

QUICK GUIDE

TO LEARN RUGBY



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JOIN THE MAULERS



INTRODUCTION

Rugby is more than just a sport. It's a way of life—a code of conduct, a community, and for many, a second family. Built on the values of respect, camaraderie, and resilience, rugby is affectionately known around the world as a "gentleman's game played by warriors." It's a game that celebrates fierce competition on the field, yet unshakable friendship off it. Win or lose, players shake hands, share stories, and often share a meal afterward. That rare spirit of unity and mutual respect is what sets rugby apart from any other game.

This book is your gateway into that world.

Whether you're a curious beginner, a parent of a young player, or an adult lacing up boots for the first time, rugby has a place for you. It's one of the few sports where lifelong participation is not only possible but encouraged. From tiny tots learning to pass in tag rugby to adults joining community clubs for the love of the game, rugby truly offers a home for all ages, sizes, and skill levels.

In the pages that follow, you'll learn the basics: how the game is played, what makes it special, and how to take your first steps into it. But more importantly, you'll discover the values that make rugby what it is—teamwork, discipline, humility, and above all, belonging. Welcome to the pitch. Welcome to the brotherhood and sisterhood. Welcome to rugby. Welcome to the Lake Zurich Maulers.

BASIC PLAY

Rugby is a fast-paced, physical team sport played between two teams of 15 players. The main objective is to score more points than the opposing team by carrying, passing, kicking, and grounding the ball in the opponent's in-goal area.

The game begins with a kick-off, and from there, players advance the ball by running or passing it backward to teammates. Forward passes are not allowed, but the ball can be kicked forward and chased. Tackling is legal, and when a player is tackled, play continues with a ruck—a contest for possession on the ground.

Teams score points by:

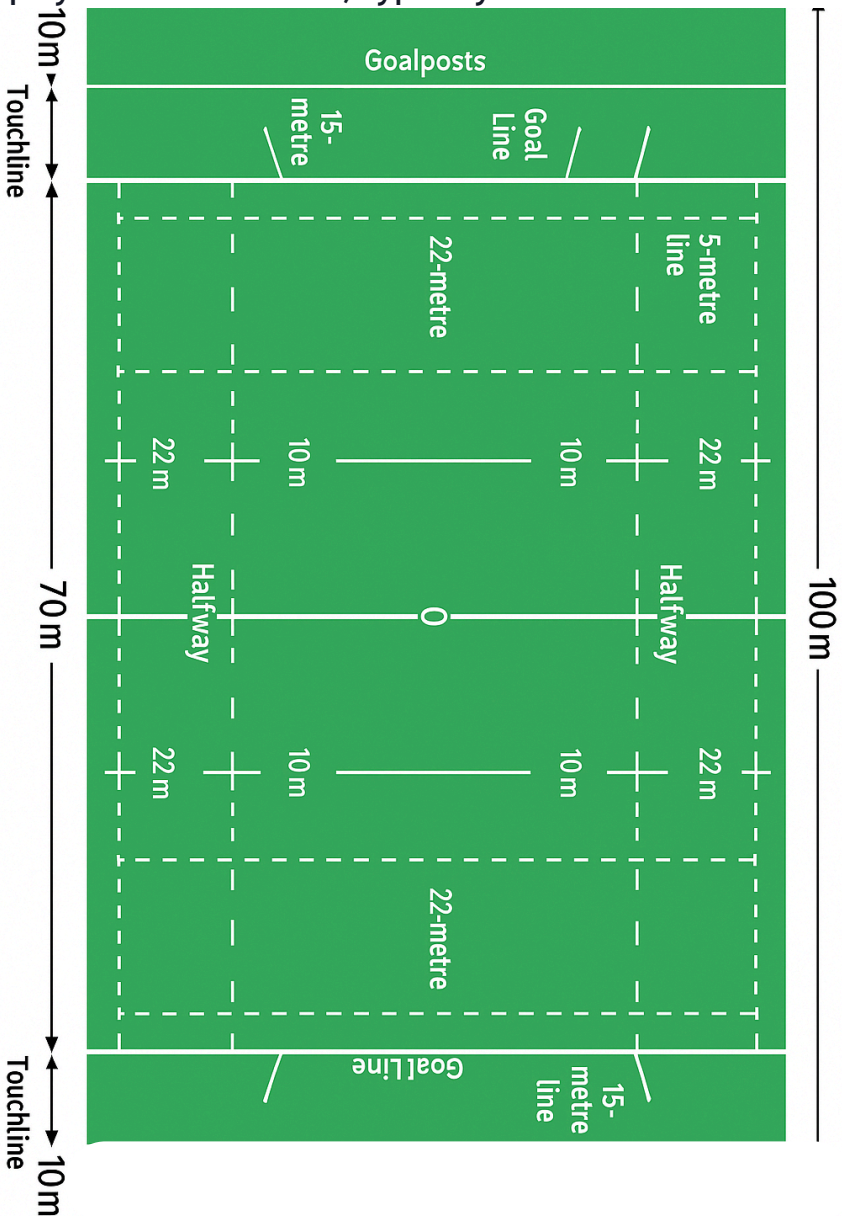
- Try (5 points): Touching the ball down in the opponent's in-goal area.
- Conversion (2 points): A kick at goal after a try.
- Penalty kick (3 points): Awarded for certain infringements.
- Drop goal (3 points): A kick through the uprights during open play.

Play is continuous, with referees enforcing laws to ensure fairness and safety, such as offsidess, knock-ons, and obstruction. The game is split into two 40-minute halves, and the team with the most points at the end wins.

Rugby is a game of strength, skill, teamwork, and respect—both for teammates and opponents.

FIELD DIMENSIONS

Below is a visual of regulation dimensions of a full-sized rugby pitch. Keep in mind that high school and U15 play on a full-sized pitch while U13 and Rookie play on smaller fields, typically about half the size.



BASIC RULES

OF PLAYERS

Each team must have no more than fifteen players on the field at all times. In standard, competitive matches each squad has 23 players consisting of 15 starters and eight reserve players.

MATCH LENGTH

Regulation rugby matches consist of two, 40 minute halves.

OFFICIALS

Referees in rugby are commonly called "sir". Rugby matches are officiated by a "sir" who is on the field and follows the action and two judges/assistant referees who are stationed on the touch lines with a flag to indicate when the ball crosses the touchline.

METHODS OF SCORING

Try - when a player touches the ball to the ground in the opponents endzone, a try is earned. This is worth 5 points.

Penalty Try - when a player that likely would have scored is impeded by an act of foul play by an opponent a penalty try can be awarded. This is worth 7 points.

Conversion - Once a try is awarded the scoring team will kick in an attempt to gain another 2 points. The kick is taken in line with where the ball was touched down.

Drop Goal - A player can score a drop goal by kicking a dropkick through the goalpost in general play. This is worth 3 points.

BASIC RULES

KICKOFFS

Each half is started by a kickoff. Also, when a team scores the opposition will restart play with a kickoff. Kicks must be taken from the center of the halfway line and must travel past the opponents 10m line. If it doesn't, a scrum is awarded to the opposition.

KNOCK-ON

A knock-on occurs when a player loses control of the ball and it travels forward toward. In this instance, a scrum is awarded to the opposition.

FORWARD PASS

A forward pass is when a player throws the ball to teammate who is in front of them. When this occurs, a scrum is awarded to the opposition.

RUCK

A ruck is formed when one or more players from each team close around the ball on the ground - after a ball carrier is tackled. Once a ruck is formed a player is not allowed to use their hands to retrieve the ball.

TOUCH

Touch is the term used when the ball goes out of bounds. If the ball is kicked directly out, a lineout is awarded to the other team. If a player runs the ball out of bounds, a lineout is awarded to the other team as well.

ADVANTAGE

Advantage in rugby allows play to continue after a minor infringement, giving the non-offending team a chance to gain a better outcome (like gaining territory or scoring).

OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction in rugby occurs when a player intentionally blocks or impedes an opponent who is not in possession of the ball, preventing them from making a tackle or contesting play. It's illegal because it unfairly interferes with the opposing team's opportunity to gain possession.

SCRUMS



A scrum in rugby is a method of restarting play where eight players from each team bind together and push against the opposing pack to compete for the ball, which is fed into the tunnel between them by the scrumhalf. The team that wins the scrum gains possession and can then continue attacking.

Formation: Eight forwards from each team bind together in three rows to form the scrum.

Engagement: The two packs come together after the referee's commands: "Crouch, Bind, Set."

Ball Feed: The scrumhalf feeds the ball straight down the middle (the "tunnel") between the two front rows.

Hooking: Players use their feet to hook or push the ball backward to their side.

Safety: No collapsing or dangerous play is allowed; referees stop the scrum if it becomes unsafe.

LINEOUTS

A lineout in rugby is a way to restart play after the ball goes out over the sideline. Players from both teams line up and the ball is thrown in between them, with jumpers lifted by teammates to catch or tap the ball and regain possession. Note that there's no jumping/lifting at the U13 or Rookie levels; there is lifting in U15 but the opposition cannot contest.

General rules of a lineout are below:

- **Throw-In Must Be Straight:** The ball must be thrown straight down the middle between the two lines of players.
- **Correct Numbers:** Each team must have the same number of players in the lineout (between 2 and 8), and the thrower must notify the referee if the number changes.
- **Gap Between Teams:** A 1-meter gap must be maintained between the two lines.
- **Lifting Is Allowed:** Players may lift teammates to help them catch the ball, but only with proper binding and safety.
- **Offside Lines:** Players not involved must stay 10 meters back from the lineout until it's over.
- **Quick Throw-Ins:** A quick throw is allowed if the ball hasn't been touched or changed and is thrown in from the correct spot.
- **No Early Jumping or Interference:** Players can't jump or engage before the ball is thrown.

OFFSIDES

In rugby, being offside means a player is in a position where they're not allowed to participate in play because they are ahead of the ball or not behind the last teammate involved in a phase of play. The offside law exists to keep the game fair, encourage continuity, and reward teams for advancing the ball properly.

Here's how it works in different parts of the game:

1. Open Play (General Play)

- A player must be behind the ball when it is passed, kicked, or carried.
- If you're in front of a teammate who kicks or passes the ball, you're offside and must not interfere with play until you're put back onside (e.g., by retreating behind the kicker or waiting until a teammate passes you).

2. Rucks and Mauls

- An offside line is created at the hindmost foot of the last player in each team's side of the ruck or maul.
- Players must stay behind this line until the ball is out—usually when it's clearly passed or picked up by the scrumhalf.

3. Scrums

- The offside line runs through the last foot of the scrum on each side.
- Backs must stay at least 5 meters behind the hindmost foot until the ball is out.

OFFSIDES (CONT.)

4. Lineouts

- Players not involved in the lineout must stay 10 meters back from the line of touch.
- Players in the lineout must stay within their channel and only move once the ball has been thrown in.

5. Kicks

- Players ahead of the kicker are offside unless:
 - They retreat behind the kicker.
 - They are played onside by a teammate who was onside when the kick was made and then moves past them.

What Happens When You're Offside?

- If a player is offside and interferes with play (touches the ball, tackles someone, or obstructs), the referee awards a penalty to the opposing team.
- If they're offside but do not interfere, they might not be penalized—but they can't engage until they become onside again.

In short: Stay behind the ball, respect the offside lines in structured play, and don't interfere unless you're legally in the game.

PLAYING POSITIONS

One of the unique features of rugby is that every player on the field wears a specific number that directly corresponds to their position and role. Unlike many sports where jersey numbers are chosen by preference or tradition, rugby numbers are standardized from 1 to 15, each representing a distinct job within the team. The team is divided into two main groups: forwards and backs.

Forwards (Numbers 1–8) are the powerhouses of the team. They are typically bigger and stronger, responsible for the physical contests like scrums, lineouts, rucks, and mauls. Their job is to win and maintain possession of the ball, often through raw strength, technical skill, and close-quarter teamwork.

Backs (Numbers 9–15) are generally faster and more agile. Their role is to use the space created by the forwards to move the ball, create scoring opportunities, and exploit weaknesses in the opposition's defense. Backs rely on speed, vision, and precise passing to get the job done.

Together, the forwards and backs form a complete unit—each player knowing their role, wearing their number with pride, and contributing to a game that demands both grit and grace.

PLAYING POSITIONS

PITCH LOCATION



Loosehead
Prop



Hooker



Tighthead
Prop



Flanker



Lock



Lock



Flanker



Eightman



Scrumhalf



Flyhalf



Inside
Center



Outside
Center



Wing



Wing



Fullback

PLAYING POSITIONS

TIGHT FIVE

1 - LOOSEHEAD PROP

The loosehead prop wears the number 1 jersey and is a key member of the forward pack, positioned on the left side of the front row in the scrum. Their main job is to provide stability and power during scrums, working closely with the hooker (2) and tighthead prop (3) to secure the ball and overpower the opposing front row.

What makes the loosehead prop unique is their position in the scrum—they bind with their head on the outside of the opposing tighthead prop, giving them slightly more freedom of movement, hence the name "loosehead." This role demands incredible strength, balance, and technique, especially in scrummaging, as well as endurance and toughness around the field to carry the ball, make tackles, and support rucks.

Though often unsung heroes, loosehead props are the cornerstone of any solid scrum and a vital presence in every phase of the game.

PLAYING POSITIONS

TIGHT FIVE

2 - HOOKER

The hooker wears the number 2 jersey and plays a central and highly specialized role in the forward pack. Positioned between the two props in the front row of the scrum, the hooker's primary job is to "hook" the ball back with their feet during the scrum—hence the name.

In addition to scrummaging, the hooker is responsible for throwing the ball in at lineouts, requiring accuracy, timing, and coordination with the jumpers. Hookers are typically among the toughest and most durable players on the field, combining strength with agility and a high work rate.

Beyond set pieces, a good hooker contributes around the field with aggressive tackling, support play, and often acts as a key link between forwards and backs. It's a demanding position that requires both grit and skill.

PLAYING POSITIONS

TIGHT FIVE

3 - TIGHTHEAD PROP

The tighthead prop wears the number 3 jersey and anchors the right side of the front row in the scrum. This position is one of the most physically demanding roles in rugby, as the tighthead often faces immense pressure from two opposing players—their direct opponent (the loosehead prop) and the opposing hooker.

Unlike the loosehead, the tighthead prop's head is positioned between two opponents in the scrum, meaning they must have exceptional strength, technique, and balance to hold the scrum steady and prevent it from collapsing. The name "tighthead" comes from this tighter bind and positioning.

Outside the scrum, tighthead props are vital in rucks, mauls, and defensive efforts. They carry the ball into contact, clear space for teammates, and bring a physical edge to every phase of play. A strong tighthead can dominate the set piece and lay the foundation for the entire team's success.

PLAYING POSITIONS

TIGHT FIVE

4/5 - LOCK

Locks, also known as second row forwards, wear the number 4 and 5 jerseys and are the tall, powerful engines of the forward pack. Positioned in the middle of the scrum behind the front row, their primary job is to generate drive and power during scrums by pushing from the second row.

Locks are also key players in the lineout, where their height and jumping ability are crucial for winning possession. They are typically lifted by teammates to catch or tap the ball, making timing, coordination, and athleticism essential.

Beyond set pieces, locks play a huge role around the field—clearing out rucks, carrying the ball forward, and making tackles. They combine size, strength, and endurance, and are often among the hardest-working players on the team. Without strong locks, a team's physical presence and set-piece dominance can quickly fall apart.

PLAYING POSITIONS

LOOSE FORWARDS

6 - BLINDSIDE FLANK

The blindside flanker wears the number 6 jersey and lines up on the side of the scrum closest to the touchline—known as the “blind side” because it’s the narrower side of the field. This position is all about physicality, toughness, and work rate.

Blindside flankers are typically bigger and more powerful than their openside counterparts (number 7), specializing in dominant tackles, clearing out rucks, and disrupting the opposition’s attack. They play a crucial role in defense, often acting as an enforcer who shuts down threats before they develop.

While their focus is on physical contests, blindside flankers also contribute to ball carrying and support play. They are expected to cover a lot of ground, make big hits, and bring relentless intensity to every breakdown and contact situation. A great blindside flanker brings controlled aggression and sets the tone for the team’s forward pack.

PLAYING POSITIONS

LOOSE FORWARDS

7 - OPENSIDE FLANK

The openside flanker wears the number 7 jersey and plays on the side of the scrum furthest from the touchline—the “open side” of the field, where there is usually more space and play tends to unfold.

This position is all about speed, agility, and relentless pressure. The openside flanker’s primary role is to get to the breakdowns quickly, compete for possession, and disrupt the opposition’s play. Known as the team’s “fetcher,” they often attempt to steal the ball or slow it down after a tackle has been made.

Openside flankers are usually slightly smaller and quicker than their blindside counterparts, but no less tough. They make countless tackles, support attacking plays, and are constantly around the ball. A great openside is a tireless worker, a menace to the opposition, and often the heartbeat of the team’s defense and breakdown strategy.

PLAYING POSITIONS

LOOSE FORWARDS

8 - EIGHTMAN

The number eight, often referred to simply as the eightman, is the anchor at the back of the scrum and plays a unique and versatile role in the forward pack. Positioned behind the two locks, the eightman controls the ball at the base of the scrum and is the only forward allowed to pick it up directly and launch an attack.

This position requires a rare blend of strength, speed, and game awareness. The eightman is often a powerful ball carrier, tasked with gaining hard meters, linking up with the backs, and breaking through defensive lines. They also play a key role in defense and at the breakdown, similar to the flankers, while offering an additional option in lineouts.

As a bridge between the forwards and backs, the number eight must be both physically dominant and tactically sharp. A great eightman leads from the front—starting momentum, maintaining control, and giving their team a strong platform to play from.

PLAYING POSITIONS

INSIDE BACKS

9 - SCRUMHALF

The scrumhalf wears the number 9 jersey and acts as the vital link between the forwards and backs.

Positioned just behind the scrum, ruck, or maul, the scrumhalf is responsible for quickly distributing the ball, making decisions under pressure, and controlling the tempo of the game.

Agile, vocal, and highly aware, the scrumhalf must have sharp passing skills, quick reactions, and a strong understanding of the game's flow. They often decide whether to pass, run, or kick, making them one of the key playmakers on the field.

Defensively, scrumhalves are fearless—often tackling much larger opponents and organizing the defensive line around the breakdown. Offensively, they are the heartbeat of the team, sparking attacks and keeping the forwards and backs connected. A great number 9 brings energy, leadership, and quick thinking to every phase of play.

PLAYING POSITIONS

INSIDE BACKS

10 - FLYHALF

The flyhalf, wearing the number 10 jersey, is often considered the tactical leader and primary playmaker of the team. Positioned just outside the scrumhalf, the flyhalf is responsible for directing the team's attack, making crucial decisions about whether to pass, kick, or run the ball.

This role requires exceptional vision, communication, and game management. The flyhalf must read the defense, call plays, and execute them with precision—often under immense pressure. A skilled flyhalf can control the pace of the game, exploit space, and turn opportunities into points.

In addition to playmaking, flyhalves often handle goal kicking and tactical kicking, adding another layer of responsibility. Defensively, they must hold their own despite often facing bigger runners head-on. A great number 10 is calm under pressure, creative with the ball, and confident in leading their team—truly the general on the field.

PLAYING POSITIONS

CENTERS

12 - INSIDE CENTER

The inside center, wearing the number 12 jersey, plays a crucial role in both attack and defense, acting as a powerful runner, a secondary playmaker, and a defensive anchor in the midfield. Positioned between the flyhalf (10) and the outside center (13), the inside center must blend physicality with skill.

Offensively, the inside center is often used to carry the ball hard into the defensive line to gain ground and create space for teammates. However, they must also have the vision and passing ability to distribute the ball effectively, especially when operating as a second playmaker alongside the flyhalf.

Defensively, the inside center is central to the team's structure, frequently making critical tackles and organizing the backline's defense against fast-moving attacks.

A strong number 12 combines strength, skill, and smarts—capable of breaking tackles, setting up teammates, and shutting down opponents with equal effectiveness.

PLAYING POSITIONS

CENTERS

13 - OUTSIDE CENTER

The outside center, wearing the number 13 jersey, is a dynamic and strategic player who operates on the edge of the midfield, positioned between the inside center (12) and the winger (14). This role requires a combination of speed, timing, and strong defensive instincts.

In attack, the outside center is often the strike runner—looking to exploit gaps, create line breaks, and link up with the wingers for scoring opportunities. They need quick footwork, sharp decision-making, and the ability to draw defenders and release the ball at the right moment.

Defensively, the number 13 plays a critical role in organizing the outer line and making one-on-one tackles, often against the opposition's fastest or most elusive players.

A great outside center is fast, alert, and tactically smart—capable of turning a half-chance into a try while also locking down the defensive edge of the field.

PLAYING POSITIONS

OUTSIDE BACKS

11/14 - WINGS

The wings, wearing jerseys number 11 (left wing) and 14 (right wing), are the finishers and speedsters of the team. Positioned on the far edges of the backline, their primary role is to turn attacking opportunities into tries by using their pace, agility, and space awareness to outrun defenders and reach the try line.

In attack, wings stay wide to stretch the opposition's defense, waiting for the right moment to receive the ball and explode into space. They need excellent acceleration, strong ball-handling skills, and the ability to evade tackles under pressure.

Defensively, wings cover the outer channels and backfield, often chasing down kicks, making cover tackles, and supporting the fullback in stopping counterattacks.

Great wings combine blistering speed with courage and positional intelligence—always ready to seize a moment and finish the job for their team.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advantage – A rule allowing play to continue after a minor infringement, giving the non-offending team a chance to gain benefit before stopping play.

Backs – The players (usually numbers 9–15) who are generally faster and more agile, responsible for running, passing, and scoring tries.

Ball Carrier – The player currently holding the ball and attempting to advance it.

Bind – The act of players gripping onto each other legally in scrums, rucks, mauls, or tackles.

Conversion – A kick at goal taken after a try, worth 2 extra points if successful.

Forward Pass – A pass that travels toward the opponents' try line. This is illegal and results in a scrum for the opposing team.

Forwards – The typically larger, stronger players (numbers 1–8) who engage in scrums, lineouts, rucks, and mauls.

Grubber Kick – A low kick along the ground, usually used to evade defenders.

Knock-On – When a player accidentally loses the ball forward with hand or arm; results in a scrum for the opposing team.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS (CONT.)

Lineout – A way to restart play after the ball goes into touch (out of bounds), where players are lifted to catch the ball thrown in.

Maul – A phase of play where the ball carrier is held up by both teammates and opponents but remains standing.

Offside – A rule violation when a player is ahead of the ball or involved in play from an illegal position.

Penalty Kick – A kick awarded after a serious infringement, which can be used to kick for goal, touch, or a quick tap restart.

Ruck – A contest on the ground after a tackle, where players compete for the ball by driving over it with their feet.

Scrum – A set-piece where 8 forwards from each team bind together and push against each other to contest the ball.

Set Piece – A structured restart of play, like a scrum or lineout.

Tackle – When a player brings an opponent with the ball to the ground. The tackler must release the player and roll away.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS (CONT.)

Tap and Go – A quick penalty restart where a player taps the ball with their foot and runs forward.

Try – Worth 5 points, scored by grounding the ball over the opponent's try line.

Touchline – The side boundary of the pitch. Going out of bounds is called "into touch."

JOIN THE MAULERS!

Joining the Lake Zurich Maulers Rugby Club isn't just about playing a sport—it's about becoming part of a tight-knit, welcoming community that values teamwork, respect, and personal growth both on and off the field.

Rugby is a unique sport in that it offers playing opportunities for children of all ages, sizes, and skill levels, and the Maulers take pride in developing players from the ground up in a fun, supportive environment. Whether your child is new to the game or already experienced, they'll find a place here to learn, compete, and thrive.

The Maulers take pride in its family-focused culture. Parents, coaches, and players come together to create an atmosphere built on camaraderie, inclusiveness, and sportsmanship. From weekend matches and team barbecues to travel tournaments and off-field events, the club fosters lifelong friendships and teaches values like discipline, humility, and resilience.

With a strong emphasis on safety, skill development, and positive coaching, the Lake Zurich Maulers offer more than just a game—they offer a community. It's a place where your child can build confidence, stay active, make great friends, and become part of something bigger than themselves.

Come be a part of the Maulers family, where we build strong players—and even stronger people.

THANK YOU



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