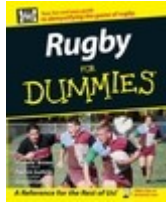




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Understanding Rugby's Scoring System  
*Adapted From:* [Rugby For Dummies](#)

Football developed from rugby, so if you understand touchdowns, extra points, and field goals, getting a handle on rugby's scoring system is a breeze. How points are accumulated in rugby has evolved over the last hundred years, with the addition of awarding points for tries and conversions. Long ago, scoring a try didn't result in points — it just earned the right to attempt a kick at goal. The modern system encourages teams to score tries over simply kicking penalties.

There are five ways to tally points in rugby. The ease of difficulty or achieving each of them plays a crucial role in strategic decision-making by players and coaches. Once you understand what the five ways are, your enjoyment of the game really takes off, as you come to appreciate what's at stake on the field.

### Scoring a try

Scoring a try is the quickest way to amass the most points in rugby. A try is the highest number of points a rugby team can score at one time, similar to scoring a touchdown in football. In fact, rugby is where the term "touchdown" came from, because the ball must actually be touched down for a try to be awarded. A try is scored when the ball is grounded by an offensive player in the in-goal area or on the tryline itself.

To signal a try, the referee raises an arm and blows the whistle at the spot where the ball came into contact with the turf. The exact place is important because it determines where the conversion kick can be taken from.

A try is worth five points.

### Awarding a penalty try

The awarding of a penalty is one of the most contentious and misunderstood aspects of rugby, usually because of when and why it occurs. A penalty try must be awarded if the referee believes the defending team committed a penalty that prevented the attacking team from scoring a try that would otherwise have been scored. This gives the referee plenty of latitude to negate dirty play or acts of cheating by awarding points to override what happened on the field. This unique license to rectify the impact of unsportsmanlike conduct is in keeping with the gentlemanly ethos of rugby.

When a penalty try is awarded, the referee runs beneath the crossbar in the center of the goalposts, raises an arm, and blows the whistle.

Just like a normal try, the attacking team receives five points, but gets to attempt the conversion as if the try had been scored under the posts.

### Converting a try

Once a try or penalty is awarded, the attacking team has the chance to add a further two points to the scoreboard by kicking a conversion. The referee marks the place where the try was scored and then the goal kicker can tee up the ball anywhere along a line parallel to the touchline, out from where the ball was grounded. In other words, if the try was scored 5 meters from the sideline, then the conversion must be taken 5 meters from the sideline.



Usually the goal kicker takes the ball back as far as he needs to get a better angle in order to improve his chances of making the kick.

Another reason for taking the kick far back is that on a conversion, the opposition may charge the kicker and block his attempt. The defending team must stand on or behind the goal line until the kicker begins to approach the ball — then they are allowed to rush the kicker.

The goal kicker places the ball on either a specially constructed kicking tee or on a mound of hand-sculpted sand. A kicking tee is a small plastic device that's placed on the ground and holds the rugby ball upright. Making a sand castle is the old-fashioned way but, unfortunately for silica aficionados, it's rarely seen anymore.

Goal kickers have their own unique routines for kicking goals, including how many steps they take, where they aim, and how they position the rest of their body. This used to be a long and drawn-out process that interrupted the flow of the game and wasted time. To speed up the play, the International Rugby Board recently imposed a one-minute time limit for conversions and penalties, which begins when the kicker receives the tee from the sidelines. Gone are the days when a game consisted of a never-ending series of interminable stoppages for penalties and conversions, punctuated by short bursts of actual play.

If the conversion kick flies through the uprights, the touch judges raise their flags and the referee blows the whistle.

Conversion kicks are worth two points. Thus, a "converted" try is worth seven points in total: five for the try plus two for the conversion. If the goal kicker misses, the team gets only the five points for the try.

### **Kicking penalty goals**

If the referee determines that a team has broken one of the laws of the game, a penalty can be awarded to the other side. The non-offending team can choose among several options of how best to utilize the resulting possession. One of those choices is to kick a penalty goal.

The referee signals a penalty by blowing the whistle and raising an arm in the direction of the team to whom the penalty has been awarded. Next, that team's captain has to make a decision. If the captain chooses to kick a goal, the kicker places the ball on the spot where the penalty occurred, or anywhere on a direct line behind it, just like a conversion. Unlike a conversion, the defending team is not allowed to rush the kicker at any time while a penalty kick is being attempted.

A successful penalty kick is worth three points.

### **Drop-kicking goals**

A dropped goal (also called a "drop goal" or "drop kick") is different than a conversion or penalty kick because it takes place while the ball is in play. A drop goal involves a player dropping the ball and trying to kick for the poles just after it hits the ground.

Slotting a drop goal is a clever maneuver that most teams don't utilize. Drop kicks are rare because they require perfect timing and lots of practice to properly execute.

If the ball passes between the goalposts and above the crossbar, the team earns three points.