INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS TOUCH RUGBY?

Touch Rugby, or TOUCH as it is becoming known, is a minimal contact sport that is played throughout the world by men, women and children of all ages and skill levels.

Touch appeals to both sports enthusiasts as well as those looking for an ‘alternative way’ of getting or keeping fit through a fun game, which needs only a ball and maybe jumpers for corner flags!

The southern hemisphere hugely supports touch, which is no surprise as its roots can be traced back to Australia in the 1960s where it was used as a warm-up game. Currently over 300,000 people play touch in New Zealand.

In England, the popularity for Touch has rapidly grown around the country, and is now widely played by over 15,000 adults in London, Cardiff, Manchester, Glasgow, Bath, Newcastle and the Midlands.

The sport of touch is targeting individuals and teams from the local community who have a shared desire to keep fit over the summer months, whilst enjoying themselves in an environment where social interaction and meeting new people are also important.

Touch festivals and leagues should be structured to appeal to both experienced sportspersons, as well as those that have never, or hardly ever, played a team sport.

For those that have never played before, introductory ‘get-to-know-touch’ sessions are recommended prior to the start of the league, giving newcomers to the game a chance to learn some of the basics before any competition itself begins.

The simplicity of this game is unique; all you need is a rugby ball, a space to play and a group of friends.

Teams are normally 6 a side and can be male, female, mixed, age and ability graded.

Touch Rugby is a fast moving, minimal contact, evasive game that is played throughout the world by men and women of all ages and skill levels.

The game is similar to rugby union but without the tackling, scrummaging, rucking, mauling, lineouts and kicking.

This fast, simple and exciting game promotes the fundamental skills of running, handling, evasion and support play, whilst developing basic principles of attack and defence, without the fear of getting hurt.

TOUCH – A FUN SPORT FOR ALL

PART I - WHY TOUCH RUGBY?

Flexibility:

- Touch Rugby is suitable for both beginners and experienced players
- Touch can be played by both men and women together and is a great way of meeting new people or involving partners or friends
- Teams can consist of up to 14 players and can be mixed or single sex as we will be running more than one league, but remember if you want to enter a mixed team you must have at least two women in your squad
• Players can either enter as an individual and we will put you into one of our teams, or you can enter a team

Fun
• Touch Rugby is a fun game for the local park or even the beach
• Touch is primarily played during the summer months when not only is the weather more favorable, but the light evenings enable it to be played after work
• Touch Rugby is a minimal contact, recreational sport that is about playing the game on the field and the social atmosphere afterwards.
• It is great for team building for groups of employees or members of a sports team
• There is no specific equipment required to start playing – just trainers to get you around the pitch safely
• It is aimed at all abilities, with coaching to help those new to the game.

Fitness
• It is easy to learn and a great way to get in shape.
• Touch is non-contact and hence is almost completely injury-free
• It is a great way of keeping fit
• Touch is also much easier to play than most other team sports, with emphasis on the ‘more simple’ skills of running, dodging, chasing, passing and catching.
• It can be used within warm ups
PART 2 - UNDERSTANDING THE GAME

Object of the game:
The object of the game is for each team to score ‘touchdowns’ and to prevent the opposition from scoring.

The ball may be passed, knocked or handed between on-side players of the attacking team, who may in turn, run or otherwise move with the ball in an attempt to gain territorial advantage and score.

Defending players prevent the attacking team from gaining a territorial advantage by touching the ball carrier. Either defending or attacking players may initiate the touch.

Start of the game:
The team that wins the coin toss chooses the direction of play and must start with a ‘tap’ from the middle of the field.

The defending team must be back 10 metres for the start of play and after each touchdown.

Duration of the game:
The duration of the game can be varied to suit your local circumstances. But as a guide try 2 x 10-minute halves.

Size of the field:
The size of the field can vary, but the game will generally be played on half a rugby field (playing across the field). Posts are not required to play Touch Rugby.
Number of players:
Squads can consist of up to a maximum of 14 players, with a playing team of 6 on the field at anyone time.

It is suggested that teams of between 8 and 10 help to encourage maximum involvement and activity.

Method of scoring:
A touchdown is awarded when an attacking player places the ball on the ground, on or over the defending team’s scoreline. A touchdown is worth 1 point.

The person who takes the role of ‘dummy half’ (the person who receives the ball from the player starting the game) can cross the try-line, but not score.

After a team scores, the play begins again with a tap in the middle of the field by the non-scoring team.
PART 3 - THE BASICS

The Touch
Players of both defending and attacking teams are to use the minimum force necessary to affect the touch. A ‘touch’ can be made on any part of the person, their clothing or the ball.

After a touch has been affected, the player in possession is required to stop, return to the mark where the touch occurred (if the mark has been over run), and perform a ‘Roll-ball’ immediately.

After being touched 6 times, the ball is handed over to the other team.

If a touch is considered too strong, a penalty will be awarded against the offending team.

The Roll ball
The attacking player who has been touched affects the roll ball. They position themselves on the mark, facing the defenders’ score line, standing parallel to the sideline and roll the ball backwards along the ground between their feet.

If the ball is rolled more than 1 metre a penalty will be awarded to the opposition.

A ‘voluntary roll ball’ occurs when the player is not touched and rolls the ball between their legs. This is not permitted and will result in a penalty to the opposition.

The most effective way to execute the roll ball is by placing the ball stationary on the ground, as it is easier to control a stationary object and therefore keep momentum of the forward movement.

The Penalty
If a player is penalised, their team must retreat 10 metres. A penalty is taken by placing the ball on the ground, letting go of the ball, touching the ball with the foot and picking up the ball.

This is called the Tap Ball. The referee will make the defending team retreat 10m and ‘The Tap’ must take place at ‘The Mark’ as indicated by the referee.

Passing
The ball must be passed backwards or directly sideways at all times. A forward pass occurs when the ball is passed in front of the player, this will result in a penalty to the other team.

A ‘touch and pass’ occurs when a person who is touched then passes the ball after the touch. This will again result in a penalty.

Offside
An attacking player is offside when that player is forward of another attacking player who either has possession or who last had possession of the ball.

A defending player is offside when that player has not retreated 5 metres for a roll ball or 10 metres for a penalty or restart of play.

For all offside infringements, the opposition will be awarded a penalty.

The side step and swerve
Touch rugby is an evasive game and players must use all their agility and athleticism to avoid the touch and indeed to make the touch. Therefore, the side step and the swerve are useful techniques to employ during a match. They can wrong foot an opponent and will often give you the extra space you need to dive in for a touch down.

**The dummy half**
The dummy half is the player who picks the ball up from the ground after the roll ball. It can be any of the players on the team in possession. The team without the ball cannot advance until the dummy half has touched the ball. The dummy half is not allowed to be caught whilst in possession of the ball. If the dummy half is caught with the ball, possession is handed over to the opposition who will recommence play with a roll-ball. Should the dummy half be in possession in the touchdown zone they are not allowed to score and would need to pass to a team mate to score a touchdown.

**Defence dropping 10m**
During a game of Touch, the defending team will have to retreat 10 metres, in a straight line, from the team with the ball. This occurs at the start of the game and after a penalty or tap ball. If the defending team concedes a penalty, the referee will insist they are back the full 10 metres and will call the players back until they are satisfied.

**Defence dropping 5m**
During a game of Touch, the defending team will frequently have to retreat 5 metres, in a straight line, from the team with the ball. This occurs after each touch and subsequent roll ball. With Touch being such a fast game, the defending players often do not have time to retreat the full 5 metres before the attackers have roll balled and continued. When this is the case the defenders must allow the attackers to run unimpeded for 5 metres before affecting the Touch. On all occasions, the referee will let the defenders know where the 5 metre point is and call them onside when they are satisfied.

**Running with the ball (two hands)**
To reduce the risk of accidentally dropping the ball, players must run with it in two hands. This is particularly important in Touch because the ball must be kept off the ground at all times, if the ball goes to ground; there is an immediate loss of possession and turnover to the opposition.

**How to score a touchdown**
A touchdown is the only way to score points in Touch, and each touchdown scores one point. The ball must be run over your opponents try line and touched firmly down. The referee will then confirm that a touchdown has been scored. It’s important to note that the dummy half (the player who picks the ball up after a roll ball cannot score)

**Rolling substitutions**
Touch Rugby is a very fast and physically demanding sport, as a result, the rules allow for rolling substitutions. With a team consisting of six, squads will often number around 12, effectively an entire team replacement.

Substitutions can and should be made as often and as frequently as possible, however ensure the player leaves the field completely before the replacement comes on. All substitutions must take place within the interchange box where marked.
PART 5 – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Go forward
Going forward when in attack, the aim of the game is to score more touchdowns than the opposition. This is achieved by advancing towards the try line, aim to get the ball up field as quickly as you can.

At times, it can be tactically advantageous to move towards the side lines of the pitch to enable more room for further attacking plays. This can be done by using miss passes and quick hands (a rhythm of two passes followed by a touch can be followed) to move the ball before allowing a touch to be made.

When in defence, try to deny your opponents time and space by moving forward and making the touch. The faster you move up on the attacking team, the less progress towards your try line they will be able to make.

Support the ball carrier at all times
Close support of the ball carrier allows more options in attack and means possession can be maintained. Close support also means no ground needs to be lost by having to pass the ball a long way backwards to a teammate.

The speed of getting the ball off the floor following a roll ball is crucial in maintaining an effective attack.

The ball carrier should always know where their support players are, they should proactively find a supporting player before a touch is made.

Remember a flat pass directly sideways is allowed and can often be the most effective pass.

Interchange players as much as possible
A fresh set of legs on the field can be the difference between winning and losing. Look to interchange your players while your team is on the attack and in the area of the interchange box.

Once you have made a touchdown, it is a good idea to get a completely new set of players on the field to keep up the intensity.

Team communication
Effective communication within the team is vital, this is not just about the verbal ‘talk’ on the field but also the overall understanding of what the team is trying to do and how they will affect that.
COACHING BENEFITS

**It develops** Ball skills, vision, teamwork, work rate, concentration, awareness, discipline, attack, defence and fitness.

**Scrumhalves**
- Passing off the deck
- Scooping
- Running from the base of the scrum
- Vision from the base of the scrum

**Fly halves**
- Reading play before receiving the ball

**Centres**
- How to hit holes
- Create space

**Wingers**
- Use space
- Read what the defence are doing off the ball

**Forwards**
- Driving
- Popping the ball to runners
- Receiving the ball on the run
- How to draw in defence
- Setting up quick phase ball

**All players**
- Learn to create space
- How to use space
- Move defence
- Work as a unit (attack and defence)
- Develop ball skills (quick hands)
- Become more focused/aware
- Control
- Higher work rate
- High level of discipline
- Fitness

Not all of the Touch rules all apply to the 15’s game, but to achieve all of the above, it is very important to be strict on the rules of the game.

You will find that players get frustrated in the beginning, but if you keep at them, you will see your players:
- Become more focused/aware
- Higher work rate
- Much higher level of discipline

**Speed of the game**
You will find that the game will not be fast to start off with, but as players learn how to play, the speed of the game will develop with their skills.
REFEREEING

As in any game, a referee’s role is vital to ensure that the prescribed rules are followed for the enjoyment of all participants.

Anyone can referee Touch Rugby at a social level providing the basics are understood (please see the basic rules below). A referee must be able to control play on the field in a firm but friendly manner.

All Touch events are advised to use the official Federation of International Touch Rules. These are the worldwide-recognised rules of Touch. Rules are available at: www.internationaltouch.org

Your local Referees’ Society and club members are both great places to start when looking for referees. The England Touch Referees Association is able to advise and assist on providing referees and training for your event. Visit: www.englandtouchrugby.org.uk

Referee Structure

England currently follows the European Referee Coaching Structure, which consists of 4 levels of refereeing. At present, only a Level 3 can be obtained in England due to the level of the games played. Below is a brief outline of what each level consists of:

**Level 1**
Level 1 is the first achievement badge where a standard of performance is required. It is designed as an ‘entry level’ badge and the course consists of a theory paper (about 1.5 hours depending on size of group) with a 60-question test at the end. Referees leave the course and work to the required on-field standard (usually with some coaching).

**Level 2**
The Level 2 badge rewards a consistent performer in the field of play. This badge is usually awarded at a national tournament. There is a two-day course, which is 95% practical. At the end of the course participants take away a 25-question exam paper and complete it within a month and send it back to the national panel.

There is a referee’s manual which they work through to gain the answers. Ideally, you would have already attended the Level One course but this is not a pre-requisite

**Level 3**
There are no courses for Level 3 and 4 referees; it is based solely on their on-field performance as well as their ability to act as a role model. A Level 3 referee is one who can perform to a very high standard in the field.

Level 4 badges are seen as the ultimate achievement with the referee seen as a true role model of the sport. All Level 4 referees are fully involved with referee coaching and have their Level 1 referee coach certificate.

Level 3 badged referees have been eligible for international selection (i.e. World Cups), with 2 Level 3 referees being selected for the recent 2007 Touch World Cup.

Courses are run throughout England at affiliated venues. For more information about attending or hosting an ETA run course please email refs@englandtouchrugby.org.uk.
BASIC RULES

1. The attacking team must start with a tap from the middle of the field
2. The defending team must be back 10m for the start of play, and after each touchdown
3. After a team scores a touchdown the play begins again with a tap in the middle
4. After being touched, the player touched must roll the ball on the ground between their legs
5. If the dummy half is touched while possessing the ball it is a turnover with a ROLL BALL
6. The attacking team continues play until they have had 6 touches or until a touchdown is scored
7. The person who takes the role of dummy half can cross the touchdown line but not score
8. After being touched 6 times the ball is handed over to the other side and play begins with a ROLL BALL
9. After touching the attacking player with the ball, all defending team members must retreat 5m to be in line with the Referee
10. When the ball is dropped on the ground it is a turnover and play begins with a ROLL BALL
11. When the ball is thrown, dropped, knocked on etc then a turnover occurs and play begins with a ROLL BALL
12. When someone is penalised their team must then retreat 10m

NOTE - PENALTY TAP - Ball on the ground – release - touch the ball with your foot - pick up the ball
13. If the defending players do not retreat 5m after a touch then they are Offside and a turnover occurs with a penalty tap
14. If a touch is considered too strong then turnover occurs with a penalty tap
15. When the ball is passed in front of the player receiving the ball it is deemed a Forward Pass and turnover occurs with a penalty tap
16. If a player is touched and then releases the ball it is deemed a Touch and Pass and turnover occurs with a penalty tap
17. If a player is not touched but then rolls the ball between their legs it is deemed a Voluntary Roll Ball or No Touch and turnover occurs with a penalty tap
18. A player must roll the ball on the mark where the touch was made – if not the player is deemed Over the Mark and turnover occurs with a penalty tap.
19. If a player Shepherds another player, or Obstructs a touch from the defending side turnover occurs with a penalty tap.

20. For minor offences i.e. bickering with refs, shouldering, leg trips etc the player can either be sent off the field by Forced Substitution, or sent to the Sin Bin for a period of time
   a. If a player is sent from the field through Forced Substitution by the Referee, then another player is able to take the field in their place.
   b. If a player is Sin Binned, then the team must continue with 5 players until the Referee allows the player to take the field again
21. Foul play of any nature (the Referee being the sole judge) will result in the offending player being sent from the field without replacement.
ENGLISH TOUCH ASSOCIATION

Touch Rugby in England is an organised sport in its own right. The English Touch Association (ETA) is England's organising body though are an affiliated member of the RFU.

Through its associated membership: insurance, representation to government and governance are provided by the RFU.

The England Touch Rugby Association (ETA) is responsible for the governance and development of Touch Rugby in England. They are a Non-Profit organisation currently funded by membership fees and managed by an Executive Committee.

The ETA is also responsible for the selection, coaching and management of National teams to take part in International competitions, such as the 2006 European Championships in Edinburgh and the 2007 World Cup in South Africa.

The ETA provide affiliated leagues around the country with support and services that ensure anyone wanting to play the sport can do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. Services include referee development, coaching, and player protection policies.

The ETA is supported by the Federation of International Touch and is an Affiliate member of the England Rugby Football Union.

Together in partnership, the RFU and ETA wish to develop local leagues and festivals. These will stimulate local activity and can be incorporated into a national framework via regional festivals and national competition.

The RFU encourage all organisers of Touch Rugby to affiliate to the ETA, which in turn means you are affiliated to the RFU. Existing RFU club’s can run one off festivals or try it sessions through the Leisure Rugby Event Notification Form. However, all leagues must be affiliate through the ETA to comply with insurance regulations.

Several commercial organisations are members of the ETA who offer their services to maximise all opportunities for touch across certain geographic areas.

Any club using the services provided by these companies still need to affiliate to the ETA if they want to be registered as a touch club.

For further details on the ETA please visit [www.englandtouchrugby.org.uk](http://www.englandtouchrugby.org.uk)
LEISURE RUGBY

The Rugby Football Union has a specialist Leisure Rugby Team to support the growth of Touch Rugby within England.

If you are running any leisure rugby events or need advice, assistance or support please email leisurerugby@therfu.com, call 0870 143 2414 or to find out what leisure rugby is all about take a look at www.rfu.com/leisurerugby for further information.

Other Useful Links

www.cambridgetouch.com
www.derbymtouch.com
www.in2touch.com
www.internationaltouch.org
www.perfectmotion.org
www.perfectmotiontouch.com
www.nottinghamtouch.com
www.leicesterselftouch.com
www.lutontouch.com
www.touchrugby.com

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