

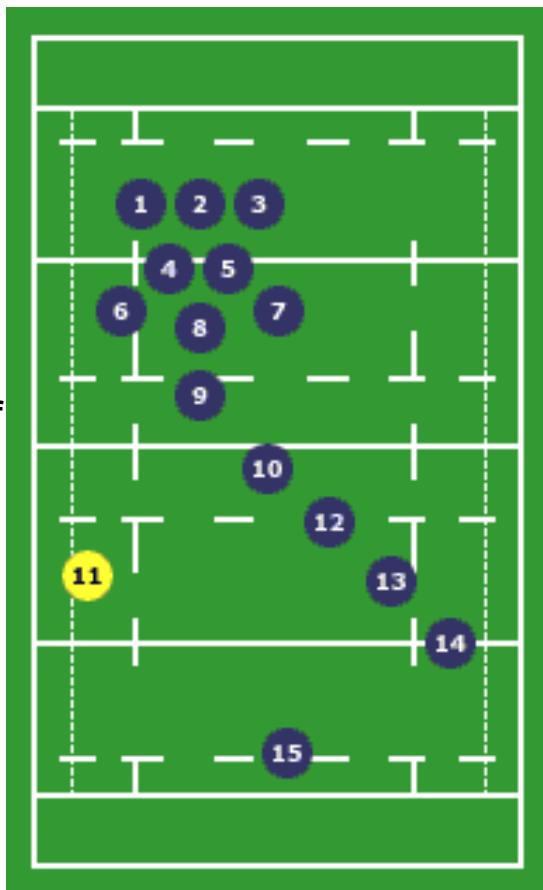
RUGBY: A Beginner's Guide

DURATION: A game of rugby consists of two halves of 40 minutes with injury time added on at the end of each half. This is not as long as you might expect because trainers are often allowed onto the pitch while play continues.

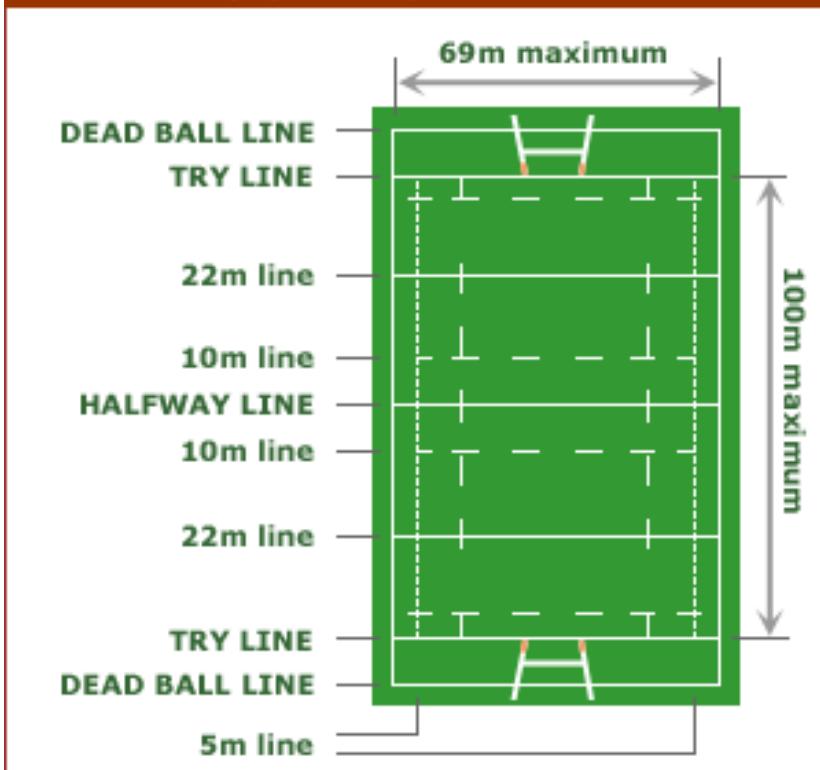
PLAYERS: Each side consists of 15 players, divided into eight forwards and seven backs. A total of seven substitutes are allowed for international matches. (There are also seven and 10-man versions of rugby union, played almost exclusively at tournaments.)

POSITIONS:

- 1 Prop, Loose Head
- 2 Hooker
- 3 Prop, Tight Head
- 4 Second Row/ Lock
- 5 Second Row/ Lock
- 6 Flanker
- 7 Flanker
- 8 Eight Man
- 9 Scrum Half/ Dummy Half
- 10 Fly Half
- 11 Wing
- 12 Inside Center
- 13 Outside Center
- 14 Wing
- 15 Fullback



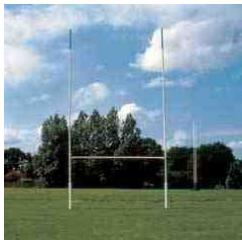
Standard Rugby Union pitch



SCORING



TRY: A try is worth five points. It is scored when a player places the ball on the ground with downward pressure in the in-goal area between the try line and dead ball line of the opposition's half. Tries can be scored in a number of ways, other than running over the try line and putting the ball down. They include the pushover try, scored by driving the opposition's scrum back over its own line; the momentum try, where a player slides into the in-goal area; and the penalty try, awarded when a team illegally obstructs the opposition to prevent a certain try from being scored. There is no such thing as an "own try". If you touch the ball down in your own in-goal area, it results in a kick or a scrum.



CONVERSION: If a team scores a try, they have an opportunity to "convert" it for two further points by kicking the ball between the posts and above the crossbar - that is, through the goal. The kick is taken from a point level with where the try was scored.

DROP GOAL: A drop goal for three points is scored when a player kicks the ball from hand through the opposition's goal. But the ball must touch the ground between being dropped and kicked.



PENALTY KICK: If a side commits a serious offence, a penalty is awarded and the opposition can take the option of a place kick at goal from where the infringement occurred. If successful, it is worth three points.

MOVING THE BALL

PASSING: All passes in rugby must travel backwards. There are different varieties of pass, including the flat, direct spin pass; the short, close-quarters pop pass; and the floated pass - a long pass which an advancing player can run onto at pace.

KICKING: Kicking forms a major part of rugby and is used to start and restart the game, score points, win territory, launch an attack or get a team out of trouble (known as a clearance kick). If the ball is kicked directly into touch by a player from behind his own 22m line, the resulting lineout is taken where the ball crossed the touchline. But if he is outside his 22, the lineout is taken level with the place from where the ball was kicked (except in the case of penalties).

Players must be behind the kicker for all set-piece kicks, such as kick-offs. But if a kick is made in loose play, then players can be in front of the kicker, although they must not advance towards the ball until the kicker has put them onside by moving in front of them. Players use a wide range of kicks, such as the high, hanging up-and-under; the drop-kick, the end-over-end grubber kick; a wipers kick across the field, or the speculative chip-and-chase.



TACKLING: Only a player in possession of the ball can be tackled. American football-style blocking is not allowed. A tackled player must release the ball after he hits the ground. Neither he nor the tackler can play the ball until they are on their feet. It is illegal to high tackle above the shoulders, or to "spike" a player by deliberately upending him onto his head. The same goes for the late tackle - tackling the player after he has passed or kicked the ball. It is also illegal to punch, gouge, stomp on or kick another player. Heavy tackles are colloquially known as dump tackles, while an attempt to prevent the ball being released quickly is sometimes called a smother tackle.



SET-PLAYS



KICK-OFF: A coin is tossed and the winning captain elects to take or receive the kick. Both halves of the match are started with a place kick from the center-point of the halfway line. The kick must cross the opposition's 10-metre line, which the opposition are not allowed to encroach beyond until the ball is kicked. If the ball does not travel 10 meters, goes straight into touch, or goes over the dead ball line at the end of the pitch, the receiving team can opt for a scrum or a kick again. After a score, the game is restarted from the same place under the same restrictions, with the conceding team drop-kicking the ball to the scoring team.



LINE-OUT: A maximum of seven and a minimum of three forwards line up parallel with each other between the five-meter and 15-metre lines. The hooker of the team in possession throws the ball in while his opposite number stands in the "tramlines" - between the touchline and the five-yard line. All players not involved in the lineout, except the scrum-half, must retire 10 meters. The ball must be thrown in straight down the middle of the lineout and the hooker must not cross into the field of play while throwing in. Jumpers can be lifted by their team-mates below the waist, but the opposition's jumpers must not be obstructed, barged or pulled down.

SCRUM: The eight forwards from each team bind together and push against each other. The scrum-half from the team that has been awarded possession feeds the ball into the center of the scrum from the side most advantageous for his hooker. The ball must be fed straight down the middle of the tunnel and the hookers must not contest for the ball until it is put in. If they do, a free-kick is awarded for "foot up". The scrum is taken again if the ball comes straight out of the tunnel or if it collapses. If the scrum wheels more than 90 degrees the scrum is reformed and awarded to the other side.

