



Physical Contact¹



In rugby there are specific circumstances which may require coaches² to come into physical contact with the children and young people they are working with. However, this contact may be misunderstood or misconstrued by others.

It is important for coaches to understand what is appropriate when it comes to physical contact and to **NEVER** engage in inappropriate touching of any kind.

What are the issues?

Even within the parameters of legitimate coaching, physical contact between a coach and a child can be misunderstood or misinterpreted by young people, parents or other adults. Touching young players, including well-intentioned formal and informal gestures, can lead to questions being raised, especially when repeated.

When is physical contact appropriate?

In general, this will be in the course of teaching age-appropriate skills, particularly where learning safe practice is critical. Examples of this could be the introduction or development of tackling, setting up a scrum, line-out, rucking or mauling.

Coaches may need to step in to prevent or treat an injury or comfort a distressed child.

A young person may wish to celebrate success, for example with a 'high 5'.

Good practice principles:

- Physical contact should always be intended to meet the needs of the child, NOT the adult.
- Physical contact should be appropriate to the age and stage of development. Unnecessary physical contact should be avoided. Clubs should provide players, parents and coaches with guidance about any physical contact that may be required as part of rugby activities.

¹ Updated July 2025

² We use the term '**coach**' when someone is 'working' with a team, however you may have other names or roles such as 'helper', 'assistant', 'manager', etc., but nonetheless you are taking some responsibility for supporting the development of children and young people.

- If the young person is able to execute the skills safely through verbal instruction, there should be no need for physical contact.
- Unless the situation is an emergency, physical contact should take place in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the young person.
- Resistance from a young person should be respected. They should be encouraged to voice any concerns they have to the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- No-one should undertake any form of therapy with children and young people if they are not trained AND appointed by the club for that specific purpose.

For further information please go to Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People In Sport (pages 59-60)

<https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2020-01/safeguarding-guidance.pdf>

All clubs offering rugby to children & young people have a responsibility to safeguard them against harm. Even when you are vigilant & the club operates to a high standard, situations can arise that cause concern. If you are worried about anything you can:



Talk to the Club Welfare Officer



Follow the [Safeguarding Policy](#)

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Irish Rugby Football Union

10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720

T +353 01 6473800 | F +353 01 6473801

www.irishrugby.com



IRFU