

# RFU REGULATION 15 – AGE GRADE RUGBY

## 15.1 General

- 15.1.1 This Regulation 15 relates to youth rugby known as Age Grade rugby from the Under 6 (U6) to Under 18 (U18) age groups.
- 15.1.2 This Regulation 15 applies to both genders up to and including U11s, from which point there are specific regulations applicable to girls' rugby for the U12 to U18 age grades in relation to playing out of age grade and these are set out in Regulation 15.5 below. Regulation 15.5 overrides all others in relation to girls' rugby between U12 and U18.
- 15.1.3 This Regulation 15 relates to playing, training and all variations of rugby permitted within the relevant age grade.
- 15.1.4 This Regulation 15 is supported by the following documents:
- (a) Competition Menu, available and Competitive Playing Calendar, available at [www.englishrugby.com/my-rugby/players/agegrade-rugby/competition-menu-calendar/](http://www.englishrugby.com/my-rugby/players/agegrade-rugby/competition-menu-calendar/)
  - (b) Best Practice Guidance supported by a Code of Practice, available at [www.englishrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englishrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance)
  - (c) Safeguarding Policy, available at: [www.englishrugby.com/governance/safeguarding/](http://www.englishrugby.com/governance/safeguarding/)

## 15.2 Determining a player's Age Grade

- 15.2.1 A player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31st August at the beginning of each Season and that age grade applies for the whole Season. At England U17 and U18 elite level only the player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31st December of that Season.
- 15.2.2 Players must only play contact rugby with players of their own age grade unless in limited circumstances a player may be permitted to play outside their age grade as set out in these Regulations. An assessment should be carried out to assess whether a player may be permitted to play outside their age grade in accordance with these Regulations. Best practice as to how to carry out an assessment is set out in the Guidance available at [www.englishrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englishrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance).

## 15.3 Playing with other Age Grades

- 15.3.1 Players in the U6 age grade and below are not permitted to participate in any types of matches, competitions, tournaments or festivals in any age grade. A player is only permitted to participate in matches, competitions, tournaments or festivals from U7s and above.
- 15.3.2 The following regulations apply to U7s and U8s:

- (a) A player in the U7 age grade and above is permitted to participate in matches, competitions, tournaments or festivals in line with the Competition Menu.
  - (b) U7s and U8s are not permitted to play contact rugby or play in the U9s age grade in any circumstances.
  - (c) U7s and U8s can train and play together if deemed appropriate by the Club or School.
- 15.3.3 The following age grades are permitted to participate together in contact rugby training (which includes playing contact internal training matches):
- (a) U9s and U10s; and
  - (b) U10s and U11s; and
  - (c) U11s and U12s; and
  - (d) U12s and U13s.

*Note: This is not playing up an age grade; this is only to enable clubs/schools to occasionally allow these teams to train together and should not be used to enable players to play out of age grade with the incorrect age grade for any length of time.*

- 15.3.4 In respect of Schools and Clubs with an insufficient number of players, U10s can train and play with U9s, U11s can train and play with U10s, U12s can train and play with U11s, and U13s can train and play with U12s, subject to satisfying the following conditions:
- (a) the School or Club does not have a sufficient number of players to make up a team in the single age grade; and
  - (b) the School's County Schools Union or the Club's Constituent Body provides written approval (such approval to be valid for up to one season only); and
  - (c) no more than half the players on the pitch at any time can be from the older age grade; and
  - (d) the team plays to the rules of the younger age grade; and
  - (e) the provisions of Regulation 15.5 are applied in relation the U12 and U13s girls.
- 15.3.5 U12s to U15s can train and play up one age grade if recommended by the player's Club or School provided that:
- (a) in each case an appropriate assessment is carried out. Best practice on carrying out an appropriate assessment is set out in the Guidance [www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance); and

- (b) in respect of Club rugby, approval is obtained from an individual who has parental responsibility for the player; and
  - (c) in respect of Schools' rugby, approval is obtained from the School's Head Teacher.
- 15.3.6 U16s and U17s can train and play up one age grade (including in the front row of the scrum) or two age grades (but not including in the front row of contested scrums if an U16 player is playing 15 a-side rugby), if recommended by the player's Club or School provided that:
- (a) an appropriate assessment is carried out. Best practice on carrying out an appropriate assessment is set out in the Guidance [www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance); and
  - (b) in respect of Club rugby, approval is obtained from an individual who has parental responsibility for the player; and
  - (c) in respect of Schools' rugby, approval is obtained from the School's Head Teacher;
  - (d) the individual who has parental responsibility for the player or the School's Head Teacher (as applicable) is informed that it is possible that this dispensation may result in the player playing with and/or against one or more U19 players who are playing down in accordance with Regulation 15.4.3.
- 15.3.7 A male player can play adult contact and non-contact rugby, or train with other adults in contact and non-contact rugby, when they reach their seventeenth birthday provided:
- (a) they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults;
  - (b) the RFU's Playing Adult Rugby Form has been duly completed and signed; and
  - (c) the player does not train or play in the front row of the contested scrum. Once a player has reached the age of 18, the player may play in any position.
- 15.3.8 In respect of England Academy Players (as defined in RFU Regulation 1):
- (a) an U16 England Academy Player can play up two age grades in the front row of the scrum provided that in each case the prior written approval of the RFU Head of Regional Academies is obtained; and
  - (b) a 16 year old England Academy Player can play adult contact rugby, or train with other adults in contact rugby, if the written approval of the RFU Head of Regional Academies has been obtained; and
  - (c) a 17 year old England Academy Player can play adult rugby and train with adults (including in the front row of the scrum) if the written approval of the RFU Head of Regional Academies has been obtained. Such approval may be given for playing or training.

## 15.4 Restrictions on Playing Down

- 15.4.1 In respect of any matches, competitions, tournaments and festivals, the Club or School must inform match officials, organisers and the opposing team of all players playing down an age grade in a reasonable time prior to the fixture.
- 15.4.2 If a player is permitted to play down as set out in these Regulations, that permission is valid for up to one Season only and the player must remain in that lower age grade for the entire Season save that if appropriate the player is entitled to move back up into the original age grade provided the player does not play down in the lower age grade again during that Season.
- 15.4.3 U9s to U19s (inclusive) can only train and play down one age grade in exceptional circumstances (and subject to competition rules) if:
- (a) the player is in a younger academic year at School than the player's academic birth year; or
  - (b) the player's safety may be compromised due to their small stature in comparison to other players in the same age grade or due to a developmental or behavioural issue:

provided that in each case:

- (i) an assessment is carried out. Best practice as to how to carry out an assessment is set out in the Guidance available at [www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance); and
  - (ii) in respect of Club rugby, approval is obtained from an individual who has parental responsibility for the player (as well as the approval of the Club's Safeguarding Officer or Youth Chairman/Secretary); and
  - (iii) in respect of Schools' rugby, the approval of the player's Head Teacher is obtained; and
  - (iv) for U13s and below, the approval of the Club's Constituent Body is obtained or, in respect of Schools' rugby, the approval of the player's Head Teacher is obtained; and
  - (v) if approval is given, the Club or School must notify the opposing teams at least 24 hours in advance of the game although an opposition's objection may not prevent the player from playing.
- 15.4.4 U9s to U19s can only train and play down two or more age grades in exceptional circumstances and only with the written approval of the RFU Legal and Governance Director to whom application must be made. Any requests for approval must be accompanied by such documentary evidence and/or signed statements as may be necessary or requested by the RFU Legal and Governance Director.

## 15.5 Girls' Rugby

- 15.5.1 This Regulation 15.5 sets out the specific regulations applicable to U12 to U18 girls' rugby in relation to playing out of age grade. The remainder of Regulation 15 shall continue to apply in relation to girls rugby save to the extent that it is varied by Regulation 15.5.
- 15.5.2 The U13 girls' age band is permitted to include U12s and U13s girls. U12 girls and above are not permitted to play mixed contact rugby.
- 15.5.3 The U15 girls' age band is permitted to include U14s and U15s.
- 15.5.4 The U18 girls' age band is permitted to include U16s, U17s and U18s.
- 15.5.5 A female player can play adult contact and non-contact rugby, or train with other adults in contact and non-contact rugby, when they reach their seventeenth birthday provided:
- they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults;
  - the RFU's Playing Adult Rugby Form has been duly completed and signed; and
  - the player does not train or play in the front row of the contested scrum. Once a player has reached the age of 18, the player may play in any position.

## 15.6 Season

### 15.6.1 In Age Grade Rugby the Season shall be:

Season 2017-2018 will run from Saturday 2 September 2017 until Monday 7 May 2018

Season 2018-2019 will run from Saturday 1 September 2018 until Monday 6 May 2019

and for the purposes of this Regulation 15, the Season shall mean the Age Grade Season

- 15.6.2 The RFU has specifically developed best practice principles on out of season activity to ensure players have sufficient rest and recovery over the summer. In particular, children of primary school age are to be encouraged to participate in non-rugby activities that develop fundamental movement and core skills. The RFU expects those involved in age grade rugby to respect these principles in the interest of player welfare. These principles can be found at [www.englishrugby.com/codesofpractice](http://www.englishrugby.com/codesofpractice).

### U13s and below

- 15.6.3 In the 13s and below age grades, all rugby activity is permitted throughout the year (during the Season and outside of the Season) except the activity set out in Regulation 15.6.4.

15.6.4 The follow activity is **not** permitted:

- (i) U5s and U6s are **not** permitted to participate in: (a) contact training at any time of the year; (b) contact or non-contact matches and competitions at any time of the year; and (c) Outgoing Tours outside of the Season.
- (ii) U7s and U8s are **not** permitted to participate in: (a) contact training at any time of the year; (b) contact matches and competitions at any time of the year; (c) non-contact matches and competitions outside of the Season; and (d) Outgoing Tours outside of the Season.
- (iii) U9s to U11s are **not** permitted to participate in: (a) contact training outside of the Season; (b) contact matches and competitions outside of the Season; (c) non-contact matches and competitions outside of the Season; and (d) Outgoing Tours outside of the Season.
- (iv) U12s and U13s are **not** permitted to participate in: (a) contact training outside of the Season; (b) contact matches and competitions outside of the Season; and (c) Outgoing Tours outside of the Season.

#### **U14s and above**

15.6.5 In U14s to U18s age grades, all rugby activity is permitted throughout the year (during the Season and outside of the Season) except the activity set out in Regulation 15.6.6.

15.6.6 U14s to U18s are **not** permitted to participate in: (a) contact training outside of the Season; and (b) contact matches and competitions outside of the Season,

Save that

- i. at U14, U15 and U16, XRugby 7s matches and competitions (including preparation for those matches and competitions);
- ii. at U17 and U18, XRugby 7s or 7-a-side matches and competitions (including preparation for those matches and competitions);
- iii. if a competition match scheduled to be played within the Season is abandoned or postponed due to adverse weather conditions, such match may be replayed up to and including the last May Bank Holiday Monday, at all times in accordance with Regulation 15.9.4 which requires prior written approval;
- iv. in the last two weeks immediately prior to the start of the Season when pre-season training and training matches are permitted;
- v. it is part of an Academy or Centre of Excellence activity pre-approved by the RFU.

15.6.7 Outgoing Tours and preparations for such tours at U14 and above are exempt from this Regulation.

### 15.7 Non-contact Rugby

During the Season players of all ages and both sexes may train and play together in non-competitive, non-contact rugby provided that:

- (a) the organiser and/or coach has assessed the session and/or match to be safe for all players;
- (b) under no circumstances is any element of contact rugby permitted and the training session and/or match should be conducted in accordance with the best practice principles set out in the Guidance available at [www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance).

### 15.8 Rugby/Holiday Camps

Rugby/holiday camps are permitted for all age grades provided that:

- (a) the rugby/holiday camp and its activity programme are run in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Guidance available at [www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance);
- (b) the Constituent Body in which the rugby/holiday camp is located is notified of the proposed rugby/holiday camp in advance;
- (c) any proposed activity is approved in writing by the Constituent Body; and
- (d) Regulation 15 is complied with in full.

### 15.9 Competition Menu and Competitive Playing Calendar

#### Competitive Activity

15.9.1 Anyone who organises any competitive activity for male and female players at U18 and below must ensure that such activity is run in accordance with the:

- (a) Competition Menu and the competition format of the specific age grade; and
- (b) Competitive Playing Calendar

which are available here [www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/players/age-grade-rugby/competition-menu-calendar/](http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/players/age-grade-rugby/competition-menu-calendar/)

#### In Season Approvals

15.9.2 Club, school and college-organised competitive activity may be played at any time during the Season and must have the written approval of the Club's Constituent Body, School's CSU or College's Union (ECRFU).

- 15.9.3 Organisers of competitive activity at county level, representative level or above (including domestic Union level where appropriate) must provide the competition programme to the RFU for written approval by 1 July in respect of the competition programme for the subsequent season.

### **Out of Season Approvals**

- 15.9.4 Competitive activity may only be played outside of the Season provided:
- (a) the activity falls within the definition of Out of Season Activity; and
  - (b) in respect of Club, School or College activity, written approval of the Club's Constituent Body, School's CSU, or College's Union (as applicable) has been obtained; or
  - (c) in respect of county level, representative level or above, written approval of the RFU has been obtained.

### **National Festivals**

- 15.9.5 National Schools' Festivals may only take place provided the written approval of ERSFU (and the hosting County Schools Union is notified) is obtained. Applications must be made in good time and by no later than three months prior to the date of the proposed National Schools' Festival.
- 15.9.6 National Clubs' Festivals may only take place provided the written approval of the hosting Constituent Body is obtained. Applications must be made in good time and by no later than three months prior to the date of the proposed National Clubs' Festival.

*Note: For the purposes of Regulations 15.9.5 and 15.9.6 above a Festival is considered to be "National" if participating Clubs or Schools are drawn from more than just neighbouring Constituent Bodies and there are more than six entrants.*

### **15.10 Tours**

Age Grade rugby tours are subject to the requirements set out in Regulation 10 and should be conducted in accordance with the best practice outlined in the RFU Tour Policy available on [www.englandrugby.com/governance/gamesupport/rugby-tours](http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/gamesupport/rugby-tours).

### **15.11 Rules of Play**

- 15.11.1 Players and Match Officials must comply with the World Rugby Laws of the Games, subject to any permitted Law Variations set out in Appendices of Regulation 15 and such other Law trials and variations as the RFU may adopt.
- 15.11.2 Rules of Play for non-contact rugby matches are available on [www.laws.worldrugby.org/](http://www.laws.worldrugby.org/)

## 15.12 Pitch and Ball Size

- 15.12.1 The maximum pitch and ball sizes in respect of each age grade are set out in the Rules of Play for that age grade.
- 15.12.2 Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable if agreed between the referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches are risk assessed.
- 15.12.3 Adjacent pitches should to the extent possible be no closer than 5 metres.

## 15.13 Clothing

- 15.13.1 Players' studs and clothing during training and matches must comply with World Rugby Regulatory requirements (including World Rugby Law 4 and World Rugby Regulation 12) which are available on [www.worldrugby.org](http://www.worldrugby.org).
- 15.13.2 Age grade players are permitted to wear base layers provided they comply with the World Rugby Regulatory requirements which are available on [www.worldrugby.org/](http://www.worldrugby.org/)
- 15.13.3 Players of all age grades are permitted to wear spectacles, glasses or specifically designed sports goggles in all forms of non-contact rugby. Players are not permitted to wear spectacles, glasses or specifically designed sports goggles in any form of contact rugby.

*Note: For information about the RFU goggles trial, please see RFU Goggles Trial Update at [www.englandrugby.com/governance/regulations/](http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/regulations/)*

## 15.14 Duration of Matches, Coaching and Training Sessions

- 15.14.1 All players, match officials, schools and Clubs must ensure that no player plays more than 35 matches per Season and in respect of all matches and festivals, plays no more than the maximum playing times set out in the table below:

| Age Grade | Maximum minutes each half | Maximum minutes per day |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| U7/U8     | 10                        | 50                      |
| U9/U10    | 15                        | 60                      |
| U11/U12   | 20                        | 70                      |
| U13/U14   | 25                        | 80                      |
| U15       | 30                        | 90                      |
| U16+      | 35                        | 90                      |

Further guidance as playing times and durations for single fixtures, festivals, tournaments and coaching and training sessions are set out in the Guidance available at [www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.englandrugby.com/Regulation15Guidance).

- 15.14.2 No extra time is permitted in any match except that added for injury time.
- 15.14.3 Matches must be brought to an end if:
- (a) at Under 7s to Under 12s the try difference rises to more than six; or

- (b) at Under 13s to Under 18s the points difference is more than 50 points unless both teams are in agreement to continue.

### **15.15 Player Eligibility and Player Registration**

- 15.15.1 Each Club must ensure all its Age Grade players are registered as a youth players by completing the RFU Youth Player Registration Form and are registered on the RFU's data system within 45 days of their first joining the Club.
- 15.15.2 Constituent Bodies and/or event organisers may require Registration cards and copies of any special dispensations issued to be taken to each Club match or festival. Team managers must produce these documents for inspection by the opposition or Match Officials if requested.
- 15.15.3 Subject to competition regulations, a player may qualify to represent an Age Grade representative team in a Constituent Body for that season if the player meets one of the following criteria:
  - (a) he/she attends a School affiliated to that Constituent Body;
  - (b) he/she resides in that Constituent Body for any part of that season;
  - (c) he/she was born in that Constituent Body;
  - (d) he/she is a registered playing member of a Club affiliated to that Constituent Body;
  - (e) he/she played for that Constituent Body in a representative fixture the previous season.
- 15.15.4 Membership of a Constituent Body's Developing Player Programme (DPP)/ Elite Player Development Group (EPDG) or an Academy does not entitle a Player to play for that Constituent Body if the Player does not satisfy one of the previous criteria.
- 15.15.5 Where a Player has not been selected for a Constituent Body the Divisional Chairman of Selectors may allow the Player to play for another Constituent Body for which the Player is not qualified if it is in the interests of the Player's development.

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### **15.16 Discipline**

Disciplinary matters relating to Age Grade rugby shall follow the procedures set out in Appendix 6 of RFU Regulation 19.

### **15.17 Competition Regulations**

There are specific competition regulations relating to the following Age Grade competitions and these regulations are available upon request from the RFU Rugby Events & Competitions Department:

- (a) U15s and U18s Schools Cup

- (b) AASE League
- (c) National U18s Cup
- (d) U18 Academy
- (e) Schools Champions Trophy
- (f) National U15 Girls Cup
- (g) National U18 Girls Cup
- (h) National Girls 7s U18 and U15