



# RUGBY CANADA AGE GRADE COMPETITION PATHWAY QUICK GUIDE

For players Under 7 to Under 19  
Including 15, 10 and 7 aside variations of the game



This document is to be implemented in accordance with the Rugby Canada LTRD Implementation Guide and provides recommendations for age grade rugby in Canada.

## Age Grade Development

For players to progress through Rugby Canada's Long Term Rugby Development model (LTRD), it is vital that a reliable and structured level of competition be available for athletes. Although this document is centered on the 15 aside variation of the game for it should be noted that the principals of this pathway can also be used in conjunction with the variations for seven aside rugby. Coaches should pay particular attention to the rules / laws at each level of play to make sure that the development and the safety of the athlete is a priority at all times

Coaches should refer to the Rugby Canada LTRD implementation guide to observe the core skills required by their athletes for age of the age grades identified.

The levels of competition and age grade variations identified in this document are as follows:

- 0 – 5 Years, Flag Rugby (LTRD Stage 1)
- 6-8 Years, Flag Rugby (LTRD Stage 2)
- 9 -10 Years, Early Contact (LTRD Stage 3)
- 11 - 12 Years Contact (LTRD Stage 3-4)
- 13 – 14 Years Contact (LTRD Stage 4)
- 15 – 16 Years & Under 19 Laws (LTRD Stages 4-6)
- Full IRB Laws – U19 Variations

It is important to note that this guide uses the Flag variation of the game however all of the basic laws and rules can be applied to all variations of non-contact rugby including touch rugby. Please consult your local Rugby Union for any variations.



## LTRD STAGE 1

# 0 to 5 Years Flag Rugby



### COACH’S ROLE

To ensure that the athlete’s needs at this stage are met the coach should act as a guide, providing an environment for players to explore in a safe and exciting way. Corrections and guidance should be very simple, positive and enthusiastic.

### AIMS RATIONALE

“Invasion by evasion” - scoring tries by evasive running.  
Introduce accurate stationary passing.

<b>TEAM SIZE:</b>	Five or Seven a side with unlimited substitutions. (Large groups should always be split into small teams) Rugby Canada recommends that both teams shall field the same number of players throughout the game.
<b>PERIODS OF PLAY:</b>	Two halves each of up to 10 minutes playing time –maximum 20 minutes of play.
<b>PLAYING AREA:</b>	50m (Length) x 40m (Width) maximum. 40m (Length) x 30m (Width) minimum.
<b>BALL SIZE:</b>	Size three.
<b>COACH LEVEL:</b>	NCCP Community Initiation – Non-Contact
<b>GAME FORMAT:</b>	Age Grade Festivals (it is recommended that each game should not exceed 10 minutes (maximum) each half.
<b>KICKING:</b>	None.
<b>LINEOUT:</b>	None, free pass from five metres in from the touch line.
<b>SCRUMMAGE:</b>	None, free pass to restart the game.

#### FLAG RUGBY RULES:

- Game to start with a free pass.
- Team conceding try to restart.
- Six Flags, ball is turned over to opposition.
- Flagged player must play the ball (pass) within three seconds of being flagged.
- Tackler must hand back the Flag to the attacking player before continuing to play.
- Players must leave and enter the field of play at the halfway touchline.
- A player must have two Flags before scoring a try, however if a Flag is removed whilst scoring a try, the try is awarded.
- If a player crosses the line with one Flag, he/she is brought back out five metres from the try line with the Flag count continuing.
- Players must stay on feet to score a try and must not dive on the ball when contesting loose possession.
- Players are not permitted to dive on a loose ball in open play in the interest of safety.
- Spinning out of contact away from the tackler is not allowed.
- No hand-off allowed.
- Carrying the ball in two hands is encouraged but not a Flag rugby rule.

## LTRD STAGE 2

# 6 to 8 Years Flag Rugby



### COACH’S ROLE

To ensure that the athlete’s needs at this stage are met the coach should act as a guide in providing an environment for players to explore in a safe and exciting way. Corrections and guidance should be very simple, positive and enthusiastic.

### AIMS RATIONALE

“Invasion by evasion” - scoring tries by evasive running.  
Introduce accurate stationary passing.

<b>TEAM SIZE:</b>	Five or Seven a side with unlimited substitutions. (Large groups should always be split into small teams) Rugby Canada recommends that both teams shall field the same number of players throughout the game.
<b>PERIODS OF PLAY:</b>	Two halves each of up to 10 minutes playing time –maximum 20 minutes of play.
<b>PLAYING AREA:</b>	50m (Length) x 40m (Width) maximum. 40m (Length) x 30m (Width) minimum.
<b>BALL SIZE:</b>	Size three (3).
<b>COACH LEVEL:</b>	NCCP Community Initiation – Non-Contact
<b>GAME FORMAT:</b>	Age Grade Festivals (it is recommended that each game should not exceed 10 minutes (maximum) each half.
<b>KICKING:</b>	None.
<b>LINEOUT:</b>	None, free pass from five metres in from the touch line.
<b>SCRUMMAGE:</b>	None, free pass to restart the game.

#### FLAG RUGBY RULES:

- Game to start with a free pass.
- Team conceding try to restart.
- Six Flags, ball is turned over to opposition.
- Flagged player must play the ball (pass) within three seconds of being flagged.
- Tackler must hand back the Flag to the attacking player before continuing to play.
- Players must leave and enter the field of play at the halfway touchline.
- A player must have two Flags before scoring a try, however if a Flag is removed whilst scoring a try, the try is awarded.
- If a player crosses the line with one Flag, he/she is brought back out five metres from the try line with the Flag count continuing.
- Players must stay on feet to score a try and must not dive on the ball when contesting loose possession.
- Players are not permitted to dive on a loose ball in open play in the interest of safety.
- Spinning out of contact away from the tackler is not allowed.
- No hand-off allowed.
- Carrying the ball in two hands is encouraged but not a Flag rugby rule.





## Frequently Asked Questions (Flag)

**Q. At the re-start of flag games how far back must the opposition go?**

**A.** The opposition must be back from the half way line five metres.

**Q. The attacking side is given a free pass one metre from the opposition try line, where must they take the free pass?**

**A.** The opposition must go back to the try line and the attacking side can take the free pass from three meters from the defending try line.

**Q. What happens if the ball goes to the floor?**

**A.** The attacking team can continue to play as long as the ball has gone backwards, if the ball has gone forward the defending team has a free pass.

**Q. Can a player dive to score a try?**

**A.** A player is not permitted to dive in the act of scoring a try & must remain on their feet.

**Q. How many steps is the attacking player permitted in the act of scoring?**

**A.** The attacking player is permitted two full steps in the momentum act of scoring, irrespective of a flag(s) being removed.



*Fundamental movement skills should be introduced through fun and games.*



### LTRD STAGE 3

# 9 to 10 Years Early Contact



## COACH’S ROLE

To facilitate the needs and capacities of younger players the coach should act as a Guide, providing the environment for players to explore in a safe and exciting way. Corrections and guidance should be subtle and simple, dealing with issues in a broad rather than detailed perspective.

## AIMS RATIONALE

Encourage the offload in contact and the correct placement of the ball and introduce tackling around the legs.

<b>TEAM SIZE:</b>	9 a side with unlimited substitutions. Three forwards six backs.
<b>PERIODS OF PLAY:</b>	Two halves each of up to 10 minutes playing time, maximum 20 minutes of play. A maximum of 50 minutes in a day. Festivals are a maximum of 5 games of 5minutes each way.
<b>PLAYING AREA:</b>	50m (Length) x 40m (Width) maximum.
<b>BALL SIZE:</b>	Size four.
<b>COACH LEVEL:</b>	NCCP Community Initiation (Contact) If for developmental reasons flag rugby is still being played at this age grade the coach will only require <u>NCCP Community Initiation (Non-Contact)</u>
<b>GAME FORMAT:</b>	Age Grade Festivals (it is recommended that each game should not exceed 10 minutes (maximum) each half.

### EARLY CONTACT RUGBY RULES: (U19 Laws apply apart from)

- Waist high tackle or lower, if the tackle is above waist height, a free pass is awarded to the attacking team.
- Defence can only tackle; they are not allowed to contest for the ball on the ground.
- The offside lines are the rear most part of the body at the tackle area.
- No mauling allowed, if a maul is formed, a free pass is given to the attacking side.
- If a hand-off occurs the referee awards a free pass to the attacking side.
- If a knock on occurs a scrum is awarded.
- Rolling replacements.
- Players must leave and enter the field of play at the halfway touchline.

<b>KICKING:</b>	Only a kick-off is permitted at this age grade.
<b>LINEOUT:</b>	2-3 players per team uncontested. (No quick throw)
<b>SCRUMMAGE:</b>	Three player passive scrum and the team putting the ball in must win it. The scrum half must pass from the base of the scrum, and the opposition scrum half is to stay at the tunnel. Backs must stay 7 metres back from the scrum until the ball is passed.
<b>HAND / FEND OFF:</b>	A player must not hand / fend off a player in any way. Definition: Any movement of the arm or hand to ward off an opponent.
<b>METHOD OF SCORING:</b>	Tries only.

### LTRD STAGE 4

# 11 to 12 Years Contact



## COACH’S ROLE

Due to maturation, the players are now capable of longer periods of concentration and attention; therefore teaching rather than guiding is more appropriate for accelerating learning. Knowledge of how to facilitate learning through understanding is critical together with skill development and progressions.

## AIMS RATIONALE

Encourage the offload in contact and the correct placement of the ball and introduce tackling around the legs.

<b>TEAM SIZE:</b>	Up to 12 players: five forwards maximum, 7 backs maximum.
<b>PERIODS OF PLAY:</b>	Two halves each of up to 15 minutes playing time, maximum 30 minutes of play.
<b>PLAYING AREA:</b>	Half field or if space is available between 22m metre lines and 5 meters in from the touch line.
<b>BALL SIZE:</b>	Size four.
<b>COACH LEVEL:</b>	NCCP Community Initiation (Contact)
<b>GAME FORMAT:</b>	Age Grade Festivals (it is recommended that each game should not exceed 15 minutes (maximum) each half. Players in this age grade should not play more than 2 games in a day and should participate in a maximum of 70 minutes or rugby in a day including practice time.

### EARLY CONTACT RUGBY RULES: (U19 Laws apply apart from)

- Waist high tackle or lower, if the tackle is above waist height, a free pass is awarded to the attacking team.
- Defence can only tackle; they are not allowed to contest for the ball. (No ruck or Maul)
- The offside lines are the rear most part of the body at the tackle area.
- If a hand-off occurs the referee awards a free pass to the attacking side.
- If a knock on occurs a scrum is awarded.
- Rolling replacements.
- Players must leave and enter the field of play at the halfway touchline.

<b>KICKING:</b>	Team scoring to drop kick to opposition to restart game. (Free pass if skill is not strong)
<b>LINEOUT:</b>	5 v 5 uncontested (No catch and drive permitted).
<b>HAND / FEND OFF:</b>	A player must not hand / fend off a player in any way. Definition: Any movement of the arm or hand to ward off an opponent.
<b>SCRUMMAGE:</b>	5 v 5 passive scrum. The team putting the ball in must win it. Neither team is permitted to push. Acting scrum half must pass from the base of the scrum, and the opposition scrum half is to stay at the tunnel until ball is passed. The offside line for the scrum half is at the mid line of the scrummage. A player who is a member of the scrum cannot play the ball. (Penalty: penalty kick)
<b>METHOD OF SCORING:</b>	Tries only.

LTRD STAGE 4

# 13 to 14 Years Contact



COACH’S ROLE

At this stage players have the capacity to focus and therefore can increase their competencies radically with the correct attention and application. Greater self-awareness and responsibility are characteristics of players at this stage, which if nurtured will form the foundations for future realization and success. Players are highly competitive and foster a greater awareness of team spirit and common goals and values. This stage is a key DEVELOPMENT stage and the focus should be on process rather than outcome goals/targets

AIMS RATIONALE

Develop awareness of the main aspects of the game(Structure and Tactical aspects)

TEAM SIZE:	13 a side with unlimited substitutions. Six forwards and 7 backs Rugby Canada requires that both teams shall field the same number of players throughout the game except if a player is sent off, that team is then disadvantaged in accordance with the IRB Laws of the game.
PERIODS OF PLAY:	30 minutes each way, maximum 60 minutes of play - no extra time.
PLAYING AREA:	A full size field 100m (length) x 70m (width) maximum.
BALL SIZE:	Size five
NCCP COACH LEVEL:	NCCP Community Initiation (Contact) or NCCP Competition Introduction
GAME FORMAT:	Competitive games or fixtures

UNDER 19 LAWS APPLY APART FROM:

KICKING:	Permitted. The scoring team must drop kick to re-start. Penalty kicks at goal will only be permitted for offences committed in the 22m area.
LINEOUT:	Full lineout, contested <b>no lift</b> , only five metre catch and drive allowed.
SCRUMMAGE:	Uncontested Both scrummages must be 3-2-1 formation (That is six forwards maximum) A player who is a member of a scrum cannot pick up a ball from a scrum (penalty free kick.) Scrum half can follow around the scrum in accordance with normal IRB Laws

METHOD OF SCORING: Tries, Conversions and penalties.

LTRD STAGE 4-5-6

# 15+ Years Under 19 Laws



Full U19 Laws apply as indicated in the International Rugby Board Laws.

TEAM SIZE:	15 Players: eights forwards maximum / seven backs maximum.
PERIODS OF PLAY:	Two halves each up to 30 minutes playing time – no extra time U15-U16 players Two halves each of up to 35 minutes playing time - no extra time for U17-U19 players
PLAYING AREA:	A full size field 100m (length) x 70m (width) maximum.
BALL SIZE:	Size 5
COACHING LEVEL:	NCCP Competition Introduction is preferable.

IRB LAWS – U 19 VARIATIONS

LAW 3: NUMBER OF PLAYERS – THE TEAM

- (5) (d) If a team nominates 22 players, it must have at least six players who can play in the front row in order that there is replacement cover for the loose-head prop, hooker and tight-head prop.
- (5) (e) If a team nominates more than 22 players it must have at least six players who can play in the front row in order that there is replacement cover for the loose-head prop, hooker and tight-head prop. There must also be three players who can play in lock position.
- (13) (b) A player who has been substituted may replace an injured player.

LAW 5: TIME

Each half of an Under-19 match lasts 35 minutes playing time. Play in a match lasts no longer than 70 minutes. After a total of 70 minutes playing time, the referee must not allow extra time to be played in the case of a drawn match in a knockout competition.

LAW 20: SCRUM

- (1) (f) In an eight person scrum the formation must be 3-4-1, with the single player (normally the Number eight) shoving on the two locks. The locks must pack with their heads on either side of the hooker.

Exception: A team must have fewer than eight players in its scrum when either the team cannot field a complete team, or a player is sent off for Foul Play, or a player leaves the field because of injury.  
Even allowing for this exception, each team must always have at least five players in a scrum.

If a team is incomplete, the scrum formation must be as follows:

If a team is without one player, then both teams must use a 3-4 formation (i.e. no No.eight).

If a team is without two players, then both teams must use a 3-2-1formation (i.e. no flankers).

If a team is without three players, then both teams must use a 3-2 formation (i.e. only front rows and locks).

LTRD STAGE 4-5-6

# 15+ Years Under 19 Laws



Continued

When a normal scrum takes place, the players in the three front row positions and the two lock positions must have been suitably trained for these positions.

If a team cannot field such suitably trained players because:  
 Either they are not available, or a player in one of those five positions is injured or has been sent off for Foul Play and no suitably trained replacement is available, then the referee must order uncontested scrums.

In an uncontested scrum, the teams do not compete for the ball. The team putting in the ball must win it. Neither team is allowed to push the other team away from the mark.

**Front rows coming together.** Each prop touches the opponent's upper arm and then pauses before the front rows meet. The sequence should be: crouch, touch, pause, engage.

**No wheeling.** A team must not intentionally wheel a scrum.  
 Penalty: free kick.

If a wheel reaches 45 degrees, the referee must stop play. If the wheel is unintentional, the referee orders another scrum at the place where the scrum is stopped.

**Rugby Canada Additional Ruling: the ball is put in by the team that previously put it in.**

**Maximum 1.5 metres push.** A team in the scrum must not push the scrum more than 1.5 metres towards their opponents' goal line.  
 Penalty: free kick.

**Ball must be released from scrum.** A player must not intentionally keep the ball in the scrum once the player's team has heeled the ball and controls it at the base of the scrum.  
 Penalty: free kick.

## IRB Ten-a-Side Variations (Optional)

<b>TEAM SIZE:</b>	10 Players: Five forwards maximum / Five backs maximum.
<b>PERIODS OF PLAY:</b>	Two halves each up to 10 minutes playing time
<b>PLAYING AREA:</b>	A full size field 100m (length) x 70m (width) maximum.
<b>BALL SIZE:</b>	As per age grade variations referred to in this document
<b>COACHING LEVEL:</b>	NCCP Community Initiation (Contact) or Competition Introduction for U15-16 players NCCP Competition Introduction for U17-U18 players

The Ten (10) aside variation of the game is an optional variation to develop the game of rugby for teams with athletes in Under 11/ 12 or above.

## IRB Seven-a-Side Law Variations

**Note:** The seven aside variation of the game can be played at all levels of LTRD. It is however important that coaches pay particular attention to the age grade **rule** variations at each level of play to make sure that the development and the safety of the athlete is a priority at all times.

- Seven players per team on the field.
- Five substitutes, with only three interchanges.
- Seven minute halves, though ten minute halves are allowed in the final of a competition.
- One minute half-time, two minutes in finals.
- Matches drawn after regulation are continued into Extra Time, in 5-minute periods.
- All conversion attempts must be drop-kicked
- Conversions must be taken within 40 seconds of scoring a try.
- Three player scrums.
- Kick-offs: in sevens, the team which has just scored kicks off, rather than the conceding team, as in fifteen-a-side.
- Yellow cards net a 2-minute suspension (instead of 10 minutes).
- Referees decide on advantage quickly (where one play usually ends advantage, not true in fifteens).

**Note: The IRB Seven aside variations can be applied to all age grades, however for safety and developmental reasons the guide-lines identified in this document should be followed for all age grades.**



## RUGBY CANADA AGE GRADE VARIATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND COMPETITION

All provincial unions and clubs should endeavour to run programs at each stage of the LTRD to promote a strong competition pathway for vital athlete development									
Age Category	0 to 5 Years	6 to 8 Years	9 to 10 Years	11 to 12 Years	13 to 14 Years	15 to 16 Years	17 to 18 Years	19 Years	
LTRD Stage		Stage 1-2	Stage 2	Stage 2-3	Stage 3-4	Stage 4-5	Stage 5-6	Stage 5-6	
Coach Qualification (Domestic Club / School)	NCCP Community Non-Contact	NCCP Community Non-Contact	NCCP Community Non-Contact	NCCP Community Contact	NCCP Community (Contact) or NCCP Competition Introduction	NCCP Community (Contact) or NCCP Competition Introduction preferred	NCCP Competition Introduction	NCCP Competition Introduction / NCCP Competition Development	
Recommended Practice Duration (Inc Games) in a day	40 -60 min.	40-60 min.	60 min.	70-90 min	90 min.	90 min	90 min.	90 min.	
Non-Contact / Contact	Non-Contact	Non-Contact	Non-Contact / Contact	Contact	Contact	Contact	Contact	Contact	
Max. Game Time	15-20 min.	20 min.	20 min	30 min	60 min.	60 min.	70	70	
Team Size	5 or 7	7	9	Up to 12	13	15	15	15	
Ball Size	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	
Line out:	Free Pass only	Free Pass only	Uncontested	Uncontested	Contested	Contested	Contested	Contested	
Line out: Lifting	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
* Pre-grip & lift on the shorts allowed at U15 onwards									
Scrum	NO	NO	YES (3v3)	YES (5v5)	YES (6v6)	YES	YES	YES	
Scrum Push	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	1.5M only	1.5M only	1.5M only	
Scrum Wheel	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	
If a forward is carded - opposition must reduce numbers - If a back line player is carded no reduction in forwards. Forward must have the following format: Full scrum: 3-4-1 then 3-4 then 3-2-1 then 3-2									
Ruck & Maul	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	
Squeeze ball is not allowed in age grade rugby									
Yellow Card				Yes - 5 min.	Yes - 5 min.	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Red Card				Yes - Replace player in Club / School	Yes - Replace player in Club / School	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Substitutes: Front row cover					See Law U19 IRB 3.5	See Law U19 IRB 3.5	See Law U19 IRB 3.5	See Law U19 IRB 3.5	







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