

2006 USA Rugby Guidelines on the Application of Law for Non-Contact, Youth Rugby

Preamble

The following USA Rugby Guidelines on the Application of Law for Youth Non-Contact Rugby (Guidelines) are intended for all players, coaches, match officials and spectators who are involved in the game of youth non-contact rugby in the USA. The Guidelines were developed by the Youth Guidelines Committee, which includes members selected by the USA Rugby Youth Committee, the USA Rugby Game Development Department and the USA Rugby Referees Association. The Guidelines are not, in and of themselves, the official law that should be applied to the youth non-contact game. They are, however, intended as a practical guide on how those Laws can be understood, interpreted and applied.

The Guidelines were first issued for application during the 2005 season in the USA. Following the season, as part of what is intended to be an ongoing annual process, a call was made by the Youth Guidelines Committee to Local Area Union Chairs and to regional Youth Development Officers asking them for proposals for amendments. Several proposals were received. The proposals have since been evaluated by the Committee, and some have been adopted, with the Guidelines amended accordingly. In what follows the changes have been highlighted in red.

The Guidelines are intended to provide a reasonably complete description of how the youth non-contact game should be played by relatively experienced players. At all levels of play the emphasis of the players, the coaches and the referees should be on safety and fun. With very young or very inexperienced players, in the interests of maintaining some sense of match flow, which in turn leads to a more enjoyable experience, the referee may decide not to stop play for minor, unintentional infringements, balancing this tolerance with the need to apply sanctions to improve the skills and choices that the players make. Similarly it may be appropriate to introduce the more subtle phases of the game, such as rucks and mauls, only after a reasonable grounding of the more basic elements.

The Guidelines are intended primarily for application on the field-of-play. However, players, coaches, club officials, and match officials all have responsibilities before and during any match in which they participate. It is important that the boys and girls try to understand the Laws of the youth non-contact game. Most importantly, they must be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others. It is the responsibility of those who coach or teach the game to ensure that players are prepared in a manner that ensures compliance with the Laws and in accordance with safe practices. The Guidelines are worded in terms of what both players and match officials should do. Although coaches' directives are not specifically addressed in this document, it is implicit that coaches have a responsibility to coach players in a manner consistent with this document.

The Guidelines are intended only for application in the youth non-contact game. As the players' age and experience increase it may become appropriate to introduce them to the contact aspects of the Game in a properly managed, safe progression towards playing under the Under-19 Variations, and ultimately the full Laws of the Game as framed by the IRB. There is nothing in these Guidelines that is intended to either promote or preclude that progression. The Guidelines are intended entirely as a free-standing explanation of the youth non-contact game so that even the uninitiated can understand, play, coach, officiate, watch, and most importantly, enjoy the game of rugby at its most basic level.

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USA Guidelines for Non-contact Youth Rugby

Law 1: Ground

Matches can be played on a full sized rugby field, but for younger or less experienced players the dimensions of the field, and other references to distance **should** be reduced. As much as possible the dimensions should keep the approximate proportions of a full-sized field.

The most important lines are the touch lines and their extensions, which are in touch; the goal lines, which are in the in-goal areas; and the 22-meter lines, which are in the 22-meter areas.

Law 2: Ball

Older players can use standard (size 5) rugby balls, though for younger players smaller (size 3 or 4) balls may be more suitable.

Law 3: Number of Players

There should be no more than seven players (three forwards as a front row, and four backs) in the playing area at any one time. Players may be freely replaced at the beginning of each period, but players who are replaced may not play again until the following period, unless it's to replace an injured player and no other replacement is available.

A player who is replaced for injury may not play again for the rest of that period.

A player who is temporarily suspended may not play again, and may not be replaced, for five minutes of playing time.

A player who is sent off may not play, and may not be replaced, during that match.

Law 4: Players' Clothing

Players should wear clothing suitable for a game that involves running around, and sometimes falling over, on a grassy surface. Except for boots, all items that are worn must be made of soft, pliable material. Players aren't allowed to wear anything that could be dangerous or unsafe for themselves or others. Specifically prohibited are eyeglasses, and any form of harness, brace or helmet that contains any metal or hard plastic. If either before or during the match the referee decides that an item of clothing is dangerous or unsafe, then the referee has to make sure that the item is removed before the player is allowed to continue in the match.

Law 5: Time

Play is divided into four periods of not longer than ten minutes each. The interval after the second period is not more than ten minutes. Each of the intervals after the first and third periods is not more than two minutes.

Each period ends at the next time that the ball becomes dead after the time has expired for that period, except that a period may not stop on a penalty or a free kick. **After the first and third interval the match**

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shall restart at the place and in the manner that the match would have continued had the interval not occurred. After the second interval (half time) the match shall restart with a kick-off at the center of the half-way line.

The referee may stop the clock for injuries, equipment changes and incidents of foul play.

Law 6: Match Officials

Before the match the referee organizes the toss. The captain of the team that wins the toss has the choice of either kicking off, in which case the opposing captain has the choice of ends, or choosing an end, in which case the other team kicks off.

During the match the referee is the sole judge of fact and Law, and no one, including team coaches or other team officials, may question the referee's authority or dispute the referee's decisions. Doing so is against the spirit of good sportsmanship, and may be penalized as foul play.

The referee blows a whistle at a kick-off and when necessary to indicate that play should stop. Except at a kick-off, when the referee blows the whistle all players must stop playing at once.

The referee may appoint touch judges who indicate when the ball is in touch, and where the subsequent line-outs are to be taken.

Law 7: Mode of Play

A match is started by a kick-off. After that, any player who is on-side may take the ball and run with it, throw or kick the ball, give or pass the ball to another player, tag an opponent holding the ball, fall on the ball, or ground the ball in an in-goal area. Any player may take part in a scrum, ruck, maul or line-out.

Law 8: Advantage

Advantage takes precedence over most other laws. Its purpose is to make play more continuous with fewer stoppages for infringements. The referee shouldn't stop play for an infringement if the non-infringing team is likely to gain an advantage.

The referee is the sole judge of whether or not a team has gained an advantage, and has wide discretion when making decisions.

With very young or very inexperienced players the referee may decide not to stop play for a minor, unintentional infringement even though the non-infringing team doesn't gain an advantage. On such occasions the referee should declare "Play on."

Law 9: Method of Scoring

When a player is first to ground the ball in the opponents' in-goal, a try, worth 5 points, is scored. If a player would probably have scored a try but for foul play by an opponent then the referee should award a penalty try, worth 5 points.

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When a player scores a try (or penalty try) the player's team has the right to attempt a conversion kick to score a goal, worth an additional 2 points.

Ideally, a conversion kick should be taken as a place kick or drop kick from a place on a line drawn parallel to the touch lines through the point where the try was scored. It should be made at posts positioned at the center of the goal line. However, in youth non-contact rugby such conditions not always available or even appropriate. Smaller than standard fields often preclude properly positioned posts, and very young players lack the physical characteristics to be able to kick the ball any great height or distance. The conditions for the conversion kicks should be set with the spirit of the ideal in mind, but in a manner that makes successful kicks challenging but possible.

If posts are suitably placed within the playing area then players may try for a drop-goal in general play or for a goal by a place kick or a drop kick after a penalty kick has been awarded. If successful each is worth 3 points.

Law 10: Foul Play

When a player and an opponent are running for the ball neither player shall charge or push the other player except with the shoulder. Equal and opposite pressure is allowed in the shoulder charge.

A player shall not stand or move in front of a team-mate who is carrying the ball, thereby preventing an opponent from tagging the current ball-carrier or from having the opportunity to tag potential ball-carriers when they receive the ball.

A player shall not twist, grab, push or pull the ball-carrier while in the act of tagging or during a ruck or maul.

A player shall not do anything to force or attempt to force the ball from the ball-carrier's hands.

A player shall not pull, push or obstruct an opponent who is not carrying the ball.

Except in a scrum, ruck or maul a player shall not hold an opponent who is not carrying the ball.

Players shall not attempt a tag by diving and leaving their feet.

It is the responsibility of all players to avoid collisions with other players. A ball-carrier shall not run at an opponent in a manner that causes a collision. An opponent shall not move into the path of a ball-carrier in a manner that causes a collision. A player shall not run at an opponent that does not have the ball in a manner that causes a collision. A player must avoid a collision with an opponent who has just kicked the ball.

In the event of a collision the referee decides which player caused it. If the referee decides that a collision was not intentional, but nevertheless had an impact on the match, then the referee may award a scrum, with the team last in possession to throw in the ball.

A player shall not do anything that is dangerous or unsafe for that player or any other player, or do anything that is against the spirit of good sportsmanship.

A player shall not repeatedly infringe any Law.

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Penalty: In most cases the penalty for foul play infringements is a penalty kick at the place of the infringement. If a player would probably have scored a try but for foul play by an opponent then the referee should award a penalty try.

For serious foul play infringements or for repeated infringements the referee may impose a temporary suspension on the infringing player. A player who is temporarily suspended may not be replaced for 5 minutes of playing time and may not take any part in the match during that time

For very serious foul play infringements or for continued repeated infringements the referee may send off the infringing player for the remainder of the match. A player who is sent off may not be replaced during that match and may not take any further part in that match. Players, coaches, and referees should all be aware that, if the match is part of a tournament, disciplinary procedures could well require that the player not take any further part in the tournament.

Law 11: Off-side and On-side in General Play

In Rugby, as in most field sports, players must abide by laws that dictate where they may be in given situations. These laws are intended to keep players from gaining unfair advantage by playing the game from unfair positions. Simply put, the off-side laws in rugby state that in general play a player may not be in front of a teammate who has the ball or who last played the ball.

Often the off-side Law comes into play after the ball has been kicked. Team-mates who are in front of the kicker must not move forward or take part in play until they have been put on-side. If they do so they are liable to penalty. Off-side players who are within ten meters of where the kicked ball will land, or where a member of the other team is waiting to play the ball, must move away from that spot. If they do not, they are liable to penalty.

The non-offending team may choose a penalty kick at the place of the infraction or a scrum at the spot of the original kick.

However, rugby is a fluid game and the referee should not levy a penalty unless the off-side players interfere with or take part in play. Rugby is most enjoyable, for players, referees and spectators, when there is a lot of action and few stoppages. To minimize stoppages for penalty the referee should communicate with players what they need to do to avoid being penalized. The referee should recognize off-side players and instruct them to either stand still or retreat. The referee should communicate to players as they become on-side.

Off-side players may be put on-side in any of several fashions. As an on-side team-mate, being the kicker or a player who was behind the kicker, runs past off-side players they become on-side. The non-kicking team can put off-side players on-side by intentionally touching the ball, such as by a charge down, or by passing or kicking the ball, or by running with the ball 5 meters in any direction.

A player who is off-side at a ruck, maul, scrum or line-out is taking place must retreat to that player's off-side line before taking further part in play even if the ruck, maul, scrum, or lineout has ended. Please refer to the relevant section of these guidelines for location of off-side lines. Again, an off-side player may be put on-side if an opponent runs 5 meters with the ball or kicks the ball. However, in the case of rucks, mauls, scrums or line-outs an opponent passing the ball does not put off-side players on-side.

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Accidental off-side occurs when a player ball-carrier runs into a teammate who is in front. Play should be stopped and a scrum ordered only if the action prevents the opposition from tagging the ball-carrier. The ball is thrown into the scrum by the non-infringing team.

If, after a knock on by a team-mate, an off-side player plays the ball, but in doing so does not deprive the opponents of an advantage, then a scrum should be awarded for the knock-on. If an off-side player does deprive the opponents of an advantage then a penalty kick should be awarded.

Penalty: To recap the penalties for off-side in general play: After a kick the non-infringing team may choose a penalty kick at the place of the infraction or a scrum at the spot of the original kick. If a player is off-side at a ruck, maul, scrum or line-out, the non-infringing team may be awarded a penalty kick at the place of infringement.

Law 12: Knock-on and Throw Forward

A knock-on usually occurs when a player drops the ball, or when the ball hits a player's hand or arm, and the ball goes towards the opponents' dead-ball line, and touches the ground or another player before the original player can catch it.

If the ball goes forward as in a knock-on while a player charges down an opponent's kick, but the player does not try to catch the ball, it is not a knock-on.

A throw-forward occurs when a player throws or passes the ball towards the opponents' dead-ball line. If the ball is not thrown forward but it hits a player or the ground and then bounces forward, it is not a throw-forward.

With very young or very inexperienced players the referee may decide not to stop play for a minor, unintentional knock-on or throw forward, even though the non-infringing team does not gain an advantage. On such occasions the referee should declare "Play on."

If a knock-on or throw forward occurs the opponents are usually awarded a scrum at the place of the infringement.

Law 13: Kick-off and Restart Kicks

The match is started, or restarted after half time or after a score, with a drop kick taken at the center of the half-way line. The referee should make sure that the kick is taken at the right place, and with very young or inexperienced players may allow a place kick if an attempt at a drop kick is unsuccessful. This tolerance allows such players to try the correct form of kick, which encourages skill improvement, but avoids taking too much time in putting the ball into play. The drop kick should be used as soon as the players skills develop sufficiently enough to allow its use without slowing play of the game.

The team that kicks off at the start of the match is decided at the coin toss. The opponents kick off after half time. **After a score the team that scored kicks off.**

Team-mates of the kicker should be behind the kicker when the ball is kicked, otherwise they are off-side and liable to penalty. Opponents of the kicker must be on or behind the 10-meter line, and must not charge until the ball is kicked. For very young or very inexperienced players a distance less than 10 meters may be appropriate. However, in that event, the referee, before the kick-off, should make clear to all concerned the location of the line that is to be used.

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After a kick-off members of the kicking team may not play the ball until it has reached the 10-meter line or it has been played by an opponent. If the ball does not reach the 10-meter line then the opponent can ask for a scrum or a re-kick. If the ball is kicked directly into touch then the opponent can ask for a line-out, a scrum, or a re-kick at the half-way line.

If after a kick-off or a drop-out the ball goes into the opponents' in-goal area without touching an opponent and an opponent then immediately makes the ball dead (by grounding it or kicking it over the touch-in-goal or dead ball lines), then the opponents can ask for a scrum at the center of the half-way line or 22-meter line from where the ball was kicked, and throw in the ball, or have the team kick off or drop out again.

The drop-out is a drop kick to be taken anywhere on or behind the 22-meter line and must cross the 22-meter line to be successful. Team-mates of the kicker should be behind the kicker when the ball is kicked, otherwise they are off-side and liable to penalty. Opponents of the kicker must not try to prevent the kicker from taking a drop-out. Opponents may attempt to block the kick but in any event must not prevent the ball from crossing the 22-meter line.

If the ball from the drop-out is kicked directly into touch or the ball does not cross the 22-meter line, then the opponents of the kicker may ask for a scrum on the 22-meter line and throw in the ball, have another drop-out, or have a line-out where the ball went into touch and throw in the ball.

Penalty: For infringements by the kicker's team: Scrum at the center of the half-way line, or on the 22-meter line, as appropriate, with the opponents to throw in the ball.

For infringements at a kick-off by the kicker's opponents: Kick again.

For infringements at a drop-out by the kicker's opponents: Penalty kick.

Law 14: Ball on the Ground - No tackle

If the ball is on the ground, a player may kick it, pick it up, or fall on it to gain possession of it. If a player is on the ground with the ball, that player must immediately either get up with it, or pass or release it. The player may not stay on the ground with the ball waiting for support.

If the player on the ground with the ball is touched with both hands on the torso or legs by an opponent who is not on the ground, then the player on the ground now may no longer get up with the ball, but must either pass or release it. Any player who is not on the ground may play the ball as soon as it leaves the hands of the player on the ground. After passing or releasing the ball the player on the ground must get up before re-entering play.

If players from both teams go to ground for the ball, the referee must very quickly declare which one gained possession of the ball. "Red ball! Blue. Don't interfere! Red. Play it!"

If the referee cannot decide which team gained possession of the ball then there is a scrum with the attacking team to throw in the ball. The referee should also make sure that the players are not diving dangerously or using their bodies to shove an opponent from the ball. Players may not fall over a player who is on the ground with the ball.

If the ball is on the ground then a player who is not on the ground may kick the ball, but must take care if there are other players reaching down for the ball or going to ground for the ball.

Penalty: For all infringements: Penalty kick

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Law 15: Tag

A tag occurs when an opponent simultaneously touches the ball-carrier with both hands anywhere from the waist to the knees, and the referee declares "Tag". The intent of the tag is just to make contact with the ball-carrier. The tag is not to be any form of push, shove, grab, pull, or block.

A tag can only take place in the playing area. If a ruck or maul has been declared, then a tag cannot occur. Opponents must be on their feet, to tag the ball-carrier. The ball-carrier shall not fall to the ground to avoid a tag.

When the ball-carrier is tagged in the field of play, then the ball-carrier must play the ball immediately. To play the ball, the ball-carrier must pass the ball or release the ball. To release the ball, the ball-carrier can let go of the ball, roll it back, throw it back, or even hurl it back.

The ball-carrier may continue running while playing the ball, but the play must be completed immediately. Immediately could be within 4 or 5 steps (2 or 3 seconds) for a very young or very inexperienced player, or within 2 steps (one second) for a very experienced player. The referee should pick a time duration that challenges the teams but is not impossible to achieve.

In playing the ball after a tag, the ball-carrier may not intentionally cause the ball to go into touch.

If the ball-carrier passes the ball, the tagger may not intercept the pass. The tagger may not take a position that could block the ball, whether it is placed, passed, thrown or rolled back. The tagger may not intentionally touch the ball until another player, from either team, has touched the ball. However, if the ball-carrier throws the ball directly at the tagger, then the tagger may play the ball.

The tagger must move away from the ball-carrier and assume a neutral position. The tagger may not move towards a support player to whom the ball-carrier could pass the ball. However, as soon as the ball leaves the hands of the ball-carrier, then the tagger may leave the neutral position.

After a tag, the opponents must allow the ball-carrier to play the ball. The opponents may not be any closer than one meter from the ball-carrier. No part of an opponent's arms or legs may be extended within the one meter zone. This distance allows the ball-carrier to extend the arms to make the pass.

Opponents other than the tagger may position themselves between the ball-carrier and other members of the ball-carrier's team. These players may intercept the ball after it has been played.

Upon being tagged, the ball-carrier may decide to place the ball on the ground. Instantly is different from immediately. Playing the ball immediately means at or before the 'ly' at the end of pronouncing the word im-med-i-ate-ly. Placing the ball instantly means at the 'in' at the beginning of pronouncing the word instantly, without taking further forward steps. When this is done, a tag zone is created. It's a circle with a one meter radius with the center where the ball is placed.

Once this zone is created any of the players, other than the ball-carrier and tagger, may enter it from the direction of their own goal line, and play the ball. Think of the zone as a house with the front door facing the opponents' goal line. Players you must enter through the back door. Players may not use the side door.

Once a player has entered the tag zone and taken possession of the ball, that player must play the ball immediately by leaving the tag zone or by passing or otherwise playing the ball.

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If a player has taken possession of the ball in the tag zone, an opponent who has entered the tag zone from the correct direction may tag the new ball-carrier while still in the tag zone. In this situation, the ball-carrier may declare a ruck or maul prior to the tag.

During this time the tagger of the original ball-carrier and the original ball-carrier must both take neutral positions. This effort takes those two players outside the tag zone. Only after they have vacated the tag zone may they support or oppose the new ball-carrier. They may not re-enter the tag zone until players other than themselves have taken possession of the ball or the ball has left the tag zone.

Any player, including the tagger and ball-carrier, may be located anywhere outside the zone. There are no off-side lines established. If a player comes into the zone and causes the ball to leave the zone towards that players' support and an opponent is lurking there, the opponent may play the ball.

If the ball-carrier is in the field-of-play and is approaching the goal line and starting to reach out to touch the ball down in in-goal as the tag occurs, then the ball carrier should be allowed to complete the movement and, if successful, be awarded a try or a touch down accordingly.

Guidelines for a tag in in-goal are covered in Law 22.

The above defines the preferred and proper method of executing a tag, as it fully reflects all the characteristics that can be translated quickly and easily into the contact game. However, if both teams agree, players may use devices such as belts with detachable tapes or flags that a tagger may remove from the ball-carrier to indicate that a tag has occurred. No guidelines are made concerning the form of the devices. However, in practice their use should maintain the important principles of the tag, which are:

1. A two handed tag anywhere between the waist and the knee.
2. Immediate action on the part of the tagged player.
3. Neutrality of action on the part of the tagger.

If the teams cannot agree on the use of the devices then the match shall be played without them.

Penalty: For failure of the ball-carrier to play the ball immediately or to place the ball instantly: Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

For failure of a player who gains possession of the ball in a tag zone to leave the tag zone or otherwise play the ball immediately: Free kick

For a ball-carrier causing the ball to go into touch after a tag; Penalty kick 15 meters from the touch line.

For other offenses by the ball-carrier's team: Penalty kick.

For offenses by the opponents: Penalty kick

Law 16: Ruck

A ruck can only take place in the field-of-play. There shall be no contest for the ball during any part of a ruck. At least one player from each team must be in close proximity to the ball for a ruck to be declared

A ruck may be declared in two circumstances. First, a ball carrier may, before being tagged, place the ball on the ground, crouch over it and declare "Ruck". Second, when the ball is otherwise on the ground any player may crouch over the ball and declare "Ruck". In either event a tag cannot take place and the player must set the ruck. If the player has crouched but is tagged before declaring the ruck, the referee declares "Tag" and thereby disallows the ruck.

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Collisions must be avoided. Priority shall be given to the first player that attempts to crouch over the ball. Only players on their feet may declare a ruck. A player that crouches over the ball and does not declare a ruck, but prevents an opponent from playing the ball is guilty of obstruction.

If the ball is on the ground because a ball carrier placed it there instantly after the tag, then players approaching the ball with intentions of declaring a ruck must do so from their side of the established tag zone. They must come through the gate.

The player that declares the ruck becomes the "setter". After a ruck is declared, the opponent closest to the setter must immediately approach a position in front of and facing the setter, and also take a crouched position. The setter and opponent shall then bind onto each other by placing a hand on each other's shoulder.

All other players of both teams must retire, without delay, behind a line drawn parallel to the goal lines through the hind most foot of those players' team-mates who are taking part in the ruck. Otherwise the players are off-side and liable to penalty.

Supporting players, one from each team, must immediately approach from an on-side position and, without interfering with the ball, bind onto and alongside their teammates that are already in the ruck by placing an arm around the team-mates' torsos. The supporting players may bind on either side of their team-mates. All players who participate in the ruck must take a crouched position with knees bent.

While taking place the ruck must stay at the place that it was set, and must not move towards either goal line, or move sideways.

The ball may not be released from the ruck before the setter's team-mate has become properly bound. When the team-mate becomes bound the ball may be released from the ruck either by another team-mate of the setter placing two hands on, or picking up, the ball or by the setter or team-mate heeling the ball backwards from the ruck, in which event any on-side player of either team that is not participating in the ruck may approach and play the ball.

As soon as all four of the players required to form a ruck are in position and properly bound the referee declares "Ruck ended" and the ball must be released immediately from the ruck.

If two players from the opponents' team become properly bound significantly before the supporting player of the setter's team becomes bound then the referee declares "Turnover", and awards a scrum, with the opponents to throw in the ball.

If the second players from each team approach and become properly bound at substantially the same time then the referee declares "Ruck ended", regardless of which of the second player is the first to bind.

If the ball is on the ground because a ball carrier, upon being tagged, had instantly placed the ball, then neither that tagged ball carrier, nor the tagger may join the ruck or remove the ball from the ruck, nor may they be the first player to touch the ball if it is heeled from the ruck.

Penalty: For failure to bind properly: Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

For off-side infringements: Penalty kick.

For causing a ruck to move from the place at which it was set: Penalty kick

For a tagger or tagged player joining the ruck, or removing the ball from the ruck, or being the first player to play the ball after it is heeled from the ruck: Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

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For all other infringements by the ball-carrier's team: Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

For all other infringements by the opponents of the ball-carrier: Penalty kick.

Law 17: Maul

A maul can only take place in the field-of-play. There shall be no contest for the ball during any part of a maul.

When a ball-carrier who has not been tagged comes near to an opponent and then turns away from the opponent's goal line and declares "Maul", then a tag cannot take place, and the ball-carrier must set a maul. If the ball-carrier has turned but is tagged before declaring the maul, the referee declares "Tag" and thereby disallows the maul. As soon as a maul is declared any player may take part in that maul, including players of either team that, prior to the maul being declared, were taking neutral positions as a result of a previous tag.

The nearby opponent, without interfering with the play of the ball, must immediately approach a position behind the ball-carrier and shall properly bind by holding the ball-carrier at the hips with both hands. The ball-carrier must offer, but not throw, the ball to a supporting teammate.

All other players of both teams must retire, without delay, behind a line drawn parallel to the goal lines through the hind most foot of those players' teammates who are taking part in the maul. Otherwise those players are off-side and liable to penalty.

A supporting player of the ball-carrier's team must immediately approach from behind the hindmost foot of the ball-carrier close enough to take the ball, and shall then turn away from the opponents' goal line, allowing the first ball-carrier to properly bind by holding the supporting player at the hips with both hands.

A second opponent, without interfering with the play of the ball, must immediately approach the maul from behind the hindmost foot of the first opponent, and must properly bind by holding the first opponent at the hips with both hands.

The ball may not be released from the maul before a supporting team-mate has taken the ball and has become properly bound by the payer that declared the maul. As soon as the supporter becomes properly bound the ball may be released from the maul either by the supporter handing the ball to a team-mate or by the supporter throwing the ball backwards from the maul.

As soon as all four of the players required to form a maul are in position and properly bound the referee declares "Maul ended" and the supporting player must immediately hand the ball to a team mate or throw the ball backwards from the maul, in which event any on-side player of either team may approach and play the ball.

If two players from the ball-carrier's team become properly tagged up significantly before the second opponent becomes tagged up then the referee declares "Advance" and the ball-carrier's team may, while still facing their own goal line, advance at a walking pace towards their opponents' goal line. The opponents must not resist that advance. As soon as the second opponent becomes properly bound up the referee declares "Maul ended".

If two players from the opponents' team become properly tagged up significantly before the supporting player of the ball-carrier's team becomes tagged up then the referee declares "Turnover", and awards a scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

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If the second players from each team approach and become properly bound up at substantially the same time then the referee declares "Maul ended", regardless of which second player is the first to bind.

Penalty: For failure to bind properly: Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

For off-side infringements: Penalty kick.

For all other infringements by the ball-carrier's team: Scrum with the opponents to throw in the ball.

For all other infringements by the opponents of the ball-carrier: Penalty kick

Law 18: Mark

The provisions of the Mark Law are fully applicable in the youth non-contact youth game. However, the occurrence of the Mark is sufficiently rare that no Guidelines have been developed. If that circumstance changes, then Guidelines will be developed accordingly.

Law 19: Touch and Line-out

What are known as "sidelines" in most of sport in this country, we in rugby call "touch lines". When the ball is "out of bounds" we call it "in touch"

For the ball to be considered in touch it must have passed the vertical plane of the touch line and touched the ground or any object, including a player or a spectator, beyond that touch line. If the ball touches the touch line, it is in touch. The ball is also in touch if a player is carrying the ball and touches the line or the ground beyond the touch line.

If a player who is outside that player's 22-meter line kicks the ball out on the fly, the line-out is formed in line with the spot where the kick was made. If a kick from in front of the 22-meter line bounces before it crosses the touch line, or if a kick is taken from behind the 22-meter line, or if a team is awarded a penalty kick and kicks the ball into touch, the line-out is formed where the ball crosses the touch line. If a player carrying the ball touches the touch line the line-out is formed at that place.

The place right under where the ball crossed the vertical plane or where the ball or player touched the touch line is where the line-out is formed. A lineout cannot be set within five meters of either goal line. This spot is called the "mark-of-touch". At right angles to the touch line at the mark is the "line-of-touch"

The team not responsible for putting the ball into touch throws in the ball, except at a line-out following a penalty kick, at which the kicking team throws in the ball.

A line-out is the method for putting the ball back in play after it has gone into touch. Like a scrum a line-out is a set move, with defined positions. Unlike scrums in the youth non-contact youth game, line-outs are contested. Here's how it works. Each team provides up to four players to form the line-out, namely two jumpers, a thrower and a receiver. All other players must stay 10 meters behind the line-of-touch, or on their goal line if that is closer, until the line-out is ended.

The thrower stands in touch at the mark-of-touch. The jumpers stand a half-meter on their side of the line-of-touch no closer than 5 and no farther than 15 meters in-field, facing the thrower. The receivers may be anywhere between the 5- and 15-meter line and a few steps behind the line-of-touch. The non-throwing thrower stands between the touch line and the 5-meter line a step or two behind the line-of-

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touch. Of course the 5 and 15 meter measurements may be adjusted for younger players and smaller fields.

At a prearranged signal the thrower tosses the ball to either jumper straight along the line-of-touch. Remember that this is a contested phase of play and fairness is paramount. It must also go 5 meters before any one touches it. The referee awards a free kick for a ball that is not thrown 5 meters or for a ball that is played before it has traveled 5 meters. If the throw is 5 meters but not straight, the non-throwing team can ask for a scrum on the 15-meter line and throw in the ball or have another line-out and throw in the ball.

Until the throw-in players in the line-out must stay on their own side of the line-of-touch. After the ball is thrown the jumpers from either team may try to gain possession of it. The referee should be in a position to monitor the throw-in while making sure players do not close the gap early. Also the referee needs to keep players not in the line-out, the backs, from creeping up in front of the 10-meter restriction. The idea is to create space for the attacking backs to work with. If the line-of-touch is crossed early or the defending backs come off side, the referee will award a penalty to the non-offending team at the spot of that off-side offense, not less than 15 meters from the touch line.

For players who are on-side the line-out is ended and the off-side lines disappear when the ball is passed or tapped back to the receiver. If the throw goes beyond 15 meters from the touch line the line-out is ended and any on-side player may advance to claim the ball.

After catching the throw a team may elect to form a ruck or a maul at the line-out. Backs from each team must respect the 10-meter restriction until the ruck or maul has ended or the ruck or maul has moved completely off the line-of-touch at which time the off-side line becomes the last foot of a player bound in the ruck or maul.

One final option is available to the throwing team. Let's say that the Red team kicks the ball far downfield and it trickles over the touch line. Two backs from the Blue team get there quickly. One picks the ball up and throws it in to the waiting team-mate. This is legal as long as the ball was thrown in straight along the line-of-touch and traveled the required 5 meters before it was touched or hit the ground. In fact, a Blue player can throw the ball 5 meters along the line-of-touch, and then run infield and play the ball. The quick throw may be taken anywhere between the mark-of-touch and Blue's goal line. The advantage here is that Blue can start an attack before Red can organize a defense. Quick line-outs are rare but can add excitement to the game.

Penalty: Failure to properly and quickly form a lineout: Free Kick on the line of touch, in 15 meters.

Not allowing the throw to go 5 meters: Free Kick on the line of touch, in 15 meters.

Crossing the line of touch before the throw or pushing shoving holding or levering off an opponent: Penalty Kick on the line of touch, in 15 meters.

Backs crossing the 10-meter restriction before the line-out has ended: Penalty kick at the place of the infringement.

Ball thrown in not straight: Scrum on the line-of-touch, in 15 meters

Law 20: Scrum

The scrum is a phase of play used to restart the game after a minor infraction, such as a knock-on or a forward pass. The referee may also order a scrum in the event of accidental or unintentional instances of off-side or obstruction. The non-offending team has the honor of throwing the ball into the scrum. If the ball or ball-carrier contacts the referee and gains an advantage the team in possession of the ball will have the put in. Be sure to read the section on In-Goal to determine who gets the put in for scrums in those instances.

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To form a scrum each team nominates three players. Two props and a hooker make up each team's half of the scrum. The props stand on either side of the hooker and all three bind together with their arms. The hooker may bind either over or under the arms of the props. This is how the front row of a scrum looks in the senior game. As with the senior game, in the youth touch version of rugby this "front row" must remain tightly bound until the scrum has ended. In addition to the three who make up a team's pack each team has a scrum-half, one of which will put in the ball.

When the two groups are properly bound and spaced no more than one arm's length between the two packs the referee directs the engagement sequence. At the word "Crouch" the two packs bend at the knees and waist to a stable crouched position. The referee then says "Touch" and all four props reach with their outside arm across the tunnel and touch their direct opponent on the outside shoulder. The referee then says "Pause" and allows a short pause to ensure all body positions are correct before saying "Engage". At the command "Engage" the two packs take a step forward and lean towards each other, contacting the other team along the line of the rear of the shoulders and the back of the neck. With their outside hand each prop will grasp their direct opponent on the torso.

To avoid head collisions the members of one pack position themselves so that on the engagement, each player's head will go to the left of the head of the direct opponent. This results in one prop, on the left, contacting only one opponent. This player is known as the loose-head prop. The right side prop is between two opponents and is known as the tight-head prop. To avoid any hand fighting between the props, the outside, or left, arm of the loose-head prop goes inside the right arm of the opposing tight-head prop.

It is imperative that all players in the scrum support their own weight and stay on their feet. The "lean together" described above should be no more than an achievement of the proper position needed to form the scrum. While the scrum is a non-contested phase of play at the youth touch level, it is important that players be taught, and learn, safety and proper technique for when they graduate to the full game where scrums are "live" and there is much pushing involved. Coaches and referees should monitor technique closely at scrum time.

Once the scrum is engaged the scrum-half should put the ball in quickly. Standing at the tunnel formed by the two engaged packs, usually to the left (the loose-head side) of that player's pack, the ball is to be put in with a one-motion, two handed toss so that it hits the ground just inside the left foot of the Loose-head prop. The ball must travel right down the center-line of the tunnel. As the ball is tossed in the hooker strikes at it with a sweeping motion to hook the ball, usually using the right foot, bringing it back through the legs. This should be done rather gently so the ball remains under control and does not go shooting back several meters. With the ball positioned on the ground under the pack's feet the scrum-half then comes behind the scrum, picks the ball up and either passes to the waiting backs or tries an attacking run. Optionally the hooker may use a harder strike to send the ball farther away from the scrum to a back waiting to play the ball.

As mentioned above the scrum in non-contact youth game is not contested. There will be no shoving, no twisting or pulling of the other team, and the team that was awarded the put in must win the ball. The hooker of the team awarded the ball is the only player allowed to have a foot off the ground, then only while hooking the ball, and not before. The opposing scrum-half may follow the ball past the tunnel but must keep both feet behind the ball to avoid being called for off-side.

Though there is no contest for the ball at this phase, the referee ensures a straight put in, as well as other facets of fair play. Any breach of fair play may be sanctioned. A put in not straight or an early strike by the hooker may result in a caution. Repeated not straight or early strike should bring a Free Kick. Pushing, pulling, twisting or any other action deemed to be unsafe may result in a Penalty kick.

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The off-side line for each team's player's not in the scrum, other than the scrum-half, (the backs) is a line, parallel to the goal lines, behind the last foot of a player bound into the scrum.

For players who are on-side the scrum ends and the off-side lines disappear when the ball is beyond that last foot or the scrum-half places a hand on the ball. A player may not make any motion without the ball to deceive the other team into thinking the ball is out in an attempt to draw an off-side penalty. Such an action may bring a penalty against the team making the fake.

In the senior game each scrum is made up of eight players arranged in three rows. All are tightly bound, engagements are an opportunity for dominance, both hookers try to gain possession and the two packs are pushing hard against each other. In all of sport the scrum is unique in its display of unity and coordination among several individual players working as a solid component.

*Penalty: For failure to form a scrum properly: Free kick.
For failure to throw the ball in properly: Free kick
For failure to hook the ball properly: Free kick
For off-side infringements: Penalty kick
For any dangerous actions: Penalty kick*

Law 21: Penalty Kicks and Free Kicks

In most cases penalty kicks and free kicks are awarded and taken at the place of the infringement, but the kick must be taken at least 5 meters from the opponents' goal line. Instead of taking a kick a team can opt for a scrum at the mark.

The kick has to be a clear one. If the ball is held, it must clearly leave the kicker's hands. Holding the ball and tapping it against the foot is not a kick, nor is bouncing it on the knee. If the ball is not held and is kicked when it is on the ground it must clearly leave the mark. The ball can be kicked in any direction.

Players of the kicker's team shall put themselves on-side by dropping back behind the kicker as quickly as they can, but if they are not able to do so before the kick is taken, they should not be penalized unless they take part in play before they become on-side.

The kicker's opponents must not delay or interfere in any way with the ball or the kicker, and shall put themselves on-side by dropping back as quickly as they can behind a line 10 meters from the mark, or to their own goal line if that is nearer to the mark. The distance that they have to drop back may be proportionately less on a smaller field. If the kick is taken while the players are dropping back they must not take part in play until they become on-side.

If it's a penalty kick the opponents must stay behind the line until the kick is taken. If it's a free kick opponents who are behind the line can charge over the line as soon as the kicker starts to move to kick.

A player may score a goal from a penalty kick.

*Penalty: For infringements by the kicker's team: The opponents are usually awarded a scrum at the mark.
For infringements by the opponents: The kicker's team is awarded a second penalty kick or free kick at the place 10 meters forward from the original kick.*

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Law 22: In-goal

What American football refers to as the “end zone” ruggers call “in-goal”. It is the area bounded by the goal line and the dead-ball line and the two touch-in-goal lines. In-goal includes the goal line but not the other three lines that form its boundaries. Some of the laws of rugby are different in in-goal than they are in the field-of-play. While there can still be off-side, knock-ons and obstruction in in-goal, there can not be rucks, mauls, scrums or line-outs.

In-goal is where tries are scored by the attacking team, or touch-downs are made by the defenders. To be awarded a try or touch-down, the ball must be grounded in in-Goal. To ground the ball a player carrying the ball must touch it to the ground in In-Goal, which includes the goal line. If the ball is on the ground in in-goal, not in possession of a player, then a player may press down on the ball with a hand(s) or arm(s) or may fall on it with the chest or belly. A player who is in touch or outside the touch-in-goal line or over the dead ball line may reach across the line and place a hand on the ball in in-goal, thus grounding it. Placing a foot, leg or head on the ball in in-goal does not count as grounding. Picking up the ball is not grounding it.

It is important that the referee watch the grounding of the ball to ensure it is done properly and to see which team first grounded the ball. If the referee is in doubt as to which team first grounded the ball, the referee should order a scrum 5 meters out from the goal line with the attacking team to throw in the ball.

If an attacker first grounds the ball a try is awarded, and play is restarted with a kick-off at midfield.

If a defender first grounds the ball a touch-down (touchback in American Football) is awarded and play is restarted in one of two ways. If the defending team caused the ball to go into in-goal, for instance with an errant pass, a scrum will be set 5 meters from the goal line, with the attacking team to throw in the ball. If an attacker caused the ball to go into in-goal, possibly with a kick ahead, the referee awards a drop-out at the defender’s 22-meter line. If a team kicks the ball from the field-of-play, and without being touched by an opponent it goes over or touches the opponents’ dead-ball line or either touch-in-goal line, including touching the corner post, the referee offers the opponents a choice of either a drop out at the 22-meter line or a scrum at the place where the kick was taken.

If a ball carrier is tagged in in-goal, then the player is held up, and referee awards a 5-meter scrum with the attacking team to throw in the ball. However, if the ball carrier is in the act of grounding the ball as the tag occurs, then the ball carrier should be allowed to complete the movement and, if successful, be awarded a try or a touch down accordingly.

For infringements in in-goal, or if the ball travels into in-goal after a knock-on in the field-of-lay, the restart is 5 meters from the goal line in line with the place where the infringement or knock-on occurred.