



England
Rugby

CREATING EARLY YEARS ACTIVITIES

A guide to engaging children
aged 18 months to 5 years.

CONTENTS

- **PAGE 3** Introduction
- **PAGE 6** Physical Development & Movement
- **PAGE 7** Personal, Emotional & Social Development
- **PAGE 8** Communication & Language
- **PAGE 10** Framework for Creating Activities
- **PAGE 12** Activity Examples
- **PAGE 17** Suggested Reading

INTRODUCTION

Our aim is to help outline how fun and appropriate activities can be created to best meet the needs of young children.

The Rugby Football Union recommend that provision should have a multi-sport and multi-movement focus, rather than solely focusing on movements and skills present within the game of rugby union. Research shows that specialising can have a negative impact on child development whilst a multi-sport and multi-movement approach is beneficial.

During Early Years, coaches should seek to promote each child's Physical development & Movement; Emotional, Social and Personal development; and Communication and Language development. These areas of development will underpin both Game Understanding and Skill Focus as the child progresses.



**Physical
development &
Movement**



**Emotional, Social
& Personal
development**



**Communication
& Language
development**



**Game
Understanding**



Skill Focus

When designing sessions for groups of children, coaches should consider the following key points.



GOOD PRACTICE

Sessions should be FUN and...

- be delivered in a safe, secure, enabling environment (indoors and outdoors)
- be active, enjoyable, engaging and accessible for all children
- be appropriate for the age and stage of each child, appreciating with the wide range of competencies that might exist within one small group
- involve a blend of child initiated 'free play' activities as well as adult initiated activities
- include opportunities for choice and decision making
- involve and engage parents and carers in the sessions, particularly with the youngest children
- use a variety of resources, but not be reliant on resources in all activities
- be multi-sport and multi-movement in approach with a link to the RFU's Core Values: Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline, Sportsmanship
- maximise time spent engaged in physical activity and minimise time spent sitting and queuing for activities
- consider grouping structure during sessions e.g. individuals, pairs, small groups.
- consider different type of games played e.g. invasion/territory, striking/fielding, target, net/wall.



FREE PLAY IS DESCRIBED BY PLAY ENGLAND AS:

... CHILDREN CHOOSING WHAT THEY WANT TO DO, HOW THEY WANT TO DO IT AND WHEN TO STOP AND TRY SOMETHING ELSE. FREE PLAY HAS NO EXTERNAL GOALS SET BY ADULTS AND HAS NO ADULT IMPOSED CURRICULUM. ALTHOUGH ADULTS USUALLY PROVIDE THE SPACE AND RESOURCES FOR FREE PLAY AND MIGHT BE INVOLVED, THE CHILD TAKES THE LEAD AND THE ADULTS RESPOND TO CUES FROM THE CHILD



Source: Play England

2.0

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT & MOVEMENT

When planning activities, coaches might consider the following aspects that contribute to a child's physical development.

2.1 MOVEMENT

- › Travelling and moving in different ways and at different speeds.
- › Changing directions and stopping safely.
- › Maintaining balance when still and when moving; on one leg and two legs, whilst twisting and turning.
- › Safely negotiating objects and other people.

2.2 HANDLING

- › Hand-eye co-ordination and object manipulation (picking up, dropping, placing, turning passing from hand to hand, passing to another person, throwing, catching; kicking).

2.3 KEEPING HEALTHY

- › Developing an understanding of importance of physical activity to being healthy.
- › Encouraging rest and rehydration.

Example

Developing a child's ability to travel and move in different ways, and different speeds (Physical Development and Movement) will help them to 'side step' within a game (Skill Focus).

3.0

PERSONAL, EMOTIONAL & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

When planning activities, coaches might consider the following aspects that contribute to a child's Personal, Emotional & Social development:

3.1 MAKING AND DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

- › Activities should offer opportunities for children to play co-operatively, taking turns with others.
- › Activities should allow children to take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity.
- › Children should be offered opportunities to show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.
- › Activities should allow children to develop clear boundaries and positive relationships that support deeper engagement and fun.

3.2 PROMOTING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-AWARENESS

- › Be aware of the differences in self-confidence and emotional development of each child. Consult with parents and carers and build sessions around their responses so that all abilities are catered for.
- › Children should be encouraged to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others.
- › They should be encouraged to gain confidence and to speak in a familiar group.
- › Children should feel comfortable and confident to ask for help or to say when they do not need help.

3.3 ALLOW CHILDREN TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP WAYS TO MANAGE THEIR FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOUR

- › Involve children, parents and carers, in developing good codes of conduct and encourage them to show these codes between themselves.
- › Children should be able to talk about how they feel and how their behaviour and others' behaviour effects their feelings.
- › Children should know that some behaviours are not acceptable.
- › Children should be encouraged to understand different situations and adapt their behaviour accordingly.

Example

Activities which require positive relationships between children (Personal, Emotional & Social development) will help them to understand the importance and role of team mates during a game (leading to Game Understanding).

4.0 COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

When planning activities, coaches might consider the following aspects that contribute to a child's Communication & Language development:

4.1 CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT USES DIVERSE COMMUNICATION

- › Children should be encouraged to talk with others.
- › Include signs, gestures, symbols, words, songs, and rhymes.
- › Use words and pictures that take into account interests, backgrounds and cultures.

4.2 ALLOW CHILDREN TO DEVELOP ATTENTION, LISTENING, AND UNDERSTANDING

- › Give children opportunities and encouragement to listen to, watch and imitate others, through joining in with rhymes, stories and games using sounds and words.
- › Think about your non-verbal communication – your facial expressions, body language and tone of voice to show children you are interested in what they say as well as helping them to keep their interest.
- › Use repetition; children need to hear words several times in different situations before they can understand and then use them.
- › Use questions to check that children understand
- › Be aware that children will show understanding in many ways including:
 - › by responding appropriately to what somebody has said
 - › following instructions
 - › responding to questions
 - › asking questions to check out meaning.
- › Match what you say to the object or the action that you're talking about.

4.3 ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO SPEAK AND EXPRESS THEIR OWN IDEAS

- › Give children time to answer questions or follow instructions.
- › Think about matching the language you use to the language level of the children.
- › Demonstrate rather than correct. If a child says something incorrectly, repeat what they've said, but in the correct way.

5.0

FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING ACTIVITIES

There are significant benefits to careful session design that considers the prime areas of learning.

When creating activities, think about the age/stage bands and make adaptations to the developmental stage of the children. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development.

When coaches create activities, we recommend using the framework below:

Name	A memorable and distinctive title for the activity.
Activity	A summary of the activity.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > What are the stage appropriate outcomes for the activity? > What Learning methods are you applying? > How will you help the child develop the prime areas of learning? [Communication & language; Physical development & movement; and, Personal, social & emotional development] > Key points that will deliver success.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > How to arrange the space including where the children need to be in the space. > How to do the task using clear step-by-step instructions. What to do to keep the activity fun and energetic. > What equipment is needed and where it needs to be placed. > The people involved in the activity. How to include parents and carers in the activity (if applicable). How to adapt the activity for smaller or larger groups. > How to adapt the activity for mixed abilities.
Regression & Progression	> How to make the activity easier or harder. (See example below using the S.T.E.P. model).
Safety & Guidance	> Specific things to be aware of relevant to the activity. E.g. floor covering, clothing, weather etc.

Example adaptations and variations during 'Cool Catcher'

	Easier...	Harder...
Space	Decrease the distance between thrower and catcher	Increase the distance between thrower and catcher
Task	Roll the ball to a wall and retrieve. Bounce the ball and catch.	Catch at different heights, to each side and one handed. Increase the speed of the pass.
Equipment	A larger softer ball, or a soft cushion may be easier to catch initially.	Use small and larger balls.
People	With another person throw and receive on the ground.	Make a catching game with another person

6.0 ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

The activities below are intended as example ideas to inspire coaches to develop suitable activities. They are not intended to be a training programme nor a list of activities to be copied.

CONE HEAD

Activity	Children collect flat cones of a named colour and take them back to their shape by balancing them on their head.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A fun warm up for the group. > Helps balance. > Develops knowledge of different colours.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Place different colour cones all over the playing area (sports hall, pitch) > Give each child a shape to act as their start and finish position > When the coach calls out a colour, the children need to pick up a cone of that colour (eg red) while dodging cones of different colours, put the correct colour cone on their head, and then balance it back to their shape.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Easier: use arms to help balance. > Harder: each child holds a (small size rugby) ball while they balance the cone on their head.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Make sure children do not stand or trip on the cones

JUNGLE

Activity	A fun and inclusive warm up.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Develops coordination, balance, creative imagination, and movement.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Children pretend they are flying to the jungle in an airplane (moving around with arms outstretched). > Ask them to mime getting binoculars to see (imaginary) animals. > Ask them individually what animal they can see and then to pretend to move like that animal. For example, if they 'see' a giraffe, ask them what giraffes are like, and ask them to stretch up tall like a giraffe and walk around on tip toes pretending to be a giraffe.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Easier: Coach demonstrates an animal that the children copy. > Harder: Children copy each other's animal.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ask children to avoid crashing their planes (bumping into each other)

BEAN GAME

Activity	Children demonstrate different actions according to the type of Bean named by the coach.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Develop locomotion skills - walking, jumping, running and change direction.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Children (and parents and carers) start by standing in a space (can be marked by cones). > In between each instruction children move about the space. > Coach introduces different types of beans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Jumping bean (individually or holding hand of parent/carer) two footed jumps > Runner bean - running on the spot > Baked bean - into a ball curled up on the floor.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Easier: moving slower / actions in isolation. > Harder: Higher knees. Moving faster. Changing directions. Dodging. Ask children to call out the different types of bean.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Watch the space so children and coaches don't run into each other.

ROLLER BALL

Activity	Children send (roll) and receive ball from partner.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop object control skills – sending, receiving and rolling
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Children start by sitting opposite a partner (parent/guardian or another child) who is a short distance away. › Children select a ball and experiment rolling the ball to their partner (left/right and two handed).
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Easier: moving closer together / using a larger ball. › Harder: move further away from partner, kneel or stand to roll the ball, increase the group size to include two pairs.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Watch the space so children avoid running over balls when collecting.

ROB THE NEST

Activity	Children collect objects and return to their nest.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develops stability – bending, stopping and pivoting as well as carrying and placing a ball.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Place one hoop in the middle with a number of balls in it. › Place other hoops around the outside [The number of hoops will depend on the number of children] › Each child runs from their hoop to the middle hoop to collect one ball and take it back to their hoop. › Once the balls have gone from the middle hoop, they have to ‘rob’ other people’s hoops. › When the whistle stops the child with most objects in their hoop wins. › Depending on the stage, less hoops can be used and children put in small groups (upto 4) Only one person from each hoop can go to get a ball. The next person can go when their have returned. › Only one ball at a time
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Easier: Fewer hoops so children know where to run to. › Harder: Increase the distance between the hoops so children have to run further and have less time to keep collecting. Use different objects that ‘score’ different points.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Encourage children to observe other pairs that are moving across the space avoiding collisions.

OBSTACLE COURSE

Activity	Complete an obstacle course.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop running, coordination and cooperation in a team.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Set out a course with stage appropriate obstacles and challenges. › At the end of the course the child has to score a ‘try’ by touching a hoop at the end. › Example: going through a tunnel + jumping through hoops + balance on an object + fast feet through a ladder + into and out of cones.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Complete the course while balancing a cone on your head. › Complete the course while walking backwards. › Add more equipment/obstacles › Add relay races
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Avoid standing on the equipment

UP & OVER

Activity	Flip all the cones over then put them back up using only your foot.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop team work, leg control, and balance › Understand behaviour – when to kick and not to kick. Putting things back the way you found them.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Each child has a shape spread around the space that is their start and end position. › Place tall spongy cones around the space. › Children give each cone a kick until all cones are over on their sides. › Children run back to their shape. › Children stand the cones up using only their foot. › Demonstrate to help them understand what they’ve got to do.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Easier: Walk between cones. › Harder: Run between cones
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Ensure adequate space

TAG

Activity	Children retrieve tag from partner.
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop movement skills (running, pivoting) and reaching and gripping.
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Children are paired with parent/guardian or another child. › One partner has a tag belt / bib placed in waist band. › Working within a defined space the partner must chase their partner to retrieve the tag. › Depending on stage, the tag is either returned and activity repeated or the retriever has the tag and they switch places.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Easier: make the space small. › Harder: increase the space, set a timer and count how many times the tagger can retrieve the tag from their partner e.g. in 1 – 2 minutes.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Encourage children to observe other pairs that are moving across the space avoiding collisions.

HOT POTATO

Activity	Passing a ball in a circle
Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develops catching, passing, hand-eye coordination
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Children stand in a circle around a hoop › They have to pop pass the ball around the circle. › Explain passing technique and how to catch. › When they hear the whistle blow the children with the ball have to run into the middle of the circle and score a try in the hoop and then return to their space in the circle.
Regression & Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Harder: Make the circle bigger. Ask children to speed up the passes. Once the ball has been passed, the child does a movement (eg touch toes, sit down/stand up, etc). Add in more balls.
Safety & Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Encourage children to only pass the ball when the person they are passing to is ready (looking at them, hands out)

7.0 SUGGESTED READING

EYFS framework (2017) which includes the prime areas of Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development, and Communication & Language.

Development Matters (2012) which takes each area and exemplifies what this broadly looks at in different ages and stages between 0-5 years old.

National Early Years Movement Framework, Youth Sport Trust (2017) which provides clear, age band specific guidance on how best to create active, healthy environments.

As part of the framework for Age Grade Rugby for ages 6-18, England Rugby have adopted the 5C's system for the development of personal and social skills in order to promote the positive development of the 'whole person'. More information can be found at: http://www.englandrugby.com/mm/Document/MyRugby/Education/01/30/51/15/RFUA6TeachingAndCoaching_English.pdf

Target Model

England Rugby Coaching: Using A.P.E.S. principle when coaching
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JF8iDf5nL18>

