

SMALL BLACKS U11 INDIVIDUAL SKILLS



INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

NZ Rugby recommend the following individual skills. Each set of skills are the focus for the below age groups and should be the focus for the coach. But it is unrealistic to presume that the team you are in charge of has all these skills therefore a coach should always work on promoting and developing all the skills. Please note: It is important to understand that many of these skills are progressive and repetitive therefore all levels should include the basics of running, handling and evasion skills.

U11 SKILLS

DRAW AND PASS

Objective: To maintain continuity of play by passing to a teammate in a better position.

Key Factors

- Run straight.
- Hold the ball in two hands.
- Run at defender.
- Look at receiver.
- Swing arms.
- Follow through.
- Pass at chest height in front of receiver.
- Complete pass, support.



Coaching Points

- By running straight down the field or towards the closest defender the passer draws a defender or defenders. The passer commits a defender preventing them from assisting in defence elsewhere.
- Hold ball in two hands
- Look at receiver to assist accuracy of pass.
- A dummy pass may be used to create a gap to run through.
- Turning inside shoulder, thigh and hip to the tackler reduces the risk of injury.
- A straight follow-through to the target by the passing hand reduces error. The elbows and wrists can be used to fine-tune the speed and flight of the pass.

- The standard pass is the preferred option in most instances because it is quicker and easier to catch and pass.
- The spiral pass should be used for greater accuracy and speed when passing over longer distances.
- Players should be equally proficient passing off either hand.
- By following through, the passer is able to guide the ball to the target area. This is at about chest height just in front of the receiver. The receiver is therefore able to catch the ball without reducing running speed. In addition, the catcher is able to catch the ball without looking down. This will enable the ball to be caught while observing opponents.
- Once the pass has been made, the passer should support the receiver.
- A pass is only as good as the ease with which it can be caught.

Common Errors

- Running with the pass.
- Not having a straight follow-through.
- Not passing to target area.
- Over-use of spiral pass.

PICKING UP THE BALL

Objectives: To safely secure the ball, assess and initiate best available option.

Key Factors

- Move forward toward the ball, side-on.
- Bend knees and present hard parts of body to opposition.
- Front foot past ball.
- Wide balanced base.
- Secure the ball with both hands.
- Assess and initiate continuity options.



Coaching Points

- Move into the ball maintaining balance.
- Approach the ball side-on keeping eyes on the ball.
- Present hard parts of body to opposition on pick up e.g. hips and shoulders to claim space around ball.
- Front foot should be placed ahead of the ball. Low body position, wide stance aids stability.

BASIC KICK

Objectives: To apply pressure to opposition by putting the ball into touch, gaining field position or restarting the game.

Key Factors

- Eyes on ball.
- Head and shoulders still, hold ball at 30° angle.
- Step forward, plant non-kicking foot.
- Place ball onto the foot with dominant hand, i.e. right hand to right foot.
- Swing leg straight through. Maintain balance on non-kicking foot.
- Lock ankle, point toe downward at contact.
- Follow through with kicking foot, opposite arm extended.
- Return to normal balanced stance.



Coaching Points

- Stand in relaxed balanced position.
- Right shoulder forward for left foot kicker.
- Left shoulder forward for right foot kicker.
- Hold the ball in two hands, so its long axis is aligned at 30° with the kicking foot, to maximise foot contact.
- Step forward and plant non-kicking foot in direction of the kick.
- Swing the kicking foot through the line of the ball, place ball on the foot striking it at 30° along its long axis.
- Contact ball with 'bootlaces' or upper foot.
- Follow through with the kicking foot to maximise length of kick and to spiral the ball.
- Extend the arm on the opposite side of the body for balance.
- Returning to normal stance indicates that the follow through has been straight and balanced.

Common Errors

- Lifting head too early.
- Turning shoulders at point of contact with the ball.
- Trying to kick too far.
- Trying to kick too hard losing timing, balance and power.
- Throwing the ball in the air to kick.
- Making contact with the ball too late.

DRIBBLING

Objective: To control the ball at the player's feet.

Key Factors

- Eyes on ball.
- Body front on to ball.
- Weight forward on balls of feet.
- Controlled short kicks with instep.



Coaching Points

- Run towards ball.
- Keep square to the ball if at all possible.
- Keep eyes and head over the ball for control.
- Use short follow-through and look to regain the ball from the kick.
- When using the kick, regaining possession is paramount.
- Fall on ball to score or regain.

Common Errors

- Kicking too hard.
- Kicking to opposition player.
- Not following kick through.
- Over-running ball.

SIDE-ON TACKLE

Objective: To stop forward momentum of the ball carrier. To regain possession of the ball.

Key Factors

- Sight target
- Eyes up
- Feet alive
- Head behind
- Brace/contact/stick
- Thrust and Squeeze
- Use legs
- Bounce up



Coaching Points

It's important to focus on elements that will keep the player safe! Feet movement; head on correct side with shoulder on; and eyes up and open. Less focus on power, driving and dominating at this level.

- By positioning inside the ball carrier this limits the ball carrier's options.
- By having the 'eyes up', the tackler can sight the target and make adjustments before impact. Sight body, not ball.
- The tackler should position as close to the ball carrier as possible before making contact with shoulder and driving with the legs.
- For effective tackle, contact is made with the shoulder at core level with head behind the buttock.
- Once the tackle has been completed the tackler should regain feet and re-enter play, by attempting to regain possession or returning to position.

Common Errors

- Waiting for the ball carrier to come to you.
- Eyes closed.
- Head down, and on wrong side, or in front.
- Diving into a tackle i.e. front-on, feet leaving the ground.
- Not using arms to wrap.
- Lack of urgency to regain feet.

Falling In The Tackle

1. Ball in two hands.
2. Position ball away from point of contact, turn toward support during contact.
3. Stay on feet as long as possible.
4. Tuck shoulder under and roll onto upper back.
5. Position body between the ball and opposition.

SIDE-STEP

Objective: To evade opponents while running, without becoming isolated.

Key Factors

- Ball in two hands.
- Run toward defender
- Change pace and/or direction of movement.
- Position ball away from defender.
- Accelerate into the space.



Coaching Points

- Run towards defender's inside shoulder.
- Shorten stride for timing and balance.
- Change direction close to them by pushing sideways powerfully off the right foot to go left and the left foot to go right.
- Accelerate to take advantage of the defender hesitation.

Common Errors

- Not running at the defender.
- Changing direction too early or too late.
- Not accelerating forward immediately after the sideways movement.

PREPARING YOUR SIDE FOR CONTACT

It is important that you prepare your players, both technically and physically, before they are placed in contact situations.

Children in this age group can profit from general strength and conditioning activities. The resistance of the child's own body weight is adequate to create physical development, eg. press -ups, sit-ups, squats, chin-ups, etc.

Contact should not be the first option of the player running with the ball so a coach should work with their players on the following skills.

1. Evasion skills - refer side-step
2. Passing skills - refer basic pass
3. Running at sides of defenders

When the coach is confident that their players are ready for contact they should use bags and shields to build up the contact skills before moving onto direct contact with other players.

Players should be wearing mouthguards for games and all contact practice situations. Consider:

- Pace of activity
- Matching size of players
- Matching maturity of players
- Distance and speed of contact

Players should practice the pre-contact, contact, post-contact and falling in the tackle body positions.

Pre-Contact

- 1 Options to avoid contact
- 2 Focus on contact zone
- 3 Ball in two hands
- 4 Low body position
- 5 Body before ball
- 6 Small steps on approach
- 7 Wide 'power' step into contact



At Contact

- 1 Contact side-on with hard parts of body
- 2 Maintain low stable base
- 3 Turn towards support on contact

Post-Contact

- 1 If falling to ground, roll onto upper back
- 2 Position body between the ball and opposition
- 3 Consider options

Choose a number of appropriate drills for these skills.

Introducing the Skill of Tackling

When teaching tackling, you should consider the following:

There are a number of progressive stages for introducing the tackle to young players. By practicing 'one on one' players will develop good technique and confidence. The following progressions can be used for all types of tackles.

Note: The use of tackle bags and hit shield are not recommended for this progressive learning stage.

1. Ball carrier kneeling - Tackler kneeling
2. Ball carrier standing - Tackler kneeling
3. Ball carrier walking - Tackler walking
4. Ball carrier jogging - Tackler jogging
5. Ball carrier running - Tackler running

CORE SKILLS

Running with ball

Basic pass

Receiving pass

Ball familiarisation



UNIT SKILLS

THE LINEOUT (5)

At this grade, the lineout should be seen as a restart of play. Jumping at this grade is an important hand-eye coordination skill and should be encouraged.

Note: On the number of players who can participate in the lineout, there must be 5 from each side.

The Thrower

The types of throwing-in will vary at this level because of the strength and size of the individual executing this skill. Use an underarm throw for younger players or the conventional overhead throw for more capable players. (Reducing the 5m lines to 3m also helps).

Overhead	Underarm
1. Fingers spread on the ball.	1. Fingers spread on the ball.
2. Ball held directly above the head.	2. Ball held down by thighs.
3. Push elbows forward.	3. Push elbows outwards and lean slightly forward.
4. Power to come from wrist and forearm.	4. Power comes from swinging motion from waist and arms.
5. Follow through.	5. Follow through.

The skill of throwing, while unique to each individual, should, to be successful, demonstrate the following key factors:

Common Errors

- Timing is out.
- Misread call.
- Arm action affecting ball's flight.

The Jumper

Lineouts in this grade are uncontested, except in U11s but we recommend that all lineouts are thrown in straight and the jumper does attempt to jump for the ball.

The objective is to develop the skill but still ensure possession for the team throwing in. There is no lineout lifting.

Key Factors

- Understand options.
- Drive upward.
- Eyes on ball.
- Soft hands.
- Controlled delivery.

Coaching Points

- Two-foot take-off ideal for timing.
- Drive up towards the ball by starting low and driving up with arms.
- Catch with soft hand so the ball is not tapped in an uncontrolled way.

Common Errors

- Snatching at ball.
- Mistimed jump.
- Misunderstood call.

THE SCRUM (5)

The scrum at this level should be seen as a restart of play for the non-offending team. Nevertheless, it is always necessary to ensure safety at all times when forming scrums. There is no contesting or pushing in scrums at this level.

Pre-Engagement and Engagement

- Before the two front rows come together they must be standing not more than an arm's length apart.

- Props bind with the hooker anywhere between armpit and hip. Hookers bind anywhere between armpit and hip or on top of Props shoulder blades.
- Position correctly on referee's call.
"Crouch"
- Sink down into a crouch position, face in neutral position, eyes open, looking forward.
- The front rows must interlock (Ear to Ear) so that no player's head is next to the head of a team-mate. Crouched and bound.
- Feet, hips and shoulders are all square.
- Bend at the hips and knees.
- Shoulders above hips at all time.
- Back straight - spine in line.
- Weight off the heels and on balls of feet.
- Referee will call "BIND"
- Using their outside arm each prop must bind.
- A loose head prop must bind on the opposing tight head prop by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the tight head and gripping the tight head prop's jersey on the back or side.
- A tight head prop must bind on the opposing loose head prop by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the opposing loose head prop and gripping the loose head prop's jersey with the right hand only on the back or side.
- The props must not grip the opponent's chest, arm, sleeve, or collar.
- Following a pause the referee will then call "set" when the front rows are ready.
- The front rows may then engage. (The "set" call is not a command but an indication that the front rows may come together when ready.)

How To Build A Front Row

- The hooker should stand on the mark, slightly bent at the knees and hips. (Weight is on the balls of their feet).
- The loosehead prop should approach the hooker from the rear, they should reach behind the hooker and bind on the hip area at the top of shorts, slightly in front. They should then move forward so their shoulders, hips and feet are parallel (square) with the hookers.
- The tighthead prop should also approach the hooker from the rear, they too should reach behind the hooker and bind on the hip area at the top of shorts, slightly in front. They should then move forward so their shoulders, hips and feet are parallel (square) with the hooker and loosehead prop.

- Together they should crouch with their weight on the balls of their feet, head up, waiting for the locks to enter. (Note: the hooker should be in the same position as his props on engagement and not move his feet to the hooking position until after the scrum has engaged.)

Building The Complete Scrum

Once the front row has been built as suggested, add the balance of the forwards in following order:

- The locks should bind firmly together, generally the taller lock will bind over the top of the shorter lock, if one lock is substantially taller than the other, and it is uncomfortable for the taller lock to bind over the shorter lock, then the taller lock should bind underneath. They should then squat down together on their haunches, put their heads between the props and the hooker. At the same time the locks should bind around the waist of their respective props and grip at the top of the shorts. Ensure the locks' feet are parallel, their heads up (chin off chest), they are looking forward and have a straight back (see front row assembly).

Note:

- It is important to have the right mental frame of mind as it is to be technically correct.
- Safe technique is the most effective technique.
- Build up progressively to allow the player to gain confidence.

ATTACK

Basic Attack

Objective: To penetrate the opponents' defence. To score.

Key Factors

- Awareness
- Alignment
- Angles of Running
- Depth
- Vision
- Speed
- Skill
- Penetration

Coaching Points

- The need to identify the situation and communicate the best option available.
- The attacking formation is dependent on the handling ability and running speed of the players and also the phase of play.
- Players should run straight to commit the opposition. This creates space.
- Players should be:
 - a. deep enough to pass the ball through the hands to space
 - b. close enough to opposition to keep defence committed
 - c. able to maintain appropriate depth throughout the movement
- Players need to use scanning techniques and peripheral vision to determine the best options.
- Speed of both feet and hands determines their ability to penetrate to score.
- Timing of the attack is relative to the tackle line.
- The continued practise and development of skills is crucial to attacking effectiveness.
- Players can penetrate a defence by:
 - a. passing
 - b. running
 - c. kicking

Common Errors

Combination of missing key factors.

Counter Attack

Objective: To attack with ball regained from opposition.

Key Factors

- Positive attitude is required.
- Assess the space available.
- Identify support.
- Communicate with support.
- Hold defenders.
- Pass ball to space.
- Run to support ball carrier.

Key Words

- Positive
- Awareness
- Communication
- Gather ball
- Pass
- Support

Coaching Points

- All players must have a positive attitude to want to get back to support the ball carrier and initiate a counter attack.
- Receiver regathers the ball. The nearby players should quickly move to an area of support and communicate options.
- Ball carrier looks to pass from an area of high density to support players in space.
- By passing or running they can move the ball to where there are few defensive players.
- Once the pass is made, offer support.
- Support should move to be inside and outside the ball carrier in depth.
- If ball is regathered in front of your team, immediate counter attack is best option.
- When ball is gathered behind your team there are three options:
 1. Counter attack.
 2. Kick to regain possession.
 3. Engage opposition to regroup them. This allows you to create continuity and develop further attacking option.

Common Errors

- Support players do not move back to align with initial ball receiver.
- Lack of communication between players looking to counter attack.
- Poor decision-making by ball carrier and/or support players regarding ability to create space.

DEFENCE

Objective: To prevent the opposition team from scoring. To regain possession.

Key Factors

- Have awareness of attackers' options and communicate them.
- Play to team defensive pattern.

- Tackler identifies player they are responsible for and communicates.
- Align on opponent's inside shoulder.
- Give ball carrier an outside option only.
- Move forward in a line to cut down opponent's options.
- Cover after pass is made.
- Make an effective tackle.
- Get to feet immediately.
- Regain possession.
- Counter attack.

Key Words

- Awareness
- Alignment
- Communication
- Go Forward
- Tackle
- Regain
- Possession

Coaching Points

- Instruct players to move forward together in defence to avoid gaps appearing.
- One player organizes defence and makes sure communication goes right through defensive unit.
- Communication must be specific to ensure defenders are tackling the right opponent.
- Tackle with intention of turning ball over, or tying ball up. This is every player's responsibility.
- Provide immediate support to tackler and other defenders outside.
- Understanding the general play law, as it relates to tackle situations, is essential.
- Putting the ball carrier on the ground means ball must be released immediately.
- This gives opportunities for tackler's support players to regather the ball.

Common Errors

- Lack of commitment.
- Poor understanding of options.
- Poor technique.

CONTINUITY

Maul

Definition: Ball held up above ground. Ball carrier and one other from each team in physical contact around ball (minimum number three).

Objective: To engage and group the opposition. To move forward. To present ball to continue attack.

Key Factors

Second and Third Support Players

- Identify role, sight target area.
- Approach ball carrier and first support player with depth, parallel to touchline.
- Assume low effective driving position.
- Bind and drive either side of ball carrier, forming a wedge forward of the ball.
- Maintain strong forward leg drive throughout, using short steps.

Additional Support Players

- Identify role, sight target area.
- Approach maul from depth, parallel to touchline.
- Assume low, effective driving position.
- If possible, bind with teammate and drive into 'mini maul'.
- Ensure balanced numbers approaching either side of maul.
- Bind and drive on to maul at the hindmost foot.
- Maintain strong forward leg drive throughout using short steps.
- Transfer ball to back of maul communicating its position throughout.
- Deliver to halfback or initiate further play.

Coaching Points

- Players must be coached to drive first, seek ball second.
- Balance is crucial to forward movement, even number of players must join maul either side of ball.
- The most effective pushing position is common through scrum, ruck and maul, i.e. knees and hips below shoulders, spine in line, chins off chest, eyes up.
- Communication crucial within maul with regard to position of ball and attacking options.
- Alternative set for maul: first two support players bind either side of ball carrier with third support player driving in on ball.
- NB: Players joining a maul must do so from behind hindmost foot.

Common Errors

- Breakdown through ineffective work of ball carrier and/or first support player.
- Players arriving too late.
- Arriving players searching for the ball first rather than binding and driving.
- Second and third support players not remaining bound at front of maul.
- Failing to continue with leg drive after initial contact.
- Poor communication in maul resulting in teammates working against each other rather than together.
- Players falling over in maul due to poor body position and balance.
- Failure to maintain straight line drive due to greater numbers of support players joining one side of the maul.
- Not presenting ball when maul becomes stationary or told to “use it” by referee.

RUCK

Definition: Ball on ground. One or more players from each team on their feet in physical contact over the ball (minimum number 2).

Objective: To engage and group opposition. To move forward. To present quick ball to continue attack.

Key Factors

Additional Support Players

- Identify role, sight target area.
- Approach ruck from depth, parallel to touchline.
- Bind with teammates onto opposition.
- Drive forward past the ball.
- Use feet to ruck ball clear of congestion.
- Stay on feet at all times.

Coaching Points

- For stability and effective driving position, encourage players to bind with teammates and drive through rucks.
- Players must stay on feet to drive forward effectively.
- Quick ruck ball, moving forward is conducive to good back play.

Common Errors

- Players joining from the side.
- Poor ball placement by ball carrier.
- Poor position of ball carrier on ground.
- Players arriving too late.
- Support players not understanding options.
- Players falling over because of unstable leg and feet positions and not binding with teammates.
- Players diving into ruck.
- Players attempting to pick up ball while it is still in the ruck.

THE TACKLE CLINIC



Tackle sessions must be carried out by all U8 coaches before the season kicks off. Please ask your provincial union for support if needed.

Note: Tackle is such an important part and it is recommended that all U10 grades ran these sessions. Good technique is safe technique.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE TACKLE CLINIC

Objective of Tackle Clinic

Like many other contact and recreational sports - rugby has its fair share of physical encounters and sometimes the head is in the wrong place at the wrong time. It's time to fix this!

The 'Tackle Clinic' initiative has been established to teach rugby players safe and correct tackle technique. By following these skills and techniques, players will be able to tackle more effectively and enjoy their rugby even more.

To take part in an official TACKLE CLINIC please contact your local provincial union.

Brief Outline:

1. Explain objective of the 'Tackle Clinic'.
2. Warm up before contact.
3. Take players through the progressions of tackling. (From knees to standing - from 25% to 75%)
4. Use key factors of tackling to correct and progress players.
5. Debrief session where questions can be asked and answered.

KEY TACKLE WORDS

- **SIGHT TARGET** Eyes on core (belly button). Where the core goes the ball-carrier goes.
- **EYES UP** Keep eyes open, back strong, hands up and elbows in.
- **FEET ALIVE** Go forward, small fast steps and balanced so you can adjust if needed. Get foot close to attacker.
- **HEAD BEHIND/HEAD TO SIDE** Head close on side for front-on tackle and behind on side-on tackle.

- **BRACE/CONTACT /STICK** Make firm contact with the shoulder. Cheek in tight!
- **THRUST & SQUEEZE** Thrust arms forward, around the ball-carrier and squeeze legs together.

WHEN COACHING TACKLING, YOU SHOULD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- There are several progressive stages for introducing the tackle to young players.
- By practicing the tackling fundamentals first, players will develop good safe technique and confidence.
- Always consider the age, size and experience of the players.
- Confidence is key so “baby steps” is best.
- Keeping the HEAD safe and free from injury is paramount!
- Get feedback from the players.
- If a player is not getting a stage of the progression right, there is a good chance they won’t be ready for the next level.
- Live tackling happens at the end of the progression - not at the start.
- The use of tackle bags is not recommended for this progressive learning stage.
- Ask your provincial union for help.
- Go to www.coachingtoolbox.co.nz for more information.

KEY FACTORS

- **SIGHT TARGET** - See what you are going to tackle. The ball, legs and upper body move - the core (belly button area) doesn’t.
- **EYES UP!** - (This is a better term than ‘chin up’ or ‘head up’ as these can be seen as messages to tilt the head back.) Keep eyes open, back straight, hands in a catching position, elbows in and go forward. Also, never look down at the ground as this exposes the neck to injury.
- **FEET ALIVE** - Move forward into the tackle - this is accomplished by smaller, faster steps, moving towards the opposition’s waist or thighs. Move slightly inside the ball-carrier (inside shoulder) - this will open up your target area, give the attacker less options and enable the tackler to move their head inside the line of the ball-carrier. Don’t ever ‘plant’ your feet. Move them quickly and adjust so a leading foot is close to the ball-carrier.
- **HEAD BEHIND/HEAD TO SIDE** - head to side of ball-carrier’s body and shoulder on target. If the head goes in front of the ball-carrier, you open yourself up to injury.

- **BRACE/CONTACT /STICK** - hands come out from a catching position in front of chest. Tense muscle groups to prepare for contact.
- **THRUST & SQUEEZE** - push arms beyond attacker, then tighten. A firm grip is essential or else the ball-carrier will break through. Avoid swinging arms.

Falling in Tackle

1. Ball in two hands.
2. Position ball away from point of contact, turn toward support during contact.
3. Stay on feet as long as possible.
4. Tuck shoulder under and roll on to upper back.
5. Position body between the ball and opposition.