

U13-U18 Girls Variations to the World Laws of the Game

Players and Match Officials must ensure that the World Rugby Laws of Game (including the World Rugby Under 19 Law Variations) and any such law variations set out below (and/or otherwise agreed by the RFU) are observed when playing girls rugby at U13 to U18 in England.

RFU Regulation 15 (<http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/regulations/>) must also be complied with at all times.

Any terms defined in these Rules shall have the meanings set out in the World Rugby Laws of the Game.

Law Variations applicable to all age grades between U13 and U18

1. Ball sizes

- U13, U14 and U15 – ball size 4
- U16, U17 and U18 – ball size 5

2. Substitutions and replacements

Rolling substitutions are permitted and substituted players can be re-used at any time. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is dead and always with the Referee's knowledge.

There is no limit on the number of replacements that a team may have, even if competing teams have unequal number, unless otherwise specified by separate regulations specific to a competition.

3. Squeezeball

No player shall use the technique known or referred to as "Squeezeball" and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of rugby may teach or coach to encourage the use the "Squeezeball" technique.

Note: "Squeezeball" is a technique where the ball carrier goes to ground, head forward (touching or close to the ground), irrespective of immediate contact with opponents, usually keeping parallel to the touchline, holding and protecting the ball close to the chest and, when on the ground, pushing the ball back between the legs.

4. Sin Bin

If a player is temporarily suspended in an Age Grade match, the duration of time in the Sin Bin shall be as set out below:

- U13, U14 and U15– 5 minutes
- U16, U17 and U18 – 7 minutes

Additional Law Variations applicable to U13 only

The variations below shall also apply at U13

5. Pitch size

- a) The maximum pitch size is 60 metres by 35 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area.
- b) Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the Referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches do not materially increase the risk of injury to players.
- c) Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.
- d) Provision should be made to indicate the position of the line 15 metres out from each goal line, serving a similar purpose to the 22 metre line in the World Rugby Laws of the Game.

6. Teams

Under 13 Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, containing six or seven players from each team on the pitch at any one time.

7. Passing:

- a) The ball can only be passed sideways or backwards. If the ball is handed to another player who is in front or passed or knocked forwards (towards the opponents' dead ball line) then a scrum is awarded to the non-offending team, unless advantage occurs to the non-offending team. In order to keep the game flowing, Referees should play advantage wherever possible.
- b) Where the ball has been ripped from the ball carrier, whether by the attacker or defender, the ball must be passed immediately away from the contact area.

8. Free Passes:

- a) A free pass is used:
 - to start the match at the beginning of each half and following a score, from the centre of the pitch
 - where the ball or ball carrier has gone into touch, 5 metres in from the side of the pitch where the ball or ball carrier went into touch
 - where there is offside and no advantage
 - where a fend or hand-off has been used
 - when there has been foul play

once forward momentum has been stopped and the ball has not been played away from the contact area if the tackler makes contact above the shoulder

If a team contests, pushes or strikes for the ball in the scrum

in the event that a ball carrier uses the “Squeezeball” technique

- b) At a free pass, the opposition must be 7 metres back from the mark. They cannot start moving forward until the ball leaves the hands of the passer. At a free pass, the player must start with the ball in both hands and, when instructed by the referee who will call “Play”, pass the ball backwards through the air to a member of their team. For safety reasons, no player may run until the pass is made. The player taking the free pass must pass the ball when the referee calls “Play”.

9. The Tackle, Maul and Ruck

- a) A “tackle” is deemed to be any contact below the armpits of the ball carrier which results in the ball carrier being held by the opponent of the ball carrier. Where the ball carrier is taken to ground, the Referee will call “Tackle-Release”.
- b) A “maul” is formed when the ball carrier and tackler are joined by one additional player from either the defending or attacking team. No more than two players from either side (including the ball carrier and tackler) can be involved in the maul.
- c) A “ruck” is formed when one player from each team, are on their feet, in physical contact and close around the ball on the ground. Players are rucking when they are in a ruck and using their feet to try to win or keep possession of the ball, without being guilty of foul play. Open play has ended.
- d) Only the ball carrier can be tackled. The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend them off using their hands or the ball.
- e) The tackler must grasp the ball carrier below the armpits, on the shirt, shorts or around the legs.
- f) When the ball carrier grounds the ball on or over the opponents’ goal line, a try should be awarded.
- g) When the ball carrier is held in contact and remains on their feet they may continue to progress forward. Once forward momentum has been stopped, the ball must be played away from the contact area.
- h) When the ball carrier is not taken to ground, the tackler may contest the ball by grabbing it.

- i) When the ball carrier is taken to ground, the tackler must immediately release the ball carrier and must get to their feet as soon as possible before he is permitted to contest the ball or block the pass.
- j) If the ball carrier is taken to ground and the referee calls “Tackle-Release”, the ball carrier must pass the ball immediately, roll away or place the ball towards their own team.
- k) When a maul is formed the ball must be made available within 5 seconds. The Referee should call “Use it” and the ball should be moved away from the contact area. If neither team can pass the ball away, a scrum should be awarded to the defending team.
- l) When the tackle is made the attacking team may only support from behind.
- m) When the tackle is made and the ball carrier is on the ground, ONE supporting player may join to form a ruck but must do so from their own side (i.e. from the direction of their own goal line) and:
 - i. Drive over the ball, taking their immediate opponent away from the ball; or
 - ii. Pick up the ball and pass away from the contact area; or
 - iii. Pick up the ball and run if the ruck is not formed or if the ball is out of the ruck.
- n) A supporting player may rip the ball from the ball carrier but must then pass the ball immediately to a team mate.
- o) Once m) i. above has taken place, the next arriving player must pass the ball to another player.
- p) When the ball has been clearly won by a team at a ruck and the ball is available to be played the Referee will call “Use it” after which the ball must be played within 5 seconds. If the ball is not played within five seconds the Referee will award a scrum and the team not in possession of the ball at the ruck is awarded the throw-in.
- q) Support players must not stand either side and in close proximity to the ball carrier to prevent defenders from making the next tackle.

10. **Scrum:**

- a) A scrum will be awarded for:
 - Forward pass; or
 - Knock on; or
 - Where the ball does not emerge from a maul or ruck; or

Where the ball becomes unplayable.

- b) The scrum will consist of three players from each team, i.e. a prop on either side of the hooker. They will be the nearest 3 players from either side, with the fourth nearest acting as scrum half.
- c) The Referee will call “Crouch” and then “Bind”. The front rows crouch and using their outside arm each prop must bind onto the arm of their opponent. Following a pause, the Referee will then call “Set” when the front rows are ready. The front rows may then engage.
- d) The scrum is uncontested and the team awarded the scrum will throw the ball into the scrum. Neither team may contest, push or strike for the ball.
- e) Front rows must not charge at each other. If they start to set too close together and with their necks and backs bent, the scrum must be stopped and the scrum reformed. Props’ body positions must be parallel to the touchline, their head and shoulders must be no lower than the hips and there must be no downward pressure exerted. Shoulders must always be above the level of the hips.

Note to Referee: Although unlikely at this age, Referees and coaches MUST be aware of the following: If the scrum collapses, the whistle must immediately be blown and the appropriate sanction awarded or the scrum reset. If a player is persistently involved in collapsing or illegal binding, they must not take any further part in the scrum or if a player’s lack of technique or strength is a danger then they must be replaced. All players, including replacements, should be suitably trained and experienced.

11. Offside:

- a) In general play, anyone who is in front of a team mate who has played the ball is liable to sanction unless they return to an onside position (i.e. behind the team mate who played the ball).
- b) At the tackle, offside occurs at the time of the tackle where the offside line is the hindmost part of the tackled player and tackler. All the other players from the defending team must retire towards their own goal line until they are behind the hindmost part of the tackled player and tackler.
- c) At the maul, where contact is made and the ball carrier stays on their feet and a maul is formed, the offside line is the hindmost foot of the hindmost player in the maul.
- d) At the ruck, the offside line is the hindmost foot of the hindmost player in the ruck.

12. Prohibited Play:

- a) The ball carrier can run and dodge potential tacklers but cannot fend or hand them off.

- b) The tackler can only make contact with the ball carrier below the armpits.
- c) No kicking of any kind.
- d) No player shall use the technique known or referred to as “Squeezeball” and no person involved in the teaching or coaching of rugby may teach or coach to encourage to use the “Squeezeball” technique.

Note: “Squeezeball” is a technique where the ball carrier goes to ground, head forward (touching or close to the ground), irrespective of immediate contact with opponents, usually keeping parallel to the touchline, holding and protecting the ball close to the chest and, when on the ground, pushing the ball back between the legs.

Additional Law Variations applicable to U15 only (which includes U14)

13. Teams

- a) Under 15 Rugby is played between teams of equal numbers of players, containing a maximum of thirteen players from each team on the pitch at any one time.
- b) If playing 13 a-side, six of the players on each team will be forwards and form the scrum, with the remaining players forming the back line.

14. Line-out

Lifting and supporting is prohibited at this age group, i.e. a player may not bind to a jumper until he has returned to the ground.

Sanction: Penalty Kick.

15. The scrum

- a) There is no ‘turnover’ law. If scrums are reset for wheeling beyond 45 degrees the throw-in is to the side in possession at the time it is wheeled beyond 45 degrees.
- b) The scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum must not move beyond the middle line of the scrum until the ball has emerged from the scrum or an opponent has lifted the ball from the ground. In the event of a strike against the head, the scrum-half who has thrown the ball into the scrum is similarly restricted in not following the ball.