

Quick Guide to Rugby Laws

Please find below a "simplified guide to the Laws" of rugby. We encourage you to pass it on to family members and friends that don't fully understand the game but wish to find out more about its rules.

This guide is offered to help those who are new to Rugby to follow and enjoy the game.

Rugby teams are made up of fifteen players plus up to seven substitutes. Players may wear thin, soft padding to protect their shoulders and heads. Officials include a referee, two touch judges, and an official in charge of substitutions of players. Points are awarded for a 'Try' (5 points) and the subsequent Convert Kick (2), a Penalty Kick which goes over the goal post crossbar (3), and a Drop Kick during play which goes over the goal posts' crossbar (3). A Try is similar to a touch down in Football, except that the ball must be touched down to the ground. We know what you're thinking: In Rugby a Try is awarded for a successful score, and in football, a touchdown is awarded when it isn't touched down? Right! In Rugby the Convert Kick must be attempted from a place in line with where the Try was scored.



During play, all players may pass, kick, or run with the ball. A forward pass is illegal, so the ball must be passed sideways or backwards to another player. 'If the ball cannot be thrown forward, how does a team advance?' you may ask. Well, very often, the ball is passed to a player who has the opportunity to run through the opposing team's defense. Any player with the ball may be tackled, but blocking by teammates is not allowed. When a player is tackled to the ground, play continues if the tackled player passes the ball without delay or places the ball on the ground and lets go of it. The tackler must release the tackled player and both players must then get up or roll away from the ball. All other players must stay on their feet at a tackle. If players interfere by 'going to ground' to prevent a fair contest for the ball, a penalty kick is awarded. If players accidentally 'go to ground' after the ball has been fairly contested, they too must roll away or get up again. Now the above can look chaotic as players from both sides try to win possession. They usually come into contact and form a 'Ruck' over the tackle situation where each team tries to push the opponents back so that possession can be gained. Players not taking part in rucks must get to their side of the rucks without delay or they are offside. Because of this, when the ball is won from a ruck, there is room to play - and play continues.

Often, a player with the ball is held by an opponent but not tackled to the ground. When other players join in it is called a 'Maul,' which is similar to a ruck - except nobody's on the ground and the ball is being held in the hands of a player who is trying to get it back to his team. Sometimes the ball is deliberately kept in a maul if a team can drive up the field. When such a drive stops, the team with the ball must pass it out without delay so that play may continue. If this does not occur, a 'Scrum' (described below) is awarded, and the opponents are given the throw-in. For minor stoppages (e.g. a forward pass or the situation described above) the game is restarted with a Scrum. Eight rather large (!) players from each team bind tightly together and crouch in a shoving position before being allowed to engage their opponents. Legal binding in a scrum forbids more than three players from each team to make contact with the opponents, so the usual pattern for each team is to have three players in the 'front row,' four in the 'second row,' and one player bound in at the back. Because the players are crouched, a tunnel is made between the front rows. The ball is put back into play when it is thrown into the center of the tunnel so that each team has fair opportunity to gain possession; using only legs and feet. Players in a scrum must stay in the scrum until the ball comes out.



Players not in the scrum must stay behind the back player of the scrum to allow the team which wins the ball room to play on. For cheating at restarts, a Free Kick is awarded. The opponents must go back 10 meters and the team given the free kick may kick the ball in any way (punt, drop kick, tap), but they cannot score directly from it. A Free Kick may also be awarded to a defending player who calls for one when catching the ball within 22

meters of the Goal line. For serious offences, including foul play, the game is restarted with a Penalty Kick. Opponents must go back 10 meters until the ball is kicked, and the ball may be kicked in any way (this time including field goal for three points). If the ball is kicked into touch from a Penalty Kick, the kicking team is awarded the throw-in.

With the exception of the Penalty Kick to touch, when the ball (or a player carrying it) goes into Touch, the game is restarted with a 'Line-out' where the ball is thrown in by the team which did not put the ball into Touch. You guessed it - the same bruised players who take part in the scrums take part in the Line-out. It is formed when these players from each team form two lines a meter apart across the field near the touch-line. The ball should be thrown straight into the gap between the lines, and the players jump to gain possession. To add a little spice to the contest, jumping players may be supported at or above waist level by teammates. Jumpers may catch the ball or throw it to another player waiting to catch it. All other players not involved in the line-out must move 10 meters back towards their goal-lines so that, when the ball is won, the teams have room to continue playing.

One last point: When a player kicks the ball, all team-mates in front of the kicker are in off-side positions and cannot run towards the opponent who catches the ball until the kicker (or another player who was behind the kicker) runs by them, putting them back on-side. And that's it! Well, not all of it, but we hope this helps you enjoy the game.