

JUNIOR RUGBY



GUIDELINES | JANUARY 2026







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INTRODUCTION

For more than twenty years, the Small Blacks Development Model has been the entry point for our tamariki into rugby. It introduced kids to the full adult version of the game inside a junior setting. That meant players as young as 10 were running around on full-sized fields, playing in profiled positions, and being asked to mirror how adults play.

Since 2020, New Zealand Rugby has been moving away from this game-first approach. The shift is toward a player-focused model, one that shapes the game around the physical, mental, and social needs of young people. The aim is simple: to create rugby that fits kids, rather than asking kids to fit rugby.

This change sits at the heart of our Community Rugby vision: to keep the game thriving. Participation will only grow if kids feel safe, included, and excited to play.

These guidelines set out why this new approach matters, how it works in practice, and the long-term benefits it brings for our participants.

Why This Matters Now

Rugby is more than a game in New Zealand. It's a meeting place for whānau, a source of community pride, and a powerful teaching of life. For players, it is where friendships are forged, confidence is built, and the joy of teamwork is first discovered.

But right now, too many players are stepping away from the game before they've had the chance to experience all that it can offer. Participation among young boys is declining, with sharp drop-offs during early adolescence. Parents are questioning whether rugby is the right choice for their kids.

At the heart of this decline is a paradox. The very thing that makes rugby unique — its physical contest — is the same thing that's scaring people away. Contact, head knocks, and the risk of injury are beginning to overshadow the joy of playing.

BUT WHAT IF WE COULD FLIP THE NARRATIVE?

The physical side of rugby is not a threat, it's a gift.

When delivered well, rugby teaches hand-eye coordination, evasion, and decision making. But it also builds character. Through the contest, players learn courage, commitment and resilience. These are the skills of life.

To secure the future of the game, rugby must evolve.

We must protect what makes rugby special, while also making it safer, simpler and better matched to the developmental needs of young people.

This means designing rugby not just for the game, but for the people who play it.

WHAT'S IN SCOPE HERE?

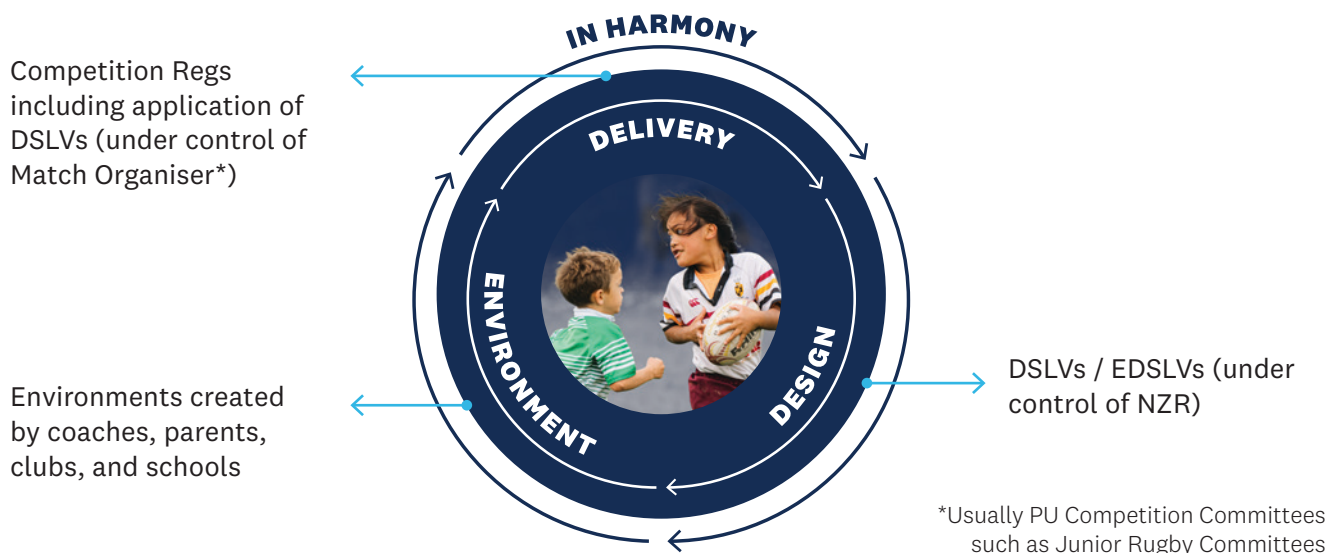
These guidelines focus on creating the right game experience for our tamariki, but development doesn't stop at 12 or 13. Rugby is a late-development sport, and players aren't ready for the full version of the game until their late teens. Because of this, World Rugby delegates responsibility for designing the Age Grade development framework to Member Unions such as New Zealand Rugby so it reflects the needs and context of the local game.

Teenagers already play in a youth development framework with limitations around scrum contest and playing minutes. Many grades already play under Game On as well. The junior framework has identified that there is a need for a smoother transition from junior to youth playing experiences and this is recognised in these guidelines. More work will follow on reviewing and refining the Youth Development Framework to complete the work on NZ's Age Grade Framework.

How do we think about Participation?

Participation is made up of three main components, all of which need to be in harmony to provide a quality and engaging experience. It starts with the participant at the centre. The three components are **Design, Delivery and Environment**.

All of these elements play an important part in creating a quality experience that engages participants and helps maintain their love of the game. The age, needs, and motivations of each player create the challenge of ensuring these components are appropriately matched. The experience for a five-year-old who is new to rugby is very different to that of an aspiring teenager or senior player. This makes the design of the experience critical.



WHAT'S NOT WORKING

Rugby participation across NZ is in decline. Data shows a steady drop in junior boys' participation, with the steepest fall between ages 11 and 13.

But the story is more than just numbers. For many parents, especially mums, rugby no longer feels like the right choice. The physical contest that defines rugby now feels like a risk.

“

If I can see, and confidently believe, safety in rugby is enforced through strong coaching and umpiring, strong marketing and advertising of rugby safety everywhere, and that safe play is the expectation from everyone involved including the crowds and players themselves, I would be happy for my child to play rugby throughout their life if they love it and want to.

KAZ GREGORY, MOTHER



“

I used to really enjoy playing with my mates but it got a bit too competitive and serious and it wasn't really fun any more. I wasn't as good or natural as some of the other kids in the team, but I always tried hard. **Sometimes I'd get taken off if we got behind, and I was even told I wasn't working hard enough when I was doing all I could.**

After a while it wasn't fun anymore, the parents and coaches were nice, but they took the games too seriously. Sometimes the coaches could be too serious at training.



U13 JUNIOR RUGBY PLAYER 2022

For many players, the game gets too serious, too complex, and too competitive too soon. It rewards early developers and sidelines the rest. It profiles kids into fixed positions before their bodies or minds are ready.

Instead of growing confidence and versatility, the current system too often reflects a selection mindset, focused on short-term results rather than long-term development. This erodes trust, fuels dropout, and leaves parents looking elsewhere.

Yet despite these issues, the game hold enormous promise. When the environment is right, kids still love rugby.

The opportunity in front of us is not to remove the challenge but to reshape it. To make the physical game a teacher. Because the very things that make rugby, rugby — the contact, the confrontation, and the skills to evade it — are exactly what set it apart.

JUNIOR RUGBY

A GAME WORTH GETTING EXCITED ABOUT

Rugby is at its best when it fits the player. When the challenge is right, the purpose is clear, and the experience builds both confidence and connection.

That's what Junior Rugby is designed to do. It's built on four core beliefs, each grounded in what we know about how kids learn, grow and develop.

These four beliefs, supported by evidence, are junior rugby's guiding lights. They keep the game safe, fun, and right for kids at every stage, while still holding on to what makes rugby, rugby.

1. Start wide to grow strong

Kids need variety before they need specialisation. Everyone should run, pass, tackle, evade, and kick before being asked to lock into one role. This keeps rugby exciting and helps every child find their place.

THE SCIENCE:

Rugby is a late specialisation sport. When children are locked into positions too early, some get opportunities while others miss out. Broad early experiences grow more adaptable players and support long-term development.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN ACTION:

Create opportunities for players to learn every skill. Rotate roles and positions so kids experience the game in different ways. Resist specialisation until after kids go through puberty.



“

I played across the backline as a junior – from first five-eight to wing – and being one of the smaller players meant I had to develop a wide range of skills. As I grew, I moved into flanker and learned to see the game from a completely different angle.

Playing in teams that encouraged freedom and creativity, along with doing athletics outside rugby, helped me become more adaptable and athletic – and really enjoy playing openside flanker.

Those broad experiences built the foundation for the player I've become.

LUCAS CASEY

OTAGO NPC, HIGHLANDERS 2026

2. Let the game teach

Kids learn best by playing. Smaller teams, right-sized fields, and simpler rules mean more touches, more decisions, and more chances to succeed.

THE SCIENCE:

Real learning happens when kids face problems on the field and figure them out. Small-sided formats increase involvement, build decision-making, and accelerate skill development, all while keeping the game fun.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN ACTION:

Provide experiences that look and feel like the game. Swap drills for game-like activities. Change the rules so the game naturally teaches the skill.

“

These young players are the future of our game. The experiences they have early on shape not just the kind of players they become, but the kind of people they grow into.

If we get it right now—with quality coaching, empowerment through asking questions and game-based learning—we’re not just developing skills, we’re building a better game for generations to come.

The game is the best teacher. When kids play in the right-sized environment, they touch the ball more, make more decisions, and learn faster. Great coaching is what brings the game to life—knowing when to guide, when to observe, and how to create moments that let the game do the teaching.

WAYNE SMITH

3. Match the challenge to the child

The game should stretch kids just enough to grow — not overwhelm them or leave them behind. Contact and complexity are introduced step by step, so confidence builds safely.

THE SCIENCE:

Children grow at different rates — sometimes three years apart. That means two 12-year-olds can look like they're in different game. Scaling field size, team numbers, and contact ensures every child can play safely and successfully, whatever their stage.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN ACTION:

Adjust field size and team numbers to give kids the right level of stretch. Ensure physical match-ups are fair. Create rules that lower contact load while still teaching decision-making.

“

Our goal is to ensure the game is safe and enjoyable for players of all abilities. A staged approach supports players' growth and development at their own pace, helping them stay involved and confident as they master the foundations of the game.

Children need to learn to walk before they can run, and we apply the same fundamental approach to rugby.

The gradual introduction of set pieces reduces the load on our volunteer coaches and referees. Enabling many of them to grow and develop alongside their players. It's a win for the players, their families, and our entire Junior Rugby community.



NIKKI SHADBOLT

JUNIOR DIRECTOR OF RUGBY

SILVERDALE RUGBY CLUB

4. Progress with purpose

Every step in rugby should prepare kids for what comes next. New rules and roles are added only when players are ready, so they build confidence layer by layer.

THE SCIENCE:

Motivation thrives when the challenge is just right. If it's too hard, kids feel anxious; too easy, they get bored. Progression that matches development keeps players engaged, learning, and hungry to return.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN ACTION:

Use modified versions of the game (e.g., uncontested scrums before contested) to ease transitions. Introduce set pieces only when players are ready – don't rush complexity.

“

I started playing rugby through the sevens format, then moved to 10-a-side before graduating to senior rugby. **The simplicity of the smaller versions helped me focus on the basics and enjoy the game, while each step gave me the chance to build confidence and develop my skills at the right pace.** I was able to use my speed and agility to make my mark, without feeling pushed into contact skills I wasn't ready for.

Having that progression allowed me to grow my abilities layer by layer and feel prepared for each new challenge.

IVANA SAMANI

ORIENTAL RONGOTAI RUGBY

& WELLINGTON PRIDE FPC



FROM SMALL BLACKS TO JUNIOR RUGBY

Our move from Small Blacks to Junior Rugby is built on a simple but powerful idea: the way the game is designed shapes how kids learn.

This comes from research called a constraints-led approach. In plain terms, it means that the rules, the field size, the number of players, and the way contact and set piece is introduced all act as “guides” for learning. Change the environment, and you change the learning.

When the game is set up well, we ensure rugby is safe, inclusive, and right for the players in front of us. Furthermore, we make it easier for coaches and referees to focus on supporting players rather than managing complexity. This will help attract and retain volunteers.



THE SCIENCE IN A SNAPSHOT

IDENTITY TAKES TIME

kids need to try many roles before settling into one.

LEARNING HAPPENS IN THE GAME

more touches and decisions lead to faster growth.

EACH AGE THINKS DIFFERENTLY

simple decisions first, bigger strategies later.

KIDS GROW UNEVENLY

one 12-year-old might be 30 kilos heavier than another.

MOTIVATION NEEDS THE RIGHT STRETCH

Too hard and kids feel anxious. Too easy and they get bored.

STRENGTHENING THE JUNIOR TO YOUTH PATHWAY

Phase 1 – Foundations

Since 2020, New Zealand Rugby has introduced Year 1–6 grades year on year, carefully phasing in each stage so that every step builds on what came before. This ensured that players never had to “walk back” on their rugby experience but could instead grow with the game as it grew with them.

NZR acknowledges that this process of incremental change has not been without its challenges for Provincial Unions. Yet these early phases were essential in laying the foundations for a bigger picture — one where junior rugby is built deliberately, stage by stage, around the needs of the players in front of us. Sharing the intention behind the framework helps make clear that each step is part of a longer journey, one that leads toward a fully evolved future for the game.



Phase 2 – Futures Work

Phase 2 signals the next horizon of junior rugby development. The future we are working toward is a fully phased Junior Rugby framework that extends through Years 7, 8, and 9 – creating a seamless, participant-centred pathway that supports lifelong engagement in the game.

At this stage, the focus shifts to designing and refining the game environment for Years 7–9. The aim is to deliver rugby that continues to challenge, inspire, and develop young players, while keeping the game safe, inclusive, and right sized for their stage of growth. This includes:

YEAR 6 & 7 (U11 – U12)

- Set Piece Foundations – introducing scrums, lineouts, and restarts with clarity, progression, and confidence-building steps.

YEAR 8 & 9 (U13 – U14)

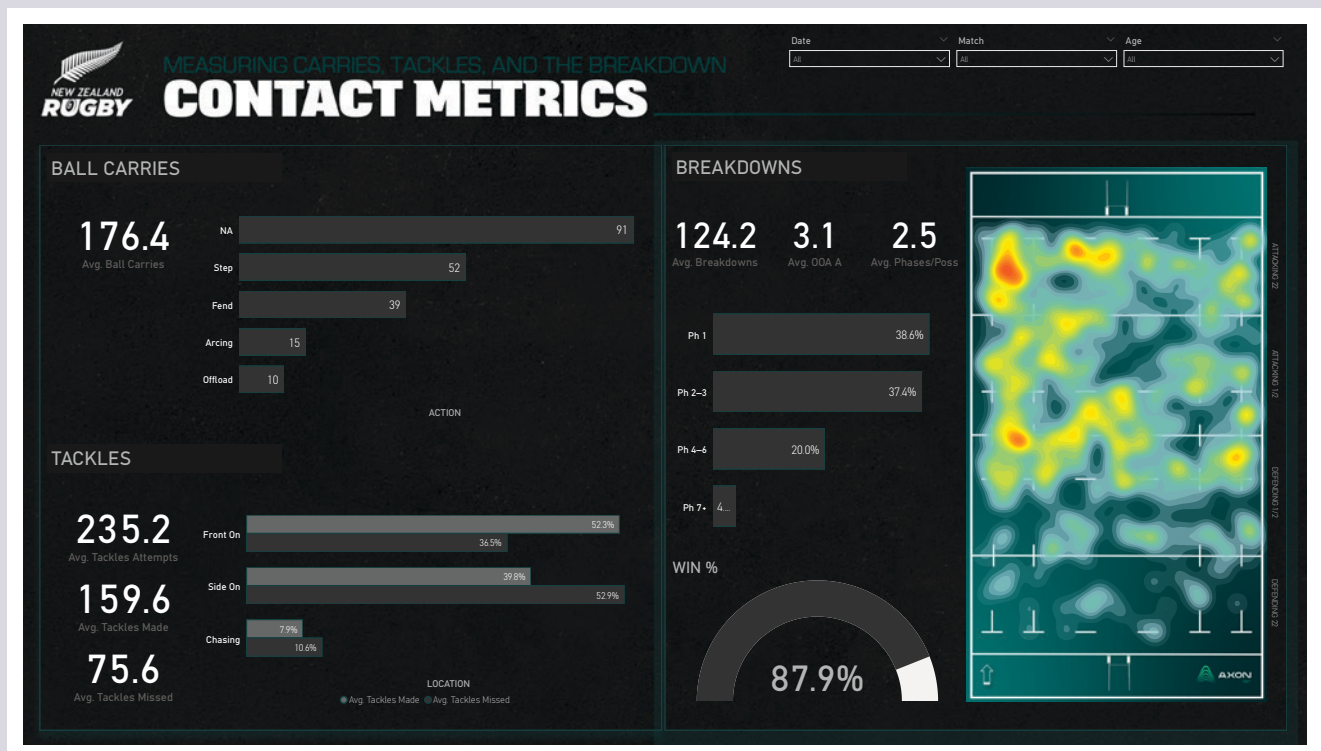
- Game Progressions – scaling field sizes, team numbers, and laws to grow positional identity, tactical understanding, and skill variety at the right pace.

To guide this work, NZR has already begun capturing evidence. In 2025, data from Year 7 and 8 matches has been analysed across three areas:

- Field Coverage – how players use space as roles and identities begin to emerge.
- Patterns of Play – how teams balance set piece, open play, and the contributions of different positions.
- Skill Development – identifying strengths and gaps in both structured and unstructured play.

This analysis provides a vital baseline for trials of field dimensions, team sizes, and set piece formations across Years 7–9.

Alongside this, NZR is also exploring complementary refinements, such as strengthening the introduction of tackle and contact at Year 3 & 4 gradually building phase play identities to full contestability.



IMPLEMENTATION AND FLEXIBILITY

TIMELINE OF FUTURES WORK

- **2026**
begin trials in partnership with Provincial Unions.
- **2027**
confirmed game design for Year 7.
- **2028**
confirmed game design for Year 8, completing the Junior rugby framework transitioning to the Youth Rugby Framework
- **2029**
confirmed game design for Year 9, representing the start of the Youth Rugby Framework

Once trials are complete and recommendations confirmed, Provincial Unions will be supported to adopt successful modifications early, giving them the opportunity to complete the Junior Rugby pathway ahead of schedule if desired.

The purpose of Phase 2 Futures work is to safeguard the future of rugby participation by ensuring Junior Rugby is more than a framework — it becomes the everyday experience of every young player. It is the pathway through which tamariki and rangatahi can find fun, growth, and success in our game today, while laying the foundations to maintain and grow a thriving community game for generations to come.

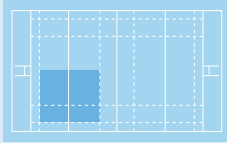
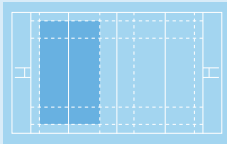
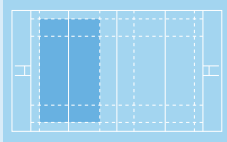
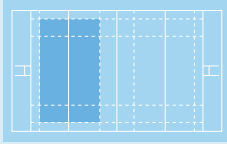
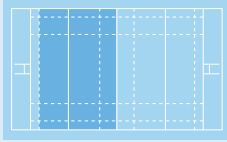
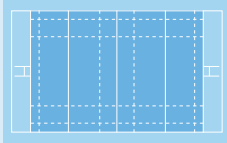
WE'RE PAVING
THE WAY TO A
BETTER GAME

CURRENT JUNIOR RUGBY

The Small Blacks Development Model was the entry point for our tamariki into rugby. Introducing kids to the full adult version of the game inside a junior setting.




CURRENT STATE

GRADE	FORMAT	RUGBY IDENTITIES	GAME DESIGN
BEGINNING			
Year 1 & 2 Under 6 & 7	Non-contact	Attack, Defence	 <p>32m width x 40m length field 7 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
LEARNING			
Year 3 Under 8	Contact Tackle, Ruck, Maul	Attack, Defence, Ruck, Maul, Counter attack	 <p>35m width x 60m length field 7 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
Year 4 Under 9	Contact Tackle, Ruck, Maul	Attack, Defence, Ruck, Maul, Counter attack	 <p>35m width x 60m length field 8 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
Year 5 Under 10	Contact Tackle, Ruck, Maul	Attack, Defence, Ruck, Maul, Counter attack	 <p>35m width x 60m length field 9 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
Year 6 Under 11	Set Piece Introduction Lineout, Scrum (uncontested)	Attack, Defence, Ruck, Maul, Counter attack, Scrum, Lineout, Back attack	 <p>45m width x 70m length field 10 players per team Size 4 ball 50 minute game duration</p>
PLAYING			
Year 7 & 8 Under 12 & 13	Set Piece Introduction Lineout, Scrum (contested)	Attack, Defence, Ruck, Maul, Counter attack, Scrum, Lineout, Back attack	 <p>70m width x 100m length field 15 players per team Size 4 ball 60 minute game duration</p>

SMALL BLACKS

BEGINNING

 Year 1 & 2 | Under 6 & 7

Introduces players to rugby in an engaging, safe, and enjoyable environment that fosters basic movement skills and a love for play.

At this stage, rugby is non-contact and focused on fun, games, and simple ball-handling skills. The emphasis is on building confidence, teamwork, and enjoyment while introducing the spirit of rugby.



FOCUS

Discovering the game in fun and playful ways.



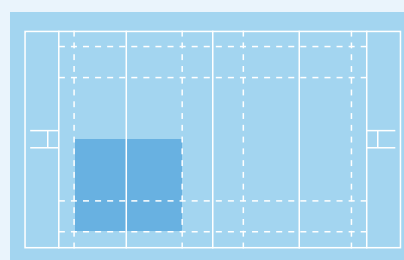
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence




GAME DESIGN

- 32m width x 40m length field
- 7 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minute game duration



SMALL BLACKS

LEARNING

 Year 3 | Under 8

To develop understanding of possession at ruck and maul, building toward full game functionality.

The ruck and maul are fully contested under New Zealand Rugby's DSLV (Domestic Safety Law Variations). Players learn to compete for possession in both rucks and mauls, and ball carriers who are held up can initiate and contest mauls. This phase represents a full integration of contact and contest elements into the game during phase play.



FOCUS

Contact, Tackle, Ruck, Maul



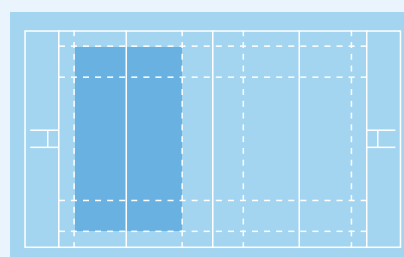
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence,
Phase play, Breakdown



GAME DESIGN

- 35m width x 60m length field
- 7 & 9 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minute game duration



SMALL BLACKS

LEARNING

 Year 4 & 5 | Under 9 & 10



FOCUS

Contact, Tackle, Ruck, Maul



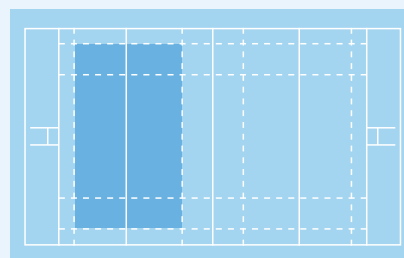
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence,
Phase play, Breakdown



GAME DESIGN

- 35m width x 60m length field
- 8 & 9 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minute game duration



SMALL BLACKS

LEARNING

 Year 6 | Under 11



FOCUS

Set Piece introduction.
Lineout, Scrum (uncontested).



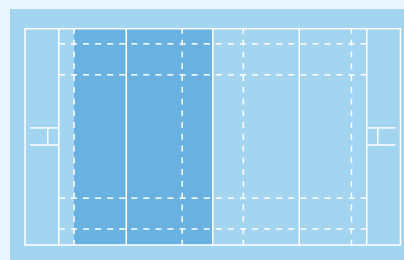
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence,
Phase play, Breakdown



GAME DESIGN

- 45 m width x 70m length field
- 10 players per team
- Size 4 ball
- 50 minute game duration



To develop understanding of possession at ruck and maul, building toward full game functionality.

The ruck and maul are fully contested under New Zealand Rugby's DSLV (Domestic Safety Law Variations). Players learn to compete for possession in both rucks and mauls, and ball carriers who are held up can initiate and contest mauls. This phase represents a full integration of contact and contest elements into the game during phase play.

Introduces players to set piece roles and skills, promoting positional requirements. Introduction of set piece identities, including scrums, lineouts, kick-offs, back attack and defence.

Scrum are uncontested, and generally players are profiled into positions. Lineouts are contested and generally players are profiled into positions. Play is in formations of 5 forwards and five backs.

SMALL BLACKS

BEGINNING

 Year 7 & 8 | Under 12 & 13

Junior player development is complete. Players now participate in positions that contest possession at the scrum and lineout. They play a full-sized field and perform specific functional roles within the game.

The game progresses to 15-a-side, with eight players involved in both the scrum and lineout. Scrum and lineouts are contested, although lifting the jumper is not permitted under the Junior Rugby framework. Players begin to specialise into positional roles and take on functional responsibilities, replicating the experience they will encounter in Year 9 onwards.



FOCUS

Set Piece introduction.
Lineout, Scrum (contested).



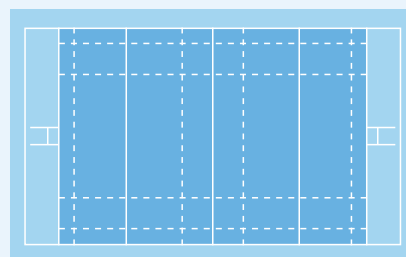
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence, Phase play,
Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout,
Kick restarts



GAME DESIGN

- 70 m width x 100 m length field
- 15 players per team
- Size 4 ball
- 60 minute game duration



WHEN I GROW
UP, I'M GONNA
PLAY RUGBY.



FUTURE JUNIOR RUGBY

A player-focused model that shapes the game around the needs of young people. The aim is simple: to create rugby that fits kids.



FUTURE STATE



PRINCIPLES

START WIDE TO GROW STRONG

Kids need variety before they need specialisation. Everyone should run, pass, tackle, evade, and kick before being asked to lock into one role. This keeps rugby exciting and helps every child find their place.

LET THE GAME TEACH

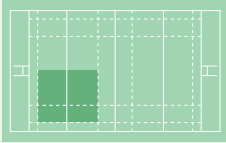
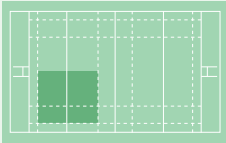
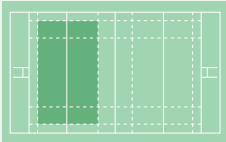
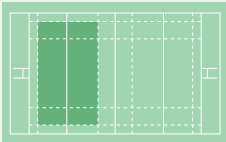
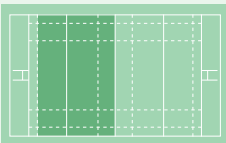
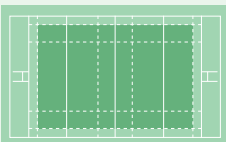
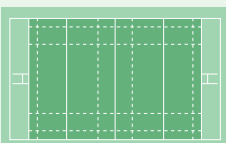
Kids learn best by playing. Smaller teams, right-sized fields, and simpler rules mean more touches, more decisions, and more chances to succeed.

MATCH THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHILD

The game should stretch kids just enough to grow – not overwhelm them or leave them behind. Contact and complexity are introduced step by step, so confidence builds safely.

PROGRESS WITH PURPOSE


Every step in rugby should prepare kids for what comes next. New rules and roles are added only when players are ready, so they build confidence layer by layer.

GRADE	FOCUS	RUGBY IDENTITIES	GAME DESIGN
DISCOVER RUGBY			
Year 1 & 2 Under 6 & 7	Discovering the game in fun and playful ways	Attack, Defence	 <p>32m width x 40m length field 7 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
TACKLE READY			
Year 3 Under 8	Getting tackle ready with confidence and safety	Attack, Defence	 <p>32m width x 40m length field 7 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
BREAKDOWN BASIC			
Year 4 Under 9	Learning how to contest and protect the ball	Attack, Defence, Ruck	 <p>35m width x 60m length field 8 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
PHASE PLAY CONTEST			
Year 5 Under 10	Competing in phase play and working as a team	Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown	 <p>35m width x 60m length field 9 players per team Size 3 ball 40 minute game duration</p>
SET PIECE FOUNDATIONS			
Year 6 & 7 Under 11 & 12	Starting to explore lineouts, scrums and kick restarts	Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout, Kick restarts	 <p>45m width x 70m length field 10 players per team Size 4 ball 50 minute game duration</p>
GAME PROGRESSION			
Year 8 & 9 Under 13 & 14	Progressing tactical play and positional understanding	Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout, Kick restarts	 <p>60m width x 90m length field 13 players per team Size 4 ball 60 minute game duration</p>
FULL GAME			
Year 10 Under 15	Playing the complete game with all its identities contested	Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout, Kick restarts	 <p>70m width x 100m length field 15 players per team Size 4 ball 70 minute game duration</p>

JUNIOR RUGBY FUTURES WORK

DISCOVER RUGBY

DISCOVERING THE GAME IN FUN AND PLAYFUL WAYS

 **Year 1 & 2 | Under 6 & 7**

To introduce players to rugby in an engaging, safe, and enjoyable environment that fosters basic movement skills and a love for play.

At this stage, rugby is non-contact and focused on fun, games, and simple ball-handling skills. The emphasis is on building confidence, teamwork, and enjoyment while introducing the spirit of rugby.



FOCUS

Discovering the game in fun and playful ways.



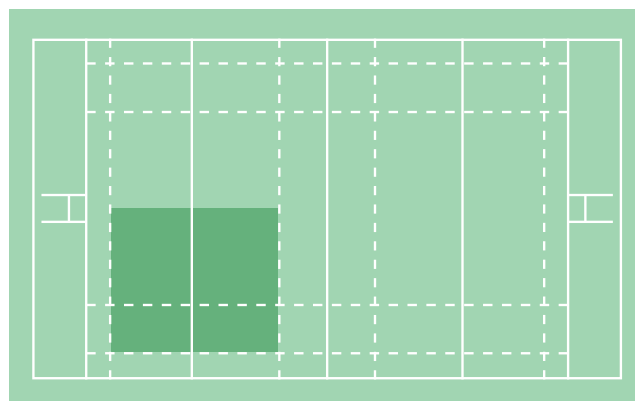
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence



GAME DESIGN

- 32m width x 40m length field
- 7 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minutes game duration



JUNIOR RUGBY FUTURES WORK

TACKLE READY

GETTING TACKLE READY WITH CONFIDENCE AND SAFETY

 **Year 3 | Under 8**

To prepare players for contact by teaching correct body position, sound technique, and the safe habits required when introducing live tackling.

Players develop confidence in controlled tackle drills, learning how to tackle safely and fall correctly. The game environment gradually introduces contact in a supportive way, ensuring safety and enjoyment remain priorities.



FOCUS

Getting tackle ready with confidence and safety.



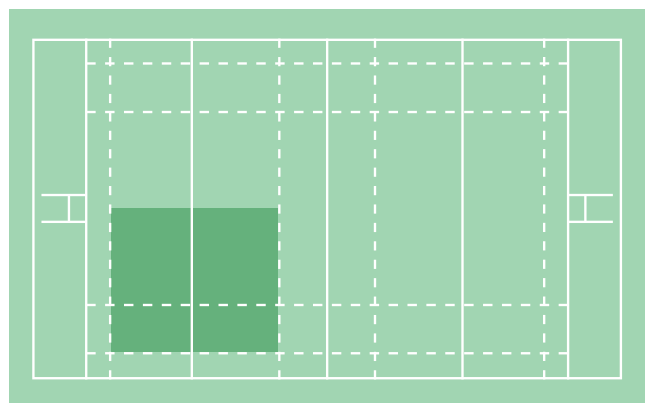
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence



GAME DESIGN

- 32m width x 40m length field
- 7 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minute game duration



JUNIOR RUGBY FUTURES WORK

BREAKDOWN BASICS

LEARNING HOW TO CONTEST AND PROTECT THE BALL

 **Year 4 | Under 9**

To introduce breakdown roles and responsibilities in a controlled environment, preparing players safely and with clarity for modified ruck scenarios.

A controlled contest for the ball on the ground is introduced. Each team is allowed one support player at the breakdown, which scaffolds the ruck and maul while maintaining clarity around roles. Players begin learning how to contest possession within gameplay.



FOCUS

Learning how to contest and protect the ball.



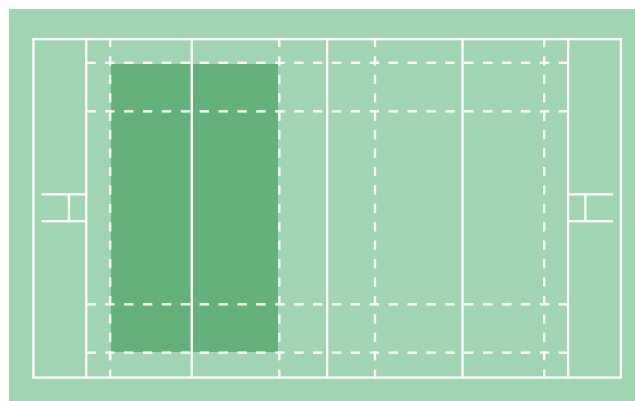
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence, Ruck



GAME DESIGN

- 35m width x 60m length field
- 9 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minute game duration



JUNIOR RUGBY FUTURES WORK

PHASE PLAY CONTEST

COMPETING IN PHASE PLAY AND WORKING AS A TEAM

 **Year 5 | Under 10**

To build understanding of continuity, teamwork, and decision-making through multiple phases of play.

Players learn how to link tackles, breakdowns, and ball movement during phase play. Attack and defence flow over several phases, with players experiencing how decisions impact space, support, and competition for possession.



FOCUS

Competing in phase play and working as a team.



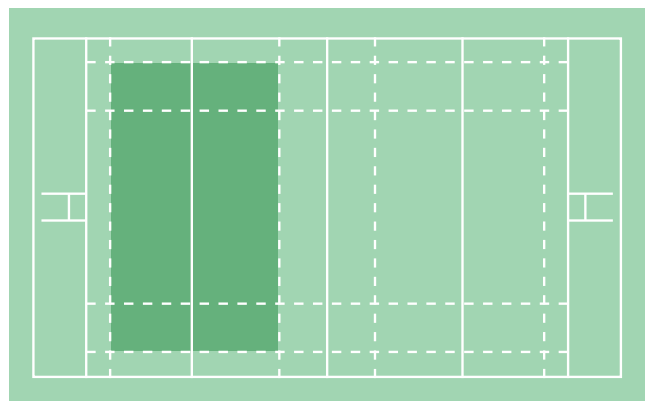
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown



GAME DESIGN

- 35m width x 60m length field
- 9 players per team
- Size 3 Ball
- 40 minutes game duration



JUNIOR RUGBY FUTURES WORK

SET PIECE FOUNDATIONSSTARTING TO EXPLORE LINEOUTS
AND SCRUMS

 **Year 6 & 7 | Under 11 & 12**

To introduce the basic structure, roles, and safety of set pieces while continuing to prioritise player well-being and understanding.

Simple lineout and scrum formats are introduced with a focus on body shape, safe engagement, and role clarity. Players begin to see how set pieces provide structure to the game while still ensuring simplicity and safety.

**FOCUS**

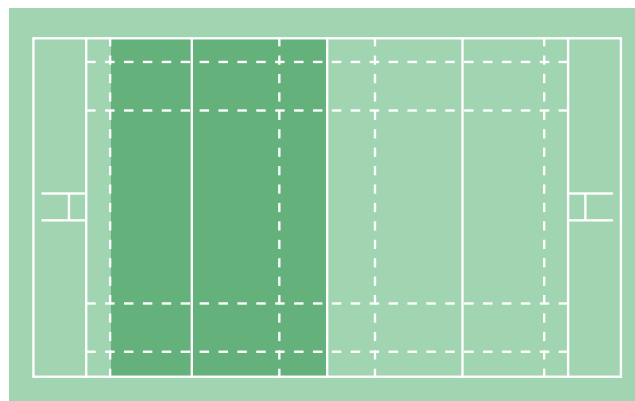
Starting to explore lineouts, scrums, and kick restarts.

**IDENTITIES**

Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout, Kick restarts

**GAME DESIGN**

- 45 m width x 70m length field
- 10 players per team
- Size 4 ball
- 50 minutes game duration



GAME PROGRESSION

PROGRESSING TACTICAL PLAY AND POSITIONAL UNDERSTANDING

 **Year 8 & 9 | Under 13 & 14**

To support players as they begin to identify with positions, develop tactical awareness, and apply set-piece structures within attack and defence.

Players start learning positional roles and responsibilities, both in open play and at set piece. Tactical understanding develops as they connect teamwork, strategy, and decision-making, progressing toward the full game



FOCUS

Progressing tactical play and positional understanding.



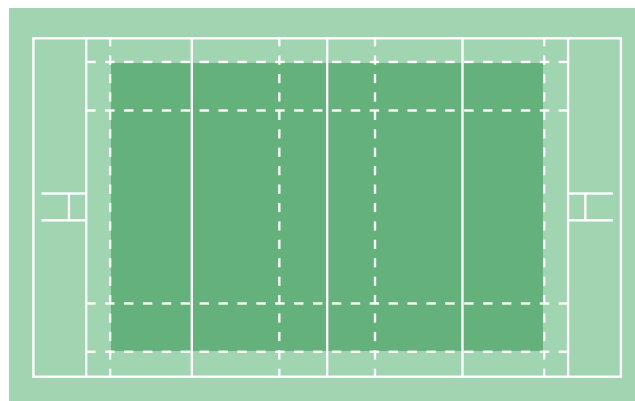
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout, Kick restarts



GAME DESIGN

- 60 m width x 90 m length field
- 13 players per team
- Size 4 ball
- 60 minutes game duration



YOUTH RUGBY DEVELOPMENT

FULL RUGBY

PLAYING THE COMPLETE GAME WITH ALL ITS IDENTITIES CONTESTED UNDER NZR DSLV

 **Year 10 | Under 15**

To prepare players for ongoing rugby participation with a solid foundation in skills, safety, and understanding of the complete game.

Players now experience the full game of rugby, including all set pieces, positional play, and tactical elements. The focus is on applying the skills and understanding developed throughout the pathway, setting them up for lifelong enjoyment and involvement in rugby and ensure we maintain and grow a thriving community game.



FOCUS

Playing the complete game with all its identities.



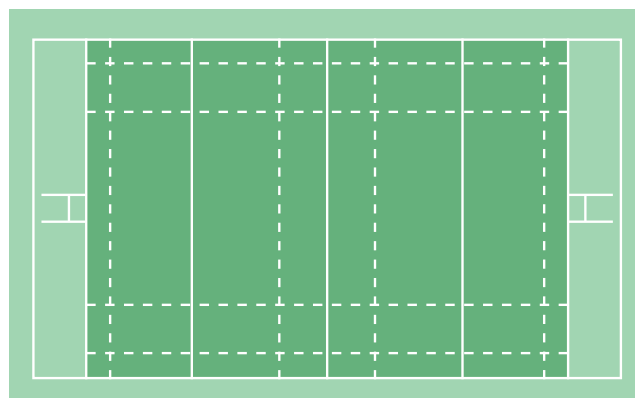
IDENTITIES

Attack, Defence, Phase play, Breakdown, Scrum, Lineout, Kick restarts



GAME DESIGN

- 70 m width x 100 m length field
- 15 players per team
- Size 4 ball
- 70 minutes game duration





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