

IRFU Age Grade Rugby (Mini Rugby) – 2026/27 Season

Age group depends on DOB. See Policies document .	Under 6/ Under 7	Under 8	Under 9 & Under 10	Under 11 & Under 12	Under 12 (all players must be aged 11)
	<i>Rugby Prime (Leprechaun Rugby)</i>	<i>Mini Rugby 1</i>	<i>Mini Rugby 2</i>	<i>Mini Rugby 3</i>	<i>Mini Rugby 4</i>
Ball size	3	3	3	4	4
Maximum time per half – Single match	Can vary from 5 minutes each way to 10 or 15 minutes each way.	15 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes	20 minutes
Maximum time per half – Festivals/Events	As above.	7 minutes	7 minutes	7 minutes	7 minutes
Maximum time	60 minutes	60 minutes	70 minutes	70 minutes	70 minutes

a squad/ team is allowed to play per day/event					
Minimum time allowed for half time	Not applicable	1 minute	1 minute	1 minute	1 minute
Max no of players per team	Can vary from 4-a-side to 8/10-a-side. Emphasis on skills, inclusion of all participants, safety and enjoyment.	8	8	10	12
No of forwards	Not applicable	Not applicable	3	5	6
No of backs	Not applicable	Not applicable	5	5	6
Safety zone betw. pitches	6 metres	6 metres	6 metres	6 metres	6 metres
Tackle height	Tagging only of the ball carrier with two hands (one on each side of the hips). Ball carrier must	Coaches to teach correct technique. Waist high – penalty for tackles above the waist.	Coaches to teach correct technique. Waist high – penalty for tackles above the waist.	Coaches to teach correct technique. Waist high – penalty for tackles above the waist.	Coaches to teach correct technique. Waist high – penalty for tackles above the waist.

	then pass backwards within a maximum of 3 steps or stop, turn and present the ball to support player.	Dangerous tackles (e.g. High/Swinging/Dump tackle) penalised immediately.	Dangerous tackles (e.g. High/Swinging/Dump tackle) penalised immediately.	Dangerous tackles (e.g. High /Swinging/Dump tackle) penalised immediately.	Dangerous tackles (e.g. High/ Swinging /Dump tackle) penalised immediately
Ripping / Tackling the ball	Not applicable.	Not allowed and will be penalised.	Not allowed and will be penalised.	Not allowed and will be penalised.	Not allowed and will be penalised.
Hand off	Not allowed. Carry ball in two hands.	Not allowed. Carry ball in two hands.	Not allowed. Carry ball in two hands.	Not allowed. Carry ball in two hands.	Below shoulder.
Maul – number of players	Not applicable	No more than 3	No more than 3	No more than 3	No more than 4
Rucks number of players	Not applicable	Ruck - Max 1 player from each team are in contact, on feet, over the ball. 1 v 1.	Ruck - Max 1 player from each team are in contact, on feet, over the ball. 1 v 1.	Ruck - Max 2 players from each team are in contact, on feet, over the ball. 2v2	Ruck - Max 2 players from each team are in contact, on feet, over the ball.2v2.
Rucks & mauls time allowed	Not applicable	5 seconds 'Use it or lose it' rule applies. Illegal to collapse a maul Referee/Coach to count down "5, 4,	5 seconds 'Use it or lose it' rule applies. Illegal to collapse a maul Referee/Coach to count down "5, 4, 3,	5 seconds 'Use it or lose it' rule applies. Illegal to collapse a maul. Referee/Coach to	5 seconds 'Use it or lose it' rule applies. Illegal to collapse a maul. Referee /Coach to

		3, 2, and 1” from moment ruck/maul is formed.	2, and 1” from moment ruck/maul is formed.	count down “5, 4, 3, 2, and 1” from moment ruck/maul is formed.	count down “5, 4, 3, 2, and 1” from moment ruck/maul is formed.
Kicking in play	Not applicable	Not allowed.	Not allowed.	Defence zone only.	Defence zone only.
Start match	Pass-off with the referee indicating the mark. Opposition must be 5 to 10 m away.	Pass-off: Must be off the ground and after the referee’s whistle.	Pass-Off: Must be off the ground and after the referee’s whistle.	Drop kick on halfway.	Drop kick on halfway.
Method of scoring	Try	Try	Try	Try	Try
Line-out	Not applicable	Not applicable	3 players incl. thrower. All ‘forwards’ must be involved in lineout. No lifting allowed.	5 players incl. thrower. All ‘forwards’ must be involved in lineout. No lifting allowed.	6 players incl. thrower. All ‘forwards’ must be involved in lineout. No lifting allowed.
Scrum	Not applicable	Not applicable	3 players. Uncontested Players must stay bound until scrum is over.	5 Players – 3 front, 2 second rows. Uncontested. Strike allowed by receiving team only	6 Players – 3 front, 2 second rows, 1 back row. Uncontested Strike allowed by receiving team only.

				Players must stay bound.	Players must stay bound
Pitch size	Can vary from 10m x 20m to 30m x 40m and or 50m x 70m depending on no. of participants.	Minimum 40m x 30m	Minimum 60m x 40m	Minimum 70m x 40m	Minimum 70m x 40m

IRFU Age Grade Rugby (Game Regulation Variations Schools & Youths Rugby)

Age Category	U13	U14	U15	U16	U17	U18	U19
Max. Match Duration	50 min.	50 min.	60 min.	60 min.	70 min.	70 min.	70 min.
Injury time	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extra time:	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Ball size	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
Line out: Pre-grip	No	No	*No	*Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Line out: Lifting	No	No	No*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Lifting also allowed at Medallion Schools (Under 15) level in Ulster.

Scrum: Push	1.5m only	1.5m only	1.5m only	1.5m only	1.5m only	1.5m only	1.5m only
Scrum: Wheel & reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset	45 Degrees & Reset

Must have the same number of forwards in the scrum, if a forward is carded – opposition must reduce numbers – if a back line player is carded no reduction in forwards. Must have the following format: Full scrum: **3-4-1**. In the event of yellow card(s): then **3-4/** then **3-2-1/** then **3-2**

Maul - Use or Lose Application	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Squeeze Ball	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed

Squeeze ball: Sanction Penalty Kick

Yellow Card	No	5 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes	7 minutes	7 minutes	7minutes
Red Card	Yes, player to be	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

	replaced						
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Yellow cards are not applicable in matches refereed by club and school affiliate referees. Incidents where players are ordered off must be reported to the relevant branch.

Substitutes: (7 +) Front Row cover	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations	Must have front row cover i.e. 6 front row players See Law 3.5 U19 Variations
Blood Substitutes:	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Blood Substitutes: Player if returning must do so within 15 minutes.

There is no Head Injury Assessment (HIA) in domestic rugby. Players with suspected concussion must be removed and must not return to play that day [Recognise & Remove]. They must enter the IRFU Graduated Return To Play Protocols.

Under no circumstances can rolling substitutions be used for assessment of suspected concussion. A player removed with a suspected concussion is injured and permanently replaced.