

Rugby 101 - The Basics

Rugby Union was, if the legend is to be believed first played when William Webb Ellis was involved in a game of football at Rugby School in England in 1823. The story goes that Master Web Ellis "with fine disregard for the rules of football as played in his time, first took the ball in his arms and ran with it, thus originating the distinctive feature of the Rugby game."

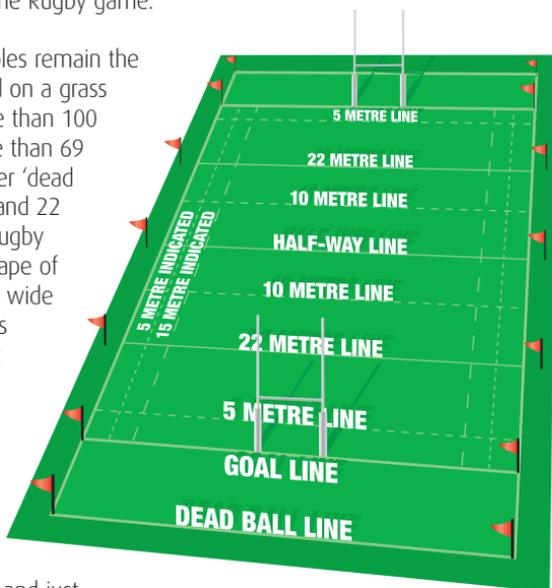
However, the basic principles remain the same. The game is played on a grass **pitch** measuring not more than 100 metres long and not more than 69 metres wide, with a further 'dead ball' area of between 10 and 22 metres at each end. The rugby **posts** (goal) are in the shape of an H. They are 5.6 metres wide with the crossbar 3 metres from the ground. The post height is unlimited.



The **ball** is an oval shape (similar to football) and just under 30 centimetres long although in the women's game and for younger players the ball is slightly smaller. The ball must be passed **backwards** between team members or kicked within the boundaries of the pitch.

The games is controlled by a single **referee** on the pitch, assisted by two touch judges on either side of the pitch and in the professional game a Video Ref whose only role is to make decisions on whether a try has been scored, and only when his assistance is called for by the match referee.

The game is now played in over 120 countries throughout the World. There are huge numbers of amateur players, both male and female, across the globe and, since 1995, the game at the highest level has been professional.



The game is played between teams of **15 players** with up to seven replacements for each team. Each player has specific duties determined by their position in the team, and at any time during the game a player can be substituted by one of the replacements – however they cannot return to action once replaced, unless they have left the pitch to have a blood injury treated. The players form two groups – the **forwards** (8 players) and the **backs** (7 players).

FORWARDS

- Front Row – the front 3 players in a scrum, consisting of 2 **props** and a **hooker**
- Second Row** – the middle 3 players in a scrum
- Back Row – 3 outside players in a scrum, consisting of 2 **flankers** and the **Number 8**

BACKS

- Half backs – **scrum half** and **fly half**
- Centres** – 2 players in the middle of the field
- Wings** – 2 players on the edge of the pitch
- Full back** – last man at the back of the pitch

The game is played over **two halves of 40 minutes** each and the principle is that you need to have scored more points than your opponents to win the match. The game is started by either a place kick or a drop kick kicked in the direction of the attacking team, from the centre of the pitch. At the kick off the ball has to go a minimum of 10 metres into the opponents half before play will continue. After a score the game is restarted with a drop kick from half way, taken by the team who conceded the score.

HOW TO SCORE POINTS

The most rewarding is the **'try'** – worth five points. To score a try a team member must, within the 'dead ball area' of the opposition team, either hold the ball and touch it on the ground, touch the ball with downward pressure or fall on the ball and exert downward pressure while it's under a players' control.

After each try the scoring team has the opportunity to add an extra two points by kicking a **'conversion'**. For a conversion the ball is placed (usually with the aid of a plastic tee) on the ground in a perpendicular line from the point where the try was scored. One team member then attempts to kick the ball between the posts to gain the extra two points.

You can also score with a 'penalty kick' where, following a penalty to the

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opposition you are able to kick the ball through the posts from the point on the field where the penalty occurred. (Worth three points)

The final way of scoring is with a **'drop goal'**. England famously won the last Rugby World Cup in extra time when Jonny Wilkinson kicked a drop goal to win the game. During the course of play your player drops the ball to the ground and once it has hit the ground he kicks it through the posts, which is worth three points.

The beauty of rugby is that it is a game for everyone. The structure of the game and the division of the sides into specific positions allows for all shapes and sizes to enjoy the game. The game also thrives amongst children with both **tag rugby** and **touch rugby** ideal introductions to the game for young children as young as four. Tag Rugby is a relatively new non-contact form of the game that is lots of fun to play and is very easy to learn and teach for both boys and girls. Women's rugby is amongst the fastest growing sports, especially in North America and this summer, Edmonton, Canada, will host the Women's Rugby World Cup tournament.



Rugby 101 - Terminology

ADVANTAGE LAW - Allows play to proceed after an infringement in the case of the non-offending team receiving an advantage.

ATTACKING TEAM - The team in possession of the ball.

BACKS - Players who spread out and attempt to run the ball delivered from a scrum or lineout.

DEAD BALL LINE - The limit to which a try can be scored beyond the goal line.

DEFENDING TEAM - The team not in possession of the ball.

DROP KICK - A kick made after the ball has reached or bounced off the ground. Worth three points if it clears the goalposts; also used to restart play after a score or certain other occasions.

FORWARD PASS - A violation that usually results in a scrum to the non-offending side.

FORWARDS - Players who pack in a scrum or throw and jump in a lineout.

FREE KICK - A relatively minor law violation that allows the non-offending side to restart play in an unopposed fashion. Opponents must retreat 10-meters and wait for the non-offending team to kick the ball through the mark. A free kick cannot be taken for goal.

INFRINGEMENT - A breaking of a law.

INTERCEPT - To catch a pass intended for a member of the opposition.

KNOCK ON - The accidental hitting of the ball from the hands or arms toward the dead ball line. Results in the same scenario as a forward pass -- a scrum to the non-offending team.

LINEOUT - Restarts play after the ball goes out over the touchline. The team that didn't touch the ball last has the throw-in.

MARK - The place where the referee signals play will be restarted. For example, the referee marks where the scrum will take place, or where the penalty has occurred.

OFFSIDE - Players in front of a member of their own team who was last in possession of the ball, or in front of established lines at a scrum. Lineouts of loose play are said to be offside. In some instances, one can retreat to an onside position without penalty; other times the infraction is automatically a violation.

continued

Rugby 101 - Terminology

PACK - Forward unit of a team, engages in scrum and lineouts.

PENALTY - Awarded after a serious infringement of the laws. Offenders are required to retire 10-meters while the opposition is given possession to restart play unopposed. Many times the non-offending team will attempt a kick at goal, worth three points.

PUT IN - Rolling the ball down the center of the scrum tunnel.

RUCK - A ball-winning activity following a tackle and release; a ruck is formed if a player from both teams is in physical contact over the ball.

SCRUM - A way to restart play where a bound group of players form a tunnel with the opposition.

SEVENS - An abbreviated game of rugby that follows the same laws but for the number of players and time of the contest. A 7s team fields only seven players; each half is seven minutes long. Much like a game of three-on-three full court basketball, it's a wide-open contest.

SET PIECE - A term for scrums and lineouts.

SUPPORT PLAYERS - Players who position themselves to increase the ball transfer options of the ball carrier.

TAP KICK (OR "TAP MOVE") - A gentle kick to oneself, followed by a pick up, used to restart play after either a penalty or free kick is awarded.

THROW IN - Throwing the ball down the middle of a lineout.

TOUCHLINE - The side boundary of the field (sideline).

TRY - Forcing the ball onto the ground with downward pressure over the opposition's goal line.

22-METER LINE - Balls kicked out of bounds from behind the "22" restarted by a lineout where the ball went out; balls kicked out of bounds from in front of the 22 are restarted by a lineout where the ball was kicked. The exception is a ball kicked out of bounds immediately after a penalty has been awarded; the lineout is held where the ball went out and the non-offending team retains the throw-in.