



MATCH OFFICIAL TEAM

Match Official FAQ's

- **General Questions**

Q: What match official development opportunities are there?

Referee Society Training Officers are receiving a comprehensive acquaint, on the law variations and application.

A Q&A webinar has been delivered and is available On Demand - [Click to register & view](#)

For more information please visit [Keep Your Boots On website](#) and follow @RFURefs on social media for the latest updates.

Q: What online learning is available?

A Law variations eLearning module is available on ER.com - [Click to access](#)

Q: What match day guidance is available for referees?

A Match Day guidance infographic is available - [Click to access the infographic](#)

Q: How will referees go about managing their briefings and what should they say about the maul?

A pre-match template is available - [Click to access the pre-match brief](#)

Q: Will training course content change to reflect Stage E Law variations

We will be making resources available to coaches and referees. Please remember that the Principles of Play and core skills of the game (outside of Maul and Scrum) remain.

Q: How do adapted Law variations apply to the age grade game?

By accessing the two links below it will provide all the information you require.

<https://bit.ly/StageEU7-U13>

<https://bit.ly/StageEU14-U18>

Q: What are the rules on parents spectating in Tier 3? Are there are any safeguarding considerations?

Return to Play & Off Field Activity Guidance provides more detail on Traveling to participate in Rugby Activity, Hospitality, Changing Rooms & showers, Clubhouses and Spectators

[Click to access the guidance](#)

Q: Is there any guidance available for spectators?

Return to Play & Off Field Activity Guidance provides more detail on Traveling to participate in Rugby Activity, Hospitality, Changing Rooms & showers, Clubhouses and Spectators.

[Click to access the guidance](#)

Q: What do the COVID requirements mean for active Rugby Union match officials?

Match Officials are empowered to ensure COVID measures are in place on the field of play. This means adhering to and applying the revised law variations and sanctioning as prescribed. Match Officials can further support COVID measures through reinforcing the need for players to avoid on field team huddles/celebrations and remind players not to spit.

Q: How can CRefC's support club officials

CRefC's should ensure that latest guidance/updates are communicated to their membership. It would also benefit their officials if they pass on relevant development opportunities such as eLearning, On Demand webinars & local CPD courses.

CRefC's are encouraged to work with Club Coaching Coordinators to ensure coaches, spectators and players are familiar with the adapted law variations.

[Click to access our resources page](#)



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Q: What happens if we're struggling with Referee appointments due to restrictions on travel?

Be proactive and make early contact with your local Referee Society, liaise with your opposition to see if they have a qualified referee available.

Q: What happens if we are struggling to make Referee appointments?

Match Officials should be given the opportunity to return to rugby in their own timing. Due to safety concerns/following government guidance, it may be the case that it is impossible to fulfil all appointment requests. Where this is the case, referee societies should communicate with affected clubs ASAP so that the club/school can seek alternative provisions.

Q: Will referee exchanges be affected, should we deploy referees in geographical bubbles?

England Rugby strongly discourage referee societies from sending their referee's on exchange until government social distancing restrictions are eased. Match Officials should limit travel as much as possible.

Q: Will referees receive a post-match meal?

This will depend on the hospitality arrangements made by each individual club.

Q: Will referees have access to changing and showering facilities?

This will depend on the arrangement made by each individual club. We are encouraging all participants to arrive changed, and shower at home where possible.

Q: Are there any insurance implications if clubs do not adhere to RFU/government guidance?

It is solely the club's responsibility to manage and ensure it is compliant with Government and RFU requirements. In this regard, match officials have no role to play outside the field of play. However, during the match, officials should encourage players to observe social distancing requirement such as no huddles, overly close celebrations or spitting.

Q: What happens if a player is sent off?

Any player dismissed from the field of play/playing enclosure will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

- **Law Variation FAQ's**

Q: Will the referee escalate sanctions for knock on and forward passes?

No, knock-on and forward pass free kicks are just a 'restart' under the new amendments and therefore exempt from escalation.

Q: Will the referee be expected to escalate sanctions for repeat offences, in which the sanction would be a penalty kick within the new variations?

We would encourage Match Officials to use their management skills in this situation. If players are making mistakes, this is an opportunity to reinforce learning. We would only encourage escalating these sanctions should player safety become at increased risk due to purposely negligent players.

Q: Why can a tapped Free kick be taken by the ball carrier 5m out from either goal line?

This allows the attacking team the flexibility on attack and keeps defenders focused on the ball / ball carrier potentially creating space elsewhere on the field.

It allows the team playing away from its own try line to move the ball away, create go forward and progress their attacking options.

Q: If the player taps and runs what is the outcome?

At a free-kick, other than on either five-metre lines, once the kick has been taken legally, the kicker may not run with the ball. *Sanction: Free kick.*

At a Penalty Kick, there is no change to the law, which can be played immediately, and the kicker may run with the ball.



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Q: Can a player take a quick tap from a penalty and run it themselves?

Yes, this law remains unchanged. However, free kicks are subject to the new law variations.

Q: How long must a player wait until a free kick or penalty can be taken?

A Penalty must be taken without delay. Restart free kicks (i.e. knock ons and forward passes) will be controlled by the match official. These FK's are designed to re-start the game and therefore cannot be taken quickly.

However, for all other offences which carry a Free kick sanction (closing the gap at a line-out for example), these may be taken quickly.

Q: Can the ball be kicked straight out from a Free kick restart?

Normal Free kick laws apply.

Q: Consistency of: How does the ball need to be released on the tap for free kick or penalty?

The ball must be kicked a visible distance. If the kicker is holding it, it must clearly leave the hands. If it is on the ground, it must clearly leave the mark.

Q: Binding on players pre and post contact?

Players must not bind onto a team-mate who is in possession of the ball. *Sanction: Penalty kick.*

No other player may join these players in contact. *Sanction: Penalty kick against joining players.*

Q: Clarity: if the tackler cannot bring ball carrier to ground or cannot rip the ball, does the ball carrier have to go to ground or can they pass from standing when told to by the referee?

The ball carrier should look to play the ball as soon as they can either by going to ground or passing to a teammate. Referees are expected to encourage the ball carrier to use it.

When one or more players come into contact with an opposing ball carrier and do not bring that player to ground, those players may attempt to gain possession of the ball if done immediately, but thereafter must not prevent the ball carrier from playing the ball. *Sanction: Penalty kick to the team in possession of the ball.*

Q: Will upright tackles be penalised?

The Tackle height protocols will be applied and where players are held up, the law variations regarding the maul will be applied.

Q: What happens if a defender is trying to stop a ball carrier scoring and attempting to hold them up over the line?

If the award previously would have been a scrum this will now be a free kick to the attacking side on the 5-metre line.

- **Lineouts**

Q: Would the minimum number of players in a lineout still be required in a GAME On fixture?

Yes. Whether contested or non-contested a minimum of five players per side must be involved, this allows more space for non-participants.

Q: Clarity of expectations of what should be done at line out by players. Risk of 'accidental' maul and back player in the line to be offside.

The player winning the ball in the lineout must either pass the ball immediately, release it to a teammate or leave the lineout as soon as they land on the ground (A catcher can run through the line). *Sanction: Free kick.*

Q: Do we still need a defender in the 5m channel of the Lineout?

Yes, this part of the Lineout law remains the same.



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Q: Can I still compete for the ball in a lineout?

Yes, the laws around competition in the lineout are unchanged.

Q: Do we still need a scrum-half / receiver in the lineout?

If a team elects to have a receiver, the receiver stands between the 5 and 15 metre lines, two metres away from their teammates' side of the line out.

The player winning the ball in the lineout must either pass the ball immediately, release it to a teammate or leave the lineout as soon as they land on the ground. *Sanction: Free kick.*

Q: Why is a 5 - 7 man line out safer than 2 - 4 player lineout?

Two reasons. First, this will create more space elsewhere on the field; and second, it will encourage teams to field front row players who play an important role in the line-out.

- **Scrum**

Q: How will the free kicks be managed?

Restart free kicks (i.e. knock ons and forward passes) will be controlled by the match official. These Free kick's are designed to re-start the game and therefore are not to be taken quickly.

Q: Can players charge a free kick awarded for a knock on or forward pass?

Yes, however defenders must be back 10m and/or onside prior to moving forward.

Q: For an accidental offside a scrum is normally awarded, what happens now?

A free kick is awarded for an accidental offside.

- **Tackle**

Q: How many players are permitted to ruck the ball?

The Ruck Law remains unchanged. There is no limit on the number of players involved in a ruck.

- **Time**

Q: How often may we have water breaks?

Law 5.9 has been amended because of the anticipated higher than usual speed of the game under these variations, water breaks are unlimited. It is suggested that these be agreed during the referee's pre-match discussions with coaches and players.

We are committed to continually updating our advice, so please ensure you have the latest versions of our resources and FAQs