



# CODES OF PRACTICE

## Age Grade Rugby

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Summer 2018 | Version 3

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# FOREWORD

**When you read these Codes of Practice, you will see how we're putting the wants and needs of children at the heart of everything we do in Age Grade rugby.**

**Being more player-centred means that the focus is on potential rather than current ability and that the emphasis is on enjoyment and encouraging a life-long love of rugby.**

As our research shows, for children, enjoyment is more important than winning; especially if it means they get to play with their friends. Prioritising winning is not what children want and does not fit with the ethos of Age Grade rugby.

That's why these codes address topics such as the purpose of Age Grade rugby, why we band competitive opportunities and training activities according to a player's age, playing frequency, over and under-playing players, out-of-season activities, player grouping and the minimum standards required for coaches.

What it recommends is new and challenging for some but is proven by research. We think this represents an exciting way forward for how rugby is taught or coached in our clubs, schools and colleges and a way to demonstrate our confidence in the growth and development of English rugby.

Apply the Age Grade rugby codes of practice and share your enthusiasm and understanding with others.



**Eddie Jones**

England Team Head Coach



# INTRODUCTION

Age Grade Rugby was introduced in September 2016 following a four-year review by the RFU including consultation with clubs schools and colleges as well as recommendations backed by academic research.

## Age Grade Rugby ensures:

- > Consistent age bandings and incremental player progressions
- > A nationally consistent playing menu and calendar that increases inclusivity, clarifies player priorities and dovetails club, school and college competitions
- > An integrated England Rugby Player Development pathway and representative framework
- > Training and Continuous Professional Development for coaches, referees, parents, teachers and others

**Age Grade Rugby is based on the principles of being player centred, development driven and competition supported. The wants and needs of young people are at its heart. It puts player enjoyment above all else in order to keep more young people enjoying the game for longer and into their adult years.**

**The Age Grade Rugby Codes of Practice explain how a rugby coach should approach the development of boys and girls (children) between the ages of U7 and U18. By coach we mean those who teach or coach rugby at a club, school or college.**

The Codes of Practice aim to help coaches at clubs, schools and colleges to recognise their responsibilities so that they can put into place a clear, progressive and monitored coaching policy.

Through their understanding of what Age Grade Rugby is and their ability to follow the guidelines, coaches are more likely to meet the needs and wants of the children they coach. This will ensure the emotional, physical and psychological development of each child and help to increase their lifelong enjoyment of the game.



## The Codes of Practice cover seven separate codes:

1

### Code of Practice 1: Developing the Whole Player

- Focuses on the benefits of developing a positive attitude towards physical activity.

2

### Code of Practice 2: Adopt a Player-Centred Approach to Playing and Training

- Encourages a focus on enjoyment and improvement regarding training, competition and frequency of play.

3

### Code of Practice 3: Grouping of Players

- Focuses on the need to give players an equal opportunity to play, train and develop with their peers.

4

### Code of Practice 4: An Individual Playing Up and Down

- Advises on how to approach the rare occasions when children are unable to play with their peer group.

5

### Code of Practice 5: Combining Age Groups

- Considers how best to combine age groups if this is the only solution.

6

### Code of Practice 6: Out of Season Activities, Rugby Camps and Tours

- Advocates the benefits of children having a break from rugby and experiencing a balanced programme that encourages them to take part in other sports.

7

### Code of Practice 7: Minimum Standards for Coaches and Referees

- Recommends standards of practice so that coaches are player-centred and appropriately skilled.

**Each code of practice outlines the intention behind it, the questions coaches should ask themselves and the guidelines to follow.**

Where appropriate, it provides web links to additional information. It also makes clear how Regulation 15\* relates to playing, training and all variations of rugby that are allowed within a relevant age grade.

The Age Grade Rugby Codes of Practice promote a positive attitude and behaviour towards the coaching of rugby.

Please read it carefully and consider the questions it asks as well as the objectives behind it. Creating a positive coaching environment will see children enjoying their rugby more and fulfilling their playing potential.

The sport will also begin to witness more players transitioning to the adult game. All of this is great for the child, you as their coach and the long-term future of English rugby.



\*[Regulation 15](#) is the RFU's regulation that relates to youth rugby known as Age Grade Rugby.

This code of practice should be read in conjunction with Regulation 15 along with Regulation 9 (Player Safety) and Regulation 21 (Safeguarding).

# 1

## DEVELOPING THE WHOLE PLAYER

### Code of Practice 1: Developing the whole player

#### > Our Intention

**Playing rugby and other sports should produce young adults who can demonstrate good cognitive skills, resilience and creative thinking.**

They will have a positive attitude towards physical activity, respect for the core values of rugby and a strong love of the game.

Coaches influence the attitude and behaviours of players because of the Age Grade approach they apply. This increases the likelihood that they will transition to adult rugby and share their enthusiasm for the sport with others.



#### **i** Did You Know?

- > Early experience of a wide variety of sports has positive implications for long-term sport involvement.
- > Early experience of a wide variety of sports does not hinder elite sport participation where peak performance is reached after maturation. This is the case in rugby which is described as a late maturation sport.
- > Research into sports where specialisation occurs before the age of 16 has indicated several negatives that include more injuries and less enjoyment.

## 1.1

## Balancing Rugby and Non-Rugby Activities

Coaches should ask themselves:

### 1. Does my approach look to develop the whole child?

 **Good Practice:**

In addition to developing skills and technique, rugby activities should develop the child physically and emotionally so that they acquire a range of cognitive and behavioural skills. The approach is holistic and considers all the child's wants and needs.

### 2. Do I encourage the child to take part in non-rugby activities and lead an active lifestyle?

 **Good Practice:**

NHS guidelines state that children should do 60 minutes activity a day. Research also shows that involvement in other sports helps to enhance and develop other skills, which in turn are beneficial to playing rugby. Children who play a wider range of sports have the potential to develop into more rounded athletes at later stages.

### 3. Do I promote the benefits of obtaining positive outcomes from competitive situations?

 **Good Practice:**

Evidence confirms that children find the enjoyment of a competitive match more important than winning. Encouraging positive outcomes at the same time as striving to be the best is more player-led and long term.

While being competitive is an integral part of rugby, prioritising winning weakens the player-led ethos behind Age Grade rugby.

### 4. Do I encourage players to experience a wide a range of playing positions?

 **Good Practice:**

U13 is the start of a gradual increase in position-specific focus but children should also continue experiencing different positions. As children change size as they get older, be open minded about the positions they can play. There should be no positional focus up to U13.

### 5. Do I strive to foster a love of the game amongst the players?

 **Good Practice:**

As a coach, know why you enjoy the game and what you get out of it. Place rugby's core values (Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship) at the heart of what you do. Take a player-led approach and follow the guidelines in Code of Practice 1.

### 6. Does your coaching help your players develop their CARDS skills

 **Good Practice:**

Cards is an acronym for: **C**reativity, **A**wareness, **R**esilience, **D**ecision making and **S**elf-organisation.

They are the priority skills for helping develop the next generation of England Rugby players both on and off the pitch.



# 2

## ADOPT A PLAYER- CENTRED APPROACH TO TRAINING & PLAYING

Age Grade Rugby Codes of Practice 2018

### Code of Practice 2: Adopt a Player-Centred Approach to Training and Playing

#### > Our Intention

**In the 2016 Age Grade Playing Survey children told us that the most enjoyable thing about rugby is playing with their friends, having fun and being part of a team. This sense of enjoyment should be reflected in every rugby activity.**

Training sessions are planned to develop the skills of the groups of children playing rugby. Until U13, there is no positional focus for the individual player, instead regular exposure to a variety of playing positions. While learning takes place during matches, training and games (see 2.2) are the main developmental tools.



#### **i** Did You Know?

- > NHS Guidelines on physical activity advise that to maintain a reasonable level of health youngsters aged 5 to 18 need to engage in:
  - > At least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
  - > Activities, such as rugby, to strengthen muscles and to develop strong bones on three days a week.
- > Age Grade players tell us they enjoy playing the most when they are with their friends (79%).

## 2.1

### Training and Training Activities

As a coach you should consider the following:

#### 1. Do I always think of the needs of the individual player rather than the expectations of the players as a group?

##### ✔ Good Practice:

Work to be player-centred in the ways communicated in this Code of Practice.

#### 2. Am I clear about the season's overall objectives for players in the age group? Or do I take a short-term approach from match to match?

##### ✔ Good Practice:

Aim to know your objectives for each training session and ensure they are part of a training block that is c. 4-6 weeks. Greater development takes place when you avoid short-term thinking and planning.

#### 3. Have I taken the appropriate coaching or refereeing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course to deliver the training and am I up to date with current training methods?

##### ✔ Good Practice:

The expectation is that you are sufficiently qualified to deliver all elements of the game, especially those involving contact. If not, take a course.

#### 4. Am I aware of and do I implement the Activate Injury Prevention Exercise Programme designed by the RFU in conjunction with the University of Bath? Injuries fell by 72% when players completed these new exercises at least three times a week and concussion injuries were reduced by 59%.

##### ✔ Good Practice:

Coaches should attend the face to face training session and sign up to the supporting online resource. More information is on:

[www.englandrugby.com/rugbysafe](http://www.englandrugby.com/rugbysafe)

#### 5. Have I considered the child's Rugby Playing Week (i.e. how much rugby activity across all settings they do in a week) so that I consider their training and playing demands within my own environment as well as other rugby settings?

##### ✔ Good Practice:

Think of the Rugby Playing Week in terms of training sessions that allow for rest days before and after intense activity (particularly contact sessions) or matches. Research from Leeds Beckett University using academy rugby union players, suggests that following contact or non-contact training, players are not fully recovered at 72 hours. Ensuring sufficient rest allows the child to recover and reduces the risk of injury.

#### 6. Have I ensured that the parents/guardians and coaches/teachers from other teams are aware of any injury or concussion the player has suffered?

##### ✔ Good Practice:

Where a player plays in multiple environments (i.e. club and school/college) and suffers any injury or concussion, the coach should ensure that the parents, and other appropriate coaches or teachers, are made aware.

This lessens the mistake of allowing the player to train or play when injured. It ensures a joined-up approach to their return to play.

## 7. Am I aware that technical development is not best achieved by full contact practice

### ✔ Good Practice:

During full contact, players tend to resort or fall back on to their learned technique rather than concentrating on improving it. Where appropriate, full contact training, as with matches, should be used to fully test whether that development has taken place.

## 8. Always consider the duration, intensity (workload), physicality (contact level) of the session in relation to the child's physical development, their Rugby Playing Week and level of competition.

### ✔ Good Practice:

As a guideline, the recommended maximum duration of a training session in a day is:

U7 - U8	>	60 mins
U9 - U11	>	90 mins
U12 - U18	>	120 mins

Remember that hot or cold weather will reduce the duration.

## 9. Consider applying a training to match ratio to manage the duration, intensity and amount of time spent playing.

### ✔ Good Practice:

We would recommend on average, three training sessions to one match. This creates a training culture with the primary focus on player development.

## 10. Remember that coaches are not allowed to train or play contact rugby with children, nor should they hold a tackle bag or shield.

### ✔ Good Practice:

While adults and children may play non-contact rugby together, it is important to consider safeguarding or safety aspects before the session.



## 2.2

## Competitive Opportunities

As a coach you should consider the following:

### 1. Am I clear about the difference between a game and a match?

#### Good Practice:

A game is a managed activity that allows the coach to devise and control situations that will best develop individual players. A match is a fixture between two clubs or teams where there is little opportunity to dictate or control the situations that arise.

Be mindful that matches have limited developmental potential because of time of ball in play and the limited involvement of some positions. Sometimes providing enjoyable training sessions and games can be more rewarding and productive than a match.

#### Ask Yourself:

1. Am I clear about the purpose of the competitive match that's scheduled or is a game more appropriate?
2. Will it give the children an enjoyable experience?
3. Does it offer the right developmental opportunities?
4. Do the opposition share the same player-centred focus as us?
5. What kind of opportunity can the opposition give to test and develop the players? What can I do to maximise this?

### 2. Always have a pre-match conversation with your opposite coach and consider the benefits of changing the rules if this is going to improve the developmental focus.

Consider playing to a younger age groups rules, or removing elements of the game. Communicate these changes to the referee and parents/spectators.

Consider a match outcome in which no scores are kept. There could be additional points for positive / good play, good decision making or a clear demonstration of rugby's core values.

In this way, you are rewarding performance over outcome.

### 3. Consider a match outcome in which no scores are kept. There could be additional points for positive/good play, good decision making or a clear demonstration of rugby's core values.

#### Good Practice:

In this way, you are rewarding performance over outcome.

#### Did You Know?

- > The top three most important things to Age Grade players are being part of a team, enjoyment and having fun. When asked, winning is the third least important.
- > It is clear from a wealth of evidence that the emphasis across all levels of children's sport, including talent pathways, needs to be on enjoyment and development, rather than performance and winning.

## 2.3

## Playing frequency

**There is a tendency for players who are perceived to be better, or who are more physically mature, to play more frequently and in more important matches than those who are considered less able.**

Those players who are often not selected and have less game time tell us that under-playing is one of the factors which make them leave the game. Under-playing also results in a lack of opportunity to develop skills and confidence in a game or match environment. It is our intention to put inclusivity, welfare and player development first.

Children who play in several environments tell us they are often forced to prioritise and play two full, intense games in a week. Research from Leeds Beckett University suggests it takes players 72 hours to recover from a match and that the most talented players play 2.5 games of rugby per week.

This suggests that a child who plays excessively may have an increased risk of injury and possible player burn-out. Those who stop playing often state overplaying as a reason for not continuing with rugby.



### **i** Did You Know?

- > England Rugby players are only permitted to play 32 full matches in a season – 20% of Age Grade players reported playing more than 30
- > 40% of Age Grade players report being asked to choose between playing for a club and a school on the same day.

### **✓** Good Practice:

- > Organise activities so that all your players have an equal opportunity to play.
- > Plan an appropriate programme of development that takes into consideration the player's Rugby Playing Week.
- > If you have a child playing for both club and school/college, talk to their parents to understand the player's level of involvement and discuss development opportunities or potential issues before they arise.
- > Do all you can to develop partnerships with the local club or school in the interests of the player
- > Share your playing calendar with the club or school/college if the player plays at both. Aim to establish a playing programme best suited to the child's development needs which takes into account their other commitments.
- > Be accessible so that parents can discuss their child's development with you.
- > Take into consideration that the physical demands of a sevens tournament can require a similar recovery period to that of a 15-a-side game.
- > Ensure that any competitive activity is arranged in accordance with the playing calendar and competitive menu ([www.englandrugby.com/agegraderugby](http://www.englandrugby.com/agegraderugby)). This ensures a balance of competition, addresses over and under playing and ensures that competition is in line with the wants and needs of players.

### **?** Ask Yourself:

- > Have I made a conscious effort, with other coaches, to strike a balance between games, matches and training and factored in a rest period during the rugby playing week?
- > Have I assessed whether it is suitable for the child to play more than two physically intense matches in a 72-hour period, based on their position, match-time and level of involvement? Have I considered whether this is a game or a match?
- > Do I rotate players so that all members of the squad have an equal chance to develop their skills as well as acquire an enthusiasm and confidence for the game?
- > Do match day squad members play for a minimum of a half a game? This addresses the potential issues of over and under playing and focuses attention on the individuals not the team.

# 3

## GROUPING OF PLAYERS

### Code of Practice 3: Grouping of Players

#### ➤ Our Intention

**Research consistently tells us that children enjoy playing rugby the most when playing with their friends.**

Coaches should ensure that all players are given an equal opportunity to play, train and develop with their peers in an open and transparent way. They should have access to the same resources and opportunities.

By grouping players appropriately, coaches should recognise the difference between individuals but continue to be player centred.



## 3.1

## Grouping of players

**Rugby in England is grouped according to age. There is currently no research or evidence to suggest that altering Age Grade Rugby so that it is structured to banding by maturation or weight (i.e. bio-banding) would have any benefit in terms of injury prevention or player development.**

The RFU believes in the playing of mixed ability teams, especially at primary school ages. Players should be grouped by their confidence, competence in the contact elements of the game, and emotional capability.

The RFU does not support the playing of fixed A, B, C teams where the A team receives increased playing and training opportunities, better resources and access to the best coaches. Where players are repeatedly separated, opportunities to develop and progress are limited.

In situations where coaches recognise differences between secondary age players (U12 – U19), differentiation in small-sided games is appropriate. This will have a positive impact if players feel they are being given inclusive and practical opportunities to participate.



## Good practice for all coaches

### ✔ Good Practice:

1. When grouping players for training or matches, coaches should be able to answer:
  - > Why is the group organised in the way it is?
  - > What are the physical risks for the group?
  - > What are the competencies of the players?
  - > What are the developmental opportunities for each player?
2. Does each player have developmental goals?
3. Does your grouping consider the amount of opportunity the child has had to practice?
4. Do you consider a player's date of birth? Remember, there may be almost a year's difference in players born on 1st September to those on 31st August. How do you ensure the development of those players born later in a season?

## Good Practice for Head Coaches and clubs, schools/colleges

### ✔ Good Practice:

1. Ensure that your coaches work with a wide range of groups not just one group exclusively. They can then share resources, expertise and see the potential in other players who may mature later. This will mean that players receive an equal and shared experience with regards to resources, coaching, training and competitive opportunities.

# 4

## AN INDIVIDUAL PLAYING UP AND DOWN

### Code of Practice 4: An Individual Playing Up and Down

#### ➤ Our Intention

**At all times, we want rugby activities to be player-centred. Usually this means a child playing with friends or peers in their assigned age group.**

If there are rare occasions where a child needs to play out of their age group this is acceptable, as long as the player benefits and the appropriate process is followed.

Full details of this can be found on [www.englandrugby.com/regulations](http://www.englandrugby.com/regulations)



## 4.1

## Individuals Playing Up or Down

**Keeping a player in the correct age group means they play where they enjoy playing rugby the most – with their friends.**

It means that they experience the stepping stones of skill development that are essential for progress and safety. Playing up should not be done only with the purpose of winning a match.



**1. Although there are situations where a player, or a couple of players, may play up or down ask yourself if you have ruled out other activities that avoid the need to play out of the age group?**

- > Are you able to differentiate and set groups different targets or goals for the activity depending on the players' needs (i.e. points for demonstrating a specific skill)?
- > Can you change the rules of the game or match? Remember that the rules for the age group are the stated maximums. For example, U13 can play U9 rules if that encourages skill development.

**2. If there are no other solutions, check whether playing up or down is permitted by Regulation 15.**

For female players, who play joint age banded rugby at U13, U15 and U18, it is not permitted for players to play up or down out of these age groups.

Age Grade	Playing Up	Playing Down	Grouping
			Always playing to the younger Age Grade Rules
U7	No	N/A	With U8s
U8		With U7s	
U9		With U10s	
U10		With U11s	
U11		With U12s	
U12		With U13s	
U13	Yes See Regulation 15.3	Only in exceptional circumstances See Regulation 15.4	No
U14			
U15			
U16	Yes See Regulation 15.3		No
U17			
U18			

U6 players may train in non-competitive, non-contact rugby with players in the U7 or U8 age group but are not permitted to participate in any types of matches, competition, festival or tournaments in any age grade.

### 3. If there is no other solution, make sure an assessment is carried out by a Level 2 or equivalent coach.

This must be verified by another coach, both of whom should have the right level of experience and competence.

- > Are you able to differentiate and set groups different targets or goals for the activity depending on the players' needs?
- > Can you change the rules of the game or match? Remember that the rules for the age group are the stated maximums. For example, U13 can play U9 rules if that encourages skill development.
- > Is the assessment player-centred so that it considers their physical, psychological and emotional development?
- > Have you gained approval from the parent/guardian/relevant person who has responsibility for the player (as well as the approval of the Club's Safeguarding Officer or Youth Chairman/Secretary)?
- > Is the decision clearly documented and kept securely?
- > For U13 players, has this decision been endorsed by the Constituent Body (CB) or the player's Head Teacher?
- > Have you provided 24-hours' notice to the other team of a player playing out of age grade?

**Note:** Standard forms are available on [www.englandrugby.com/regulations](http://www.englandrugby.com/regulations)



# 5

## COMBINING AGE GROUPS

### Code of Practice 5: Combining Age Groups

#### ➤ Our Intention

**There are occasions when it is necessary to combine age grades to provide a playing or training opportunity.**

The mixing of age grade focusses on the grouping of children to play together as a team as opposed to 'playing up or down' which is focussed on an individual only.

If the reason for combining age groups is clear, a combined age group is occasionally the right option.



## 5.1

## Mixed Age Groups

**At times, you may feel there are practical reasons to combine age grades for training or contact sessions. This could be because:**

- > One group of players has been committed to a fixture without exploring playing opportunities for all squad members thereby leaving some players behind.
- > One age group has lots of players who are unavailable due to injury or academic commitments.
- > A school, club or college has small numbers of a particular age group and needs additional players to make up the numbers.

### ✔ Good Practice:

1. Coaches should ensure that all squad members have an equal opportunity to play with squad members playing at least half a game.

**Ask yourself if you have explored other options that avoid the need to combine teams?**

- > Can you change the rules of the game or match? Remember that the rules for the age group are the stated maximums. For example, U13 can play U9 rules if that encourages skill development

**Before grouping age grades, have you considered each player's physical, psychological and emotional development? Is it appropriate?**

**The following age grade groupings are permitted:**

- > **U9s & U10s**  
**U10s & U11s**  
**U11s & U12s**  
**U12s & U13s**
- > Regulations permit U16 and U17 players to train and play up and permit seventeen year olds to play adult rugby if appropriate for the development of the child. The process and detail of this can be found in regulation 15 (15.3, 15.5 and 15.6).

**Mixed rugby is permitted until U11 after which girls play Joint Age Band rugby and the following age grade groupings are permitted:**

- > **U13**  
**U15**  
**U18**
- > In girl's rugby, it is not permitted to combine age bands i.e. U13 cannot play U15 rugby.

**Note:** Dual age banding is permitted in girls' rugby due the minimal difference in the physical capabilities of female players in these bands. This does not increase the risk of physical mismatches compared to teenage boys' rugby where the game is generally organised within a single year group.



**When working with mixed age grades you should:**

- > Obtain written approval from the Constituent Body (CB) for the Club or the school's County Schools Union (CSU)
- > Check that not more than half of the players are from the older age grade.
- > Follow the rules for the younger age grade if you are playing matches competitively.

# 6

## OUT OF SEASON ACTIVITY, RUGBY CAMPS AND TOURS

### Code of Practice 6: Out of Season Activity, Rugby Camps and Tours

#### > Our Intention

**Research from periodisation experts promotes an 'off season' to recover and to experience other sports and activity.**

This code supports the research that age grade players should have a break from specific rugby activities between the end of the season in May and the start of the new season in September.

The RFU recognises that those who have had been actively involved in playing rugby, at whatever level, benefit from a sustained break over the summer. Children can then experience different sports as part of their development and avoid the negative impact that continuous rugby activity may have on their long-term involvement with sporting activities. This is more likely to protect their long-term interest and enjoyment of rugby.

The RFU encourages coaches to be open to the fact that the summer provides opportunities to introduce the game to those who have had limited exposure to it but who may suddenly discover its appeal.



## 6.1

## Out of Season Activities

1. **Am I aware that the Age Grade Rugby season for games and competition is from the first Saturday in September until the first Monday in May?**
2. **Is all 'Out of Season Activity' (activity not within the season) in line with RFU regulation 15.8?**
3. **Have I received approval from my CB or CSU to organise out of season matches or competition?**

## Facts to be aware of and questions to ask yourself:

1. Am I aware that the evidence shows that players in this age group benefit from experiencing different sporting activities?
2. Do I make sure that these players have an off-season break of at least four months? Have I visited [Age Grade Rugby Resources and Support](#) to enable this?
3. Does this activity benefit new or inexperienced players? If not, why am I running it?
4. Have I considered other beneficial group activities that can be held at my club or school during the summer months as a way to develop fundamental movement skills that are transferable to rugby i.e. cricket, 5-a-side football, rounders or athletics?
5. Is all out of season activity in line with the RFU out-of-season activity list?
6. Have I taken into account that summer activities increase the demand of the time of our volunteers?
7. Am I aware that at U13 and below no outgoing tours are permitted but are at U14 and above?

## The following is permitted:

At U11 and below	At U12 and U13	At U14, U15 and U16	At U17 and 18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Non-contact* training only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Non-contact training only.</li> <li>&gt; Non-contact matches and competition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Non-contact training only.</li> <li>&gt; Non-contact matches and competition.</li> <li>&gt; XRugby7s contact matches, competition and preparation**. <a href="http://www.englandrugby.com/xrugby7s">www.englandrugby.com/xrugby7s</a></li> </ul> <p>No other contact activity is permitted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Non-contact training only.</li> <li>&gt; Non-contact matches and competition.</li> <li>&gt; XRugby7s contact matches, competition and preparation**. <a href="http://www.englandrugby.com/xrugby7s">www.englandrugby.com/xrugby7s</a></li> <li>&gt; 7-a-side contact matches and competition and preparation.</li> </ul> <p>No other contact activity is permitted.</p>

## Exceptions:

At U14 and above, players can play 15-a-side competition in May, if it has been re-arranged due to adverse weather, or in August two-weeks prior to the start of the season.

Be mindful that during the summer months grass pitches are likely to be harder and so the risk of impact injury increases. Hotter weather means that players need more hydration, so always ensure that plenty of water is available.

## Note:

\*Non-contact expressly means no tackling and no involvement in scrums, rucks or mauls.

\*\* Preparation means to ensure new players are ready and able to participate in matches and competition safely.



## 6.2

## Rugby Camps Checklist for Coaches & Teachers

1. Am I clear on the rationale for running a rugby / holiday camp? Is it player-centred and does it support player development rather than fitness training in preparation for the new season?
2. Have I ensured that the very young participants are not just attending for parental convenience and is the programme of activities suitable for the child?
3. Am I following the Code of Practice concerning the maximum training times per age group (Code 2) and mixed age grades (Code 5)?
4. Have I received endorsement from the Constituent Body (CB) or County Schools Union (CSU) in which my camp is located?
5. Is everyone notified about the Key Contact who has overall responsibility for the camp? Are their names and contact details visible before, during and after the camp?
6. Are all coaches qualified with a current enhanced RFU DBS and do I have at least one Level 2 coach to devise, supervise and lead the coaching programme?
7. Have I made sure that coaches are not working in isolation and with appropriate supervision in case of injury or something unanticipated?
8. Have I scheduled a range of activities in line with RFU's summer activities and Out of Season? Is there an appropriate balance of play and rest? Does the programme have player development at its centre?
9. Is there a welfare and safeguarding plan in place, with a safeguarding lead?
10. Have I completed a risk assessment for the camp and each of the venues that will be used?



## 6.3

## Tours

Age Grade tours are for children and young people to enjoy first and foremost in a safe and appropriate environment for them. Whilst it is acknowledged that tours are an excellent way to build team spirit, visit other areas and experience other cultures, Age Grade tours are not an excuse for adults to recreate what many perceive to be the traditions of touring as an adult.



### Checklist for coaches & teachers:

1. **Have I read and completed the tour guidance and checklist**

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2. **Is the tour permitted within RFU Regulation (i.e. no outgoing U13 and below summer tours)?**

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3. **Am I aware of the Rules and Regulations of the Union I am visiting?**

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4. **Have I communicated with the opposition coaches so that the match or game is organised in the best interest of the players?**

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5. **Am I aware of the regulations for touring set out in RFU Regulation 10 including the permission from the Constituent Body or CSU required to tour overseas (including Wales and Scotland)?**

# 7

## MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR COACHES AND REFEREES

### Code of Practice 7: Minimum Standards for Coaches and Referees

#### > Our Intention

**All players have their rugby journey supported by coaches and referees who are player-centred and skilled in the holistic development of young people.**

The coaches and referees are competent and confident in key coaching processes, rugby specific knowledge and the application of RFU regulations. They put the welfare, as well as the wants and needs of young players, first.



## 7.1

## Levels of practice for coaches and referees

### 1. Am I qualified and up to date in my coaching and refereeing skills? Have I made sure I meet the minimum required practice? Am I fit enough to referee a match?

There are three levels of practice:

#### Required Practice

1. DBS (those in clubs or academies MUST have an RFU Enhanced DBS)

It is mandatory that every Age Grade coach meets the Required Practice.

#### Standard Practice (Coaches & Referees)

1. Completion of DBS
2. Completion and application of online HeadCase training course ([www.englandrugby.com/headcase](http://www.englandrugby.com/headcase))
3. RFU UKCC Coaching / Refereeing Qualification.

The RFU recommends that contact rugby should only be introduced and refereed under the supervision of RFU coaches and referees who have achieved standard practice.



#### Best Practice (Coaches & Referees)

1. Licensed Coach / Referee (eligible to become a member of the England Rugby Coaching Association (ERCA) or English Rugby Refereeing Association (ERRA) member)
2. Qualified, Active and Engaging in annual CPD, including refereeing (if relevant)
3. Has completed the RFU Play It Safe safeguarding training, or comparable training for teachers in a school environment
4. Has completed a relevant First Aid course

Best Practice is what most coaches and referees should aspire to.

#### ✔ Good Practice:

All those who work as a coach or referee should be qualified, up to date with current methods, confident in their knowledge of the rules and have completed safeguarding and first aid training. They can then best meet the needs of all players.



## 7.2

### Minimum standards at clubs and schools/ colleges

1. **How do I recruit my coaches? Have I considered the active recruitment of coaches and the matching of coaches to specific age groups based on factors such as personality, experience and team need?**

 **Good Practice:**

All those who work as a coach or referee should be qualified, up to date with current methods, confident in their knowledge of the rules and have completed safeguarding and first aid training. They can then best meet the needs of all players.

2. **Am I confident that all coaches under my supervision are sufficiently competent and meet the Required Practice?**

 **Good Practice:**

All clubs and schools must ensure that all coaches who work with young people are DBS checked. More information is at: [englandrugby.com/safeguarding](http://englandrugby.com/safeguarding).

3. **Do I ensure that each age group has access to the most appropriate coach? Are the skills and knowledge of the more experienced and qualified coaches shared?**



4. **Are there appropriate levels of staff available so that coaches are not working in isolation?**

5. **Is there appropriate first aid cover and equipment at all contact sessions and matches?**

 **Good Practice:**

Clubs and schools should read and must follow care guidelines as detailed in RFU Regulation 9 (Player Safety).

6. **Has an appropriate risk assessment been completed for the venue and activity?**

7. **Have the players and parents seen and understood the RFU animated concussion awareness video? [englandrugby.com/headcase](http://englandrugby.com/headcase)**

# MAKING THE MOST OF THE CODES OF PRACTICE



**Thank you for taking the time to read the Age Grade Codes of Practice.**

The success of Age Grade Rugby across schools, clubs and colleges in England needs your support.

As part of making the most of the Codes of Practice we recommend that you:

- > Make a note of the questions you cannot answer confidently and find out what you need to do so that you can.
- > Aim to follow and apply the guidelines where they are given.
- > Share the codes and your support with other coaches. The more coaches behind the codes, the more embedded Age Grade Rugby will become.
- > Visit the [England Rugby Age Grade Rugby page](#) and join all the other coaches who have said, 'I'm in!'

Increasing and maintaining player enjoyment among children is at the heart of the Codes of Practice. Achieve this in your work as a coach and your own level of enjoyment will increase too.

# USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

## Adult Laws of the Game:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Age Grade Research and supporting documents:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Playing Calendar:

This document details when local and national club and school / college competitions may take place throughout a season. It is not a priority calendar and does prevent playing of any friendly or school block fixtures.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Competitive Menu:

This menu ensures that format of competition matches is in the interests of inclusive participation for all Age Grade Players.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Concussion modules for players, parents and coaches:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Goggles:

[DOWNLOAD DOCUMENT](#)

## Insurance:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Further queries to:

[RFU@PERKINS-SLADE.COM](mailto:RFU@PERKINS-SLADE.COM)

## Quilter Kids First.

Quilter Kids First puts children first. Aimed at U7-U13 boys and girls, it up-skills coaches and creates a great rugby environment, so that everyone stays in the game for longer.

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Rules of Play:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Rugby Safe:

RugbySafe is RFU's overarching player safety and wellbeing programme to support clubs, schools/ colleges and participants at all levels of the game. Find out more including FAQs player clothing, first aid and player safety:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

## Safeguarding:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Further queries to

[SAFEGUARDING@THERFU.COM](mailto:SAFEGUARDING@THERFU.COM)

## Tours:

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Further queries to:

[TOURENQUIRIES@THERFU.COM](mailto:TOURENQUIRIES@THERFU.COM)

# ARE YOU IN?

**You've downloaded  
and read the Codes of  
Practice but are you in?**

Visit [www.englandrugby.com](http://www.englandrugby.com),  
enter your club details and join all  
the other coaches in England who  
have said

**“ I'm in! ”**

