

Rugby “Cheat Sheet”

Rugby is a fun, fast-paced game that anyone can enjoy. Here is a brief overview to help explain this complex yet simple game.

Object: The object of the game is to carry the ball over the opponents’ goal line and touch the ball down to the ground to score a try.

Scoring: There are four ways to score points in a rugby game.

- Try – Grounding the ball on or over an opponents’ goal line is worth 5 points.
- Conversion – A successful kick at goal after scoring a try is worth 2 points.
- Penalty – A successful kick at goal after a penalty is worth 3 points.
- Drop Goal – A drop kick over the goal during open play is worth 3 points.



Number of Players:

Standard rugby consists of 15 players on each side, with substitutions limited to 7 additional players. Generally, once a player leaves the game he may not return.

Duration: Standard 15-a-side rugby consists of 40-minute halves and a 10-minute half-time (35-minute halves for high school).

Field & Equipment: Rugby is played on a field approximately 100 meters in length (excluding two try zones) by 70 meters wide. Players wear a pair of boots (cleats) and a mouth guard. Helmets and hard padding are not allowed, but some players opt to wear soft-padded head gear.



Touching down to score a try!



Brief History: According to legend, rugby was born in 1823 when William Webb Ellis, a student at Rugby School in England, was playing soccer and picked up the ball and ran with it down the field. Today rugby is played in over 100 countries around the world. The Rugby World Cup is held every four years, most recently in Fall 2011 in New Zealand. (And it was broadcast on NBC!)

Running & Passing: In order to move the ball forward in rugby, players may run or kick the ball. The ball may be passed only laterally or backwards. No forward passes allowed. A forward pass is an infringement and may result in a scrum awarded to the other team. Likewise, if a player accidentally drops or knocks the ball forward to the ground—known as a “knock-on”—a scrum may be awarded to the other team.

Kicking: The rugby ball may be kicked at any time during a game. Generally, a kicker’s teammates must be behind the ball when it is kicked.

Did You Know?

The USA is the reigning Olympic rugby champion, having won gold in the 1920 and 1924 Olympic Games. Rugby was discontinued after 1924, but is now reinstated—with 7-a-side rugby—for the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.



Tackling: Rugby is a continuous, full contact sport. When a tackle is made, play continues. A tackle occurs when the ball-carrier is taken to the ground by an opponent. Once a player makes a tackle, she must roll away or get to her feet before playing the ball. Once tackled, a ball-carrier must release the ball.



Ruck: When a ball-carrier is tackled to the ground, a ruck may form when one or more players from each team close in around the ball to contest possession.

Maul: A maul forms when the ball-carrier is held up by a member of the opposition as well as a member of his own team.



Scrum: A scrum is used to restart play after a minor infringement (e.g., knock-on). A scrum consists of 8 of a team's 15 players, who bind who bind together to face 8 players of the opposition. The ball is thrown into the middle of the scrum, and the players work with their feet to hook the ball to the back of the scrum, making it available again for open play.



Lineout: When the ball goes out of bounds, play is restarted with a lineout. Two lines are formed by the opposing teams. The ball is thrown between the lines, and teams may lift players to contest for the ball.



Offside: The offside law restricts where players may be on the field, to ensure there is space to attack and defend. In general, a player is offside if that player is ahead of a teammate carrying the ball or who last played the ball. Being in an offside position is not, in itself, an offense. But an offside player may not take part in the game until onside again, at risk of being penalized.

Advantage: The advantage law allows the game to be more continuous. If an infringement occurs where stoppage in play would deprive the non-offending team of opportunity to advance the ball, the referee may "play advantage" and allow the non-offending team to play on. If no advantage occurs, the referee may go back and award the penalty, scrum, etc. for the original infringement.

For More Rugby Info

Check out the "What Is Rugby?" section of the SYC Rugby site at www.sycva.com/rugby/.

Why Did the Whistle Blow? Common reasons...

Forward pass or knock-on -- If a pass has gone forwards, or a handling error has resulted in a knock-on, the referee may award a scrum to the non-offending team.

Joining a ruck or maul from the side -- When joining a ruck or maul, players must join from behind the last player on their side. Joining from the side may result in award of a penalty to the other team.

Failure to roll away -- Players on the ground when a ruck is formed must immediately roll away from the ball, which allows for continuity of play. Failure to roll away may result in award of a penalty to the other team.

Why Did the Whistle Blow? Continued...

Failure to release player or ball -- After a tackle, the tackler must immediately release the ball-carrier, and the ball-carrier must release the ball. Failure to release limits fair contest for possession, and may result in award of a penalty to the non-offending team.

Advantage being played -- After an infringement, the referee may play advantage to the benefit of the non-offending team. If no advantage occurs, the referee may go back and award the penalty or scrum for the original infringement.