



Women's IRFU Long Term Player Development – Stage 2, 3, 4 U14, U16, U18 Rules and Regulations (2026/2027 Season)

Regulation & Stage	<u>STAGE</u> <u>2</u> U14	<u>STAGE</u> <u>3</u> U16	<u>STAGE</u> <u>4</u> U18	Notes
Date of Eligibility (2026/2027 Season)	Anyone born 2014 & 2013	Anyone born 2012 & 2011	Anyone born 2010, 2009 & 1/7/08–31/12/08	Girl's rugby is split into 3 age groups, each containing two age categories. Any player in the third age category, wishing to play up, must provide written consent from 1. Parents/Guardians, 2. Club Welfare Officer, 3. Club Youth Coordinator as per Consent Form. Girls Mini Rugby teams play in a two-year age band i.e. U8, U10 & U12. The next available age band is U14. It is not permissible for a player in the U12 age band to play at the U14 age band.
Ball size	4	4	4	Must be adhered to.
Maximum time per single match.	50 min	60 min	70 min	Injury time permitted No extra time
Maximum time per half – Festivals/Events	7 min	10 min	10 min	No injury or extra time allowed
Maximum time a squad/	70 min.	80 min.	90 min.	No injury or extra time allowed

team is allowed to play per festival/event				
Minimum time allowed for half time	1 min	1 min	1 min	
Pitch Size	Full pitch out to 5m lines	Full pitch	Full pitch	Full pitch out to 5m lines if 13 aside at Stage 3
No of players per team	Up to 13 aside	Up to 15 aside	15 aside	Equal numbers on both teams – emphasis on participation, player development & enjoyment. Provincial rules and regs dictate competition regulations.
No of forwards	6	8	8	
No of backs	7	7	7	
Tackle	Yes	Yes	Yes	Dangerous Tackles (e.g. High / Swinging / Dump tackle) to be penalised immediately & player warned.
Hand off	Not on Face	Not on Face	Not on Face	Players should be encouraged to carry the ball in two hands.

Time allowed for rucks & mauls	The 5 seconds “Use it or Lose it” rule applies.	The 5 seconds “Use it or Lose it” rule applies.	The 5 seconds “Use it or Lose it” rule applies.	
Squeeze Ball	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	
Kicking in Play	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Start match	Drop Kick on Half Way	Drop Kick on Half Way	Drop Kick on Half Way	
Method of scoring	Try & Conversions	Try & Conversions	Try & Conversions	Conversions, penalty kicks and drop kicks allowed if playing on a full pitch. For U14 & U16, all conversions to be taken between the 15m lines, (i.e. the conversion for any try scored between the side-line and the 15m line, shall be taken where the 15m line and the 22m line meet).
Line out	*6 Players (inc. Thrower) No lifting Contest allowed.	8 Players (inc. Thrower) Full lineout lift allowed	8 Players Max (inc. Thrower) Full lineout lift allowed	*All “forwards” must be involved in lineout.
Scrum	6 Players Uncontested. Strike allowed by	*8 Players U19 Law Variations	8 Players U19 Law Variations apply	*These are guidelines, but their application is at the discretion of each province.

	receiving team only. Players must stay bound	apply		
Yellow Card	N/A	5 mins *	7 mins *	If playing blitzes/shorter matches, the sin bin is reduced to 2 mins.
Red Card	Yes, player to be replaced	Yes	Yes	

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**

Rolling subs allowed.

Incidents where players are ordered off (foul play) must be dealt with, as agreed by the Branch.

Variations;

- In Stage 2, if a team are unable to field 13 aside then 10 aside or XRugby format should be used (i.e. Cross pitch 7 aside). Scrums and lineouts are reduced to 5 v 5 or 3 v 3. Rolling subs applies so that all players participate. Penalty kicks for touch are allowed if on a full-size pitch. Tap and play if on a half pitch.
- In Stage 3, if a team are unable to field 15 aside then 13 aside format should be used. If still unable to play, both teams drop to 10 aside. Scrums and lineouts may reduce in accordance with the playing numbers on the pitch. Rolling subs applies so that all players participate. Penalty kicks for touch are allowed if on a full pitch.

- 13 aside	Scrums and Lineouts are 6 v 6	Pitch Size	Full pitch out to 5m lines
- 10 aside	Scrums and Lineouts are 5 v 5	Pitch Size	Full pitch out to 5m lines
- XRugby	Scrums and Lineouts are 3 v 3	Pitch Size	Half Pitch
- In Stage 4, if a team are unable to field 15 aside then 13 aside format should be used. If still unable to play, both teams drop to 10 aside. Scrums and lineouts may reduce in accordance with the playing numbers on the pitch. Rolling subs applies so that all players participate. Penalty kicks for touch are allowed if on a full-size pitch. Penalty kicks not allowed if playing on a half pitch. Tap and Go applies.

- 13 aside	Scrums and Lineouts are 6 v 6	Pitch Size	Full pitch
- 10 aside	Scrums and Lineouts are 5 v 5	Pitch Size	Full pitch out to 5m lines
- XRugby	Scrums and Lineouts are 3 v 3	Pitch Size	Half Pitch (See XRugby guidelines)
- Sevens Rugby	Scrums and Lineouts are 3 v 3	Pitch Size	Full Pitch
- These variations are to guide and advise only and should act as a development tool to reaching the overall type of game played as set out in the Women's Long-Term Player Development Model. Provinces may set their own guidelines for their competitions in line with the regulations outlined in this document.
- The coach should become familiar with the information provided for "Coaching Late Beginners" in the Women's Long-Term Player Development Model.