



RFU

AGE GRADE RUGBY

REGULATION & PLAYING UPDATES

Summer 2024 & Season 2024/25 v.1

Dated: 1st May 2024

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This document includes the modifications to regulations for summer 2024 and the 2024/25 season. The summer regulations kick off when the off-season starts on Tuesday 7th May and the new season's regulations begin from 1st August 2024; that is when players shift up to their new ages and set of playing rules.

The aim of the regulations is to support the safe and consistent playing of the game and development of players. The regulations can be found [here](#) with Regulation 15 covering Age Grade Rugby. The drive continues to be to enable as many options as we can for players to play, while ensuring the critical need for everyone involved in the age grade game to apply a player welfare and safety lens at all times.

This update will help everyone involved in Age Grade Rugby to engage in the season well-informed and confidently. We recommend this is shared widely across the age grade club, school and college networks.

Summer 2024

1. The updated RFU Age Grade Summer Activity Framework will be followed for out of season activity (see Reg 15.8)

There is a specific [Summer Activity page](#) with all the detail. The programme maintains the player safety/retention focus whilst ensuring an age grade off-season period remains. It enables match opportunities and contact skills development and applies up to the new season on 7th September 2024.

The framework covers all aspects of age grade training and playing activity (including CB, DPP and Rugby Camps) and is designed to support player safety, contact preparation and player retention. Additional elements are layered on month by month and coaches can select from the months before, as well as up to the threshold of the current one. This is regulation, no activity is permitted beyond this monthly threshold.

		MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
TRAINING	FREQUENCY	1-3 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME FOR U11-18)	1-2 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME)	1-2 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME)	1-3 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME)
	INTENSITY	LOW	LOW - MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM - HIGH
	TYPE	GENERAL FITNESS AND SKILLS NON-CONTACT TRAINING FOR U13 & BELOW MAX 20 MINS CONTACT FOR U14-18 PER WEEK	GENERAL FITNESS AND SKILLS MAX 20 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK	GENERAL FITNESS AND SKILLS MAX 30 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK	POSITION/GAME SPECIFIC SKILLS MAX 40 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK MAX 20 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK
	TIME	MAX 45 - 60 MINUTES +ACTIVATE	MAX 45 - 60 MINUTES +ACTIVATE	MAX 45 - 75 MINUTE +ACTIVATE	MAX 45 - 90 MINUTE +ACTIVATE
FIXTURES	TAG	U11 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U7 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U7 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U7 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS
	NON-CONTACT/TI RUGBY	U11 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U9 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U9 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U9 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS
	X RUGBY	U14-18 BOYS & GIRLS	U14-18 BOYS & GIRLS	U14-18 BOYS & GIRLS	U12 - 18 BOYS U12, 14, 16, 18 GIRLS BANDS
	GAME ON ADAPTED CONTACT FORMAT	X	X	X	U14 - 18 BOYS U14, 16, 18 GIRLS BANDS
	FIXTURES/FESTIVALS	1 X FIXTURE/FESTIVAL FOR U11-18 BOYS & GIRLS PER FORTNIGHT	1 X FIXTURE/FESTIVAL PER FORTNIGHT	1 X FIXTURE/FESTIVAL PER FORTNIGHT	3 X FIXTURES/FESTIVALS

THE FRAMEWORK IS A MENU TO CHOOSE FROM, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PLAY/TRAIN IN THE OFF-SEASON. FOR THOSE THAT CHOOSE TO, THIS SHOWS THE MAXIMUM ACTIVITY PERMITTED EACH MONTH. ALL MATCHES ARE FRIENDLIES DUE TO BEING OUT OF SEASON.
PLEASE REMEMBER PLAYERS MOVE TO THEIR NEW AGE GROUPS/BANDS ON 1st AUGUST

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Activity is not compulsory, most players and adults involved in the age grade game will want a rest or to come and go during the summer. Where there is a demand for activity, coaches must still be player-centred and focus on the different levels of readiness in their group.

The additional supporting information on the [Summer Activity page](#) includes tools and resources to aid Age Grade Specific, Girls Rugby Specific, Age Grade to Adult Transition and the Return to Scrummaging. These high quality resources are not only relevant to summer but also useful throughout the season.

Season 2024/25

2. The end of the 2024/25 age grade season will be Monday 5th May 2025 (see Reg 15.8)

The Age Grade Season 2023-24 will run from Saturday 7th September 2024 until Monday 5th May 2025.

There is a window for Representative rugby programmes only, in May. Defined Player Development Group and CB playing opportunities will take place at this time, as outlined in the [Age Grade Playing Calendar](#). This reduces clashes with core club, school and college rugby in-season. U16 and U18 girls and boys pathway activity remains during the season due to summer GCSE and A-Level exam periods.

3. Combining age groups remains permitted at all ages in the boys game, with more robust assessment needed and the number of players on the pitch from the older age changing from 50% to a third (see Reg 15.2 & 15.5)

Please note, that **combining team** regulations involve whole groups of players in defined circumstances. This is **different from playing up and down** regulations, which are for individual players in defined circumstances.

The default is still for players to play in their own age group; recruitment and retention strategies are the first priority to ensure this. The updated combining regulation and assessment requirements will stop examples where combined teams are being fielded as an easy alternative to employing such strategies.

We already have the dual age bands which **combine teams in the girls' game**; girls can only combine in those ages. This change is for the boys game and means if there are not enough numbers to field full sides in a single age group, teams can be combined (if approved) either up or down one age from U12 to U18.

Specific combined team conditions (as per [Regulation 15.2](#)) apply:

- CB (in clubs) or ECRFU (in colleges) or Headteacher (in schools) approval is required using the updated online form;
- From 2024/25, no more than a third of the players on the pitch at any time can be from the older age;
- Matches must be played to the younger age rules.

Changing from half to a **third of players from the older age group being allowed on the pitch** is on player safety grounds, providing less risk of physical mismatches. Again this responds to feedback in the game. The specific number of players permitted at each age group is defined in the [table in Regulation 15.5](#).

The circumstances, conditions and requirements for approval for both scenarios must be [as per Regulation 15](#) and absolutely grounded in strong risk assessment and safety principles. Combined team coaches must be prepared to flex to enable all players on both teams to be able to play safely and confidently; early communication with opponents before the day of the game is critical and our expectation.

4. The circumstances under which U19s can play down in schools and colleges are more clearly defined; and England Schools RFU approval is now required in the case of schools (see Reg 15.4)

This is to ensure clarity of the reasons that these players need to play down, a more robust and neutral assessment of any player safety risk and to ensure that the possibility of playing with/against younger players is considered specifically. The regulation states that to apply for approval:

The school/college player is an Under 19 (Year 14) and must be in at least their third year of study at the school/college and their second year of their first full level 3 qualification. They must not have previously completed a full level 3 qualification or embarked on an 'additional' one year programme at any level.

5. All Playing Out of Age Grade applications are to be made using the online Smartsheet forms; paper forms will no longer be accepted. In addition, some of the differences between playing out of age grade scenarios have been addressed to create greater consistency (see Reg 15.1.7 & 15.2 to 15.5)

Feedback from applicants and approvers about the online system is overwhelmingly positive. This ensures consistency across the country, that data is shared securely and detailed monitoring of playing out of age grade is possible. Reference is now made to the online process in all playing out of age grade regulations.

In addition, some of the requirements which were previously different between scenarios are now consistent. For example, the person who “endorses” an application on behalf of the club/school/college and the format or requirements of a player assessment are now more consistent for playing up/down, combining and 17s playing adult. There were some inconsistencies previously.

6. RFU Online forms are to be used for approval of players in the Player Development Group (PDG), Academies and England U18 pathways (see Reg 15.6 & 15.7)

As per Regulation 15.6 and 15.7, players in the Performance Pathway programmes require approval from the RFU Performance Department before playing out of age grade and in adult rugby. This ensures that such activity is aligned to the Individual Development Plan. A new online form has been introduced to ease the process for the volunteers and staff involved, as well as ensuring that data which can involve assessment by a number of people is held and shared securely.

7. RFU Online forms are to be available for approvals for age grade Rugby Camps, Events and Competitions (see Reg 15 Intro).

Following the positive feedback on the playing out of age grade process from across the game – both from applicants and approvers – there are online forms for these other activities and events. These will be in place in Summer 2024 and will ensure greater consistency, support and streamlined workload for club/school/college and CB volunteers.

The aim is for these, similar to playing out of age grade, to become the nationally consistent method of applying for approval for such events. The link to the online form will be accessible in the Regulation 15 section of the [Regulations page](#).

Regulation 15 - Age Grade Rugby.

Regulation 15 governs Age Grade Rugby across the game and must always be applied and followed. Failure to follow the regulations of the game leads to potential disciplinary action because of the risk that entails to players and our sport.

The areas which we receive the most questions about are as follows. We recommend all involved with the age grade game take time to familiarise themselves with these so they can apply them confidently during the season:

- Playing Up (15.3) criteria, conditions and approvals
- Playing Down (15.4) criteria, conditions and approvals
- Playing Adult Rugby (15.6)
- Out of Season Activities (15.8)
- Approval of activities (15.9)
- Half Game Rule (15.12)

The **Community Rugby Help Portal** provides additional support and information about the Age Grade Regulations.

