

## **PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE RULES**

The Primary Rugby League games programme is now firmly established and accepted as the vehicle to introduce children to the great game of Rugby League. Over the past 15 years specialist coaching awards and programmes have been introduced that support children's development, and aim to ensure that each child realises their potential through learning and developing their skills in a logical and progressive manner.

Please see below the 2024 Primary Rugby League rules.

### **CUB PLAY**

1. A child can register to participate in cub play rugby league activity from the age of 4 and can play until they finish reception.
2. The purpose of Cub Play is to introduce children to Rugby League in a non-contact, fun, safe, and developmentally appropriate manner.
3. The focus of Cub Play sessions should be to develop children's movement skills to prepare them for a life in sport and physical activity.
4. The UKCC Level 1 qualification beginner level offers a range of activities that are suitable for Cub Play participants.
5. Clubs are not permitted to arrange Cub Play fixtures. Children develop at different rates and may not be psychologically, physically and socially ready to enter a competitive environment. A poor experience of Rugby League could put them off sport for life.
6. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid RFL UKCC Level 1 is required to coach at this level.

Coaches must hold a RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.

### **SAFE PLAY CODE**

This Safe Play Code has been written in order to promote safety and good conduct within the Primary Rugby League versions of the game. It will provide the best possible on-field environment for the development of young Rugby League players, particularly in the areas of actively controlling undesirable actions and behaviour.

#### **Section 1 - The Tackle Zone**

##### **The Code: Tackles above the armpits**

When a ball carrier is advancing in an upright posture, any tackle by the defender in which contact is made above the armpits is deemed to be an infringement.

#### **Section 2 - Dangerous Tackles**

##### **The Code: Tripping or throwing an opponent**

It is an infringement if the tackler trips or uses his or her legs in anyway during a tackle. This applies even if the defender already has a hand on the ball carrier (i.e., the Cumberland throw).

##### **The Code: Lifting 1**

Adopting a crotch hold is not permitted. Placing either the hand or arm in the crotch region at any time is an infringement.

##### **The Code: Lifting 2**

Vertical lifting is an infringement. Should a referee anticipate this is going to happen in a tackle he or she should blow the whistle immediately to prevent it from occurring.

##### **The Code: Lifting 3**

The ball carrier cannot be lifted and driven. A tackle in which the ball carrier is lifted and remains off the ground for two or more steps is an infringement. However, this should not be confused with a driving tackle when the ball carrier is knocked off his or her feet.

**The Code: Shoulder charge**

Defenders are not allowed to shoulder charge the ball carrier in order to affect a tackle. A defender who runs at a ball carrier and makes no attempt to tackle, grab or hold the ball carrier, but merely makes an attempt to affect the tackle by the use of the shoulder shall be deemed to have committed an infringement.

**The Code: Flopping**

A defender cannot drop or fall on a prone player. If the ball carrier is prone or stationary on the ground it is an infringement to drop, dive or fall on that player. The tackle will be deemed complete by the defender simply putting a hand on the ball carrier.

**The Code: Slinging**

The use of the ball carrier's arm or jersey to sling a player to the ground is not permitted. Any defender who uses the arm or jersey of the ball carrier to complete a tackle is committing an infringement.

**Section 3 - Hand-off or Fend**

**The Code: Dangerous use of the hand**

An attacking player cannot thrust out his or her arm and contact a defender above the shoulder. Any player that hands off or fends above the shoulder will be deemed to have infringed.

**Section 4 - Verbal abuse and foul language**

**The Code: Unacceptable language**

The use of obscene, threatening, racist, denigrating, and abusive language is not permitted. There is a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable language and behaviour based on individual's gender identity, race, age, disability, faith or sexual orientation. Any form of verbal abuse, threatening language or sledging will be deemed an infringement.

**Section 5 – Tackle Shields & Tackle Bags**

Under no circumstances must a coach, volunteer or parent hold a tackle shield for a child to tackle. An adult can hold the top of a tackle bag for a child to tackle.

**UNDER 6s RULES**

1. The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
2. Every child must play all of the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured).
3. The recommended number of players per team shall be four, with a maximum of five and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays teams can be flexible, for example two teams of four and one of five.
4. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
5. Size of the playing area is 25m x 12m.
6. The game will be played with a size three standard Rugby League ball.
7. Touch or Tag are the mandatory format for this age group.
8. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.
9. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
10. After each touch or tag all defending players must retire four metres prior to the PTB restart. The touched player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.  
  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m. (i.e. If a tackle is made closer to the opponents try line, then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
11. Grubber kicks only, are allowed on the last touch or tackle. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
12. A try is scored in the normal way by placing or touching the ball down on or over the opponents try line.
13. No scrums.
14. If the ball goes into touch the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
15. When an attacking player is touched or tag removed before they place the ball down in the opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was touched or tag removed, unless it is on the 5<sup>th</sup> play where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.
16. No ball stealing.

17. Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code, will result in **the coach stopping the game and explaining the offence to all players**. Following this, play will continue.
18. Sin Bin does not apply. However, **coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required**.
19. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. The coach must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
20. The role of the coach is to develop, not to win. The coach should give all players equal development opportunities in training and games.  
  
NB. These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.

**UNDER 7s RULES**

1. The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
2. Every child must play all of the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured).
3. The recommended number of players per team shall be four, with a maximum of five and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays teams can be flexible, for example two teams of four and one of five.
4. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
5. Size of the playing area is 25m x 12m.
6. The game will be played with a size three standard Rugby League ball.
7. Touch or tag is the recommended format for this age group. If both coaches agree then the game can be played as tackle. If both coaches cannot agree on the format then it must revert to touch.
8. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.
9. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
10. After each touch or tackle all defending players must retire four metres prior to the PTB restart. The tackled player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.  
  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m. (i.e. If a tackle is made closer to the opponents try line then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
11. Grubber kicks only, are allowed on the last touch or tackle. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
12. A try is scored in the normal way by placing or touching the ball down on or over the opponents try line.
13. No scrums.
14. If the ball goes into touch the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
15. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.

- b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in goal area will result in a PTB re start 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled and it is counted as one of the six tackles.
16. No ball stealing.
17. Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code, will result in **the coach stopping the game and explaining the offence to all players**. Following this, play will continue.
18. Sin Bin does not apply. However, **coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required**.
19. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. The coach must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
20. The role of the coach is to develop, not to win. The coach should give all players equal development opportunities in training and games.
- NB. These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.

### UNDER 8s RULES

1. The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
2. Every child must play all of the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured).
3. The recommended number of players per team shall be five, with a maximum of six and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays teams can be flexible, for example two teams of four and one of five.
4. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 30 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
5. Size of the playing area is 25m x 15m.
6. The game will be played with a size three standard Rugby League ball.
7. Touch is the recommended format for this age group. If both coaches agree then the game can be played as tackle. If both coaches cannot agree on the format, then it must revert to touch.
8. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.
9. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
10. After each touch or tackle all defending players must retire four metres prior to the PTB restart. The tackled player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.  
  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m. (i.e. If a tackle is made closer to the opponents try line then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
11. Grubber kicks only, are allowed on the last touch or tackle. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
12. A try is scored in the normal way by placing or touching the ball down on or over the opponents try line.
13. No scrums.
14. If the ball goes into touch the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
15. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.

- b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in goal area will result in a PTB re start 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled and it is counted as one of the six tackles.
16. No ball stealing.
17. Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code, will result in **the coach stopping the game and explaining the offence to all players**. Following this, play will continue.
18. Sin Bin does not apply. However, **coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required**.
19. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. The coach must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
20. The role of the coach is to develop, not to win. The coach should give all players equal development opportunities in training and games.
- NB. These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.



**UNDER 9s RULES**

1. The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
2. Every child must play all of the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured).
3. The recommended number of players per team shall be six, with a maximum of seven and a minimum of three. To ensure every child plays teams can be flexible, for example two teams of six and one of five.
4. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 40 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is three games of 10 minutes.
5. Size of the playing area is 30m x 18m.
6. The game will be played with a size three standard Rugby League ball.
7. Tackle is the recommended format for this age group.
8. The six-play rule applies. This means that every team must complete a full set of six plays including errors or a Try being scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to allow players to execute the skills of the game without experiencing any fear of failure and to give every team the opportunity to play a full set of six each time. This rule also allows for each player to get an equal amount of time attacking and defending.  
  
*There is some flexibility with this rule. Where experience at U9s, Leagues may wish to permit turning the ball over following two errors in any one set. Remembering the ethos of PRL around a progressive approach to player development and fun and inclusion.*
9. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
10. After each touch or tackle all defending players must retire four metres prior to the PTB restart. The tackled player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback and the Games Coach shouts 'GO'.  
  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m. (i.e. If a tackle is made closer to the opponents try line then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
11. Grubber kicks only, are allowed on the last touch or tackle. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
12. A try is scored in the normal way by placing or touching the ball down on or over the opponents try line.
13. No scrums.
14. If the ball goes into touch the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
15. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.

- b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in goal area will result in a PTB re start 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled, and it is counted as one of the six tackles.
16. No ball stealing.
17. Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code, will result in **the coach stopping the game and explaining the offence to all players**. Following this, play will continue.
18. Sin Bin does not apply. However, **coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required**.
19. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. The coach must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
20. The role of the coach is to develop, not to win. The coach should give all players equal development opportunities in training and games.
- NB. These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.

**UNDER 10s RULES**

1. The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
2. Every child must play all of the time. There should be no substitutes. (The only time a player should not be on the field of play is if they are injured)
3. The maximum number of players per team shall be nine, with a minimum of four. To ensure every child plays teams can be flexible, for example one team of seven and one of nine.
4. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 40 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is 2 games of 20 minutes.
5. Size of the playing area is 50m x 30m. (Based on 9 players. The width should always be no more than 3m per player)
6. The game will be played with a size three standard Rugby League ball. Smaller ball better for developing the key core skill of grip
7. Tackle is the recommended format for this age group.
8. The two-error rule applies. Teams' handover possession once they have made a second error in a set of 6. Teams still retain the ball for a set of 6 when a try is scored. The coaching ethos behind this rule is to start to introduce players to the consequence of losing possession when an error is made. Retaining the ball when a try is scored should still provide an equal balance of attacking and defending during the game.  
  
*There is some flexibility with this rule. Where experience at U10s, teams may wish to permit turning the ball over following one error rather than two in any one set. Remembering the ethos of PRL around a progressive approach to player development and fun and inclusion.*
9. At the beginning of each game and at the start of each attacking set, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 5m from the attacking teams try line.
10. After each touch or tackle all defending players must retire five metres prior to the PTB restart. The tackled player should restart the game by a PTB. The defending side cannot move until the ball is passed by the acting halfback or the dummy half chooses to run with the ball (scoot).  
  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m. (i.e. If a tackle is made closer to the opponents try line then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
11. Teams are allowed one scoot from dummy half per set of 6 tackles, the dummy half can't score but they can be tackled, this encourages players to push with the ball player and develop their support play.
12. Grubber kicks and chip kicks are allowed on the last touch or tackle. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
13. A try is scored in the normal way by placing or touching the ball down on or over the opponents try line.
14. No scrums.

15. If the ball goes into touch the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.
16.
  - a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.
  - b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in goal area will result in a PTB re start 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled and it is counted as one of the six tackles.
17. No ball stealing
18. Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code, will result in **the coach stopping the game and explaining the offence to all players**. Following this, play will continue.
19. Sin Bin does not apply. However, **coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required**.
20. Coach Qualification - A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. The coach must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
21. The role of the coach is to develop, not to win. The coach should give all players equal development opportunities in training and games.  
  
NB. These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.

**UNDER 11s Rules**

1. The game is to be called Primary Rugby League and is a modified version of Rugby League and must be played under the Safe Play Code rules.
2. As many children as possible should be given an opportunity to play all of the time. Try to limit the number of substitutes by modifying numbers e.g., if both teams have 18 players play 2 games of 9 a side instead of 1 game of 11 a side with 7 substitutes.
3. The maximum number of players per team shall be eleven, with a minimum of six. Teams can be flexible, for example one team of 9 and one of eleven.
4. No player should be allowed to play for more than a total of 40 minutes in any one day. The recommended playing time is 2 games of 20 minutes.
5. Size of the playing area is 50-60m x 40m. (Based on 11 players, the width should be reduced at roughly 3m per player when playing lower numbers)
6. The game will be played with a size four standard Rugby League ball.
7. Tackle is the recommended format for this age group.
8. Teams' handover possession once they have made an error in a set of 6. The opposition receive the ball where the error was made. Once a team has scored, they also hand over possession. The opposition start with a play the ball 10m from their own line after conceding a try.
9. At the beginning of each game, the game will commence with a Play the ball (PTB) 10m from the attacking teams try line.
10. After each tackle defending players must retire five metres prior to the PTB restart.  
  
The ball must be played backwards with the foot. The team in possession must retire behind the acting half-back. One active marker can be present at the PTB restarts. The ball is in play once it is played backwards (there should be no delay in playing the ball backwards once the player has placed the ball on the ground).  
  
Dummy half can run - without forfeiting possession if tackled but cannot score this encourages players to push with the ball player and develop their support play.  
  
The minimum distance the ball is played from the try line is 5m. (i.e. If a tackle is made closer to the opponents try line then move the player back 5m mark to PTB, this is to give the attacking team more space).
11. Kicking out of hand (grubber, chip, cross field) is allowed. No fly kicking or secondary kicks are permitted.
12. A try is scored in the normal way by placing or touching the ball down on or over the opponents try line.
13. No scrums.
14. If the ball goes into touch the restart will take place opposite the entry point, 5m from the side line and 5m from the try line with a PTB.

15. a) When an attacking player is held up in their opponents in goal area, play will be restarted by a PTB restart 5m from the try line in line with where the player was held up, unless it is on the handover tackle where the restart will be a PTB, 5m from the try line, for the side that has just defended.
- b) Any player tackled and forced into their own in goal area will result in a PTB re start 5m infield from the try line opposite to where the player was tackled, and it is counted as one of the six tackles.
16. No ball stealing
17. Any act of foul play that contravenes the Safe Play Code, will result in **the coach explaining the offence to the player and stopping the game if necessary**. Following this, play will continue.
18. Sin Bin does not apply. However, **coaches are encouraged to give players guilty of foul play a timeout where required**.
19. Coach Qualification – A minimum of a valid UKCC Rugby League Level 1 is required to be an assistant or head coach at this level. They must have a valid licence which requires an RFL enhanced DBS and hold the Safeguarding and Protecting Children Certificate.
20. The role of the coach is to develop, not to win. The coach should give all players equal development opportunities in training and games.
- NB. These rules recognise the custom and practice of some playing leagues to allow coaches on the field of play during games to facilitate the development of inexperienced players.