

Rugby Union has many laws. Some are complicated but it is essentially an easy game to follow and understand. Below is a guide to the main components of the game. They are presented simply and there are some generalizations especially in the player section.

The Ball - Length 280 - 300mm Circumference (end on) 760 - 790 mm
Circumference (in width) 580 - 620 mm Weight 400 - 440 grams

The Dress - Jersey, shorts and undergarments, socks and boots. Boot studs to be maximum 18-mm long, 13-mm diameter, 10mm diameter (top), and 20mm integral washer.

The Toss Up - Before the start of the match captains will toss a coin for the right to choose ends or to kick off.

The Referee - The referee is appointed under the authority of each union. The Touch Judges are normally appointed by the Union, however if this does not happen, it is the responsibility of the two sides to provide them. The touch judges now play a much more active part in assisting the referee, as well as signaling where the ball left the field of play.

The Mode of Play - The match is started by a kick off. The ball must be kicked ten meters into the opponent's half. The type of kick to start the game (first and second half) is a place kick (a tee is usually used to place the ball on). With subsequent kick offs, after a score a drop kick is used to restart the game. After kick off, a player may then catch or pick up the ball and run with it. He may then pass or throw it to another player, kick or otherwise propel the ball, tackle push or shoulder an opponent holding the ball, fall on the ball, take part in scrummage, ruck maul or lineout, ground the ball in goal. The ball must not be passed forward from the hand to a team mate.

The Scoring - There are 2 methods of scoring - A try which is achieved by grounding the ball in the opponent's goal area. A goal is scored by kicking the ball through the opponent's cross bar and between the posts either:- § by a place kick (the ball is placed on the floor using a tee) or § by a drop kick (a kick from the hands during open play where the ball touches the ground just before the point of contact) or § by a conversion (a placed kick always awarded after a try, in line with where the try was scored). A penalty try can be awarded where a side would have probably scored but for foul play by the opposing team.

The Points - Try = 5 points Goal = 3 points Goal after a try (conversion) = 2 points

The Drop Out - Where the ball is knocked, kicked or thrown into the opposition In-Goal area and a defending player touches down, then a drop out is taken on the defending side's 22 meter line. A drop out is a method of restarting the game. The ball must pass over the 22 meter line using a drop kick. Both sides can then compete for the ball once it has crossed.

Five Meters Scrum - This is awarded to a side which carries the ball over the in goal area and is then unable to ground the ball for a try.

Fair Catch (Mark) - A player makes a "mark" when he catches a ball in his own 22 meter or In-Goal area. As he catches the ball he must claim the "Mark" verbally (calls " Mark"). A "Mark" cannot be awarded where a player catches a ball direct from a kick-off.

Knock On - A knock on occurs when the ball is dropped or knocked forward and travels towards the direction of the opponent's dead ball line.

Throw Forward - This occurs when a player passes the ball but it moves forward, towards the direction of the oppositions dead ball line. With both a knock on and

a throw forward, a scrum will be awarded to the opposing side.

The Maul - A maul is when at least one player from each side is bound onto each other and competing for the ball, The ball will be off the ground.

The Ruck - A ruck is formed normally when a maul goes to ground. Unlike a maul, the ball cannot be handled in a ruck; the two sides have to try to drive over the ball to enable them to then play it from the back of the ruck.

The Tackle - A tackle occurs when the ball carrier is held by one or more persons and whilst being held the tackled person goes to ground. The person is deemed to have gone to ground when one or two knees are in contact with the ground. The tackled player, at this point, must release the ball.

The Scrum – The scrum is formed when the ball is knocked-on, passed forward or is adjusted by the Referee, or does not appear from a ruck or maul quickly enough. A scrum is contested between the two sets of forwards normally as eight versus eight. The side who put the ball in will invariably win the ball. When they don't and the opposing side "steals" the ball it is commonly called "one against the head" or "a tight head".

Tight Head - When two sides scrummage against each other they are both traditionally in a 3 - 4 - 1 formation. When the front rows (3) engage their heads slot into certain gaps. These are called the "tight head" and the "loose head". They differ as one player will be pushing predominantly with one shoulder (loose head) and the other with two shoulders (tight head).

Loose Head - See Above

Lineout - This is where the ball goes out of play over the touchline and as with the scrum, it is a method of restarting the game. The players line up five meters and no more than fifteen meters in from the touchline, at 90 degrees to it. The lineout will include 3 to 7 players at any one time. The number of players in any lineout will be dictated by the side throwing the ball in. The lineout begins when the ball leaves the hands of the player throwing it in.

Offside - A player who is off side will be in a position in which he is out of the game and is liable to penalty. In general play, a player is in an offside position because he is in front of the ball when another player of his team has last played it. In play at scrummage, ruck, maul or lineout, a player will be offside because he remains or advances in front of the offside line. In the case of a lineout, the off side line is 10 meters back from where the lineout was formed. In the case of a maul, ruck or scrummage it is in line with the hind most foot or body of the player on each side of the maul, ruck or scrummage.