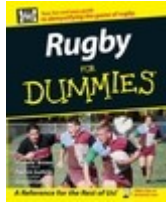




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Figuring Out the Rugby Field

Adapted From: [Rugby For Dummies](#)

Rugby is played on a grass field, although sand, clay, and dirt surfaces are permitted, provided they are not dangerous. A permanently hard surface, such as asphalt or cement, is prohibited. The place where rugby is played is variously referred to as the *field of play*, *the playing field*, *the rugby field*, and *the pitch*, but they all refer to the same place.

Dimensions of the playing area

Rugby is contested on the playing area. The playing area is composed of the field of play and two in-goal areas. This is where the players do battle.

- **The field of play:** The area where the bulk of the action takes place is referred to as the field of play. It measures no more than 100 meters long by no more than 70 meters wide (109.4 yards long by 76.5 yards wide). The field of play does not include the touchlines or the in-goal areas at either end of the ground.
- **The in-goal areas:** At each end of the playing area are the in-goal areas, which must be between 10 and 22 meters long and 70 meters wide (10.9 to 24.1 yards long by 76.5 yards wide). The in-goal areas include the goal lines, but not the touch-in-goal or dead ball lines.
- **The playing area:** This includes both the field of play and the two in-goal areas. The touchlines, touch-in-goal lines, and dead-ball lines are not part of the playing area.

What do all these lines mean?

Most newcomers to rugby find the field markings an indecipherable mystery of seemingly random chalk marks. The rugby pitch has numerous lines marked on it, which can seem confusing, but once you know what they all mean and comprehend their strategic importance, your overall understanding of the game will be significantly enhanced. Keep reading and you'll learn in five minutes what it takes some players five years to figure out. Here's a rundown of the lines and what each one means:

- **Halfway line:** The halfway line is a solid line that marks the center of the field, and is where the game starts. Play is also restarted at the halfway line after successful tries, drop goals, or penalty goals. One of the objectives in rugby is to spend as much time as possible in the opponent's half of the field.
- **10-meter line:** There are two broken 10-meter lines that are placed 10 meters on either side of the halfway line. When a team kicks off, the ball must reach this line for the kick to be legal.
- **22-meter line:** There are two solid 22-meter lines, which are located 22 meters out from each goal line. Drop-outs, a specific kind of restart, are taken from behind the 22-meter line. The 22-meter line is also crucial in positional play.
- **Goal line:** The goal line, also called the *tryline*, is a solid line that delineates the beginning of the in-goal areas. There are two goal lines, one at either end of the field of play, which players must reach to successfully score a try.



- **Dead-ball line:** The line beyond the in-goal area at each end of the pitch is called the dead-ball line. Once the ball touches, or goes over this line, the ball is considered "dead," or out of play.
- **Touchline:** The two solid lines that run from goal line to goal line are called the touchlines. These are just like the sidelines in football. They are called touchlines because when the ball contacts the line or the ground beyond them, it is considered to be in touch, which means out of bounds.
- **Touch in-goal line:** The touch-in-goal line is the continuation of the touchline between the goal line and the dead ball line. For newcomers to the game, grasping the meaning of the principal lines described above allows you to follow the flow of play.
- **5-meter line:** The 5-meter line is a broken line that runs from one tryline to the other, parallel to the touchlines. It marks the front of the line-out and the minimum distance a line-out throw must travel.
- **Dash lines:** Dash lines are 1 meter in length and provide points for both referees and players. There are three different types of dash lines:
 - **15-meter dash line:** There are seven dash lines that are located 15 meters in and parallel to both touchlines. The dash lines intersect the goal lines, the 22-meter lines, the 10-meter lines, and the halfway line. They define the back of the line-out, and also where scrums and penalties are taken after line-out infringements.
 - **5-meter dash line:** There are six 5-meter dash lines positioned 5 meters in front of and parallel to each tryline. They are placed in from each touchline at 5 and 15 meters, and one in front of each goalpost. The dashes mark the minimum distance from the defending team's tryline where a scrum or line-out can be set, or where a penalty can be taken.
 - **Halfway dash line:** This is a half-meter-long dash that intersects the halfway line at midfield. This is the spot where kickoffs and restarts are supposed to originate — even though most kickers will cheat a meter or two sideways in either direction.

Explaining the goalposts and flags

Old-time football fans will immediately recognize the H-shaped structures at either end of the pitch. Of course, these are the goalposts that are situated at each end of the field of play, directly on the tryline. They must be 5.6 meters (6.12 yards) apart with a crossbar that measures 3 meters (3.28 yards) above the ground. The minimum height of the goalposts is 3.4 meters (3.71 yards) above the crossbar. As a safety precaution, the goalposts are usually covered with padding to prevent injury if players crash into them. The goalpost pads also provide great advertising opportunities from sponsors.

There are 14 flags on the rugby pitch. Four of the flags mark the intersections of the dead-ball and touch-in-goal lines. These flags rarely come into play, as they mark the extreme corners of the field.

Another four flags mark the three-way intersection of the goal lines, touchlines, and touch-in-goal lines. These flags are not part of the in-goal areas, so if you make contact with any of them during play, you are out of bounds. Although it might seem self-evident, the game of rugby is meant to be played within the boundaries, with limited exceptions.

The remaining six flags are also outside the playing area, positioned 2 meters beyond the touchline, at the 22-meter and halfway lines.