

# RFU REGULATION 15 – AGE GRADE RUGBY

(For Age Grades U7 – U18)

## 15.1 Age Grade & Dispensations

- 15.1.1 A player's age grade is determined by their age at midnight on 31 August at the beginning of each Season and that age grade applies for the whole season. At U17 and U18 elite level only the age limit is determined at midnight on 31 December of that season.
- 15.1.2 Players may only play contact rugby with other players of their age grade unless they have a dispensation to play with players from a different age grade as set out in these Regulations.

*Note: Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that player safety is not compromised when applying any of these dispensations since players of different age grades and development will be playing together and the duty of care owed to players means it may not always be appropriate to allow a player to take advantage of a dispensation.*

- 15.1.3 When playing in Fixtures or Festivals, the Club or School must inform the coaches and match officials of opposing teams in advance of any dispensation being applied and identify each player concerned.
- 15.1.4 The following dispensations apply:
- 15.1.4.1 In Mini and Midi Rugby (Under 7 – Under 12) players shall play in their own age grade unless one of the following dispensations apply:

(a) Training Dispensation

During internal Club or School training, players may train together and play internal training matches together in the following groups only:

- (i) Under 7 and Under 8 squads;
- (ii) Under 9 and Under 10 squads,
- (iii) Under 11 and Under 12 squads.

(b) RFU Special Dispensation

The vast majority of children, with correct coaching, can play in their correct age grades but in exception circumstances, where the safety of the child may be compromised due a developmental disability (physical or behavioural), application may be made to the RFU for an individual dispensation permitting a player to play down one age grade. Such dispensation will last for only one Season. Application for such dispensation should be submitted to the RFU Company Secretary and Legal Officer and should be accompanied by documentary evidence or signed statements confirming the player's disability.

For the avoidance of doubt, special dispensations to play outside of their true age grade will not be granted to players merely because they appear to have skills inferior or superior to their team mates.

(c) 6 Year Old Player Dispensation

To encourage recruitment, children may enter the Under 7 age grade immediately they attain their sixth birthday. Players aged 6 or over may not however take advantage of this dispensation if it will result in their training or playing with Under 9s playing in an Under 8 team under Regulation 15.1.4.1(b).

For avoidance of doubt players joining the Under 7 age grade during the season in accordance with this dispensation must remain in the Under 7 age grade for the following season in order to comply with Regulation 15.1.1.

(d) 12 Year Old Player Dispensation

In addition to any Team Dispensation, where a School or Club does not have enough players to form an Under 12 squad, Under 12 players may play with an Under 13 side but only with written parental consent. A Club or School may use this dispensation if it has more Under 12 players than are required to complete a squad.

(e) Special Dispensation for Schools & Clubs with a Small Number of Players

(1) Dispensation:

- (i) To allow age bands rather than single age grades. I.e. U7s with U8s; 9s with U10s; U11s with U12s;
- (ii) Dispensation to be for one season at a time;
- (iii) Teams to play in Rules of Play for the younger age grade. i.e. Under 7 Mini Tag; Under 9 Mini Rugby; Under 11 Midi Rugby;
- (iv) No more than half the players on the pitch at any time in a game should be from the older age grade;
- (v) Teams can play in friendly fixtures after advising the opposition and gaining their consent;
- (vi) Teams cannot take part in competitive Festivals (unless they comply with the existing Age Grade regulations);
- (vii) The Age Grade Dispensations 15.1.4.1 (a) and (b) are not applicable to those granted this Special Dispensation;
- (viii) For the purpose of this dispensation a 'team' means 10 players for U7/U8, 14 players for U9/U10 and 18 players for U11/12.

(2) Approval:

To be considered by the RFU Company Secretary and Legal Officer upon receipt of:-

- (i) Application from the Club/School Secretary with a signed declaration showing numbers of players in each age grade;
- (ii) This to be supported and countersigned by an officer of the Constituent Body RDP (7-18 Chair) or RDO;
- (iii) A declaration by the age group Coach(s) that the children in the proposed age grouping are capable of playing in the proposed amalgamated two year age banding.

(3) Conditions:

- (i) The age group Coach should be qualified and have completed an appropriate safeguarding course or training.
- (ii) The coach must discuss with the parents, the differences in physical development of all the children in the proposed age band and how it affects their child before obtaining their consent.
- (iii) The parents must be fully briefed by the coach concerned on how their child could cope with the differences in physical development between the children in their two year age band.

- (f) Additional dispensations are available to IAPS schools which are listed in the IAPS Handbook

## **GUIDELINES TO REGULATIONS 15.1.4.2-15.1.4.5**

### **1. Playing out of Age Grade**

- 1.1 The decision to allow a young person to play out of age grade lies with the person in the best position to assess all the relevant circumstances and they must obtain permission from the player's parent, guardian or head teacher.
- 1.2 When making a decision the following aspects should be considered:
  - (a) The physical development, skill level and experience of the individual and his playing colleagues
  - (b) The individual's playing position in the team
  - (c) The competitive standard of a particular match or training session(s) or series of matches and playing conditions (if approval is not being given for the season)
- 1.3 The ultimate consideration must be for the welfare and safety of the player and those with whom he will be playing.

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| 1.4 | There must be clear communication with all those involved in and affected by the decision. |
| 1.5 | Clear and complete records must be kept of decisions taken and the bases for them.         |

15.1.4.2 In Youth Rugby (Under 13 – Under 18) players shall play in their own age grade unless they fall within one of the following exceptions:

- (a) Very talented or physically developed players in the U13, U14, U15 and U18 age grades may play up one age grade with appropriate permission;
- (b) Those in the U16 and U17 age grades may play up two age grades;
- (c) In very exceptional circumstances, where a young person's safety may be compromised due to a developmental disability (physical or behavioural) that young person may play down one age grade;
- (d) An England Academy Player may play up into a higher age grade if the RFU Head of Elite Player Development has given his specific written consent.

15.1.4.3 A Club or School team may not play or select as a replacement or substitute an U19 player within their team if an U16 player plays or is selected as a replacement or substitute for any team in the same match.

15.1.4.4 Players may not play adult rugby, or train with other adults, until they have reached their eighteenth birthday unless they comply with one of the following exceptions:

- (a) players who are aged 17 may play adult (including Under 20) rugby and train with adults provided they have been assessed as capable of playing with adults and the RFU's playing adult rugby form has been duly completed and signed. This exception does not apply to playing in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages either during training or in a match, where (subject to (b) and (c) below) there is an absolute prohibition on players under the age of 18 playing in adult rugby;
- (b) players who are aged 17 who are England Academy Players may play and train in the front row of the scrum during contested or uncontested scrummages when playing adult rugby if the RFU Head of Elite Player Development has given his specific written consent. Such consent must be given for playing or training;
- (c) players playing up one or two age grades pursuant to Regulation 15.1.4.2 (a) or (c) are permitted to play in the front row of the scrum even if they have not reached the age of 18 notwithstanding the fact that at U18 and U19 age grade rugby they may be playing with or against players who have reached the age of 18;

- (d) players of all sexes and of any age may train or play together in non-contact variations of rugby, providing the organizer has assessed the session as safe for all players:
- (e) players who are 16 who are England Academy Players may play adult rugby if the RFU Head of Elite Player Development has given his specific written consent. Such consent must be given for playing or training.

15.1.4.5 Permission to play must be obtained, and recorded in the RFU's playing adult rugby form (a copy of which must be kept), from either the player's parent, guardian or head teacher before any person under the age of 18 plays adult rugby or plays with players who are not in the same annual age banding. When assessing whether a player under 18 is capable of playing adult rugby, those responsible for making the decision must take account of the guidelines at paragraphs 1.1 – 1.5 below. Breach of RFU Regulation 15.1.4.4 and/or 15.1.4.5 will be regarded very seriously by the RFU, the sanctions for which are set out in Appendix 2 of RFU Regulation 19.

15.1.4.6 The RFU playing adult rugby form must be retained by the Club, County or other rugby body for whom he plays and sent to the RFU, or as it directs, immediately upon request by the RFU.

15.1.5 In girls Rugby (U15 and U18) the following shall apply:

- (a) The Under 15 age grade takes into account players aged 12, 13 and 14 on 1st September.
- (b) The Under 18 age grade takes into account players aged 15, 16 or 17 on September 1st.
- (c) There will be NO dispensations allowed between age grades. The RFU's age grades differ from the RFU's in that they cover three year age bands. Following consultation with the RFU/RFU's insurers we have been informed that insurance cover will not be extended to those girls playing outside their specific age band. There will be no exceptions therefore to the age band regulations.

## **15.2 Player Eligibility and Player Registration**

15.2.1 Each Club must ensure all its Age Grade players complete the RFU Youth Player Registration Form and are registered on the RFU's Rugby First system within 45 days of their first joining the Club.

15.2.2 Registration cards and copies of any special dispensations issued by the RFU should be taken to each Club match or festival. Team managers must produce these documents for inspection by the opposition or match officials if requested.

15.2.3 A player may qualify to represent an Age Grade team in any Constituent Body for that season if he meets one of the following criteria:

- (a) he attends a School or affiliated to that Constituent Body;

- (b) during part or all of that season he resides in that Constituent Body;
- (c) he was born in that Constituent Body;
- (d) he is a registered playing member of a Club affiliated to that Constituent Body;
- (e) he played for that Constituent Body in a representative fixture the previous season.

15.2.4 Membership of a Constituent Body’s School of Rugby or an Academy does not entitle a player to play for that Constituent Body if he does not satisfy one of the previous four criteria.

15.2.5 Where a player has not been selected for the Constituent Body for which he is eligible the Divisional Chairman of Selectors may allow him to play for another Constituent Body for which he is not qualified if it is in the interests of the player’s development.

### 15.3 Rules of Play and Law Variations

15.3.1 Where no Law Variations have been made by the RFU, the IRB Laws of the Game apply.

15.3.2 The Rugby Under 7 to Under 12 Rules of Play includes playing rules for Mini-Midi Rugby at each age grade in Appendix 1.

15.3.3 Youth Rugby is played in accordance with the U19 Law Variations of the IRB and any RFU ELVs in force which are set out in Appendix 2.

### 15.4 Season

The Season dates and requirements are set out in RFU Regulation 11 “The Season”.

### 15.5 Duration of Matches and Sessions

15.5.1 Players aged under 18 shall not play more than the maximum number of games in one day as tabulated below:

	Single Fixture			Festival		
	Minutes e/w	Max Games	Total Playing Time	Minutes e/w	Max Games	Total Playing Time
<b>U7/U8</b>	10	1	20	5	5	50
<b>U9/U10</b>	15	1	30	6	5	60
<b>U11/U12</b>	20	1	40	7	5	70
<b>U13/U14</b>	25	1	50	10*	4*	80*
<b>U15</b>	30	1	60	9*	5*	90*
<b>U16 plus</b>	35	1	70	9*	5*	90*

NB: \* = only for 15-a-side Festivals

15.5.2 No extra time is permitted in any match except that added for injury time.

- 15.5.3 Matches must be brought to an end if
- (a) at Under 7s to Under 12s the try difference rises to more than six; or
  - (b) at Under 13s to Under 18s the points difference is more than 50 points unless both teams are in agreement to continue.
- 15.5.4 In Mini and Midi Rugby Fixtures, coaching and training sessions (including time devoted to match play) must last no longer than the following:
- (a) Under 7 and Under 8: 60 minutes
  - (b) Under 9 and Under 10: 90 minutes
  - (c) Under 11 and Under 12: 120 minutes

## 15.6 Fixtures, Festivals & Competitions

### General

- 15.6.1 Festivals and Competitions may be played at any time within the Season subject to the approval of the Constituent Body or CSU in which the festival is played. Subject to RFU Regulation 11 – The Season, any U18 pre-season practice match or Festival must be approved by the RFU for clubs and ERFSU for schools.

*Note: Constituent Bodies are expected to keep the number of such Festivals under close scrutiny and maintain the teaching of the game as the main purpose of age grade rugby.*

- 15.6.2 All National Schools' Festivals may only take place if permitted by the permission of the ERFSU. All National Clubs' Festivals may only take place if permitted by the RFU Company Secretary and Legal Officer.

*Note: For the purposes of 15.6.2 above a Festival is considered to be "National" if participating Clubs or Schools are drawn from more than just neighbouring Constituent Bodies and there are more than six entrants.*

### Mini & Midi Rugby

- 15.6.3 In Mini and Midi Rugby maximum squad sizes should be:

- (a) Under 7 and Under 8 – 10 players;
- (b) Under 9 and Under 10 – 14 players;
- (c) Under 11 and Under 12 – 18 players.

Teams can participate with less than this number should they wish.

- 15.6.4 In Mini and Midi Rugby Festival organisers may not exclude players who have a valid dispensation.
- 15.6.5 Each player in the Under 7 – Under 12 Age Grade is limited to playing in not more than:

- (a) 17 Fixtures and/or Festivals during a season; and
  - (b) 1 Festival during the same weekend, during which teams are only permitted to play in a maximum of 5 games.  
The combination of fixtures and festivals should not exceed 17 in order to allow for adequate training and coaching to take place.
- 15.6.6 In Mini and Midi Rugby Clubs and Schools must maintain a record of how many Fixtures and Festivals are played by each player to ensure they are not exceeding these limits.
- 15.6.7 Where Clubs or Schools have large squads, additional Fixtures and/or Festivals may be arranged, provided no player plays in more than the maximum number referred to in Regulation 15.6.5 above.

## 15.7 Pitches & Equipment

15.7.1 The maximum pitch size and ball size is:

Age grade	Pitch size (metres)	Ball size
Under 7 and Under 8	60 x 30 + 5 m for ingoal area	3
Under 9 and Under 10	60 x 35 + 5 m for ingoal areas	3 at U9; 4 at U10
Under 11 and Under 12	60 x 43 + 5 m for ingoal areas*	4
U13-U14	See IRB Law 1	4
U15-U18	See IRB Law 1	5

\* = Provision should be made to indicate the position of the line 15 metres out from each goal line, serving a similar purpose to the 22 metre line in the IRB Laws of the Game.

- 15.7.2 Reduced pitch sizes are acceptable provided this is agreed between the officiating referee and coaches, and the smaller pitches do not materially increase the risk of injury to players.
- 15.7.3 Adjacent pitches should be no closer than 5 metres.
- 15.7.4 Players studs and clothing during training and matches must comply with IRB Regulatory requirements.
- 15.7.5 Players playing age grades U7 to U8 only may wear specially designed and manufactured “goggles” provided the child’s optician certifies that:
- (a) They only allow the player to have properly corrected vision and do not substantially restrict any normal field of vision.
  - (b) They do not constitute a physical danger to the wearer or other players.

## 15.8 Discipline

Disciplinary Matters relating to Schools and Club youth rugby up to and including U18 teams shall be undertaken in accordance with Appendix 6 of RFU Regulation 19.