

APPENDIX 1 – U7-U12 RULES OF PLAY (BOYS AND GIRLS)

A) U7 AND U8 RULES OF PLAY (MINI TAG)

Players and match officials must ensure that the following Rules of Play and RFU Regulation 15 are observed when playing rugby at Under 7 and Under 8. The below Rules shall apply to both Under 7s and Under 8s Mini Tag Rugby unless specifically stated otherwise.

Club rugby: As of 1 September 2013, the Under 7s and Under 8s Rules of Play set out below are mandatory and replace the previous Under 7s and Under 8s Rules of Play in their entirety in respect of all club rugby.

School rugby: The Under 7s and Under 8s Rules of Play set out below are discretionary only in school rugby but the RFU will continue to work with IAPS and the ERSFU with a view to eventually converge schools' Rules of Play with those of club rugby. The previous Rules of Play that can still be played by Schools can be found at www.rfu.com/thegame/regulations.

The **key changes** between the previous Rules of Play and the new Rules of Play are the following:

	Key Changes	
	Under 7s	Under 8s
Team numbers:	4-a-side instead of 5 to 7-a-side	6-a-side instead of 7-a-side
Pitch size:	20 metres x 12 metres instead of 60 metres x 30 metres	45 metres x 22 metres instead of 60 metres x 30 metres
Scoring:	Play can continue from a knock-on	Players permitted to go to ground to score

1. Object:

- The object of the game is to score a try (5 points) by placing the ball with a downward pressure on or behind the opponent's goal line. A penalty try may be awarded if a try would probably have been scored but for Foul Play by the defending team.
- For safety reasons, where Mini Tag Rugby is played indoors or in restricted areas, a try can be scored by the ball carrier crossing the vertical plane of the goal-line without grounding the ball. This allows players to have their head up and be aware of their surroundings at all times.
- When a try is scored, the game is restarted by a free pass from the centre of the pitch by the non-scoring team.
- FOR UNDER 7s ONLY: For the sake of safety, the ball carrier must remain on their feet at all times and they are not allowed to score a try by

diving over the goal-line. If a player grounds the ball while on their knees, the try is allowed but, afterwards, all players may be reminded that they must stay on their feet. A player may not be prevented from grounding the ball by any physical contact (including placing a hand between ball and ground).

2. Teams:

- a) FOR UNDER 7s ONLY: Under 7s Mini Tag Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, each team containing not more than four players and not less than three players on the pitch at any one time.
- b) FOR UNDER 8s ONLY: Under 8s Mini Tag Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, each team containing not more than six players and not less than five players on the pitch at any one time.
- c) Rolling substitutions are permitted and substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is "dead" or at half time and always with the referee's knowledge.
- d) Coaches are not permitted to be on pitch when the game is in play and the referee is encouraged to advise and guide the teams and players.

3. Pitch Size

- a) FOR UNDER 7s ONLY: The maximum pitch size is for Under 7s is 20 metres by 12 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.
- b) FOR UNDER 8s ONLY: The maximum pitch size is for Under 8s is 45 metres by 22 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.
- c) Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the officiating referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches do not materially increase the risk of injury to players.
- d) Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.

4. Passing:

- a) The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards (but not forwards) through the air and cannot be handed to another player.
- b) FOR UNDER 7s ONLY: If the ball is handed to another player or passed forward (towards the opponent's goal-line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side. If the ball is accidentally knocked forwards towards the opponent's goal-line this does not constitute an offence and play can continue.
- c) FOR UNDER 8s ONLY: If the ball is handed to another player or passed or knocked forwards (towards the opponents' goal-line) then a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.

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- d) In order to keep the game flowing, referees may play advantage wherever possible.

5. Free Passes:

- a) A free pass is used to start the match at the beginning of each half from the centre of the pitch, from the side of the pitch when the ball goes into touch at the point where the ball went out of play and from where the referee makes a mark when an infringement has taken place.
- b) At a free pass, the player must start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee who will call “PLAY”, pass the ball backwards through the air to a member of their team. For safety reasons, no player may run until the pass is made. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball when the referee calls “PLAY”.
- c) FOR UNDER 7s ONLY:
- i. At a free pass, the opposition must be 3 metres back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer.
 - ii. If an infringement takes place or the ball goes into touch over the goal-line or within 3 metres of the goal-line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non-offending side 3 metres from the goal-line. This gives more space for both attacking and defending teams to play in.
- d) FOR UNDER 8s ONLY:
- i. At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer.
 - ii. If an infringement takes place or the ball goes into touch over the goal-line or within 7 metres of the goal-line, then the free pass must be awarded to the non-offending side 7 metres from the goal-line. This gives more space for both attacking and defending teams to play in.

6. The Tag:

- a) All players must wear a tag belt around their waist with two tags attached to it by Velcro positioned over each hip. Tag belts are to be securely fastened and any excess belt is to be tucked away so that this cannot be pulled by mistake. Tag belts are to be worn outside of shirts and not obscured in any way. Referees are to be watchful for tags being wrapped around the belt preventing them from being pulled off.
- b) The standard dimensions for a tag are 38 cms in length by 5 cms in width although slight variations of a few millimetres are permitted. They should be made of a flexible plastic or plastic/canvas material. Tags are generally provided in red, blue, green and yellow and must sufficiently stand out against the player’s strip. The tags must not be the same colour as the players’ shorts or shirts. Tags must be positioned on the side of the hips (not at the front or back).

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- c) A “TAG” is the removal of one of the two tags from the ball carrier’s belt. Only the ball carrier can be tagged. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way. The ball cannot be pulled out of the ball carrier’s hands at any time.
- d) If a player does not have two tags on their belt, one on each hip, they will be penalised if they become a ball carrier or if they tag an opponent and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement (i.e. where the infringement was noticed).

Actions by the ball carrier:

- e) When the ball carrier is tagged the ball must be passed to a team mate within 3 seconds, this includes stopping time. The ball carrier must attempt to stop as soon as possible; within approximately 3 strides, but the ball can be passed in the act of stopping. If the pass takes longer than 3 seconds or the player takes more than approximately 3 strides they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place where the tag occurred.
- f) After the ball has been passed, the player must go to the tagger, retrieve their tag and place it back on their belt before re-joining play. If the player continues to play and influences the game without collecting their tag, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement (i.e. the point at which that player had influence).
- g) Players are however only allowed one step to score a try after being tagged.
- h) If the ball carrier is tagged whilst standing inside the goal area they must ground the ball immediately in order to score. Referees may help this part of the game along by advising the ball carrier “Touch the ball down and I’ll award the try”, or similar.
- i) FOR UNDER 7s ONLY: If the ball carrier dives to ground to score a try it will be disallowed and a free pass will be awarded to the defending side 3 metres out from the goal-line.

Actions by the tagger:

- j) When a tag is made, the tagger must stop running, hold the tag above their head and shout, “TAG”. At this stage the referee must shout, “TAG - PASS”.
- k) If the ball carrier stops running within 1 metre of the tagger, the tagger must move back towards their own goal-line, at least 1 metre, to allow room for the ball to be passed. If the tagger fails to retire at least 1 metre before rejoining the game, they are to be considered “offside” and a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement (i.e. where the infringement was noticed).

- l) Once the ball has been passed, the tagger must hand back the tag to the player and cannot re-join the match until this has been done. If a tagger continues to play and influences the match with an opponent's tag in their hand, or throws it to the floor, they must be penalised and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side at the place of infringement.
- m) FOR UNDER 8s ONLY:
 - i. To reward good defence and to promote the attacking side keeping the ball alive by passing the ball before being tagged, the side in possession of a ball will only be allowed to be tagged a maximum of 6 times before scoring a try. At the 7th tag, the referee will stop the game and give the ball to the other side by awarding a free pass at the point that the tag took place. If the 7th tag takes place one step from the try line and the ball is grounded, the try will be disallowed and the opposition will be given the ball for a free pass 7 metres out from the goal line, in line with the point the goal line was crossed.
 - ii. Coaches of the teams may agree to reduce the maximum number of allowable tags to provide more of a challenge to their players, both in attack and defence. If coaches cannot agree then the 7th tag ruling must be enforced.

7. Offside:

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

8. Ball on the Ground:

- a) Players of Mini Tag Rugby must be encouraged to stay on their feet, with the ball in hand. If the ball goes to ground, players can pick it up, run and pass but they must not dive to the floor to recover the ball.
- b) If the ball is passed other than forward and goes to ground, play will continue and either side may pick up the ball. If the passed ball rolls into touch a free pass will commence from the touchline to the non-passing side.
- c) FOR UNDER 7s ONLY:
 - i. If the ball is passed forward, a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.
 - ii. If the ball is accidentally knocked forwards towards the opponent's goal-line this does not constitute an offence and play can continue.

- iii. If the player falls to the ground with the ball then a free pass will be awarded to the non-offending side.
- d) FOR UNDER 8s ONLY:
- i. If the ball is passed or knocked forward (other than as set out in (d)(ii) below), a free pass is awarded to the non-offending side unless advantage occurs to the non-offending side.
- ii. Where the ball is on the ground over the try line:
- If the team defending the try line have dropped the ball over the try line, and their opponents fallen on it or touched it down a try shall be awarded to the attacking team.
 - If the team defending the try line have dropped the ball over the try line, and then fallen on it or touched it down a free pass shall be awarded to the attacking team 7 metres from the try line.
 - If the team attacking the try line have dropped the ball forward over the try line, and there is no advantage to their opponents, a free pass shall be awarded to the defending team 7 metres from the try line.
 - If the team attacking the try line have dropped the ball backwards over the try line and then touched it down or fallen on it a try can be awarded.
 - If the team attacking the try line have dropped the ball backwards over the try line and their opponents touch the ball down or fall on it, a free pass shall be awarded to the defending team 7 metres out from the try line.

9. Obstruction:

- a) The ball carrier can run and dodge potential taggers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball and cannot guard or shield their tags in any way.
- b) Similarly, the ball carrier or a potential tagger must not deliberately make contact with an opponent.
- c) If such contact is made the game must be stopped, the offender spoken to, reminded of the non-contact rules of tag and a free pass awarded to the non-offending side.
- d) If the ball is pulled from the ball carrier's grasp, a free pass is awarded to the ball carrier's side.

10. Kicking:

- a) There is no kicking of any kind in Mini Tag Rugby.

11. No Contact:

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

12. Prohibited Play:

In Mini Tag Rugby, there is total emphasis on running with the ball, evasion, running in support of the ball carrier, passing and running to tag the ball carrier. In Mini Tag Rugby the following are also not permitted:

- a) no tackling (see 11 above);
- b) no scrummage;
- c) no line-out;
- d) no kicking of any kind (see 10 above);
- e) no hand off/fend off (a hand off being the placing of an open palmed hand by the ball carrier against an opponent's face or body while a fend off is an outstretched arm by the ball carrier towards an opponent to discourage that person making a tag) (see also 9(a) above);
- f) no ripping of the ball (see also 9(d) above); and
- g) no passing forwards (see also 4 above).