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|  | **Youth Rugby (non-contact) Laws for Rugby Alabama – 2024**  Last updated 7/1/24 by Michael Laney  **The most current version of this document will be maintained at:**  <http://birminghamrugby.com/youth-3/non-contact-rugby/> |  |
| **Introduction:**  USA Rugby’s “[Rookie Rugby Guidebook](https://cms2.revize.com/revize/desmoines/rookie-rugby-guidebook.pdf)” allows league directors and tournament directors to choose combinations of various laws and progressions to best suit the participants and the goals of their organizations. For example, it states the preferred method is to use flags but also states, **“the game can be played as two hand touch.”**  A set of laws can vary from tournament to tournament to develop different goals. The final say on the exact combination of laws used is up to each tournament director, unless that state’s SRO (State Rugby Organization) has set rules and it has been agreed that no variations are allowed. | | |

**Below are clarifications on options and “progressions” that may be used. If a law is not stated below, refer to USA Rugby’s “Rookie Rugby Guidebook”. For example**, **the document below will not go into every detail such as defining obstruction, a forward pass, and many other laws of rugby union.**

**Two Hand Touch Option**

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| **Summary:**   * **Two hand touch** * **Stop or go back to where you were touched** * **Roll the ball between your legs for “ruck ball”** * **Toe the ball from the ground for restarts** * **Scrum half can run or pass** * **Defense steps back 5 meters and waits till the ball is passed or scrum half runs.** * **No kicking except conversions and kickoffs** * **Unlimited downs unless both coaches and the referee agree that needs to change to 6 downs.** * **No player shall intentionally go to ground unless it’s a ball carrier sliding feet first into the try zone with no defender in front of the slide.** * **The ball being on the ground does not stop it from being live.** * **“Throw Aways” and “Advantage” will be called, even AFTER the player is touched.** |

**Details:**

1. **Number of Players:** Teams may consist of anywhere from 5 to 7 players on the field each. If one team cannot field 5 or more players, the tournament director may make a judgement call on a match by match basis as long as each team has the same number on the field or the difference between the two teams is no more than 1.
2. **Substitutions:** Substitutions may be allowed during any stoppage, but only if the referee acknowledges and calls the player on. Substitutions are unlimited.
3. **Duration:** Halves will be 7 minutes with a 1 to 2-minute halftime.
4. **Penalties** against the offense will result in a turnover. Penalties against the defense will result in the referee advancing the ball 10 meters from the spot of the infringement.
5. **The advantage rule** is used. Just like contact rugby, the duration of that advantage is up to the referee. The referee is encouraged to verbalize when advantage starts and ends, but is not obligated to.
6. **Red and yellow cards** are allowed and the repercussions will be the same as a typical 7s match, including sin bins and ejections. If a red card is issued the referee decides if that player is ejected from just that match or the entire tournament.
7. **Point System**: Tries are worth 5 points, unless no goal posts exist for conversion attempts. A successful conversion kick is worth 2 points. If there are no goal posts, tries will be worth 7 points.
8. **Restarts** occur after turnovers and penalties. Kickoffs and “ruck ball” are **NOT** considered “restarts” in this context.
   1. Restarts are done by **tapping (a.k.a. “toeing”) the ball through the mark**. The ball must be **on the ground** at the referee’s mark and not moving before it can be tapped through the mark. If this is not done the referee may allow the same player to take multiple attempts from the same location until they get it right or until the referee decides a delay of game penalty should be enforced. A delay of game in this case would result in a turnover. After a successful tap through the mark, the ball carrier must pass the ball. In other words, no quick tap and run from a restart at this age.
   2. **Defensive Line at Restarts**: Defenders must stay back at least 10 meters for all restarts and may not advance any closer until the ball is PASSED or they will be considered offsides. As soon as the ball leaves the first ball carrier’s hands the defense may advance. If the defenders were offsides, the referee may call advantage or blow the whistle. The result for defensive offsides is a 10 meter penalty.
   3. **Within 5 meters of a try line**: Restarts may not begin any closer than 5 meters from either try line. If an infringement happens within that 5 meters the ball will be moved to the 5 meter line.
9. **Kicking** is only allowed for two scenarios. They are conversions (if goal posts exist) and kickoffs. Tapping the ball through the mark is not considered “kicking.”

a. **Conversions** are allowed if at least one set of goal posts are in place, even if those posts are not on the try line. The crossbar(s) must be between 7 feet and 10 feet high as long as it is equal for both teams. The goalposts must not be wider than 23 feet and 4 inches (high school American football standard) and must be equal for both teams. A conversion is a drop goal or place kick for two additional points. The conversion may be taken from either direction, and from anywhere on the field. In other words, it may be centered even if the try was not scored in the center. Any single kicking tee or cone is allowed on a conversion place kick, but not mandatory.

b. **Kickoffs**:

- Each half begins with a kickoff from the half way line. The kicker may punt or drop-kick the ball. The scoring team kicks off.

- **Offsides on kickoffs:** The non-kicking team may not be any closer than 5 meters from the half way line until the ball is kicked. If closer, the non-kicking team is offsides, and the referee may call advantage or blow the whistle and give the kicking team the choice of a re-kick or possession of the ball at the half way line. If any player on the kicking team is beyond the half way line at the time of the kickoff he/she is offsides and the referee may call advantage or blow the whistle and give the non-kicking team the choice of a re-kick or a turnover at the half way line.

- **Kickoffs into the try zone:** If the ball is kicked into the opponents’ try zone without touching any player and an opponent grounds the ball without delay or it goes dead through in-goal, the non-kicking team has the option of having the kick retaken or possession of the ball at the half way line via a restart. If, during a kickoff, the ball touches a player on the non-kicking team in the try zone or before going into the try zone, it’s a live ball. The only exception is if the act of “touching” the ball is the grounding of the ball as described in the above scenario. If, during a kickoff, the ball touches a player on the non-kicking team before it goes dead through in-goal, the kicking team is awarded the ball with a restart (tap and pass) at the 5 meter line.

1. **Intentional vs. Unintentional Kicking:** Kicking is defined by contact with the foot or leg below the knee. Intent to kick is determined by the referee’s discretion.
   * + If the ball is kicked intentionally and goes backwards, it’s a penalty. If unintentional and still backwards, play on.
     + If the ball is kicked intentionally and goes forward it’s a penalty. If unintentional and still forward it’s a knock on.
2. **Two Hand Touch**
   1. A touch occurs when the ball carrier is touched with two hands by an opposition player on any part of the body below the shoulders, ball, clothing, or combination thereof. Match organizers may decide to restrict body areas where touches may be made, particularly where there are mixed gender matches. Players must not use excessive force when making a touch.
   2. Players who touch an opposing ball carrier WITH TWO HANDS AT THE SAME TIME are encouraged to say the word “Touch!” at the same time or immediately afterwards. If the referee considers that a touch has not taken place the referee is encouraged to call “Play on!”.
   3. Nobody other than the player making the touch or the referee shall call the word, “Touch!” in this scenario.
   4. Players must not attempt to pull the ball from the ball carrier’s hands and must not prevent the ball carrier from playing the ball.
   5. **Going back to the mark:** A touched player must stop and “ruck” the ball at the place of the touch. If the ball carrier’s momentum carries him or her beyond that location, the referee will give that player time to go back to that location, or reasonably close to it. This is called, “going back to the mark” or “playing it from the mark.” If this is not done, the referee may either:
      1. Give the ball carrier a warning, and allow that player to go back to the mark with no penalty

Or

* + 1. Call a penalty, resulting in a turnover.
  1. **Ruck Ball:** 
     1. **Offense during a ruck ball:**
        + **Tagged player:** Following a touch, the ball carrier shall place or roll the ball backwards between his or her legs at the location on the field where the touch was made. The ball must not move more than one meter from the mark.
        + **Scrum Half:** The scrum half may run with the ball or pass the ball. If the scrum half holds the ball an extraordinary amount of time without running or passing, see the part of this document called, “Time Wasting.” If the scrum half runs with the ball and is tagged before passing, it is treated the same as if any other ball carrier was tagged. This is an important clarification as some law books for touch rugby will state this is a turnover.
     2. **Defense during a ruck ball:** After a defender touches a ball carrier with two hands everyone on the defensive team must retreat 5 meters from the gain line. The defense may not get any closer than 5 meters until the scrum half passes the ball or runs with the ball. “Passing the ball” does not occur until the ball has left the scrum half’s hands. If a defender is offsides, but did not have time to get back onsides before the next phase began, he/she must not interfere with the play and may not tag the ball carrier until after that ball carrier has passed the gain line. If the referee determines the defending player had time to get onsides, but did not, the referee may call advantage or a penalty.
  2. **Being touched in the try zone.** If a ball carrier is touched within either try zone, it’s a ruck ball at the closest 5 meter line. If a ball carrier is touched AFTER placing the ball in the opponent’s try zone to score a try, that touch is not recognized and the try is awarded.

1. **Throw Aways** are part of the Advantage Rule. Even AFTER a ball carrier is touched by two hands, if that ball carrier then throws a forward pass, knocks the ball on, kicks it, or commits any other infringement other than stepping out of bounds, that infringement is enforced and the advantage rule may apply. For example, if player A is the ball carrier and player B is on the opposite team, player B tags player A, then player A throws a forward pass. This is a live ball until the referee blows the whistle. If player A’s team recovers that ball it’s a turnover to player B’s team because it’s still a forward pass, even after the touch. If player B’s team recovers the ball the referee may opt to play advantage and let play continue.
2. **Stepping out of bounds AFTER being touched** by two hands is NOT a turnover. The ball carrier will go back to the mark with his or her team maintaining possession of the ball, unless playing by the “6 downs” law variation and it was the 6th down.
3. **Time Wasting**: If the referee suspects one team is wasting time on purpose the referee shall give a 10 second warning. If that 10 seconds expires the result is a turnover.
4. **Unlimited Downs:** Unless otherwise stated, there will be unlimited downs. If all involved head coaches, the tournament director, and the referee agree, the tournament director may change to a 6 down format. This is not mentioned in the Rookie Rugby handbook, but may be necessary in some brackets to make the game flow better. If that happens, after 6 downs, the ball is turned over to the other team.
5. **Going to ground (diving, sliding, or falling)** intentionally is a penalty or a turnover,unless it’s a ball carrier sliding feet first into the try zone with no defender in front of the slide. Intent is determined by the referee any argument can result in a call reversal or penalty. Momentum falling forward unintentionally when trying to apply pressure to touch the ball down in the try zone should not be penalized. Head first dives and head first slides are penalties.
   1. Clarification #1: If the referee deems a player is intentionally pushed or tripped by the other team, the player who committed the act of pushing or tripping will be penalized rather than the player who went to ground due to those actions.
   2. Clarification #2: When players fall over in the act of scoring a try, referees should pay special attention to intent on the defensive and offensive side. The defense is more likely to unintentionally bump into the ball carrier and make him fall over when he stops to touch the ball down. Also, the ball carrier is more likely to slip in the act of touching the ball down. In many cases, neither player should be penalized even if the ball carrier does go to ground. However, if either the bump or the act of going to ground are deemed intentional by the referee, a penalty should be called. If the penalty is on the offense the try is NOT awarded and there is a turnover at the 5 meter line. If the penalty is on the defense, the try is awarded and the referee may present a yellow or red card if appropriate.
   3. If a player on offense goes to ground intentionally (unless it’s a ball carrier sliding feet first into the try zone with no defender in front of the slide) it’s a turnover to the defense at the spot of the infringement (or the 5 meter line when appropriate).
   4. If a player on defense goes to ground intentionally, it’s a penalty. Possession remains with the offense. The defense is penalized 10 meters before the restart.
   5. If a player on offense, then a player on defense go to ground intentionally, it’s a penalty. Turnover to the defense. The team that was on defense is penalized 10 meters before the restart. See exception above about a ball carrier sliding feet first into the try zone with no defender in front of the slide.
   6. If a player on defense then a player on offense go to ground intentionally, it’s a penalty. Possession remains with the offense. The team that was on offense is penalized 10 meters before the restart.
   7. If the referee cannot determine which team went to ground intentionally first, this is a turnover to the defense but the team that was on defense is penalized 10 meters before the restart.
6. **Grabbing** the ball, clothing, hair, or anything dangerous may result in a penalty or a card even if it is not intentional. This is up to the discretion of the referee.
7. **Stripping the ball** from a ball carrier’s hands is not allowed. Result = 10-meter penalty and the original ball carrier’s team maintains possession.
8. **Lineouts** will not be taken. If a player runs out of bounds or fumbles the ball out of bounds, the other team will gain possession at the referee’s mark one meter from the touch line.
9. **Scrums** will not be done.
10. **Other basic laws:** For other obvious laws, such as no forward passes or obstruction, consult the “[Rookie Rugby – How to Play Manual](https://cms2.revize.com/revize/desmoines/rookie-rugby-guidebook.pdf)” Anything in that “Rookie Rugby – How to Play Manual” that conflicts with the “Rookie Rugby (non-contact) Laws for Rugby Alabama” document you are reading now is not to be used.

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| **Glossary:**  **Advantage =** If a team gains an advantage following an infringement by their opponents, the referee may allow play to continue in an effort to keep the game flowing. The referee is encouraged to say the word “advantage” but does not have to. It is up to the referee to decide if it is safe and appropriate to play advantage or immediately blow the whistle. The referee may decide how long the advantage lasts. If the referee decides no advantage was gained he/she must blow the whistle and the ball goes back to the spot of the original infringement.  **Breakdown** = the place on the field a new phase begins after a ball carrier is tagged with two hands. A breakdown in this case is conducted via a ruck ball.  **Gain Line** = Much like a “line of scrimmage” in American Football. It’s a straight line across the field, parallel to the try line, where the ball starts on a restart or ruck ball.  **Penalty** = In most cases a turnover and/or movement of the ball 5 meters.  **Phase** = Similar to a “down” in American Football. Note: some matches may be played with unlimited phases.  **Pitch** = Field  **Ruck Ball =** Rolling the ball between ones’ legs after being touched to begin a new “phase”  **Scrum Half** = Player on offense who arrives at the point of the breakdown (a.k.a. “ruck ball”) to play the ball from between or behind the legs of his or her teammate who was tagged. Anyone on the team can act as the scrum half on any particular play that involves a breakdown. It does not always have to be the same person but it can be.  **Try** = score by touching the ball down into the opponent’s try zone.  **Try Line** = Similar to the front of the “end zone” in American Football. May also be referred to as the “goal line.”  **Try Zone** = Similar to the “end zone” in American Football. |