

# AGE GRADE RUGBY SUMMER ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

APRIL 2023



England  
Rugby

# INTRODUCTION

After positive feedback from the game in 2021 and 2022, the RFU Summer Activity Framework permanently replaces the previous age grade out of season regulations in Regulation 15.8.

The Framework applies to any age grade rugby activity that a club, school, college or other organisation decides to run in the off-season. It is not compulsory to do summer rugby, it is theirs and the player's choice whether they do so. Some will opt for a full rest, some will dip in and out and some will want regular weekly activity.

This guide is designed to help enable all players to continue to engage with Rugby throughout the summer months, whilst ensuring they are in the best possible state of readiness for the new season from September.

Providing a balanced menu of training and playing that considers the conditions and other activities for young people throughout this period, will help players stay connected and engaged as well as help reduce the risk of injury during the season.

The menu outlines the playing and training opportunities to be provided from May to August. Each month gives a progression towards full contact rugby in September. The activity per month indicates the maximum you can do that month with the option to continue with May activity in June, May/June activity in July and May/June/July activity in August. This flex is especially important for coaches to consider as players will come and go through the summer months.

The Summer Framework extends the out-of-season activity that was available in the past, particularly for younger age groups, by including contact training progression, providing the opportunity to play some friendly fixtures and increasing the formats available. This is not to create an extended season, it is to help the re-engagement with rugby and safe progression towards full contact as outlined above.

## THE 4 BUILDING BLOCKS TO READINESS

Using insight from our Athletic Performance Department we have identified four key building blocks in preparing players for the start of the new season. The Activate Injury Prevention Programme should run throughout these building blocks.

### BLOCK 1



- General Fitness
- Fundamental Movements
- Multisport / General Skills

### BLOCK 3



- Contact Development
- Rugby Skill Development

### BLOCK 2



- Introduce contact
- Rugby Skills
- Sport Specific Movements

### BLOCK 4



- Game / Team Specific
- Position Specific



# FRAMEWORK

During this period it is important we don't try to cover everything at once. The model below demonstrates how you should look to build these blocks incrementally throughout to prepare Age Grade players effectively for the new season whilst following the training and playing menu.

**MAY/JUNE**

**BLOCKS 1 & 2**

**JULY**

**BLOCKS 2 & 3**

**AUGUST**

**BLOCKS 3 & 4**



# ACTIVATE

The activate injury prevention programme should run throughout all of the blocks and during the season. Activate helps players develop and improve four key areas.



## 1. GENERAL MOVEMENT CONTROL

Develops adaptability allowing for better 'physical' decisions and reaction around the contact areas.



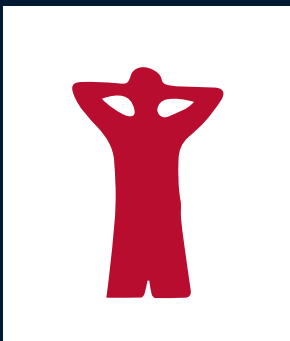
## 2. PRE-ACTIVATION

The progressive nature of the programme improves muscle activation and enables them to respond better to the demands of exercise.



## 3. FUNCTIONAL CONDITIONING

Overtime functional power and strength develops which increases flexibility and range of movement.



## 4. REDUCTION OF POTENTIAL "WHIPLASH" EFFECT

The progressive nature of the programme improves muscle activation and enables them to respond better to the demands of exercise.

**Developing these four key areas will all contribute to:**

- Improving player performance
- Prepare Players for the physical demands of the game
- Reduce the risk of injury including concussion
- Having more players available (due to less players being injured)



# AGE GRADE OVERVIEW (BOYS & GIRLS U7 - U18)

- This is not an extension to the current season. it is an opportunity to use the summer months to engage / re-engage players and prepare them the following season in best shape possible.
- All players will move up to their new age grade on 1st August.
- Age Grade players will move to prepare for their new rules of play from 1st August.
- Contact training and limited number of fixtures will be permitted May – August with time and format restrictions.



## AGE GRADE OUT-OF-SEASON SUMMER ACTIVITY GUIDE

APRIL 2023

		MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
TRAINING	FREQUENCY	1-2 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME FOR U12-18)	1-2 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME)	1-2 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME)	1-3 SESSIONS PER WEEK (INC GAME)
	INTENSITY	LOW	LOW - MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM - HIGH
	TYPE	GENERAL FITNESS AND SKILLS NON-CONTACT TRAINING FOR U13 & BELOW MAX 20 MINS CONTACT FOR U14-18 PER WEEK	GENERAL FITNESS AND SKILLS- MAX 20 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK	GENERAL FITNESS AND SKILLS MAX 30 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK	POSITION/GAME SPECIFIC SKILLS MAX 40 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK MAX 20 MINS CONTACT PER WEEK
	TIME	45 + 60 MINUTE + ACTIVATE	45 + 60 MINUTE + ACTIVATE	45 + 75 MINUTE + ACTIVATE	45 + 90 MINUTE + ACTIVATE
FIXTURES	TAG	U12 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U7 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U7 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U7 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS
	THE TOUCH UNION	U12 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U9 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U9 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS	U9 - U18 BOYS & GIRLS
	X RUGBY	U14-18 BOYS & GIRLS	U14-18 BOYS & GIRLS	U14-18 BOYS & GIRLS	U12 - 18 BOYS U12, 14, 16, 18 GIRLS BANDS
	GAME ON ADAPTED CONTACT FORMAT	X	X	X	U14 - 18 BOYS U14, 16, 18 GIRLS BANDS
	FIXTURES/FESTIVALS	1 X FIXTURE/FESTIVAL PER FORTNIGHT FOR U12-18 BOYS GIRLS PER FORTNIGHT	1 X FIXTURE/FESTIVAL PER FORTNIGHT	1 X FIXTURE/FESTIVAL PER FORTNIGHT	3 X FIXTURES/FESTIVALS
THE FRAMEWORK IS A MENU TO CHOOSE FROM, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PLAY/TRAIN IN THE OFF SEASON. FOR THOSE THAT CHOOSE TO, THIS SHOWS THE MAXIMUM ACTIVITY PERMITTED EACH MONTH. ALL MATCHES ARE FRIENDLIES DUE TO BEING OUT OF SEASON. PLEASE REMEMBER PLAYERS MOVE TO THEIR NEW AGE GROUPS/BANDS ON 1st AUGUST					

@AgeGradeRugby 
 @ERrugbycoach 
 @englandrugbycoach



# TACKLE HEIGHT CHANGES FROM 1ST JULY 2023

## - A GUIDE TO BUILDING CONFIDENCE

From the 1st of July 2023, the tackle height will be lowered across the age grade game to below the base of the sternum.

Any tackles above the base of the sternum, including tackles that start below the base and slide upwards, may be liable for sanction.

By Lowering the tackle height we are looking to reduce tackles that start or finish in the high risk areas where heads of the ball carrier and tackler are in the same airspace.

Under the new laws, both the ball carrier and the tackler have a responsibility to avoid head-to-head contact.

The ball carrier should avoid significantly lowering their body height or dipping down before making contact with an opponent in open play. This can be described as 'low and late'.

Any tackles above the base of the sternum may be liable for sanction

**BELOW THE BASE OF THE STERNUM**

**RESPECT**

We respect our match officials and accept their decision



**TARGET THE BELLY**

OR

**TARGET THE THIGHS**

From the 1st of July, a low and late dip from the ball carrier that puts heads of the ball carrier and tackler in the same airspace may be liable for sanction.

Players in the age grade game are mainly coached and make tackles in the safe and legal tackle areas. However as with all law changes players may require time to adapt around the tackler and ball carrier responsibilities.

Coaching this can be carried out in many different ways, and not always through full contact activities. Consider using the table below as a guide to designing your contact training in preparation for the start of the new season.



MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact focus on physical movement linked to decision making.</li> <li>• Shoulder contact and hold.</li> <li>• No full tackles to ground.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrestling and contact with floor activities.</li> <li>• Use of tackle shields and cylinders.</li> <li>• Small sided skill zones or 3v3/ 4v4 games using touch, bib tag, shoulder contact and freeze.</li> <li>• No full tackles to ground .</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrestling and contact with floor activities.</li> <li>• Small sided skill zones or 3v3/ 4v4 games in small areas to reduce impact intensity and maximum 1:30 – 2 minutes play time before a rest.</li> <li>• Use of tackle shields and cylinders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger sided games and defending in space.</li> <li>• Higher intensity, shorter time blocks.</li> </ul>

**RECOMMENDED TACKLING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE SUMMER**

# AGE GRADE OVERVIEW

Players wants and needs will be very different across the age grade game as they return to rugby and build towards the start of the new season. The summer activity guide supports and reflects both the challenges and opportunities available during this period.

## Considerations:

- Focus on building social connections with others
- Continue to develop players confidence
- Opportunity to develop players skills incrementally
- Be mindful of what activity they have done and are doing throughout the summer

	U7 - U8	U9 - U13	U14 - U18
SOCIAL	Social connections and communicating with others.	Social connections, communicating effectively with others and developing peer to peer support.	Social connections, communicating effectively with others, peer to peer support, peer to peer feedback and tactical problem solving.
PHYSICAL MOVEMENT	Developing fundamental movements linked to stability, object control and locomotion.	Introduction to the Activate injury prevention programme.	Using the Activate injury prevention programme.
CONTACT	-	Introduction and development of the tackle for both ball carrier and tackler.  Incremental introduction to ruck and maul.	Players transitioning to 15 a side rugby.  Reintroduction and development of the tackle for both ball carrier and tackler.
SET PIECE		Incremental introduction of the scrum	Development of position specific roles.
OTHER	Keep sessions varied and multisport to avoid players becoming disengaged.	Continue developing evasion and handling skills trying to avoid contact.	Developing tactical awareness around space.



# SESSION DESIGN

The session content will vary depending on the age and stage of your players, and the outcomes or phase of the season that you are in.

Players are likely to be at different stages and coaches should look to deliver appropriate activity for the stage of the player ensuring player welfare is the main priority.

Coaches should look to use the FITT principle to incorporate the building blocks of readiness for the month they are in.

## THE F.I.T.T PRINCIPLE

The F.I.T.T principle is a great tool to help you when planning sessions to ensure you are developing the players incrementally.

**FREQUENCY**

HOW OFTEN ARE YOU PUTTING  
ON SESSIONS

**INTENSITY**

MONITOR THE INTENSITY  
OF THE SESSION

**TYPE**

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITY ARE YOU  
INCLUDING IN YOUR SESSIONS?

**TIME**

HOW LONG ARE THE ACTIVITIES  
AND YOUR OVERALL SESSIONS





# F.I.T.T PRINCIPLE

Here are some key considerations when using F.I.T.T.

## FREQUENCY

- Be mindful of what activity players have been doing
- Factor in game time to overall activity per week
- What other activity do players have per week

## INTENSITY

- Progressive re-introduction to contact & game play
- Reduce intensity through game constraints
- Consider game formats

## TYPE

- Start general progressing to specific
- Use of skill practice progressing to game play
- Progressive introduction to position specific

## TIME

- Gradually increase ball in play within sessions
- Consider how many game involvements players have
- High intensity work in short blocks



# SESSION DESIGN

We can deliver the content of these blocks using a Game Zone – Skill Zone approach. We recommend all sessions should contain the following components:

PURPOSE	ACTIVITY	AIM	TIME
<b>SOCIAL CONNECTION / SKILLS</b>	Free play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows players to connect with team mates</li><li>• Practice a skill such as passing</li><li>• Peer to peer support and feedback</li><li>• Opportunity to explore</li></ul>	5 minutes
<b>WARM UP</b>	Pulse Raiser, Dynamic stretch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Raise heart rate</li><li>• Activate muscles and joints</li><li>• Mental preparation for the session</li></ul>	10- 15 minutes *Add additional time for Activate Injury Prevention Programme
<b>MAIN SESSION</b>	Game Zone – Skill Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify session purpose</li><li>• Use of Game Zone and Skill Zone</li><li>• Option to use Game Zone and Skill Zone simultaneous or individually</li></ul>	25 – 40 minutes
<b>COOL DOWN</b>	Bring heart rate down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce heart rate</li><li>• Opportunity for peer to peer reflections</li></ul>	5 minutes

\* Activate can be delivered within or in addition to the recommended session times.



# SESSION DESIGN

Below is an example session structure and session plan focussing on building blocks 1 and 2.

Using the Game Zone and Skill Zone model the session is able to meet the purpose around the building blocks for readiness and enables coaches to align to the FITT principle by monitoring intensity, activity type and time spent on activities and the sessions as a whole.

## Session Plan Example:

PART	WHY	HOW	WHAT
START	Social connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free play</li> </ul>	Ensure players are engaging in reconnection – Skill challenge and exploration <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
	Pulse raiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill Zone</li> </ul>	Noughts and crosses - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
	Activate exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activate injury prevention programme</li> </ul>	Activate Exercises - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
MIDDLE	General fitness / skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Game Zone</li> <li>Small sided for low intensity</li> <li>Use of different types of balls</li> <li>Start, stop , jump, land, catch and throw</li> </ul>	Small sided End ball - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
	General Skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill Zone</li> <li>Use of Different balls</li> </ul>	Ball Control - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
	Contact introduction Skill Zone OPTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill Zone</li> <li>Low intensity – technique focussed</li> <li>Regular focus on the basics of the tackle - both tackler and ball carrier</li> </ul>	Contact the floor - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a> 1 v 1 tackle / ball carry technique <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
	Rugby skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill Zone</li> <li>Run in conjunction with Game Zone below</li> </ul>	Beat the Defender - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
	Rugby skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Game Zone</li> <li>Rugby specific game, using handling skills from skill zone and fitness element.</li> </ul>	Ready4Rugby - <a href="#">CLICK HERE</a>
END	Social connection Cool down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Game Zone / Skill Zone</li> <li>Low intensity – slow jog / walk</li> <li>Stretch</li> </ul>	Passing challenge Rugby Netball



# TOP TIPS FOR SESSIONS

- Plan sessions in blocks of 3-4
- Have a clear purpose for the session
- Adjust the session using different balls
- Time activities
- Keep activity small sided
- Small space to manage intensity
- Keep all contact activity technique focussed
- Relate to previous session and prime for the next
- Regularly focus on the basics of the tackle - both tackler and ball carrier

# SUPPORTING INFORMATION

There are many RFU tools and support resources to help you run appropriate, fun and varied out-of-season activities. Please use the following links to access these.

- [Summer Activity and Return to Play](#)
- [Tackle Height Hub and Support Tools](#)
- [Age Grade Rugby and Girls Age Banding Changes](#)
- [Activate Injury Prevention Exercise Programme](#)
- [Coach Resources](#)
- [Keep Your Boots On Youtube Channel](#)
- [Kids First Rugby](#)
- [Age Grade Rugby Resources](#)





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