13s to U18s can participate in training, fixtures and festivals. Outside of the Season, U13s to U18s can participate in the Pre-Approved Activity (as set out in Regulation 15.6.5).
- 15.6.5 For the purposes of this Regulation, “Pre-Approved Activity” means:
- (a) for all age grades: (i) rugby based non-contact training and non-contact invasion games (where one team invades another’s territory) that develops and supports fundamental movement and core skills, examples of which are set out in www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance; (ii) internal matches that form part of a Club’s genuine recruitment initiative; (iii) summer camps are permitted provided they comply with the requirements set out in RFU Regulation 15.8; and (iv) Schools Games Events.
 - (b) for U8s the tag to tackle training resource available from the RFU;
 - (c) for U9s to U18s: (i) training; and (ii) non-contact versions of rugby including tag and touch, further detail of which is set out in www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance;
 - (d) for U13s to U18s: (i) seven a-side contact rugby; (ii) in the two weeks immediately prior to the start of the Season, pre-season matches, festivals and skills revision training, guidance on which can be found at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance; (iii) in the three weeks immediately following the end of the Season, matches that were abandoned or postponed due to adverse weather conditions; and (iv) up until the end of May, non-competitive exhibition games forming part of a national showcase in advance of a national game.
- 15.6.6 Outgoing Tours and Trials are exempt from this Regulation.

15.7 Non-contact Rugby

Players of all ages and both sexes may train and play together in non-competitive, non-contact rugby provided that: (a) the organiser and/or coach has assessed the session and/or match to be safe for all players; (b) under no circumstances is any element of contact rugby permitted and the training session and/or match should be conducted in accordance with the best practice principles set out in the Guidance available at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance.

15.8 Summer Camps

Summer camps are permitted for all age grades provided that: (a) the summer camps and its activity programme are run in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Guidance available at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance; (b) the Constituent Body in which the summer camp is located is notified of the proposed summer camp in advance; (c) any proposed activity falling outside the guidelines is approved in writing by the Constituent Body; and (d) Regulation 15 is complied with.

15.9 Festivals and Fixtures

In Season

- 15.9.1 Subject to Regulation 15.6.3 above, festivals, fixtures and competitions may be played at any time during the Season provided the School's CSU or the Club's Constituent Body gives its written approval.

Out of Season

- 15.9.2 U6s to U18s may only play in festivals or fixtures outside the Season provided that: (a) the festival or fixture is classified as a "Pre-Approved Activity"; and (b) the hosting Constituent Body has given written approval.
- 15.9.3 All festivals and fixtures that do not fall within the definition of "Pre-Approved Activity" are not permitted out of season unless the written consent of the RFU Legal and Governance Director is obtained which shall only be granted in exceptional circumstances, as determined by the RFU Legal & Governance Department.

National Festivals

- 15.9.4 National Schools' Festivals may only take place provided the written approval of ERSFU (and the hosting Constituent Body is notified) is obtained. Applications must be made in good time and by no later than three months prior to the date of the proposed National Schools' Festival.
- 15.9.5 National Clubs' Festivals may only take place provided the written approval of the hosting Constituent Body is obtained. Applications must be made in good time and by no later than three months prior to the date of the proposed National Clubs' Festival.

Note: For the purposes of Regulations 15.9.4 and 15.9.5 above a Festival is considered to be "National" if participating Clubs or Schools are drawn from more than just neighbouring Constituent Bodies and there are more than six entrants.

15.10 Tours

Age Grade rugby tours are subject to the requirements set out in Regulation 10 and should be conducted in accordance with the best practice outlined in the RFU Tour Policy available on www.rfu.com.

15.11 Rules of Play

- 15.11.1 Players and Match Officials must comply with the IRB Laws of the Games, subject to any permitted Law Variations set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 and such other Law trials and variations as the RFU may adopt.
- 15.11.2 Rules of Play for U7-U12 Age Grade rugby (boys and girls) are set out in Appendix 1.
- 15.11.3 Rules of Play for U13-U18 boys are set out in Appendix 2.

- 15.11.4 Rules of Play for U13 – U18 girls are set out in Appendix 3.
- 15.11.5 Rules of Play for non-contact rugby matches are available on www.irblaws.com.

15.12 Pitch and Ball Size

- 15.12.1 The maximum pitch and ball sizes are in respect of each age grade are set out in the Rules of Play for that age grade.
- 15.12.2 Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable if agreed between the referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches are risk assessed.
- 15.12.3 Adjacent pitches should to the extent possible be no closer than 5 metres.

15.13 Clothing

- 15.13.1 Players' studs and clothing during training and matches must comply with IRB Regulatory requirements (including IRB Law 4 and IRB Regulation 12) which are available on www.irb.com.
- 15.13.2 Age grade players are permitted to wear base layers provided they comply with the IRB Regulatory requirements which are available on www.irb.com.
- 15.13.3 Players of all age grades are permitted to wear spectacles, glasses or specifically designed sports goggles in all forms of non-contact rugby. Players are not permitted to wear spectacles, glasses or specifically designed sports goggles in any form of contact rugby.

15.14 Duration of Matches, coaching and training sessions

- 15.14.1 All players, match officials and clubs must ensure that no player plays more than 35 matches per Season and plays no more than 90 minutes of match time in a day.
- 15.14.2 The table below details the maximum playing times that must be adhered to:

Age Grade	Single Fixtures		Festival/Tournament	
	Minutes Each Half	Total Minutes Playing Time	Minutes Each Half	Max Games per Day
U7/U8	10	20	5	5
U9/U10	15	30	6	5
U11/U12	20	40	7	5
U13/U14	25	50	10	4 (or 5 if 9 mins each way)
U15	30	60	9*	5
U16 +	35	70	9*	5

* = Means only for 15-a-side and 7s on a given day

Further guidance as playing times and durations for single fixtures, festivals, tournaments and coaching and training sessions are set out in the Guidance available at www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance.

- 15.14.3 No extra time is permitted in any match except that added for injury time.
- 15.14.4 Matches must be brought to an end if:
 - (a) at Under 7s to Under 12s the try difference rises to more than six;
or
 - (b) at Under 13s to Under 18s the points difference is more than 50 points unless both teams are in agreement to continue.

15.15 Player Eligibility and Player Registration

- 15.15.1 Each Club must ensure all its Age Grade players are registered as a youth players by completing the RFU Youth Player Registration Form and are registered on the RFU's data system within 45 days of their first joining the Club.
- 15.15.2 Constituent Bodies and/or event organisers may require Registration cards and copies of any special dispensations issued to be taken to each Club match or festival. Team managers must produce these documents for inspection by the opposition or Match Officials if requested.
- 15.15.3 Subject to competition regulations, a player may qualify to represent an Age Grade representative team in a Constituent Body for that season if the player meets one of the following criteria:
 - (a) he/she attends a School affiliated to that Constituent Body;
 - (b) he/she resides in that Constituent Body for any part of that season;
 - (c) he/she was born in that Constituent Body;
 - (d) he/she is a registered playing member of a Club affiliated to that Constituent Body;
 - (e) he/she played for that Constituent Body in a representative fixture the previous season.
- 15.15.4 Membership of a Constituent Body's School of Rugby or an Academy does not entitle a Player to play for that Constituent Body if the Player does not satisfy one of the previous criteria.
- 15.15.5 Where a Player has not been selected for a Constituent Body the Divisional Chairman of Selectors may allow the Player to play for another Constituent Body for which the Player is not qualified if it is in the interests of the Player's development.

15.16 Discipline

Disciplinary matters relating to Age Grade rugby shall follow the procedures set out in Appendix 6 of RFU Regulation 19.

15.17 Competition Regulations

There are specific competition regulations relating to the following Age Grade competitions and these regulations are available upon request from the RFU Rugby Events & Competitions Department:

- (a) NatWest Schools Cup competition
- (b) AASE League competition
- (c) National U17s competitions
- (d) U18 Academy competition