



RFU RugbySafe Refresher 2021/22 - Age Grade Game

- **Activate - RFU Injury Prevention Exercise Programme**
- **HEADCASE - concussion awareness and education programme**
- **First Aid**
- **Age Grade Summer Activity Guide**
- **Return to full contact guidance**
- **Safeguarding guidance**

Ahead of the new season, we are sharing a reminder of player welfare resources and training and education programmes.

Player welfare is at the heart of all training delivered to coaches, match officials and medics at all levels of the game in England.

While rugby is a contact sport, and risk is inherent in that, the care and focus on injury prevention and concussion education, recognition and management for players is the best that it has ever been.

It is important to remember the many physical and mental health benefits that rugby brings. As well as keeping people active and healthy, rugby provides enjoyment and a support network. It instils values of teamwork, respect, discipline and sportsmanship, and has been shown to increase confidence, self-esteem and build character.

Rugby for young people [at schools](#), colleges and clubs in England exists in many different formats. From full contact to adapted versions such as X-Rugby and non-contact such as Touch or Tag.

RFU RugbySafe programme

The RFU's overarching **RugbySafe** programme covers all player safety and wellbeing projects to support clubs, colleges, schools, universities and participants at all levels of the game.

A new RugbySafe Toolkit for the 2021/22 season will be available on the [RugbySafe homepage](#) in mid-August and will include specific guidance for schools and colleges.

A number of Essential Guides and Resources are also available [here](#)

Age Grade Rules

Age Grade rugby follows a progressive approach to introducing contact. Regulations are designed to increase safety for children, allowing players the time to learn rugby basics before contact is gradually introduced in small progressions. More information [here](#)

These changes to Age Grade rugby were fully implemented at the start of the 2016/2017 season following a four-year review. At the start of the 2017/2018 season, the RFU released [Age Grade Codes of Practice](#) to help those involved in the game to apply the regulations most effectively to put the player first.

Throughout 2020, the RFU has worked on adaptations of the rules and regulations of the game. These include agreed changes to the regulations for the 2020-21 season, the summer 2021 out-of-season period and the upcoming 2021-22 season. All these changes are centred on the safe re-



introduction of rugby to all age grade players after the progressions they have missed due to the pandemic.

In June 2021, the RFU announced a law change to implement reduced tackle height consistently across all age grade rugby to below the imagined line of the armpit. New research is also being undertaken in the community game with a waist height tackle law variation to be evaluated across 1,200 U16-18 games during 2021/22 season. More info [here](#)

Concussion awareness and education programmes

Launched in 2013, the RFU's [*Don't be a headcase concussion awareness & education programme*](#) covers all levels of the game from grassroots to elite, and was developed in consultation with leading experts in the field.

At the core of the campaign are two simple messages:

- **Four Rs (Recognise, Remove, Recover, Return)**
- **If in doubt, sit them out**

Player welfare must always come first. No risk should ever be taken. **Players must not go back on the pitch if they have had a head knock.**

Recognised as one of the UK's leading concussion awareness and education resources, the RFU's HEADCASE programme aims to increase understanding and provide information on concussion and other related topics, including how to prevent and manage suspected concussions.

HEADCASE offers online and hard copy resources to support clubs, colleges, schools, universities, players and parents. It is an integral part of our training and education for coaches, match officials and medics.

The **HEADCASE** online education module is open to all and is a pre-requisite to training courses. Participants must provide evidence they have completed the concussion module and passed the test. The module provides information on how to recognise signs and symptoms of a suspected concussion, as well as concussion management and Graduated Return To Play protocols.

In order for schools to enter our National Schools Competitions they must demonstrate they undertake a **HEADCASE** Concussion Education programme with teachers and players in their school.

The **HEADCASE** programme guidelines were adopted as the national concussion guidelines for the education sector in England published in 2015.

Rugby's approach to head injury assessments and concussion protocols has led to many other team sports adopting our guidance.

[**HEADCASE overview**](#)

[**HEADCASE Extended Guide**](#)

[**HEADCASE Graduated Return to Play for the adult and age grade game**](#)

We believe there is now a good awareness around concussion following increased education for coaches, players, teachers and parents on what must happen if a player receives a head injury.



However, we can always increase awareness further. Please help us achieve this by sharing information contained here as widely as possible.

Injury prevention and research

All Age Grade players are encouraged to follow **Activate - the RFU Injury Prevention Exercise Programme**, with coaching sessions planned and delivered around the **FITT principles (Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type)**

Activate is the RFU's primary prevention intervention for injuries and is available for rugby coaches and teachers across the country via a suite of online resources.

Exercises focus on three areas: General movement control, Pre-activation and Functional Conditioning. These aid activation of stabilising head and neck muscles reducing the potential whiplash effect that can cause concussion.

The RFU also conducts research and rugby is leading the way in terms of injury surveillance work. **In a three-year injury prevention and surveillance study on schoolboy injuries, published in May 2017**, involving 40 schools and nearly 2,500 players aged 14–18 years, researchers found that overall injuries fell by 72% when players completed **Activate** at least three times a week. Concussion injuries in the schoolboy study were reduced by 59%.

The **Youth Rugby Injury Surveillance Project (YRISP)** collects match exposure and match injuries from schools across England at the under-13, under-15 and under-18 age groups. The aim of the project is to better understand the risk, types and mechanisms of injuries in schoolboy rugby across different age groups.

How to get involved

Your club / school can register any number of teams from U13 to U18, both boys and girls. If you are interested in nominating any of your teams for the project or would like more information, please contact the research team via either: the online registration form [here](#) or by emailing rfu-youth@bath.ac.uk

First Aid Provision

RFU regulations state that all clubs and those involved in arranging any rugby activity must ensure that there is an appropriate level of immediate care and/or first aid cover and equipment provided for that rugby activity with these being determined by a risk assessment. There must be access to a telephone to ensure that the emergency services can be contacted immediately when needed and clear vehicular access for an ambulance or other emergency vehicle.

The RFU recommends that all clubs have at least one first-aider per team. To support this, the RFU runs its own first aid course for rugby clubs and schools, which is a nationally recognised qualification.

Below are some additional links and resources that may help clubs and organisers of rugby activities:

- [The Community Rugby Pitch-side First Aid and Immediate Care Provision Guidelines](#)
- There is also a [webinar to help](#)
- [Risk Assessment tool](#)

Visit Courses and Booking [here](#) for further information about training courses or resources.



Age Grade Summer Activity Guide

This Summer Activity Framework must be followed until 31 August and includes provision for friendly matches to be played under adapted contact 15s Law Variations from 7 August. See the [Summer Activity page](#) and Community Game Update (27 July 2021) for further information.

Returning to full contact including scrummaging guidance

As previously shared in Community Game Updates, guidance and webinars to support the return to scrums and mauls is available below.

Return to scrummaging should be introduced incrementally, with the initial emphasis on individual scrum specific conditioning and technique work.

When players are ready, they can move to 1 v 1 building to 5 v 5 before finally practising 8 v 8 in a controlled environment.

We recommend keeping the number of match intensity scrums to a minimum. Instead, the focus should be on individual and unit body position/posture and building time in players positions.

We have a **three stage Return to Scrummaging Guide** available for coaches:

1. **Crouch**
2. **Bind**
3. **Set**

As part of the ongoing support for getting players back to rugby safely, we have the following webinars that we hope match officials, coaches, players and club officials will find useful.

#SCRUMTOGETHER

Scrum Together – Episode 1

Scrum Together – Episode 2

Mauling - Players will also need to be reintroduced to mauling incrementally. The focus should be on individual body technique first before 'live' mauling is introduced.

Safeguarding

Ahead of pre-season training and the new season starting, clubs must have safeguarding procedures in place. More information is available [here](#).

[Click here](#) for the RFU Safeguarding Children policy.

If you have any questions, or if you need any safeguarding advice or support, please contact us by emailing safeguarding@rfu.com