

## Rugby Basics

*Rugby positions* each have a specific role to play. Different physical attributes are required, although strength and speed are key across the team. Most players will specialize in one or two positions which uses their skills and size to best advantage.

The 15 players for each team are on the pitch (field) at all times and play both attacking and defending roles unlike American Football which has offense, defense and special teams that alternate depending on possession.

The team is divided into two packs, the Forwards (8 players) and Backs (7 players) and they can stand in any position on the field of play as long as they remain inside. The exception is set piece plays when rugby rules stipulate where each player should be in relation to the ball and opposition.

The players wear rugby jerseys with the numbers 1-15 on the back. The number stays with the rugby positions and not the player as it can do in other sports so the hooker is always number 2 for example. The numbers were introduced in 1920s as a way for coaches to rate the players.

Teams can call on substitute players with team numbers (16-23) to cover rugby positions where players are injured, tired or as impact players to turn a match around or close down an opposing team in a close game.



Rugby is the most complex simple game you'll ever watch. At its core, rugby is one team with the ball running into another team defending, until the offensive team scores or loses the ball.

However there are many rules that govern the teams' interactions, and this is what confuses most newcomers to the game.

### THE BASIC RULES

**Knock-On/Forward Pass** – The ball cannot travel forward off a player's hands. That means no forward passes or dribbling (or fumbling forward). The two ways you can advance the ball is kicking the ball or carrying the ball forward. Passes have to be either lateral or backwards.

- Result of breaking this rule: Scrum for the opposing team.

Maybe the most commonly asked question is: What is that thing with all the guys mushed together in a big blob? That's a scrum. On each team, eight of the 15 players, known as the forward pack, bind together. Three in the front, four in the middle and one at the back. They push forward in the same formation, while the team that didn't commit the foul puts the ball into the scrum, hoping it comes out at the back of the scrum on their side. Around 90 percent of the time, the team that puts the ball in gets the ball back.

**Tackling** – When one player tackles another, there are three rules for the tackler and not following these three rules brings a penalty.

1. Don't tackle around the neck or above.
2. Don't pile drive opponents head into the ground into the ground like you're spiking a football.
3. Tackle with your hands and shoulders, not just your shoulders. In other words, you MUST wrap up.

**Ruck** – Once the player with the ball has been tackled, they **must** release it. What's called a "ruck" is formed and the ball is up for grabs — the two teams have to fight for possession of the ball. Rules governing the contest for possession often vary referee to referee, but the basics are: stay on your feet, enter the ruck from your side of the field (the chute) and don't touch the ball until it's secured by one team or outside of the ruck.

The goal of every rugby team is to score a "try." There is an infinite number of ways to score tries, but they all involve crossing the goal line and touching the ball on the ground. One try is worth 5 points, after which the scoring team has the opportunity to kick the ball off the ground for a "conversion" worth two points.

The difficulty of a conversion depends on where the try scorer touches the ball down. Touch the ball down underneath the uprights and the conversion will be a chip shot that most of you reading could make. Score next to the sideline and even good kickers will only make this conversion half the time. The only other way to score is off penalty kicks. A penalty kick is exactly like a conversion, but are awarded after foul play instead of following a try.

A rugby game is 80 minutes long with 40 minute halves and stoppage time similar to soccer. Draws are allowed but rarely occur in competition. High school boys' and girls' matches will be 30 minute halves. B-side games may be 20 or 30 minute halves agreed upon by the coaches depending on each team's situation/number and experience of players.

For more information, please go to [www.usarugby.org](http://www.usarugby.org)