



SKILL CARD

BALL FAMILIARIZATION

LEVEL: BEGINNER



OBJECTIVE

To have players become familiar with the shape and size of a rugby ball.

COACHING CUES

Describe the rugby ball by comparing it to other sports that kids will know. A rugby ball is bigger than a football and about the size of a soccer ball. The shape is similar to a football so that the ball can easily be passed, but the shape is more round than a football so that the ball can be kicked as well.



Step 1: Have kids pass the rugby ball around and have them pick out differences and similarities between a rugby ball and other sports balls.

Step 2: Have everyone hold their own ball, instructing them to carry the ball with two hands at all times.

Step 3: Make a small square space with cones and have players run from one side to the other, making sure to hold the ball in two hands at all times.

Step 4: On the instructor's signal, have them all put their balls down and pick up someone else's, making sure to use two hands at all times.

Step 5: Have players throw the ball into the air and catch it 5-10 times each.

Step 6: Lastly, have them move the ball around their bodies. Start around the waist and then try under each leg. Make it a fun contest to see who can perform various skills without dropping the ball during each exercise.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Make sure players use two hands at all times.
2. Make sure players are communicating with each other.
3. Make sure players are varying their movements.
4. Help players identify the best method for performing each skill.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

Rugby balls are different than most other sports balls because of their size and shape. Reacting to the funny bounces and challenge of handling an awkwardly sized ball is part of the fun and challenge of rugby.

CONNECTED GAMES

Rookie Relays • Circle Passing
Eagles Nest
Rugby Freeze Tag
Cold and Hot Potatoes

USA PE STANDARDS

S5.E2: Challenge, K-8



SKILL CARD

CARRY THE BALL

LEVEL: BEGINNER



OBJECTIVE

To have players run effectively with the ball in two hands.



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

COACHING CUES

Learning how to properly run with the ball is very important for a player safety and to properly develop basic skills.

FIRST STEP FORWARD / PARK THE BALL / TWO HANDS

First Step Forward: The first step in rugby is always forward.

Park the Ball: The ball should be carried:

- Away from the body, ready to be passed
- Ball is carried at chest height

Two Hands: Two hands on the bottom 1/3 of the ball.

Utilize connected Rookie Rugby Games to check and correct ball carrying.

New rugby players may need time to familiarize themselves with the “funny shaped ball” Rugby uses.

The more time a child has with a rugby ball in their hand during practice, the better!

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Make sure players are holding the ball with two hands when they are running or evading.
2. Correct players if they are carrying the ball too high or too low.
3. Emphasize parking the ball away from the body.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

The first step in rugby is forward.

CONNECTED GAMES

Relay Races • Just Score
Rugby Freeze Tag • Flag Rugby
Depth Lines • 2v1 • 3v2
Inside the Eagles Nest

USA PE STANDARDS

S1.E2: Jogging, Running, K-5

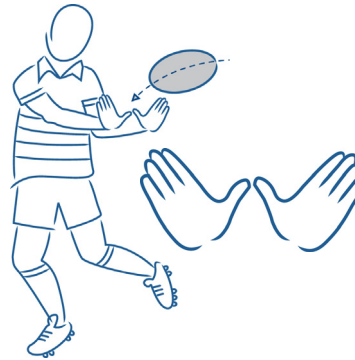
SKILL CARD

RECEIVING THE PASS

LEVEL: BEGINNER

OBJECTIVE

To have players develop the continuity of play by receiving a pass from their teammate and continuing forward.



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

COACHING CUES

SET A TARGET / REACH FOR THE BALL / PARK THE BALL

Set a Target:

- Maintain a square orientation to the field by keeping hips and chest parallel to the try line.
- Form the letter "W" in front of the body with both hands by placing thumbs together and spreading fingers wide.
- Keep hands relaxed, while waiting for the pass, no robots!

Reach for the Ball:

- Keep your eye on the ball all the way from the thrower to your hands.
- Reach for the ball. Catching the ball against your body can result in fumbles off of the body or an interception from the other team.

Park the Ball

- Resist the temptation to bring the ball into the body. Keep the arms and the ball out away from the body, where they caught the pass.
- This leaves the arms in position for a quick continuation pass. This also has the benefit of drawing the defense's eyes away from the player.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Always have players call for the ball, even when practicing.
2. After the catch, place the hands on the bottom third of the ball.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Place the outside foot (from the passer) forward while preparing to receiving a pass.
- Hips face up the pitch (square) while shoulders face the ball.
- The first step after a catch is forward.

CONNECTED GAMES

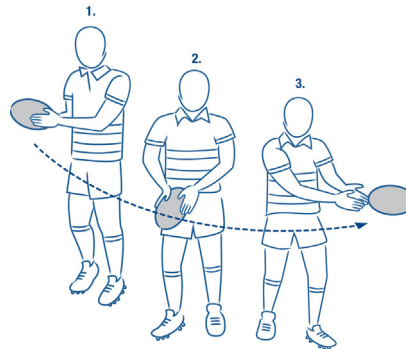
Relay Races • Depth Running
Cold and Hot Potato • Ultimate Rugby
Circle Passing • Flag Rugby
Rugby Baseball

USA PE STANDARDS

S1.E16: Catching, K-5
S1.E6: Combinations, 3-5
S1.M3-M4: Catching, 6-8

OBJECTIVE

To have players maintain continuity of play by passing to a teammate in a better position.



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

COACHING CUES

The basic pass in rugby is a "Push" pass. This pass is designed to move the ball quickly as possible from player to player.

HIGH ELBOW / TURN HEAD / SCOOP / POINT

High Elbow:

- Passes in rugby take place while running forward.
- Hold the ball with two hands on the bottom third of the ball.
- Hold the ball at sternum height.
- Bring the elbow up to provide force behind your throw.

Turn Head:

- Turn the head to find the receiver.

Scoop the ball, "Low-to-High":

- In a "Low-to-High" movement, pass the ball at chest height in front of the receiver so that they may run onto the ball.
- Push the ball with the outside arm as the pass is being delivered.

Point with both hands:

- Pointing with both index fingers ensures a proper follow through.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Passes are made with two hands on the ball.
2. Hands should be on the bottom 1/3 of the ball.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Hips face upfield, Shoulders to target
- Step with the outside foot while passing to generate power.
- First step is forward, immediately after passing.
- Support the receiver by running on their inside shoulder.

CONNECTED GAMES

Relay Races • Rugby Baseball
Cold and Hot Potato • Circle Passing
Just Score • Ultimate Rugby
Flag Rugby • Inside the Eagles Nest

USA PE STANDARDS

S1.E6: Combinations, 3-5
S1.E13: Underhand throw, K-5
S1.E15: Passing with Hands, 4-5
S1.M4-M5: Passing and Receiving, 6-8

OBJECTIVE

Safely execute a flag pull to minimize incidental contact and provide a foundation for a transition to contact rugby or other flag sports.

COACHING CUES

CLOSE THE SPACE / FAST-SLOW-FAST / LEAD FOOT / SWOOP / REACH



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

Close the Space: The defender sprints forward to close the space between the defender and the ball carrier.

Fast-Slow-Fast:

- Fast: The defender closes space quickly.
- Slow: The defender slows their foot pattern to control the body and react to evasive steps from the ball carrier.
- Fast: The defender speeds up to pull the flag.

Lead Foot:

- The lead foot will react to evasive steps, cutting off the forward space of the ball carrier.
- Placing the lead foot toe-to-toe (while avoiding contact) with the ball carrier prior to the flag pull will slow and eliminate the ball carrier's available space for evasion.

Swoop: Swoop to a low, balanced athletic position before pulling the flag.

Reach:

- Execute a controlled reach for the near hip without lunging, staying balanced.
- Reach with both hands for the near flag.
- The shoulder and hip of the flag puller should be aligned with the near side of the ball carrier. This prepares the athlete for contact rugby later in life and keeps the head away from the ball carrier's body.

Hold the flag high and say "Flag"

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Maintain position (inside, outside) during pursuit, preventing the ball carrier from cutting back and turning the defender's hips.
2. Make sure the flag puller is not placing their head across the ball carrier's body or reaching for the far hip.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- React to evasion with the lead foot in a fast-slow-fast pattern.
- Prevent committing hips by keeping toes forward.

CONNECTED GAMES

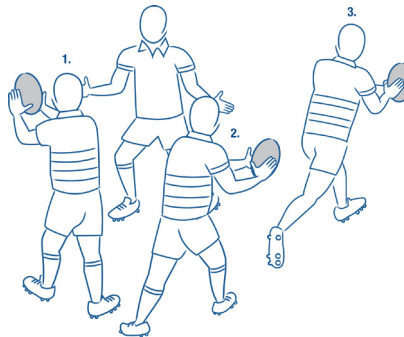
Flag Fury • Just Score
Sharks and Minnows • Flag Rugby
Great Escape • 2v1 ; 3v2
Footwork

USA PE STANDARDS

S2.E3: Speed, Direction, Force, 2-5
S2.E5: Strategies & Tactics, 3-5
S4.E1: Personal Responsibility, K-5
S1.M11: Defensive Skills, 6-8

OBJECTIVE

To have players maintain continuity of play by evading defenders and moving forward.



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

COACHING CUES

Evading the defender is a key skill in rugby to get past the defense. Evasion focuses on leading the defender one way and then playing the ball the other way.

SQUARE / ANGLE CHANGE / EVADE & EXIT / SQUARE

Square:

- Running square to the defender allows the runner to evade either to the left or right of the defense.

Angle Change:

- Changing the angle, while keeping hips up field, forces the defender to make a choice. Look for the defender to turn her hip and shoulder in pursuit.

Evade and Exit:

- After the defender commits to pursuit, the offensive player may cut back on the defender. Options include: Jab Steps - Hesitation Step - Jump Step - Double Moves - Stutter Step
- Have fun experimenting with the evasive steps.

Square the Field:

- After evading the flag puller, square to the field to gain the most ground on the defense.

CHECK AND CORRECT

- Help offensive players choose an appropriate distance before beginning their evasion step.
- Keep hips and shoulders square to the field during the angle change. Turning the hips commits the ball carrier and allows the defense to pursue.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Step out with toes pointed up field for angle change.
- Step with the inside foot to pass defender, sealing the space.
- Step forward and run straight to prevent drifting across the field.

CONNECTED GAMES

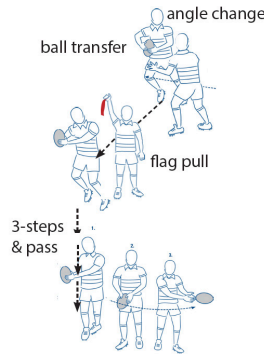
Relay Races • Just Score
 Sharks and Minnows • Flag Rugby
 Rugby Freeze Tag • 2v1
 Flag Fury • 3v2

USA PE STANDARDS

S2.E3: Speed, Direction, Force, K-5
 S2.E5: Strategies and Tactics, 3-5
 S1.M6: Offensive skills, 6-8
 S2.M2: Creating space with offensive tactics, 6-8

OBJECTIVE

To have players develop the continuity of play by combining rugby skills during and after a flag pull.



[VIEW VIDEO](#)

COACHING CUES

SQUARE THE DEFENDER / ANGLE CHANGE / BALL TRANSFER / 3-STEPS AND PASS

Square the Defender:

- Run forward and cause the defender to set their feet prior to a flag pull.

Angle Change:

- Step with your outside foot to evade the defender.
- The defender must react and will attempt to pull the flag on the runner.

Ball Transfer:

- Transfer the ball to the outside of the defender, keeping it in two hands.
- This is a good opportunity for the ball carrier to scan the field for a receiver.

During the Flag Pull:

Having the flag pulled in rugby is a positive outcome because:

1. The ball will go forward.
2. Space will be created in the defense as the flag puller will be removed from the defense's shape.
3. Continuation will be created when the ball is passed from the offense.

3 Steps and Pass:

- Step with the inside foot while passing the defender.
- Take two additional athletic steps and pass the ball.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Following a flag pull, the 3 steps should be athletic steps towards the try-zone.
2. Students should practice the 3-steps-and-pass to experience the rhythm of this movement.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Step with the outside foot when evading the defender.
- Step with the inside foot while passing the defender. This squares the body to the field and prevents the defender from pursuing the ball carrier if their flag is not pulled.

CONNECTED GAMES

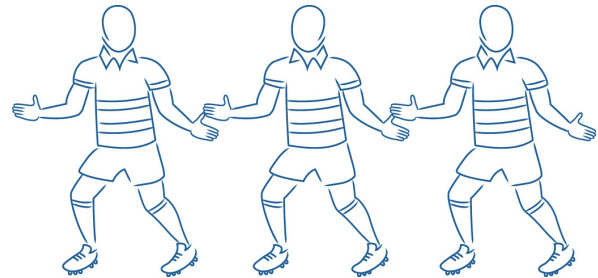
Just Score
2v1
3v2
Flag Rugby

USA PE STANDARDS

S1.E6: Combinations, 3-5
S1.E15: Passing with Hands, 4-5
S1.M4-5: Passing & Receiving, 6-8
S1.M6: Offensive Skills, 6-8

OBJECTIVE

To have players work as a team to prevent the offensive team from scoring.



COACHING CUES

The best defensive shape in rugby is a flat line. Flat line defense is when players are lined up across the width of the field in a straight line. Players should work together to keep this line when moving forward and backwards on the field.

Step 1: Demonstrate and instruct a flat line defense.

Step 2: Have players line up in a flat line defense and have them jog in every direction as a team in a flat line. Begin with them close enough to hold hands.

Step 3: A great teaching tip is to have players "cross the street" on defense. Be sure players are looking both ways (right and left) before advancing or retreating to make sure their entire team is together.

Step 4: Encourage players to constantly communicate to keep the flat line together. Some common terms are:

- Use "Up" to instruct the line to move forward
- Use "Back" to instruct the line to move backwards
- Use "Slide Left" or "Slide Right" for side movements.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Make sure players are communicating to stay together.
2. Make sure players are checking their position at all times.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Keep pace with your teammates and utilize communication to move up, back, left, and right together.
- Mirror the movement of the defense by matching and tracking the offensive player directly across.

CONNECTED GAMES

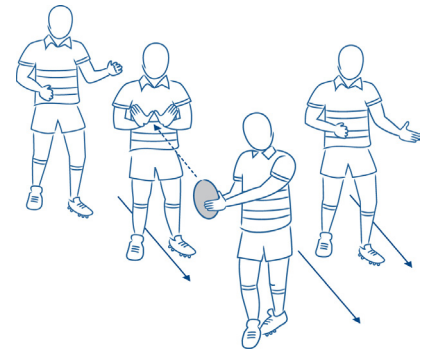
Sharks and Minnows • Flag Rugby
 Stars and Stripes • 2v1
 Mirrored Lines • 3v2
 Just Score

USA PE STANDARDS

S1.M11: Defensive Skills, 6-8
 S2.M4: Reducing Space, 6-8

OBJECTIVE

To have players work as a team to penetrate the defense and score by being in position to move the ball forward.



COACHING CUES

A good offensive shape consists of a ball carrier and two support players forming a triangle on the field. Additional players will line up in support in a staggered position.

Step 1: Help players understand offensive shape by placing them in a triangle formation.

Step 2: Have players practice by setting up on the field; change the ball carrier so they can adjust to keep a good formation.

Step 3: Have all support players move forward to receive a pass. This allows them to attack at a running pace.

Step 4: Have support players attack the weakest point in the defense. The weakest point in the defense is where the most space is between two defenders.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Make sure players keep depth and stay behind the ball carrier.
2. Players should communicate to maintain offensive shape.
3. After a flag pull, the first support should come off of the inside shoulder.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Maintain an appropriate depth to the ball carrier without crowding.
- Prepare to receive a pass by placing the outside foot forward.
- After receiving the pass, the first step should be forward.

CONNECTED GAMES

Depth Running • Just Score
 2v1
 3v2
 Flag Rugby

USA PE STANDARDS

S2.E1: Space, 3-5
 S2.E2: Pathways, Shapes, Levels, 4-5
 S2.E5: Strategies & Tactics, 3-5
 S2.M3: Create space using width and length, 6-8



SKILL CARD

DEFENSE WITH FLAGS

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE



OBJECTIVE

To have players understand the process of playing with flags and execute smart flag pulls.



COACHING CUES

There is a four step process when making a full defensive flag pull. This process keeps players safe and will help players learn the progressions when transitioning to tackle rugby.

FLAG! / 3-STEPS / DEFENSE RETURNS THE FLAG / OFFENSE REPLACES THE FLAG

Step 1: FLAG!: Defender removes ball carrier's flag and yells "FLAG!" to communicate the flag pull.

Step 2: 3-Steps: Ball carrier can take up to three additional steps after a flag pull before passing to a teammate. Ball carrier then passes to a teammate.

Step 3: Defense Returns the Flag: Defender returns the flag to the ball carrier and then returns to play.

Step 4: Offense Replaces the Flag: The ball carrier replaces the flag on their belt and then returns to play. Both players are out of play until the flag is returned.

Prohibited Offensive Tactics: Flag guarding, fending off, jumping and spinning.

Prohibited Defensive Tactics: Diving, initiating contact.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Make sure all flags are clearly visible and worn properly.
2. Make sure players always return their opponent's flag before returning to play and are not throwing flags on the ground.

FOOTWORK/MOVEMENTS

- Double check to make sure players are returning flags to their belts before joining the play.
- Penalize offensive players for any unsafe actions during a flag pull like jumping, spinning or flag guarding with a turnover.

CONNECTED GAMES

2v1
3v2
Flag Rugby
Transitioning from Ultimate to Flag

USA PE STANDARDS

S4.E1, M1-2: Personal Responsibility, K-8
S4.M4: Working with others, 7-8
S4.E5 & M6: Rules and Etiquette, 2-8

OBJECTIVE

To have players widen their offensive skill set to more effectively move the ball to space and increase continuity on the field.

COACHING CUES

There are many different types of passes in rugby, but in youth rugby the most common passes used are the basic, spin and pop pass. Players should learn these passes and when to use them during play.

Spin Pass:

Step 1: The spin pass is used for long distances and should be practiced by using the following technique:

- Hold the ball in two hands: The hand furthest from the receiver will be used to deliver the power and should be held at the back of the ball. The hand closest to the receiver will guide where the ball moves.
- Move your hands across the body and use the power hand to apply spin by rotating the hand as you release the ball.
- Follow through - Guide hand will point to the receiver with the power hand on top.

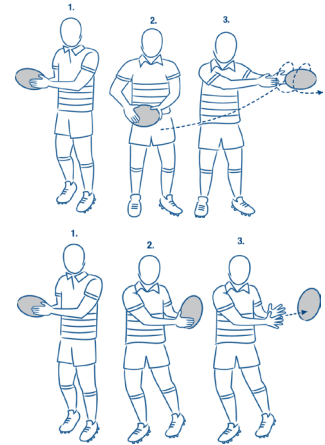
Step 2: Have players practice with partners. Help individuals work to perfect the spin pass.

Pop Pass:

Step 1: The pop pass is used for short distances when throwing into the path of a teammate running forward. The technique for a pop pass is:

- Using two hands, throw the ball up. The ball will be "placed into the space to the right or left of the passer.
- The ball should be thrown into the path of support player who can run onto the ball to receive it

Step 2: Have players practice with partners. Help individuals work to perfect the pop pass



SKILL PROGRESSIONS

1. Have players work on their spin pass by skipping the player immediately next to them, performing a "skip pass".
2. Have players practice switching the direction of their passes.
3. Include defenders when practicing. Have players complete a specific type of pass when they approach a defender.
4. Play Ultimate Rugby, only using a specific type of passing.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Always have players call for the ball, even when practicing.
2. Ensure players know the difference between each pass. Test their knowledge during practice.
3. During pop passes, it is important that players receiving the pass are moving forward and not standing static.

OBJECTIVE

To keep players focused on scoring by developing the instinct to move forward when carrying the ball.



COACHING CUES

When facing defenders, it can sometimes be unnatural for players to keep moving forward instead of passing or moving backwards to find space. Players should be taught that moving forward when carrying the ball is essential to scoring points and keeping the flow of the game.

Step 1: Have players get into pairs of two, with one player holding a rugby ball.

Step 2: Have one player on defense challenge the player with the ball, but make it a rule that the ball carrier can only go forward even if they think they will get their flag pulled. Make it a contest to see how far each player can go without getting their flag pulled.

Step 3: Let each player take a few turns until they are naturally moving forward through every play.

Step 4: Ensure that players are safe by emphasizing that Rookie Rugby is non-contact.

Step 5: Practice one on one evasion drills that will encourage players to move forward instead of running away from the defense. If needed, restrict playing space by forming a narrow grid and forcing players to stay within the boundaries.

SKILL PROGRESSIONS

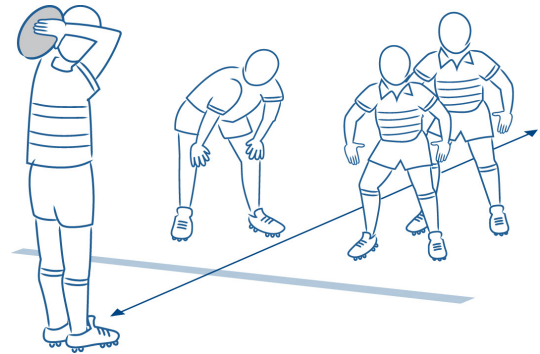
1. Play a progressive flag rugby game starting with 4v1 then moving into 4v2 and 4v3. Players will feel more comfortable moving forward when there are less defenders.
2. Have players play a 3v3 or 4v4 flag rugby game and make the rule that ball carriers are not allowed to move backwards.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. If a player steps or runs backwards, make sure to correct them right away.
2. Make sure players are holding the ball correctly as they run.
3. Encourage players to move forward by using simple commands during play. "Run Forward!" is commonly used in youth rugby.

OBJECTIVE

To teach players the Rookie Rugby version of a lineout.



COACHING CUES

Four players from each team will make up a lineout. For the team in possession of the ball, there will be one player throwing the ball in, two players receiving the in-bound pass, and one player who will move the ball away from the lineout. The defending team will match the offensive team's four players.

Players should not lift in lineouts until they have developed the necessary skills and strength. Lineouts in Rookie Rugby start as uncontested. The team that throws the ball in must be allowed to win possession of the ball.

Step 1: Coach the Thrower

Spin Pass - start with a basic spin or underhand pass. Call out a jumper and have players try to hit their target.

Overhead Pass - More experienced players can start advancing to throwing the ball overhead.

Step 2: Coach the Jumpers - Encourage players to maintain a low body position while in the lineout. Have them take one step into the tunnel, bring their far foot in to be shoulder width and then jump straight into the air when going for the ball. He/She should be an easy "step-step-jump" motion.

Step 3: Rotate all players so they have a chance to try all positions.

SKILL PROGRESSIONS

1. Begin with shorter distances before advancing.
2. Once players are the appropriate age and ability they can advance to contested lineouts without lifting.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Coach the lineout effectively and safely.
2. Create a platform to launch an attack.
3. Lifting takes specific skills and strength and should not be used in Rookie Rugby games. They can advance to contested lineouts without lifting.

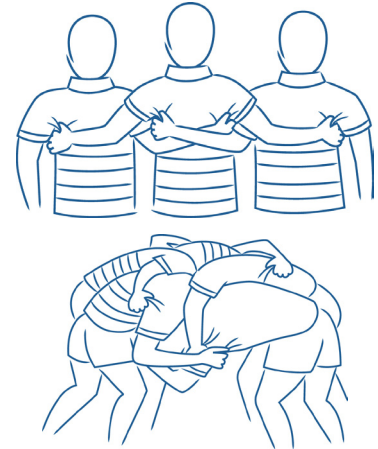
OBJECTIVE

To teach players the Rookie Rugby version of a scrum.

COACHING CUES

A scrum is formed from two units, one from each team made up of three players each (Front Row). In each Front Row there will be two "Props" with a "Hooker" in the middle.

Rookie Rugby scrums start as uncontested and players should not be allowed to push or drive. The team that was awarded the scrum will roll the ball into the scrum and should be allowed to win possession of the ball.



Step 1: Players should learn the appropriate body position in a scrum. Players should keep their back flat, feet and body square, shoulders above hips, head neutral, and eyes forward.

Step 2: The essential foundation of a scrum is the binding of the Front Row:

- The Hooker stands in the middle and places their arms around both Props backs. Their hands grasp the prop's jersey just below the armpits.
- Each Prop places an arm around the Hooker, grasping just below the opposite armpit.
- Players should hold the jersey of the person next to them tightly to keep the scrum strong and stable.

Step 3: Coaches and players must know the engagement sequence and cadence the referee uses. The engagement sequence will be called out by the referee: "Crouch! Bind! Set!"

- Crouch–Bound front rows lower into position
- Bind–Props will grasp the prop opposite them on their shoulder
- Set–The two front rows come together, placing their heads to the left and under the chest of the player across from them, and form a scrum
- The team in possession will roll the ball into the scrum. The Hooker from the team rolling the ball in moves the ball backwards with one foot.
- The player putting the ball in will collect it from the back of the scrum and pass to a teammate.

SKILL PROGRESSIONS

1. Once players are of the right age and ability, they can advance to contested scrums; however, pushing in scrums is not allowed in Rookie Rugby.

USA PE STANDARDS

S2.E3, S2.E5: Movement Concepts, 6

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Develop players capable of working as a collective unit.
2. Before any engagement, make sure that all players are bound together properly.
3. At any time before engagement, if a front row player is not ready for the scrum, they should inform the referee.

OBJECTIVE

To integrate kicking into Rookie Rugby.



COACHING CUES

There are two main types of kicking in rugby:

Punting - Punting the ball is when players drop the ball and kick it before it hits the ground.

Drop Kick - A drop kick is a kick where players will allow the ball to hit the ground before kicking it.

Step 1: Have all players practice the skill of punting during practice. Instruct players to hold the ball up and down. Have them step forward, drop the ball, and swing through with their back leg, making contact with the ball.

Step 2: Have all players practice drop kicks by holding the ball up and down. Have them drop the ball, take a step, and kick through.

Starting the Game: The first time to introduce kicking in Rookie Rugby is the start of the game. This allows kicking to be introduced slowly and allows all players to have the chance to practice their skills. Drop kicks can be more difficult for children. Start kick-offs with punting until players are ready to advance to drop kick starts.

Kick-offs after Scoring: Similar to the start of the game, a kick-off is used to restart play after a try is scored. After introducing kicking at the start of a game, this is the next progression for kids in Rookie Rugby. After a try is scored, the team that scored they try will kick-off to the opposing team.

SKILL PROGRESSIONS

1. Add penalty kicks into games. A penalty kick in rugby is when the non-infringing team kicks the ball down the field and out of bounds in order to get a lineout.
2. Add kicking during open play into games. Players should be permitted to punt the ball at any time during the game as a strategic move. It is recommended that teams are limited to the number of kicks they can perform until they are ready to strategically make kicking decisions.

CHECK AND CORRECT

1. Coach kicking effectively and safely.
2. Be sure that players understand when kicking should occur in games.
3. Players should not start kicking in rugby until they are fully ready.