



**ROOKIE RUGBY**

# COACH WORKBOOK

AN INTRODUCTION  
TO RUGBY FOR  
BOYS & GIRLS  
OF ALL AGES



**GET INTO  
RUGBY**



National  
Coaching  
Certification  
Program

# GUIDE BOOK

AN INTRODUCTION  
TO RUGBY FOR  
BOYS & GIRLS  
OF ALL AGES

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National  
Coaching  
Certification  
Program

## PARTNERS IN COACH EDUCATION

The National Coaching Certification Program is a collaborative program of the Government of Canada, provincial/territorial governments, national/provincial/territorial sport organizations, and the Coaching Association of Canada.



Coaching Association of Canada  
Association canadienne des entraîneurs



The programs of this organization are funded  
in part by the Government of Canada.



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## PARTNERS IN TRAINING AND EDUCATION

**Rugby Canada:** As it relates to the Training and Education of coaches, Rugby Canada has harmonized the minimum standards of World Rugby and the NCCP into one program. As a result, upon completion, coaches walk away with 2 separate designations: A World Rugby Level Certification and an NCCP Qualification.

**World Rugby:** Is Rugby Canada's International Federation. As it relates to Training and Education, WR creates and shares rugby specific content on the "what" and "how" of coaching, match officiating, strength & conditioning and medical personnel. WR also determines minimum standards for the achievement of Levels of Certification. World Rugby training and certifications are tracked on the Passport.

**National Coaching Certification Program:** The NCCP is a partnership of Canadian sport and multi-sport organizations and the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) that has created minimum standards for coaching in various contexts of sport. The NCCP is based on a set of outcomes, criteria, and evidence of coaching behaviours. NCCP training and certifications are tracked on the Locker.

## RR LEARNING OUTCOMES & NCCP OUTCOMES CRITERIA & EVIDENCE

Rookie Rugby Learning Outcomes & National Coaching Certification Program Outcomes, Criteria and Evidence

The goal of this training is to enable parents, coaches, and teachers to create positive, safe, and inclusive playing opportunities for kids aged under 12. In this training you will learn:

- What Rookie Rugby is and where it fits in Rugby Canada's Long-term Development model
- The role of the coach in creating positive sport environments
- How to create a practice plan
- How to deliver an active, fun, purposeful and safe Rookie Rugby session

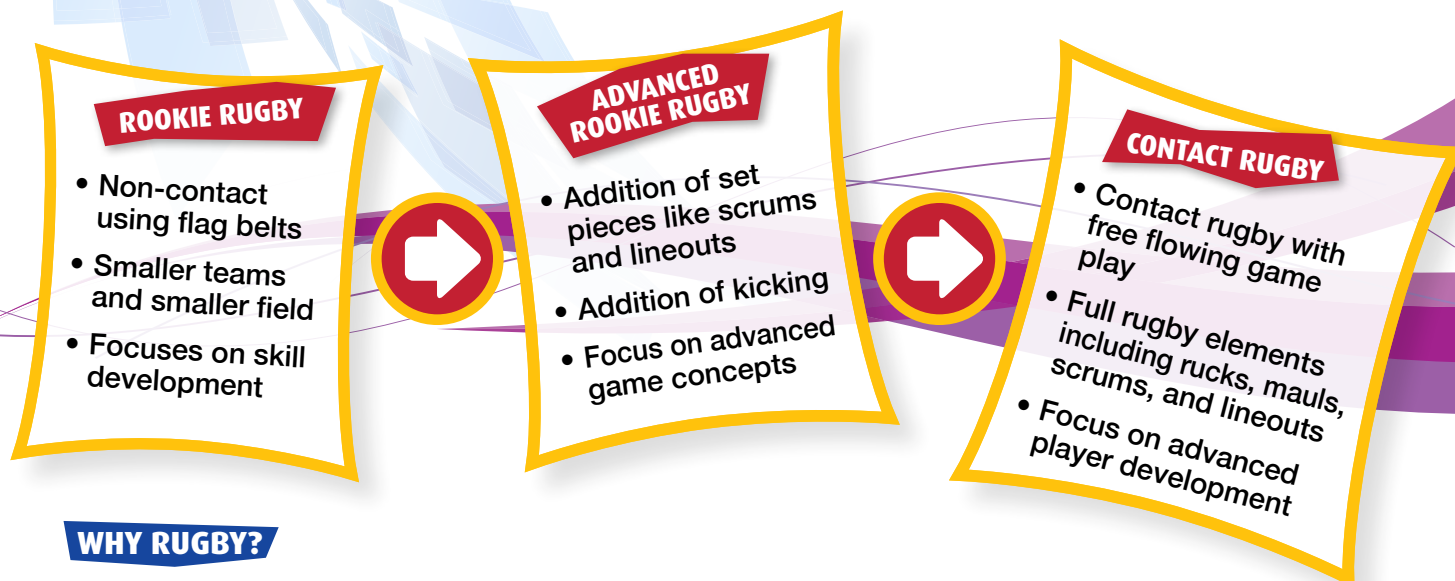
This coaching pathway covers the following outcomes, criteria, and evidence in the Community Initiation context of the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP):

OUTCOME	CRITERIA	TRAINING
Make Ethical Decisions	Apply an ethical decision-making process	NCCP Make Ethical Decisions training
Provide Support to Athletes in Training	Lead participants in appropriate activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rookie Rugby training</li><li>• World Rugby Coaching Children</li></ul>
Plan a Practice	Plan activities in a safe practice environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rookie Rugby training</li><li>• World Rugby Rugby Ready</li><li>• World Rugby Concussion Management for the General Public</li></ul>

## INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have taken the first step for introducing the game of rugby to young players across Canada. **Rookie Rugby** is the non-contact game for Youth under the age of 12. The game is played in clubs, schools, community organizations and backyards across the country. The rules are simple and easy to learn – kids will have so much fun playing this fast-paced sport.

**Rugby Canada** has designed this book to enable parents, coaches, and teachers to create playing opportunities for kids of all ages. In here you will find everything you need to know about the game including how to teach various skills, rules of the game, and much more.



## WHY RUGBY?

Rugby is a diverse sport for individuals of all ages. It builds teamwork, understanding, cooperation, and respect for fellow athletes. Rugby is proud of its ability to retain high standards of sportsmanship, ethical behavior, and fair play.

## ROOKIE RUGBY CORE VALUES

**Rugby Canada** believes in developing participants not only as rugby players, but as contributing members of the community. This holistic approach is consistent with **World Rugby's** five core values as a way to give rugby players more than just physical sport. **Rookie Rugby** adds "Fun" to the six values, which aim to teach rugby participants the unique essence of rugby and to uphold players of the game to a high standard both on and off the field. They are:

**INTEGRITY** **PASSION** **SOLIDARITY**  
**DISCIPLINE** **FUN** **RESPECT**

## CANADA'S SPORT FOR LIFE: LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT STAGES

Rugby Canada is committed to the overall health of its participants and supports Canada's Sport for Long-Term Development Stages (LTD) Pathway and the development of Physical Literacy. Rookie Rugby has integrated both of these initiatives into the resource and overall program.

### LTD PATHWAY

Rookie Rugby is perfect for a wide range of ages and abilities, consisting of skills and games appropriate for all stages of the LTD stages. The three primary stages that are targeted are the **Active Start**, **FUNDamentals**, and **Learn to Train** because they aim to develop the foundation of skills for individuals preparing to be active later in life. **Rookie Rugby** targets these stages to develop the basic skills needed for athletes preparing to play rugby throughout their lives.

**ACTIVE START**  
MALES 0-6  
FEMALES 0-6

**FUNDAMENTALS**  
MALES 6-9  
FEMALES 6-8

**LEARN TO TRAIN**  
MALES 9-12  
FEMALES 8-12



### PHYSICAL LITERACY

Canada's Sport for Life vision is to help Canadians achieve excellence in sport and remain healthy through physical literacy. Physical literacy is making sure that individuals have the competence, confidence, and motivation to be active.

**Rookie Rugby** strives to include physical literacy components within each game and activity. These fundamental movements will help participants develop the competence, confidence, and motivation to continue playing rugby and remain active throughout their lives. Major movements and skills that participants can expect to master while playing **Rookie Rugby** are:



**RUNNING**



**CATCHING**



**AGILITY**



**PASSING**



**KICKING**



**JUMPING**



**PUSHING/PULLING**



**COORDINATION**



**BALANCE**

## BEFORE THE MATCH

### SAFETY

Rugby and Rookie Rugby's top priority is players' safety. Coaches, match officials and players must understand how to play rugby in order to enjoy the game while also being safe. As Rookie Rugby is an introduction to rugby, the game is played in a non-contact, flag format. As players progress through the age groups, some elements of the contact game are carefully included to ensure a staged approach to contact development. Players may choose to participate in non-contact rugby throughout their lifetime should they wish.

### GAME SETUP

#### THE PLAYING SPACE

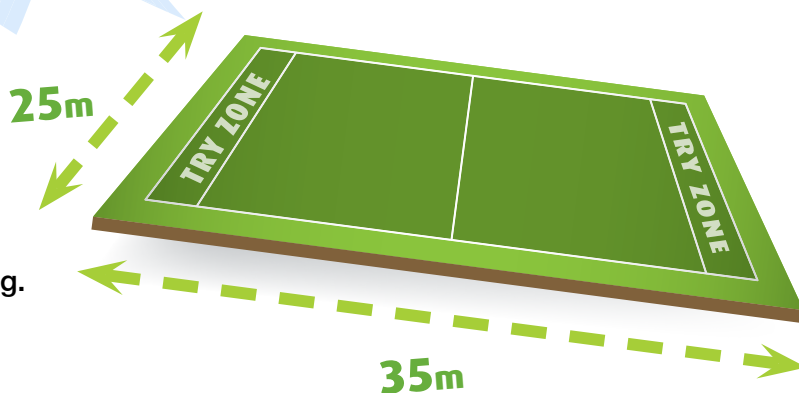
Maximum recommended dimensions: 35 meters in length and 25 meters in width.  
The try zone: Exactly 5 metres deep from the try line and clearly marked with cones.

*\*The size of the field can be adapted to suit the age and ability of the teams participating.*

#### THE PLAYING SURFACES

Rookie Rugby can be played in any open space of any size. You can play on grass, inside a gym or even in a parking lot! A full sized field can be lined for several rookie rugby fields.

A full-sized rugby field or pitch is 70 metres wide and up to 100 metres long.



### EQUIPMENT

#### THE BALL

The rugby ball is oval and made of four panels. It comes in various sizes and Rugby Canada has made recommendations on which ball is appropriate for which ages. Using a smaller ball when players are learning the game is encouraged in order to build success and allow players to develop skills appropriately.

The following ball sizes are recommended:

- Size 3 for 4-10 Y/O
- Size 4 for 11-14 Y/O
- Size 5 for 15 Y/O+



*\*When running girls-only programs, it is optional to continue using a smaller ball than what might be recommended for the age group (Using a size 4 in High School for example). A smaller ball for females can increase success in skill development.*

#### FIELD MARKERS

Use cones or painted field lines to clearly mark the sidelines and scoring areas.



## FLAGS

In an effort to increase the running, passing and catching ability of young rugby players, Rookie Rugby replaces tackling with flags, similar to flag football. Each Rookie Rugby flag has one adjustable belt strap with 2 Velcro flags attaching on the sides of the hip.

Flags must be worn over t-shirts and must not be tucked into pockets or wrapped around belts.

Official Rookie Rugby balls and flags are available at [www.rookierugby.ca](http://www.rookierugby.ca).

## CORRECT



Flags on hips and placed upside down



Flag belt and flags worn over shirt

## INCORRECT



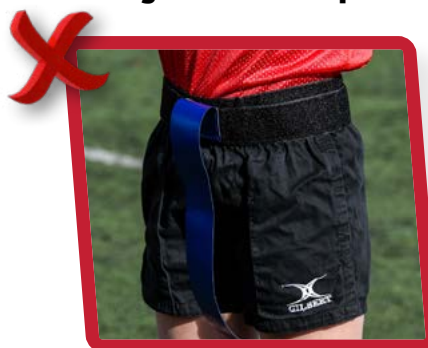
Flag wrapped around belt



Flags tucked into pockets



Shirt untucked and worn over belt and flags



Flags not worn on hips

## PLAYERS' CLOTHING

### PERSONAL SAFETY APPAREL

Rookie Rugby requires appropriate footwear and flags for a safe playing environment.

Footwear should be appropriate for the type of playing surface used in order to minimize risk for players. Cleats are the most appropriate footwear for grass fields. Tennis shoes are the most appropriate footwear for indoor surfaces. Both cleats and tennis shoes may be equally appropriate for turf fields.

### MOUTH GUARDS

Mouth-guards may prevent dental and facial injuries during accidental contact.



T-SHIRT - - - - ->

SPORT PINNIE - - - - ->

FLAG BELT - - - - ->

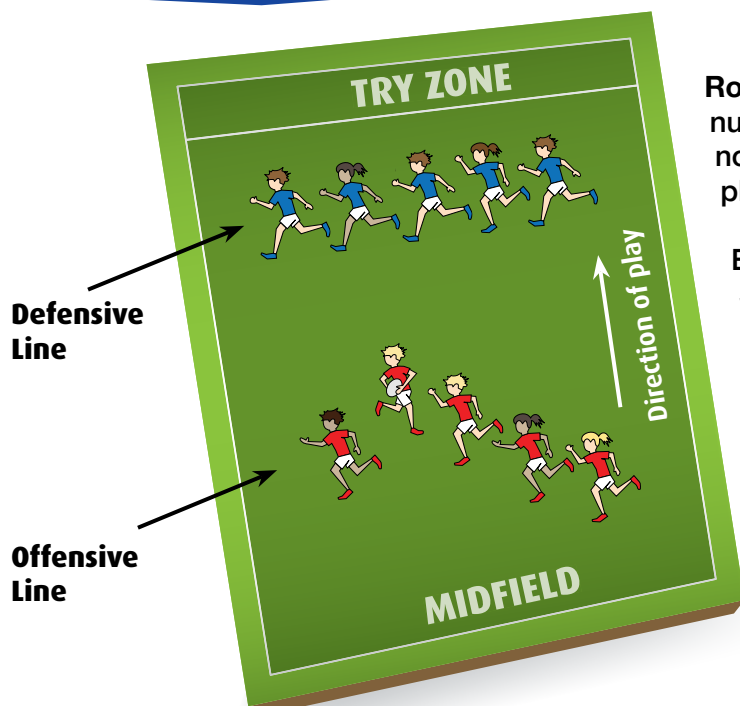
SHORTS - - - - ->

SOCKS - - - - ->

CLEATS - - - - ->



## NUMBER OF PLAYERS



Rookie Rugby can be played between teams with equal numbers of players on each team. Each team contains no more than seven players and no less than four. Five players per team is the preferred format of Rookie Rugby.

Each team may have an agreed number of substitutions. Substituted players may return to play during any stoppage in play. Each player is encouraged to play every position on the field.

Rookie Rugby is about learning and participation. It is encouraged to keep team numbers at or below 7v7. More players on the field means less opportunity for each player to pass, run, catch, defend, and score.

## TIME OF PLAY

A Rookie Rugby game is made up of two halves, running time. It is recommended that each half last between 5 and 20 minutes, depending on players' ages and abilities. Halftime should be 2-5 minutes in length. The clock will be stopped for injury, water breaks or at the referee's discretion.

Recommended times for single games: (Running Clock)

- Elementary Schools: Two 10-minute halves
- Middle Schools: Two 12-minute halves
- High Schools: Two 15-minute halves

Recommended times for multiple games in one day:  
(Festival Formats)

- All ages/grades: Two 7-10-minute halves



**AGE GRADE LAW VARIATIONS:** Below you will find a detailed description of the basic rules of the game of rugby. For a complete set of law variations for community rugby please visit:

## PLAYING THE GAME

### OBJECTIVE OF THE GAME AND SCORING

The objective of the game is to score more points than the opposing team. To earn points, the offensive team will work to move the ball forward until one player can run past the goal line and into the try zone and touch the ball to the ground with two hands. A score in rugby is much like a touchdown in American football, but players must touch the ball down to the ground. This action is called grounding the ball and will result in a score, which is called a 'try' in rugby, worth 5 points. Defences will prevent the offense from moving forward with flag pulls, which force the offense to pass. Defence can also try to intercept the ball to cause a turnover.

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

### SCORING A TRY



## OPEN PLAY

### MOVING THE BALL

Players advance the ball by running towards the opposition's try zone (in-goal). Players run forward, passing the ball from one player to another. All passes in rugby must be thrown sideways or toward your own try zone (in-goal).

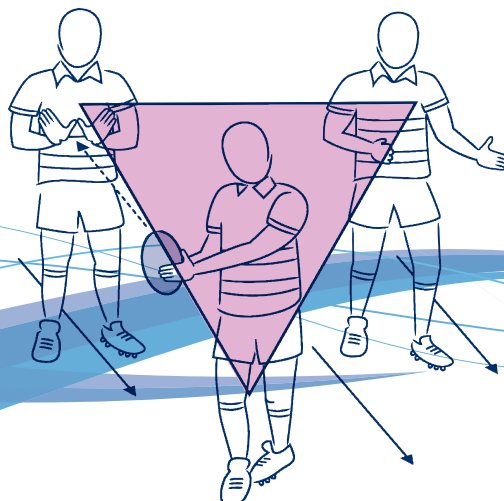
### OFFENSE

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

**GO FORWARD** means that in order to score, all offensive players, including support players, should be moving toward their opponent's goal line. Players will naturally run from sideline to sideline in order to avoid a flag pull. Get them moving forward by running towards the spaces between defensive players.

**SUPPORT** in rugby means that players are 'following' the ball carrier in the proper position to receive a pass.

- Players should work to support their teammates and always be ready to receive a pass. The easiest way to teach this concept is by using shapes, specifically triangles, by placing them in an offensive shape. The most effective shape in rugby is a 'triangle' because it provides the ball carrier multiple options. Since ball carriers can only pass laterally or backwards, these players will be to the right and left, and a step behind, creating a triangle.
- When a defensive player removes the ball carrier's flag, the defensive player is 'removed' from play until they return the flag. This creates a large open space in the defence, which is vulnerable for attack. Positioning players in support positions will enable them to take advantage of this situation. In order to be successful, support players must move forward into these open spaces.



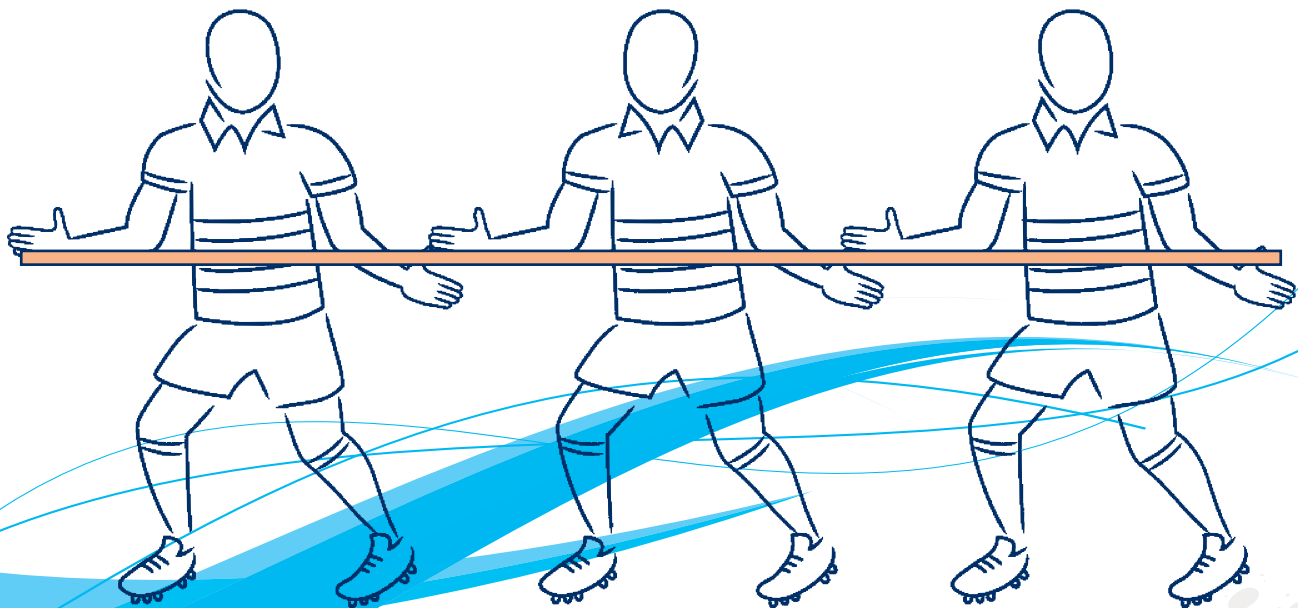
## DEFENCE

Defence prevents the opposing team from scoring. Similar to offense, defence is also taught in a basic shape, in this case a flat line.

A flat line defence is similar to a solid wall without space or gaps. Space in a defensive line will create places for the offense to run through and score.

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

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



## DEFENSIVE QUESTIONS

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

## PLAYING WITH FLAGS

The game of **Rookie Rugby** is played with flags to replace the action of tackling. Flag rugby is the preferred method to introduce rugby. If no flags are available, the game can be played as two hand touch; however, flags are always the better option. **Rookie Rugby** is played with flags for several reasons:

### 1 FLAG RUGBY KEEPS IT SAFE

Flag rugby eliminates the opportunity for players to push or shove. Flag rugby increases the safety of the game for kids, especially when playing indoors.

### 2 FLAG RUGBY KEEPS IT SIMPLE

Ball carriers will clearly know when their flag is pulled, creating continuity. This free flowing part of the game is important for new players to learn the basic skills of rugby.

### 3 FLAG RUGBY IS EASIER TO REFEREE

Athletes will proclaim “FLAG” as they pull each flag, making a clear indicator for the referee. Determining if a two-handed touch has been made can be more difficult.

### 4 FLAG RUGBY ENCOURAGES CO-ED PLAY

Flag rugby eliminates body-to-body contact, which allows for less issues with co-ed play.

### 5 FLAG RUGBY DEVELOPS DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Using flags more closely reflect a tackle situation in rugby by taking both players out of the game temporarily. Similar to tackle rugby, both the ball carrier and defensive player must perform a task before returning to play. The ball carrier must pass the ball and replace their flag, and the defensive player must return the pulled flag to the ball carrier.



## FLAG ETIQUETTE

While the offensive team attempts to move the ball forward, the defensive team will attempt to slow them down by pulling the ball carrier's flag, simulating a tackle. A player is "tackled" at any time a flag falls off, whether caused by the defence or other.

Flags must be worn over t-shirts to allow defenders access to the flag. If you place a flag 'upside down' on the belt, it will pop out slightly, allowing a flag pull to be a bit easier.

Once the ball carrier's flag is removed the game will continue by using the following flag etiquette:

### STEP 1

Defender removes the flag, holds it up in the air and yells, "FLAG!" The defender is now out of play and should stand still and wait for the ball carrier.

### STEP 2

The ball carrier must pass the ball to a teammate within three steps or three seconds. After the pass, the player with a flag missing is out of play.

### STEP 3

While play continues the (former) ball carrier must retrieve their flag from where the defender is standing. The defender may return to play after returning the flag.

### STEP 4

The player whose flag was removed must replace their flag on their belt before returning to play.

Note: the referee can call "Flag" and require a pass if the ball carrier's flag is not in the correct place or has fallen off.

Note: If a flag is pulled and the ball carrier can ground the ball correctly in the try zone within three steps, a try will be awarded.

## CONTINUATION

Please note that **Rookie Rugby** is a continuous game, meaning that play does NOT stop when a flag is pulled. Blowing a whistle or stopping play after a flag pull is not recommended for **Rookie Rugby**. If flag etiquette is violated, initially play advantage and only penalize the infraction when play is affected (i.e. a defensive player who has pulled one flag pulls another flag or an offensive player receives a pass before returning their flag to their belt).



## RESTARTS

### STARTING THE GAME AND RESTARTS

At the start of the game or after each score, the team who did not score or is starting the game takes a tap and pass from the centre of the playing field. The defence must be at least 5 steps back during any free pass. A free pass is an uncontested pass allowed from one player to a teammate. Remember it must be lateral or backwards.

### OUT OF BOUNDS

If the ball is passed or carried out of bounds, **Rookie Rugby** begins with a free pass to restart play. The free pass should be one metre in field from the sideline. See “*Rookie Rugby Progressions*” for more advanced lineout opportunities.



## INFRACTIONS

### THE RESULTS OF ANY INFRACTION:

After any violation of **Rookie Rugby** laws, teams follow the same pattern in **Rookie Rugby**.

- 1 If the non-offending team can continue to play, the referee may play advantage and allow play to continue.
- 2 The defence retreats 5 steps, and must wait for the offensive player to pass the ball before moving up the field.
- 3 The offense will make a free pass, laterally or backwards, or start the ball with a tap of the foot. Play is restarted as soon as the pass is made.

## INFRACTION DEFINITIONS

These charts contain the various infractions of the **Rookie Rugby** laws, including a definition and associated picture. Please refer to the previous page for the steps to take following one of these penalty actions.

### INFRACTION ACTION: **KNOCK-ON**



**DEFINITION:** A knock-on occurs when a player fumbles the ball forward.

### INFRACTION ACTION: **FORWARD PASS**



**DEFINITION:** In rugby, passes can only be made laterally or backwards. If a player passes the ball forward to a teammate it will result in a penalty.

### INFRACTION ACTION: **OBSTRUCTION, BLOCKING, OR FENDING OFF**



**DEFINITION:** Players must not obstruct a defender from making a flag pull. This includes the ball carrier using their arms and elbows to block defenders or support players running in the way of a defender and obstructing them from making a flag pull. As a result from it, a turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty. "Spinning" is frequently banned in **Rookie Rugby** play as an obstruction.

### INFRACTION ACTION: **DIVING**



**DEFINITION:** Players must not dive to the ground at any point. Rugby is a game best played on your feet, so players must remain on their feet at all times. A dive in the try zone will result in a penalty to the defence 5 metres from the offense and the try will not be awarded.

### INFRACTION ACTION: **DELIBERATE CONTACT**



**DEFINITION:** Rookie Rugby is a non-contact game, if a player pushes or hits another player it will result in a penalty.

### INFRACTION ACTION: **FAILURE TO RELEASE THE BALL**



**DEFINITION:** Experienced Rookie Rugby leagues may need to implement this penalty. Beginners often hold on to the ball for longer than three seconds as they learn the game – it is not the intent to penalize this behavior, but to allow the ball carrier time to make a fundamentally sound pass.

There are two options for awarding this penalty:

#### **Turnover option**

If a player fails to pass the ball within three seconds/three steps of getting their flag pulled the referee will stop play and award a penalty to the other team. Teams **MUST** reset their lines after this penalty before play is restarted.

#### **Reset option**

If a player fails to pass the ball within three seconds/three steps of getting their flag pulled the referee will stop play. Teams **MUST** reset their lines before play is restarted.

**INFRACTION ACTION:**

**PULLING/STRIPPING THE BALL FROM THE BALL CARRIER'S HANDS**



**DEFINITION:** An opposing player is not permitted to intentionally “pull” or remove the ball from the ball carrier’s hands. A turnover will occur with the opposing team being awarded a free pass at the spot of the penalty.

**INFRACTION ACTION:**  
**YELLOW CARDS**



**DEFINITION:** The use of yellow cards in Rookie Rugby can be used to penalize repeated foul play. Players receiving a yellow card are awarded a 2 minute ‘time out’. During this time, the coach should use it as a learning moment and teach appropriate behavior.

**INFRACTION ACTION:**  
**RED CARDS**



**DEFINITION:** Red cards are not used in Rookie Rugby, as it eliminates and excludes players from the game. Yellow cards should be used to manage inappropriate behavior when necessary.

## ROOKIE RUGBY PROGRESSIONS

Once players are comfortable with the basic play of **Rookie Rugby**, progressions of the game can be added. These progressions should only be introduced after players have mastered the intro game. They can be very useful to provide age and stage appropriate progression for players to move into higher-level rugby leagues.

### ADVANTAGE

The laws of rugby were designed to keep play fair and continuous. Advantage is an integral part of making sure the game continues even if there has been an error by a team. This rule comes into play after an infringement of the rules occurs. Although advantage can be found in many places during a regular game of rugby, we keep it simple in **Rookie Rugby**. There are three common scenarios in which we apply **Rookie Rugby** laws for advantage progression to progress.

GAME SCENARIO:	IF NO ADVANTAGE:	PLAY ADVANTAGE BY:
A pass is dropped and fumbles forward and picked up by the defence.	Turnover to the other team.	Allow the defence to pick up the ball and play on without blowing the whistle.
A pass is dropped and fumbles forward and picked up by the offense.	Turnover to the other team.	Turnover to the other team. Restart play with a free pass or an uncontested scrum.
A pass is dropped and fumbles backwards.	Dropped passes can sometimes be an immediate turnover in early editions of the game.	In this case, the ball was not advanced forward. Either team can pick up the ball and play on without blowing the whistle.



## TAP AND PASS

The tap and pass skill is used in rugby games to restart play after penalties. In **Rookie Rugby**, play is restarted using a free pass and does not involve the tap. Older and more advanced players may incorporate the tap and pass as a progression of skills.

Following a penalty, players will perform a tap and pass, which can be performed in two ways. The first way a tap and pass is performed is by placing the ball on the ground, tapping it forward no more than one metre with their foot, picking it up and passing it to a teammate. The second way to tap and pass is when players hold the ball in two hands and tap the ball on the tip of their foot, causing the ball to be released from both hands just slightly before passing the ball to a teammate. Defensive players cannot play the ball until the tap and pass has been completed, just like the free pass.

## TAP AND PASS



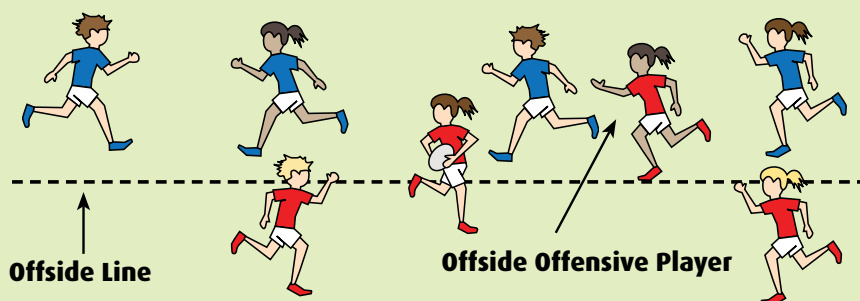
## OFFSIDE

Offside in rugby occurs on both the offensive and defensive sides of the ball. An offside line is drawn across the field where the ball carrier stops after the flag pull - not where the flag is pulled. This is to keep the defenders out of the line of the next pass.

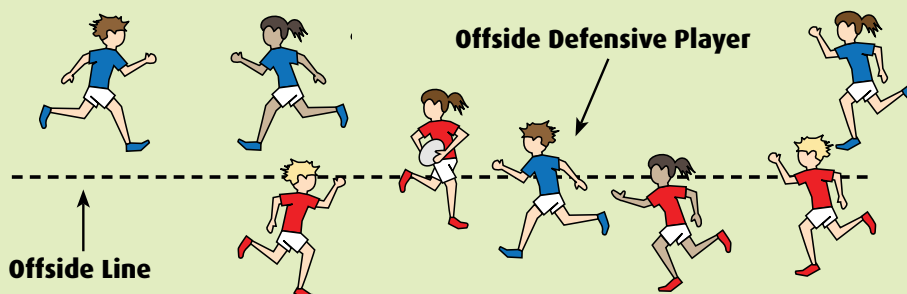
**OFFENSIVE OFFSIDE:** In Rookie Rugby, passes can only be made laterally or backwards. Because of this, offensive offside occurs when teammates are in front of the ball carrier and their position impacts play. Keep in mind that a penalty will only occur if the offside offensive player receives a pass.

**DEFENSIVE OFFSIDE:** Defensive offside is in place to ensure fairness in play. There is an imaginary line drawn through the ball after a flag is pulled and the ball-carrier stops. This indicates where the defence must be in order to play the ball. As indicated in the image below, all defensive players must be in front of the ball and must not prevent the first pass from being made after a restart.

### OFFENSIVE OFFSIDE



### DEFENSIVE OFFSIDE



## ROOKIE RUGBY ADVANCED PROGRESSIONS

The following progressions are considered much more advanced and should only be introduced for older players who have played **Rookie Rugby** and had the chance to master the basic skills. These advanced skills are typically taught in club rugby. These progressions are appropriate for the **Learn to Train LTD** stage and should not be introduced to players in the **Active Start** or **FUNDamentals** stages.

### KICKING

Although kicking is a Fundamental Movement Skill, it should be noted that kicking should not be added into **Rookie Rugby** until the players are of the appropriate age and ability. The safety and development of players is at the forefront of the game, and the focus of the intro games is playing with the ball in hand. In advanced versions of rugby, kicking is allowed at any time during open play, as well as for starts of the game. The following is a recommended plan for introducing kicking to the game.

There are three main types of kicking in **Rookie Rugby**:

**PUNTING:** When a player kicks the ball with their foot while it is in the air.

**DROP KICK:** A drop kick is a rugby-specific kick where players will drop the ball and allow it to hit the ground and bounce up before kicking it.

**GRUBBER:** A grubber is a low kick of the rugby ball, causing it to bounce multiple times along the ground.

**PUNTING**



**GRUBBER**



**DROP KICK**



## INTRODUCING KICKING TO THE GAME

**STARTING THE GAME AND AFTER A TRY:** The first time to introduce kicking in Rookie Rugby is the start of the game. This allows kicking to be introduced slowly and gives all players a chance to practice their skills. Drop kicks can be more difficult for younger players. Start kick-offs with punting until players are ready to advance. After a try is scored the team that scored the try will kick off to the opposing team. Kicks are taken from the middle of the field.

**PENALTY KICKS:** When penalties are committed during open play in Rookie Rugby a free pass is awarded. An advancement to add, once players are ready, is the option for a penalty kick. A penalty kick in rugby is when the non-infringing team kicks the ball down the field and out of bounds in order to restart play with a free pass or lineout where the ball went out. If the ball does not go out of bounds, the non-kicking team can recover the ball and play continues.

**KICKING DURING OPEN PLAY:** The last progression for kicking is to add it during open play. Players will be permitted to punt the ball at any time during the game as a strategic move. It is recommended that teams are limited to the number of kicks they can perform until they are ready to strategically make kicking decisions.

**Offside at kick:** Offensive players must be even with or behind the ball when it is kicked or they are offside.

**OPEN PLAY KICKING**



**PLACE KICK**



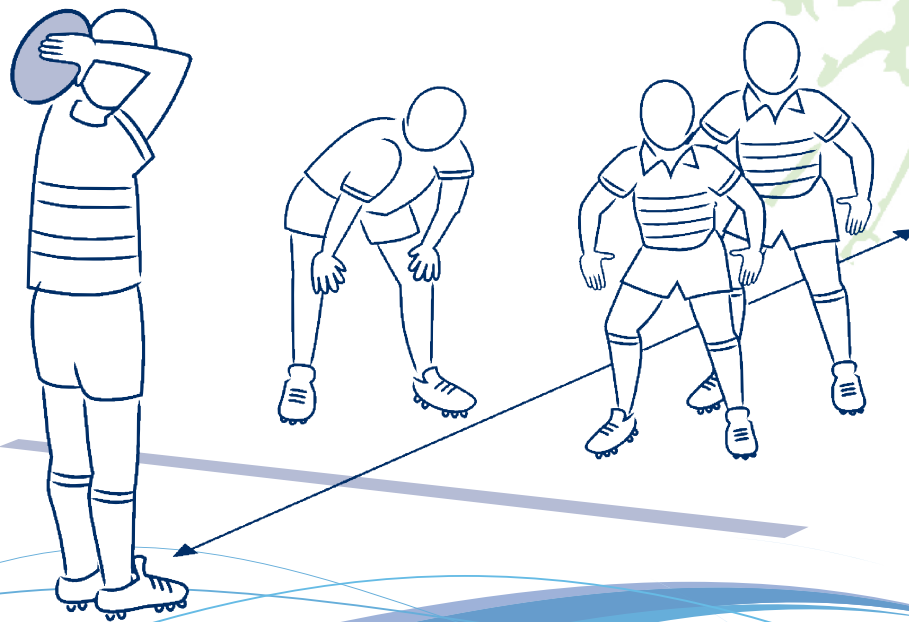
## UNCONTESTED LINEOUTS

Another great advancement to the game of **Rookie Rugby** is a lineout. A lineout occurs when the ball goes out or is carried out of bounds during play. The lineout will occur at the point where the ball went out of bounds.

Three players from each team will make up a lineout for teams of 5-7 players. For the team in possession of the ball, there will be one player throwing the ball in, one or two players receiving, and one player who will receive the ball from the lineout.

Players should not lift in lineouts until they have developed the necessary skills and strength.

In **Rookie Rugby** there are no contested lineouts. The team that throws the ball in must be allowed to win possession of the ball.



## UNCONTESTED SCRUMS

When kids participating in **Rookie Rugby** have advanced their skills to a point where they are ready for the next step, try adding scrums. A scrum is a unique part of this game. It should be noted that scrums in **Rookie Rugby** should only be added when participants are of the appropriate age and ability.

A scrum is formed from two units: one from each team made up of three players each (Front Row). In each Front Row there are two 'Props' with a 'Hooker' in the middle.

Before allowing a scrum make sure all players have proper body position throughout the scrum: Back flat, feet and body square, shoulders above hips, head neutral, core tight, and eyes forward.

Coaches and players must know the engagement sequence and cadence the referee uses. The referee will call out the engagement sequence: *"Crouch...Bind...Set!"*

**Crouch:** Bound front rows lower into position, close enough so the ears of all 6 players lined up.

**Bind:** Props will grasp on to opposing players' jerseys just below their armpits.

**Set:** The two front rows come together, placing their heads to the left of the player across to form a scrum. The two sides do not push.

**Roll the ball:** The referee will tell the team in possession to roll the ball into the scrum from the side.

**Hooker:** The hooker from the team rolling the ball in uses a foot to pull the ball backwards.

Always remember that safety comes first. Before any engagement make sure that all players are bound together properly. At any time before engagement if a front row player is not ready for the scrum they should inform the referee. Educators should have an in-depth understanding of up-to-date safety guidelines in their province/territory and jurisdiction.



▲  
**PROP**      ▲  
**HOKER**      ▲  
**PROP**



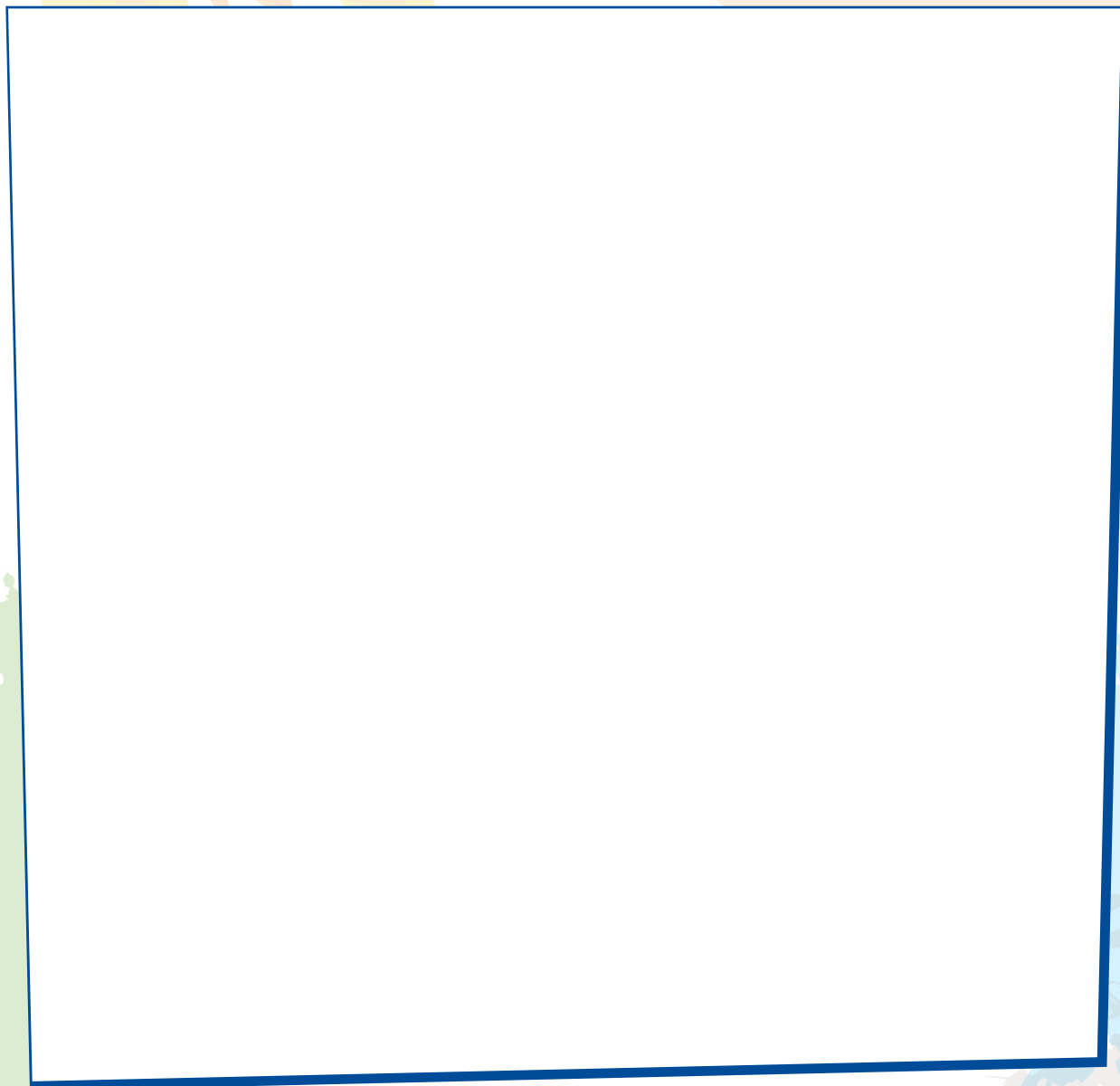
## GET INVOLVED

### COACHING ROOKIE RUGBY

While there is no fast track to becoming a good coach, the experience can be very rewarding and worth all of the time and effort put in. By taking the time to read the right resources and take coaching courses, you will be on your way to becoming a successful coach.

### THE ROLE OF A COACH

Using the space below, draw what you think the role of the coach is.



## ROOKIE RUGBY COACHING TIPS

**PLAN YOUR PRACTICE:** Know how your practice will be structured before you arrive; a session should include warm up, activities, cool down, and review. Be sure to have a backup plan for different number of players, as well as, ways to change practice if things are going better or worse than expected.

**LOOK LIKE A COACH:** Your first impression to players is how you look. If you look and act like a coach, players will view you as one. Wear nice athletic gear to practice and games; avoid old torn up rugby t-shirts and dirty tennis shoes.

**ARRIVE EARLY:** Arriving early will help you prepare the area for practice and also help set the tone for a well-run practice. Before practice is also a great time to answer questions that your parents or players may have.

**ORGANIZE THE ACTIVITIES:** It is very important to have each skill and game organized. If you are attempting to organize while at practice you will lose the attention of your players.

**LET THE PLAYERS PLAY, AND ONLY STOP TO TALK SPARINGLY:** Understand that players can only retain a small amount of new information at a time. Make your coaching points succinct, and then let the players practice these points. Avoid instructing too much so that your players can learn by doing.

**USE QUESTIONS:** Use questions to heighten player's self-awareness. Question players to ensure they understand your instruction. Try to use open-ended questions to allow for more quality information and feedback.

**PROVIDE FEEDBACK:** Providing feedback lets players know you are listening and watching. Make sure to keep feedback positive. If you are correcting a player make sure they understand how it will help them play better.

**BE A ROLE MODEL:** Realize that your players look up to you. Act the way you would want your players to act.

**DEAL WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR:** Players will occasionally act up. Speak to those players and take the time to figure out why that behavior is occurring. Punishing disruptive player with running or physical activity is only a quick fix; taking time to understand and deal with the problem will lead to better behavior in the long run.

Practice plan			
<b>Team:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Age/Level:</b>			
<b>Location:</b>		<b>Objective:</b>	
<b>Equipment needed:</b>			
<b>Introduction</b>		<b>Key message/safety</b>	
<b>Warm-up</b>	Include general and specific warm-up	<b>Key message/safety</b>	
		<b>Equipment needed</b>	
<b>Main part</b>	Pay attention to the order of the activities	<b>Key message/safety</b>	
		<b>Equipment needed</b>	
<b>Cool-down</b>		<b>Key message/safety</b>	
<b>Conclusion</b>		<b>Key message/safety</b>	

## COACHING TIPS FOR RUNNING PRACTICE

Coaching children is one of the most rewarding jobs that anyone can have. It is recommended that all **Rookie Rugby** coaches seek out educational opportunities and coaching courses to better expand their knowledge of coaching and the game of rugby. Below are a few tips for organizing and running sessions.

### WHOLE PART WHOLE

**Whole Part Whole (WPW)** is a coaching strategy that incorporates games-based coaching and individual skill development together. This strategy starts with a game or activity that incorporates many different rugby skills together. Use this game to assess the abilities of your players and make note of the skills and areas that you want to focus on and improve. After short game-play, break the game out into a smaller activity that focuses on a specific skill. Spend time teaching the skill and allow players to learn. Following this activity, put players back into the original game to see those newly learned and fine-tuned skills into action.

#### WPW EXAMPLE:

- Flag Rugby Game – 10 minutes
  - Note that the defence isn't staying together and working as a unit
- Mirrored Lines Activity – 7 minutes
  - Focus on a defensive activity
- Flag Rugby Game – 10 minutes
  - Notice the newly fine-tuned defence being applied to the game



## COACHING TIPS FOR RUNNING PRACTICE

Active, Purposeful, Enjoyable, Safe.

Activity instructions, review your practice plan, is it APES?

What changes would you make?

**A**

**ACTIVE**

**P**

**PURPOSEFUL**

**S**

**SAFE**

**E**

**ENJOYABLE**

NCCP ADAPTIVE TECHNIQUE		
Sport:	Game or Activity:	Skill(s):
Activity Level:	Number of Athletes:	Equipment:
<p><b>DO I NEED TO ADAPT? CONSIDER:</b></p> <div> <div>Is the environment safe?</div> <div>Are the athletes engaged?</div> <div>Do the athletes experience success?</div> <div>Is there evidence of skill development?</div> </div> <p><b>If NO, then consider ADAPTIVE</b></p>		
<b>A-D-A-P-T-I-V-E</b>	<b>CONSIDERATIONS</b>	
ABILITY		
DIFFICULTY		
AREA		
PARTICIPANTS		
TIME		
INCLUSION		
VARIABILITY		
EQUIPMENT		
<p><b>Implement and Assess</b></p>		

## COACHING PROCESS

Whole Part Whole is one coaching strategy that you can use to improve your own skills when teaching Rookie Rugby. Additionally, below is an outline of the coaching process with some tips on how you can set up your activities and sessions.

### 1 INSTRUCTION AND EXPLANATION

- Plan what you say before you speak
- Gain player's attention before you start
- Keep the message simple
- Invite questions and check for understanding



### 2 DEMONSTRATION

- Position yourself so all can see and hear
- Focus on one or two key points per practice
- Repeat the demonstration
- Invite questions and check for understanding



### 3 OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS

- Focus on each key point one at a time
- Observe action several times and from different positions
- Compare observation with correct behavior to find matches/mismatches
- Determine action: Build on strengths, correct errors, or do nothing



### 4 FEEDBACK FOR PLAYERS

- Ask players questions to generate self-feedback
- Limit information to one or two key points
- Give specific and simple information
- Keep it positive



## REFEREEING ROOKIE RUGBY

One of the greatest things about **Rookie Rugby** is how easy it is to administer, coach, and referee. In many instances, a **Rookie Rugby** coach can take on the role of a referee during games. When doing so, it should be noted that referees in **Rookie Rugby** are more like coaches. Refereeing as a coach means using your words more than your whistle. The number one priority as a referee is maintaining the player's safety.

If a player makes a mistake, use it as a coaching moment and let them know what they are doing wrong and why you are awarding a penalty or blowing your whistle. This will help coach the athlete so that they do not make the same mistake again. You can even involve the coaches, if needed, and have them come on to the field and explain a situation after a penalty is awarded. Try to always have a sideline referee during games by utilizing parents and other volunteers.

## OFFICIALS

**Rookie Rugby** should be officiated by individuals who have taken the **Rookie Rugby** Instructor course, which includes a portion on refereeing.

**The goals of match officials should be:**

- 1** Be fair and manage foul play. The primary goal of any official on any level is to keep the match fair and safe.
- 2** Keep the game moving. Address common and obvious violations to help children learn the game, but do not over-penalize.
- 3** Be a vocal teacher: Kids will learn a great deal from your calls, but only if it is clear why they are being called.

**Duties of the official:**

- 1** Arrive prepared: Wear appropriate clothing, bring your whistle and communicate with coaches about appropriate field of play and equipment.
- 2** Meet with coaches and/or captains to:
  - a. Discuss foul play
  - b. Clarify subbing and time out rules/processes. (These may vary by league)
  - c. Organize the coin toss.
- 3** Address injuries immediately.



Always keep in mind the following elements while on the field as a referee:

**SAFETY COMES FIRST:** Keeping a game safe should be a top priority to the referee. Rookie Rugby players have not learned the proper techniques for contact yet, therefore the referee should be quick to discourage any unsafe actions.

Use a quick whistle for unsafe actions such as:

- Holding, pushing, or shoving
- Blocking and obstructions
- Pulling the ball from the ball carrier
- Players diving on the ball or going to the ground
- Contesting the ball on the ground

*\*Remember to instruct players on WHY you are blowing the whistle*

**COMMUNICATION:** Clearly communicating is a key skill for rugby referees. Remember to help coach the players by talking with them during the game rather than always using your whistle.

- Blow your whistle only when you want to stop play
- Shout “FLAG” when a flag has been pulled
- Shout “PLAY ON” when you want play to resume
- Signal the team starting play after a penalty by extending your arm towards that team
- Coach/educate players on the laws
- Have a friendly attitude

**ENCOURAGE CONTINUITY:** Rookie Rugby is a free flowing and continuous game. Avoid blowing your whistle too many times so players begin understanding the flow of rugby.

- Use the advantage rule. Although harder to understand at first, this helps keep the game flowing

**BE IN POSITION:** The key to making good calls is being in a position to see the play. Be sure to keep moving so that you can see the game play and ball carrier at all times.

- Be level with the play
- Call what you see
- Blow the whistle only when you want to stop play



## REFEREE CALLS

**TRY SCORED**



**FORWARD PASS**



**KNOCK ON**



**PENALTY**



**ADVANTAGE**



## ROOKIE RUGBY RESOURCES



[www.rookierugby.ca](http://www.rookierugby.ca)

Check out this page for everything that you need related to **Rookie Rugby**. This site includes lesson plans, game cards, skill cards, the **Rookie Rugby** store, local contact information and much more!



[www.rugby.ca](http://www.rugby.ca)

Visit **Rugby Canada's** official website to find out more about rugby in Canada. Learn how to get involved with coaching or refereeing, keep up to date on our national teams, or even find out about a rugby event in your area!



[www.getintorugby.worldrugby.org](http://www.getintorugby.worldrugby.org)

**Rugby Canada's** **Rookie Rugby** program is supported by **World Rugby's** **Get Into Rugby** program. Check out where flag rugby programs are growing around the world!



**CANADIAN  
SPORT FOR LIFE**

[canadiansportforlife.ca](http://canadiansportforlife.ca)

Head here to learn more about Canada's **Sport for Life Long Term Athlete Development Pathway and Physical Literacy** movement, as well as other programs they have that focus on the health and wellness of all Canadians.



## ROOKIE RUGBY VOCABULARY

**ADVANTAGE:** The purpose of this rule is to let the game flow and avoid unnecessary stoppages. If an infringement occurs that results in the benefit of the non-infringing team, the referee will let play continue. For example, if a knock-on occurs and the non-infringing team gains possession from this knock-on, the referee will call advantage and allow play to continue. To help play, the referee will call ‘Advantage’ when this occurs.

**BIND:** A bind occurs in Rookie Rugby in a scrum. Front row players will bind together before the scrum begins. Once the scrum is about to start, referees will call out “crouch, bind, set” to start the play. On the “bind” command the prop players will grasp on to opposing players’ jerseys in the proper location.

**CROUCH:** When calling out the cadence to an uncontested scrum, referees will start with the word “crouch.” This signals players to get into the proper scrum positions, with backs flat and a low athletic position.

**DRAWING A DEFENDER:** Drawing a defender is an act done by the ball carrier to attract defensive players. Drawing the defender is an important skill in rugby because once a defender is drawn in, it becomes more difficult for them to defend against other offensive players.

**DROP KICK:** A drop kick in rugby is used to restart play and score points. A ball is drop kicked by dropping the ball and then kicking it when it bounces off the ground. This skill is introduced in advanced forms of Rookie Rugby.

**EVADE:** The act of evading is done by a ball carrier to avoid being tackled by defenders. To evade, players can fake a run one direction and then run the other way, make a quick cut in one direction, or fake a pass.

**FORWARD PASS:** Passes that are thrown forward (towards the try zone in which a team is trying to score) are not allowed. All passes in rugby must be thrown sideways or backwards.



**FLAT LINE DEFENCE:** The flat line defence is a common term used in rugby. If the defence team covers the field in a flat line it makes it much harder for the offense to get through because there are no holes. Learning to stay in a flat line with teammates is an important skill for every rugby player to gain.

**TAP AND PASS:** A free pass is an uncontested pass allowed from one player to a teammate. A free pass is used to start the following:

- A. Each half of the match at the centre of the field
- B. After an infringement to restart the match at the place of infringement

**GROUNDING:** In rugby, grounding is when a player touches the rugby ball down to the ground in order to score a try. In order to properly ground the ball a player must stay on their feet and touch the ball down with 2 hands.

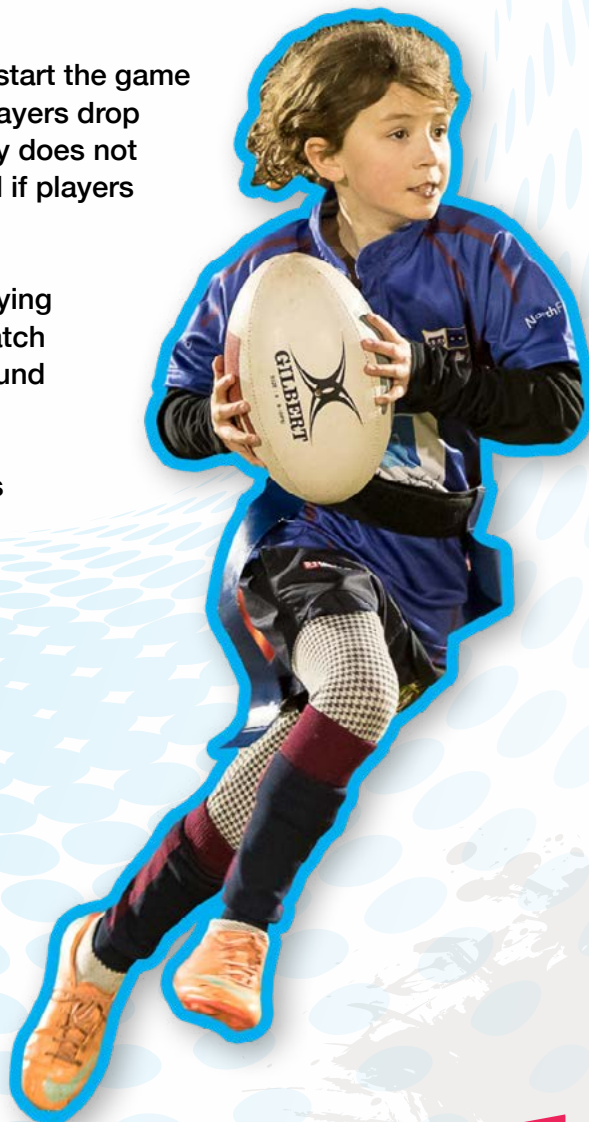
**KICK-OFF:** A kick-off in rugby is used to start a half, or restart the game after points have been scored. Kick-offs are made by players drop kicking the ball at the centre line. Rookie Rugby typically does not include kicking to restart play but it can be incorporated if players have practiced it sufficiently.

**KNOCK-ON:** A knock-on occurs when a player, while carrying the ball or trying to receive a pass, fumbles or fails to catch the ball, and the ball then goes forward and hits the ground or another player.

**LIFT:** A lift in rugby is used for true lineouts when players physically lift one of the players into the air to compete for possession of the ball. Lifts should never be used in Rookie Rugby.

**LINEOUT:** A lineout is used to restart play after the ball goes out of bounds.

**OFFSIDE:** Any time that an offensive player is in front of a teammate who is carrying the ball, that player is offside and must not become involved or interfere in play in any way until he/she becomes onside again. On defence, there is an imaginary line through the ball after a flag has been pulled. Any defensive player in front of this line is offside.



**PUNTING:** Punting the ball is kicking the ball down the field. Punting the ball can be done at any time during free play but is typically used sparingly because of the risk of losing possession. Rookie Rugby typically does not include punting, but it can be incorporated if players have practiced it sufficiently. It is only recommended for maximum Rookie Rugby dimensions.

**RUGBY WORLD CUP:** The Rugby World Cup and the Women's Rugby World Cup are international rugby competitions organized by World Rugby and held every four years. The version of rugby played at the Rugby World Cups is 15-a-side rugby, which is considered the more 'traditional' form of the game.

**SET:** When calling out the cadence to an uncontested scrum, referees will call out "crouch, bind, set" to start the play. On the "set" signal, players will come together with the opposing team in the scrum in order for the ball to be rolled into the centre.

**SUPPORT:** Support is a common term in rugby and refers to offensively being a position to receive a pass from a teammate with the ball. Support players should never be ahead of the ball carrier and should be close enough to receive a pass.

**TRIANGLE SHAPED OFFENSE:** This offensive is always forming triangles so players are always in support of the ball carrier.

**UNCONTESTED SCRUM:** An uncontested scrum is a scrum where one team is required to win the ball unopposed by the other team. No pushing is allowed.

**TRY:** Scoring in rugby is called a 'try.' Scoring a try is done by crossing over the goal line, into the try zone, and touching the ball down to the ground. A try is worth five points.

**TRY ZONE:** The try zone in rugby is the end zone where players can score a try.

**PASS:** A pass is when a rugby ball is thrown from one player to another. All passes in rugby must be thrown sideways or backward.

**OLYMPIC RUGBY SEVENS:** Olympic Rugby Sevens is the seven-a-side version of rugby that is played in the Olympics. Younger players can start playing rugby sevens and have the possibility to work all the way up to making the Canadian Olympic Rugby team.

