# INTRODUCTION

The Foundation of Rugby Coaching course has been developed to provide coaches with a basic understanding of facets of the game of Rugby Union.

It is a comprehensive manual focusing on the skills of Rugby as well as providing basic information on teaching a skill and the practical implications of rugby training.

The Foundations of Rugby Coaching course is divided into five stages: creating an environment, coaching process, the area of game knowledge, teaching skills and how to run an effective practice.

New Zealand Rugby believes that coach education is vital in providing the best possible training for our players. By undertaking the Foundations of Rugby Coaching Course you are demonstrating your commitment to coaching and to your players by seeking to further develop your skills and knowledge.

New Zealand Rugby values the contribution of experienced coaches and Rugby Development Officers who have assisted in the development of this resource for coaches.



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# MODULE 1 – CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT

## TOPIC 1: FABS




### Fun

Fun is a key component of success in sport and life.

**The benefits of having fun:**

- increases physical and psychological health.
- boosts endorphins which decrease stress.
- improves relationships with the people you are having fun with.
- lifts energy levels.
- creates laughter which releases serotonin which reduces stress and is good for memory, sleep, breathing, heart rate and mood.
- creates relaxation, enjoyment and the ability to deal with problems.

**Integrating Fun into trainings**

- play competitive games and activities.
- foster a love of a challenge – best times; best scores; previous successes. Work hard.
- help players set a training goal. Provide encouragement and acknowledge their efforts.
- smile a lot. Smiles demonstrate confidence and professionalism.
- allow players to choose and run activities.
- activities can be related to specific skills or generic skills and game understanding.

**Performance**

- fun and performance co-exist alongside hard work.
- coaches create the model by setting the standards and finding their own enjoyment within the coaching framework.

## Achievement

Every player and coach are capable of achieving.

**Achieving is building character, values and a love for the game.**

- coaches are role models who should consistently demonstrate honesty and integrity and teach life lessons such as leadership, sharing, selflessness and teamwork.
- coaches should support players unconditionally.
- players should develop an ability to take responsibility for their own actions. Don't do everything for them.
- winning is good – playing with focus and determination is better.

**Achievement strategies**

- remain calm, relaxed and dignified at all times.
- praise qualities like effort, attempting new skills and skills demonstrated during activities and games.
- encourage activities which relate to the ability level of the group and the individual.
- don't specialise too early. Progress in rugby takes a long time.
- develop perseverance and patience whilst learning skills and game understanding.

## Belonging

Rugby brings people together.

> "It is hard to imagine a thriving New Zealand community without rugby. Being part of a rugby community increases our sense of belonging and inclusion for volunteers, athletes, coaches, families and fans and can be a place of strong connection and acceptance.
>
> Belonging is fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being."

**Aspects of belonging**

- unites individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities as players, coaches, volunteers, advocates and spectators.
- connects people across geographic, economic and ethnic boundaries.
- develops a mateship – the number one reason individuals play rugby.

### Strategies to Develop

- include and foster all groups of people.
- develop a sense of community. Foster trust, reciprocity, and a sense of security.
- create relationships and long-lasting social bonds.
- teach leadership and life skills that improve self-esteem and interpersonal skills.
- encourage the groups to work together to achieve the same goals and a sense of accomplishment.
- support those who have uncertainty in their lives.
- develop a mentoring programme.

## Safety

Safety is having confidence in your preparation, game understanding, and knowing your teammates.

### Aspects of Safety

- environment and equipment.
- coach behaviour. Not creating stress either verbally or physically.
- fair play – respect – knowing the boundaries – understanding the laws of the game
- supporting one another.
- knowing your teammates strengths and weaknesses.
- physical and mental preparation.

### Strategies to Develop

- consider practical ways you can help your players feel safe.
- change aspects that are making your players feel unsafe such as placing unreasonable expectations on them with the threat of unfulfilled expectations.
- positive and encouraging talk.
- ensure all equipment is safe.
- ensure the environment is safe.
- coach correct techniques and ensure that current laws are known and understood.

# MODULE 2 – COACHING PROCESS

## TOPIC 1 – COACH PHILOSOPHY

## TOPIC 2 – QUESTIONING

## TOPIC 3 – KNOWING YOUR PLAYERS

While making your way through the coaching journey, you will learn more and more about yourself as a coach. It might be the way you interact with the players, the way you speak, or even your body language at a training. All these aspects form the basis of who you are as a coach. It's important to be familiar with your own strengths and weaknesses and having a process to refer to is important.

The Coach Process is a simple way of saying who you are and how you coach. It looks at three main aspects.

- Coach Philosophy
- Questioning
- Knowing Your Players

## COACH PHILOSOPHY

A coaching philosophy is like a statement of intent. Your coaching philosophy guides how you behave as a coach, what you believe is important and also how you interact with the players. It might not be visible, but it can be seen in the way that a coach presents themselves and also how they coach.

Some examples of coaching philosophies might be:

- To pass on my knowledge to the players as best I can.
- To always look for new ways of teaching the skills involved in rugby.
- To connect with the players and make them feel safe in the team environment.
- To have a positive environment at trainings and matches, no matter the result.

Forming a coaching philosophy is important because it provides you the coach with a point to always come back to.

## QUESTIONING

Asking good questions can help in any learning environment. It enables the coach to extract the information from a player while making them feel empowered. When using a questioning approach, we should aim to ask open-ended questions. These are questions that require the participant to give full, descriptive answers rather than just "yes" or "no."

Examples of open-ended questions specific to rugby might include the following:

- How could we do that differently?
- Where should your feet be at that moment?
- Tell me what you were trying to do there?
- Show me what good technique looks like here.

## KNOWING YOUR PLAYERS

Getting to know our players is important because it allows us to connect with them. Using a questioning approach, we can learn more about what our players have experienced in the past, what their knowledge base is and what they might want to gain from playing rugby. Everyone has a different style of learning, so it's also important to know what learning style best suits the team you might be working with. Athletes learn by listening to, watching, reading, and doing the activities at a training. As coaches, we can use a combination of different teaching methods to coach our players the skills required for rugby. What works for one player might not work for another, so it's important to keep trainings wide-ranging and different to what players might expect. Team-building activities before the season starts is another great way of connecting with and getting to know the participants.

Getting an understanding of your Coach Process takes time. The more you coach the more you'll learn about your style of coaching and how to apply it. The Coach Process should act as a guide for how to work with athletes and teams, and it can change over time. The Coach Process is a mechanism to use for your coaching and to build on being the best coach you can be.

For more information related to the coaching process, head to **www.rugbytoolbox.co.nz**



## COMMUNICATING ACROSS CULTURES

New Zealand is a multi-cultural society with a mix of European, Maori, Pacific Island and Asian ethnic groups. As a coach it is important to be sensitive and alert to the cultural differences in communicating with the players you coach. For example, many cultures of the world believe direct eye contact to be inappropriate. If you are unsure about how to communicate with a player from a different culture, ask somebody for advice. Above all, a friendly and sincere approach will always be appreciated, and remember, the smile is an international sign of welcome.

New Zealand is a society made up of many different cultures, and as a coach you should be aware of the cultural differences between players, such as differences in behaviour, beliefs and social structure that belong to different cultures.

### WHY CULTURAL AWARENESS

- To help you gain a better understanding of your players and their family
- To enable you to create coping strategies for yourself, your players and your team
- To help foster understanding within your team
- To gain support from your players, their families and the wider community

### CULTURAL ISSUES A COACH SHOULD BE AWARE OF

- In all cultures family has high importance and to gain the players support the coach should also seek the support of the whole family.
- Religion has a huge influence in many cultures and prayer (karakia) may be appropriate. The use of inappropriate language should be avoided.
- Many cultures believe making direct eye contact or speaking out of turn is inappropriate, and yet looking down and not talking can be interpreted by the coach as evidence a player is inattentive and is unwilling to interact.
- Questioning and confronting players in front of the whole team can be interpreted by a player as



belittling and may be better done privately.

- As a coach, your standing (mana) in the eyes of your players will be enhanced if you take time to learn a little about their culture, are able to pronounce their names correctly, and learn some basic forms of communication, such as greeting and farewell.
- Most cultures have spiritual aspects and rituals to consider. The spirit (tapu) of the group and individual should be treated with respect.

### BASIC TIPS TO BE AWARE OF FOR COACHING MAORI PLAYERS

- Treat all elders with respect.
- The most sacred part of the body is the head, so do not tap another person on the head or pass food over someone's head.
- Do not put your hat or hair implements near food - don't sit on tables or other surfaces where food is prepared.
- Separate personal clothing from clothes used for cooking or washing dishes.
- Do not step over a person lying down.
- Treat your visitors well by serving them first and providing plenty of food.
- If you are meeting someone bring a koha (donation) such as a packet of biscuits.
- Everyone pitches in to help, so offer your services before you're asked - you will be told if you don't need to lend a hand.
- Take shoes off when entering a home or meeting house.

If you are unsure how to react or communicate with a player from a different culture, then ask someone for advice, otherwise a sincere honest and friendly approach will always be appreciated.



# MODULE 3 – GAME KNOWLEDGE

## TOPIC 1 – PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

The Principles of Play are the rules of thumb upon which rugby is based – they are generalisations that cover most situations.

The Principles of Play provide simple guidelines upon which your team should base its play.

They also provide a checklist for coaches to analyse their team's performance.

For simplicity, the Principles of Play can be subdivided into the Principles of Attack and the Principles of Defence.

## PRINCIPLES OF ATTACK

### Key Factors

In sequential order the Principles of Attack are:

- gain possession of the ball;
- use the ball to go forward to create space;
- support the ball-carrier
- maintain continuity
- exert pressure to score points

***Communication Links All These Principles Together***

### Coaching Points

#### 1. GAIN POSSESSION

To gain possession of the ball, the team must be competent in the individual, mini-unit and unit skills needed at scrums, lineouts, kick-offs, restarts and regathering loose ball.

This involves collective skills at each of these formations as well as the individual skills of catching, picking up the ball and kicking.

#### 2. GO FORWARD

Once possession has been won, the team must attack by going forward. Forward movement will ensure the opposition:

- are on the back foot;
- will need to regroup to stop forward movement, thus creating space in other areas. (Grouping and spreading)
- Using the ball going forward will utilise individual, mini-unit and unit skills.
- Using kicks to move the ball forward should result in:

- > gaining territory
- > pressuring the opposition
- > regaining possession

NB Kicking may result in possession being lost.

- The option that is chosen will depend on:
  - > understanding what is required;
  - > communicating it;
  - > executing the best option.

### 3. SUPPORT

The attack is continued by supporting team mates who position themselves with depth in order to:

- provide options to the ball-carrier;
- communicate options;
- utilise space;
- provide continuity.

Support play is the most common role in the game. It is important to be effective and work hard "off the ball".

Skills in contact and decision making need to be developed so that options other than just going to ground are created.

### 4. CONTINUITY

If the defence prevents the attack from continuing it will be necessary to:

- engage the opposition with the aid of your support;
- retain possession going forward;
- utilise the space that is created.

The development of a ruck or maul creates an offside line, which allows the attack even more time and space.

If the defence does not contest the ruck or maul, the formation may go forward until a try is scored.

### 5. PRESSURE

Pressure occurs when the attacking team is able to:

- use possession going forward;
- retain possession through effective support, until it scores.

Pressure can be exerted from anywhere on the field.

## PRINCIPLES OF DEFENCE

## Key Factors

In sequential order the Principles of Defence are:

- contest possession
- go forward
- with the support of teammates
- to apply pressure
- and regain possession
- to counter-attack

***Communication and Effective Tackling are Essential Components of Defence***

## Coaching Points

### 1. CONTEST POSSESSION

Compete in set pieces.

### 2. GO FORWARD

Reduces the opposition's time and space and therefore the options available.

### 3. SUPPORT

In any given situation every player must understand and communicate their role within the team's defensive pattern. Working together is the key.

### 4. PRESSURE

Pressure occurs when a team goes forward with support making effective tackles.

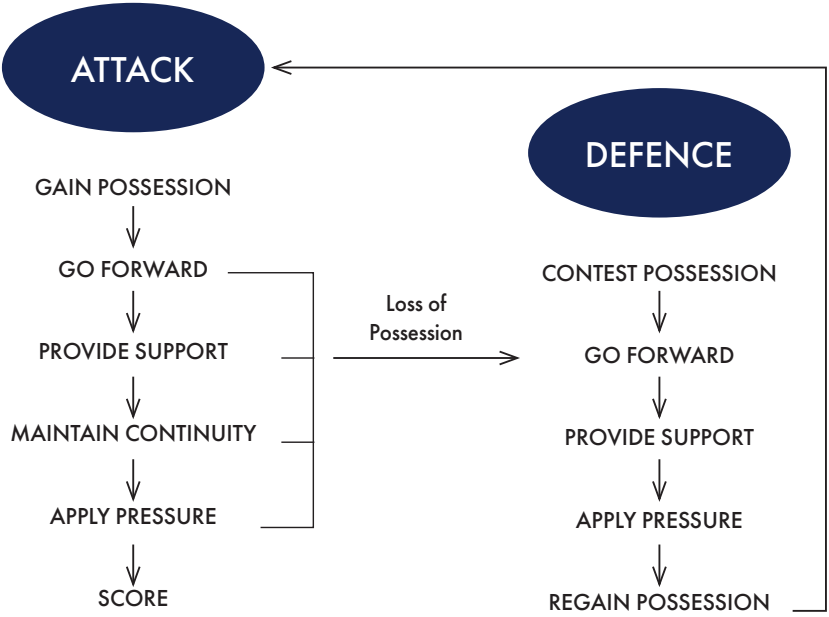
### 5. REGAIN POSSESSION

Regain possession by:

- making effective tackles;
- support players to regather ball, tie up the ball off the ground or clear out the tackle area.

### 6. COUNTER-ATTACK TO SCORE

## Principles of Play Flowchart






# MODULE 4 – COACHING SKILLS

## TOPIC 1: SKILL ANALYSIS

### Introduction

One of the most important roles of the coach is skill analysis, the ability to look at a player, evaluate what is seen, and know what to do next. Skill analysis can be divided into three parts:

1. Observing the player performing a skill.
2. Analysing the effectiveness of the performance.
3. Detecting and correcting errors to improve the player's future performance.

The focus at this level is on observing how the player actually performs the skill (skill observation). In order to effectively analyse a player's performance the coach needs to plan what to observe and how to observe it.

### DIVIDE A SKILL INTO MEANINGFUL PHASES

OBSERVE

ANALYSE

DETECT

CORRECT



## The Purpose of the Skill

Before the coach can observe and analyse a skill they should first identify the purpose of the skill. Rugby skills can have a wide range of purposes, for example, stopping an opponent (a rugby tackle), kicking a goal, throwing into a lineout, passing into space. Understanding the purpose of the skill is important as it helps the coach know what parts of the skill to focus on.

Most skills can be divided into three phases:

1. The Preparatory Phase
2. The Execution Phase
3. The Follow-through Phase

## The Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase involves movements that get the player ready for the force-producing movements in the execution phase. For example, the run-up when place-kicking a ball.

## The Execution Phase

The execution phase can be divided into two parts:

1. The force-producing movements the players make to produce force for the impact or propulsion, for example, the swing of the leg when place-kicking.
2. The 'critical instant' is the point of contact (or the release) of the movement, for example, the moment of contact in a place kick. This is the point that determines the effectiveness of the skill.

Successful execution requires the player to apply the correct amount of force, in the correct direction and with precise timing. It is often difficult for the coach to observe and assess the movement within this phase, as the movement takes place very quickly.

## The Follow-Through Phase

The follow-through refers to the body movements occurring after the execution phase. This phase is where the movement slows down after impact and the player prepares for the next action. For example, the high leg-lift after place-kicking a goal. The follow-through is important in slowing the body parts down over a longer period of time, absorbing the forces produced and helping to prevent injuries.

Coaches should be aware that all three of these movement phases are equally important to a successful skill performance. For example, close observation of the preparatory or follow-through phase will often provide the coach with excellent clues about the effectiveness of the execution phase and the cause of a poor performance.

## Identify the Key Factors within each Phase

Key factors are the important individual actions within a skill performance that influence the final outcome. Key factors should always be stated in terms of specific body movements and they must

be observable by the coach.

The process of identifying these key factors can be simplified if we divide them into each of the three movement phases. For example, the key factors in the preparatory phase for a drop kick include:

- Hold the ball in two hands, point downwards.
- Eyes on ball; head still.
- Step forward onto non-kicking foot flexing at the knee.
- Drop ball onto ground landing on the point.
- Swing through the line of the ball with kicking foot.
- Contact ball at the top of instep.
- Follow through onto toes of non-kicking foot.
- Raise opposite arm to kicking foot for balance.



It is important to remember that these key factors are general guideline
everyone as every player has their own unique anatomy and sports his

Another consideration in identifying the key factors is the stage of gro
player. In general, younger players cannot be expected to perform a skill the same way an older, more experienced player can. Therefore, the key factors of any skill may vary to suit the player's stage of development.

For example, in the Small Blacks Development Model, more complex skills such as kicking and tackling are introduced after players have been playing for two years.

## Develop an Observation Plan to Analyse the Key Factors of a Skill

To successfully analyse the skill performance the coach needs to plan how they will observe the movement. The coach must decide what to look for and how, when, and where to observe the skill performance or movement.

An observation plan consists of:

- identifying the purpose of the skill;
- dividing the skill into the three movement phases;
- creating a checklist of key factors for each movement phase;
- choosing observation strategies, for example:
  - > What angle(s) to observe from?
  - > What to look at?
  - > How many observations of the skill?

## Observation Strategies

### WHAT ANGLE TO OBSERVE FROM?

Generally, the observation should be from a position at right angles to the general direction of the player's motion and opposite the point of interest. However, observing the performance from multiple

angles (e.g. side, front and back) is beneficial in giving the coach a number of different perspectives. If the performance covers some distance or moves in different directions then observations should be from various points.

### WHAT TO LOOK AT?

For the first few observations look at the whole movement in general to gain an overall impression of the skill performance. Then focus on one aspect of the movement at a time.

The outer extremities (i.e. arms and legs) usually move much faster than the body and can be difficult to observe. Start by focusing on the larger, slower-moving parts and then work outwards. For example, with a sprinter, focus initially on the hip rotations, followed by the knee lift and finally the foot actions. A video camera can be a useful tool to 'capture' the movement. The skill performance can be replayed in slow motion enabling the coach to identify exactly where faults occur. Using a video can help the coach develop their own observation and analytical abilities by directing them where to focus their live observations. Ideally, have a video monitor close by to observe the performance while the movement pattern is fresh in the minds of both the coach and the player.

### HOW MANY OBSERVATIONS OF THE SKILL?

There is no set number of observations to perform for each skill. The number of observations required will depend on the skill of the player and your skill as an observer. Focus on a particular movement long enough to know that the movement pattern is consistently repeated and that you feel comfortable in being able to describe to yourself and the player what you see.

Be aware that with some activities fatigue will change the player's movement patterns, for example, a fatigued jumper in a lineout will not drive with their legs. In activities where fatigue influences performance, it is important to develop the observation plan carefully so as not to waste the player's energy; if possible, use a video.

### CAUSE AND EFFECT IN MOVEMENT OBSERVATION

Coaches are too often tempted to correct the symptoms of the fault rather than the actual cause of the fault. For example, when a lineout thrower misses their mark the coach may comment on their target whereas the poor throw may have been due to not pushing the elbows forward.

### UNDERTAKING THE OBSERVATION - HELPFUL HINTS

- The coach should be aware of factors that can influence the skill performance. For example player fatigue, excitement, nervousness; ground or weather conditions; knowledge of the performance required.
- Ensure that the skill selected for observation is performed in a manner closely related to the competition situation.
- The players should understand why you are undertaking this planned observation, as they too should be involved and learn from this experience.
- It can be extremely beneficial to have a more experienced coach assist initially in observing and analysing movement skills. This will enable the learner coach to compare notes and develop confidence in their own observational and analytical abilities.

- Taking the time to develop an observation plan will assist the coach develop a greater understanding of what 'skilled' performance is, as well as enhancing their overall observation skills.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the observation plan and technique and if necessary make modifications. Remember, players will only gain benefit from the systematic observation if the coach is able to provide appropriate feedback.



## SKILL OBSERVATION PLAN

Sport: ..... Specific Skill: .....

| Meaningful Phase/Action | Main Purpose of Phase or Action | Key Factors | Observation Strategy |
|---|---|---|---|
| Catching a high ball | To claim the ball and to maintain possession | • Eyes on the ball throughout.<br>• Attack the ball.<br>• Assess options - stay on ground or jump into air.<br>• Extend leading arm in direction of the ball.<br>• Position side-on to opponents.<br>• Call.<br>• Catch above eye level.<br>• Watch the ball into the hands, arms then body.<br>• Brace the body in anticipation of contact. | View from the side and from the front |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## SAMPLE OBSERVATION PLAN

**Coach / Observer:** Sam Slater
**Date:** 23 September 2022
**Specific skill to be observed:** Place kick
**Athlete:** Christopher Crutchgrip

| Phase | Key Factors | | | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Preparatory Phase** | Lean the ball slightly forward to expose the "sweet spot". | | | |
| | Before moving back stand over the ball in the kicking position. | | | |
| | Move back to a comfortable position. | | | |
| | Concentrate on the "sweet spot". | | | |
| | Relax. | | | |
| | Focus – use key words. | | | |
| | Use imagery to picture the complete kick. | | | |
| | Approach by running in an arc. | | | Moves directly behind ball. Needs more arc. |
| | Turn non-kicking shoulder side on to target. | | | |
| **Execution Phase** | Place non-kicking foot in line with target. | | | |
| | Swing through strike zone. | | | |
| | Keep head over ball. | | | Lifts head before contact. |
| | Make contact with top of instep | | | |
| **Follow-Through Phase** | Rise onto the toes of the non-kicking foot. | | | |
| | Follow straight through. | | | |
| | Return to balanced stance. | | | |

# TOPIC 2: COACHING A SKILL

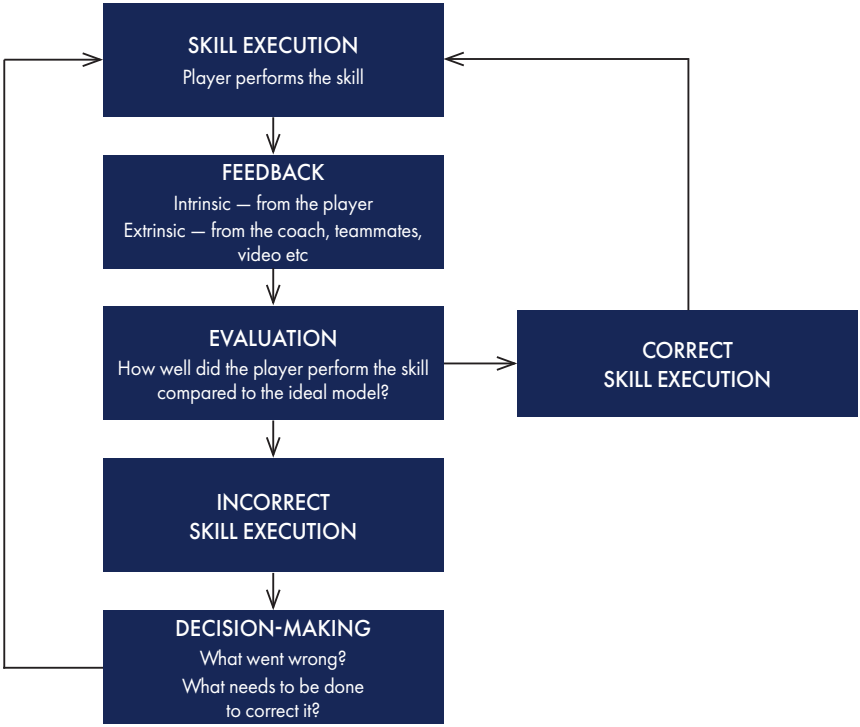
## Introduction

For players to perform well at any level of sport they must acquire a number of skills. Skill learning begins with mastery of the basic skills and techniques and progresses to applying those skills in increasingly competitive situations.

It is one of the coach's primary responsibilities to provide the player with opportunities to learn and practise skills in a positive and constructive environment. Appropriate skill learning, especially at the junior level, can set the platform for future potential elite performance.

## Understand the Skill – Feedback Loop as a Basis for Skill Learning

The skill–feedback loop demonstrates how feedback is processed when learning a skill. The model shown below is a simplified version of how each player uses feedback to assess whether or not they have responded correctly and, if not, how they should respond correctly.



## Skill Execution

The player performs the skill.

The skill execution is influenced by the player's previous learned experiences, stage of growth and development, fitness level and degree of motivation.

## Feedback

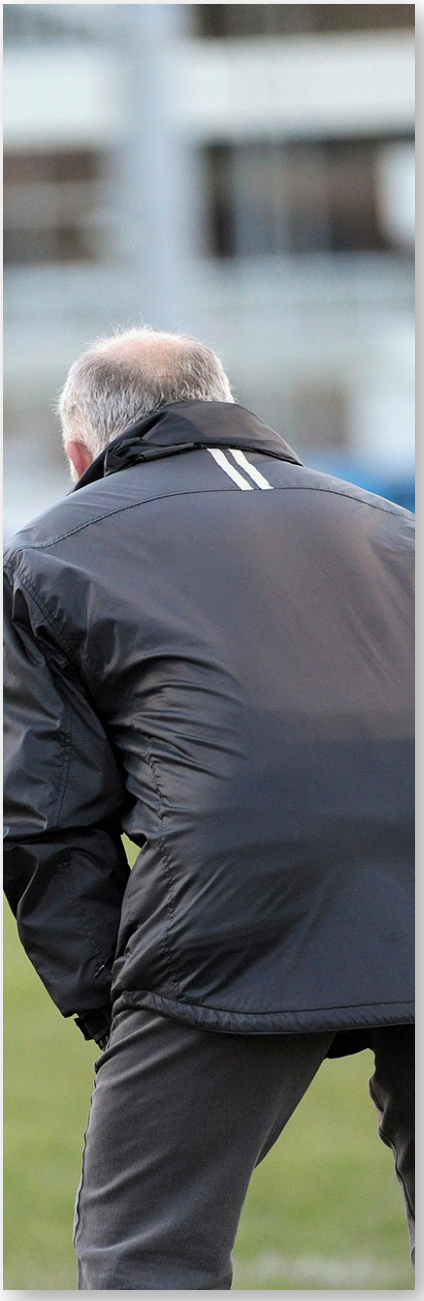
The player may receive two types of feedback response:

- Intrinsic (internal) feedback
- Extrinsic (external) feedback

Intrinsic feedback is dependent on the player's ability to 'feel' the experience using sensory perception. If a skill was performed well, the player feels a sense of 'correctness'. If the skill was not executed as intended, the player experiences a feeling of 'error'.

The more experienced the player, the greater the accuracy in sensory evaluation. The ability to perceive what is correct in the early stages of learning a skill is less accurate because the player's memory has not been developed enough to be able to have a good perception of correctness. Coaches should ask the player specific questions about how the skill felt when executed to encourage the player to become more self-aware.

Extrinsic feedback is given by an external source such as the coach, other players, or spectators. The coach needs to be able to identify errors, provide information (feedback) appropriately and specifically, and then give instructions for the correct execution of the skill.



## Evaluation

After receiving both intrinsic and extrinsic feedback the player must then sort the information and evaluate their performance compared to the 'ideal model'.

Developing a player's ability for self-awareness is important in providing a source of internal control rather than the player always depending on external sources (e.g. you as the coach) to evaluate the performance and tell them what to do.

Players may not have all the information about a situation so it can be difficult for them to evaluate the feedback and make the appropriate decisions. The coach can assist this process by providing clear, precise feedback that is specific to the required performance and at a level that the player can understand.

Evaluation of the performance can also be limited by the coach's ability to give feedback and the player's ability to receive feedback (i.e. communication).

## Decision-Making

If the skill execution was incorrect the player must process this information further to decide what went wrong and what they can do to correct it.

One of the major limitations to performance improvement is the ability of players to make sound and appropriate decisions. By giving players opportunities to decide for themselves how or what to do to fix their own errors or identify a correct performance, the coach enables the players to practise and improve their decision-making processes.



## Select and Teach the Simple and Complex Skills in Your Sport

"Skill" can be defined as the learned ability to bring about a pre-determined result with maximum certainty and maximum efficiency. "Technique" refers to the way in which a skill is performed, the successful movement of the body to achieve a specific activity.

A skilled performance does not depend simply on the physical ability of the player and their technique: it also depends on their ability to think, interpret and select. It involves the player in decision-making.

## Selecting a Skill

In selecting a skill to teach, coaches need to consider the following:

- What are the stages of learning and growth and development of each player?
- What skills are important for players to learn to have success performing them, to have fun and to be safe?
- What are the basic movements that underlie these skills?

## Classifying Motor Skills

### SIMPLE AND COMPLEX SKILLS

A simple skill is one that can be learned with very little practice and has few parts to it. It can be taught as a whole activity.

A complex skill takes more time and effort to acquire because a number of different movements make up the skill.



## OPEN AND CLOSED SKILLS

A closed skill is one where the options are few and largely constant. For example, a kick to touch from a penalty.

An open skill is one where there are a number of variables which demand the player's attention. The environment is constantly changing and unpredictable and there is limited time to make decisions and produce the actions required of a skilled performance. For example, in passing the ball, the player must be aware of both opponents and teammates as well as the act of passing the ball.

## WAYS OF TEACHING A SKILL

### Whole or Part Learning

A skill may be taught in its entirety (whole learning) or broken down into parts (part learning). Most coaches combine the two methods (as whole-part-whole learning) with players learning the whole skill at times while at other times concentrating on parts of the skill.

The best method depends on the skill being taught. Generally, whole learning is best for simple skills and part learning for more complex skills.

### Chaining

This involves breaking a skill down into progressive part teaching. Each part is taught and practised on its own, and the parts are added in their correct sequence. Chaining is adopted when a skill is complex and needs to be taught in a particular order.

### Massed or Distributed Practice

Massed practice is where the coach has players continuously practise a skill without any breaks until the skill has been learned. In a distributed practice, the players may learn the skill in short, frequent practice sessions interspersed with rests or alternative skill activities.

Distributed practice is the most effective for improving performance with younger players in particular, as the breaks between sessions reduce boredom and recharge the players' energy and powers of concentration. Massed practice is more suitable for highly skilled or highly motivated players.

### Drill or Problem-Solving

Drills involve learning through repetition while problem-solving refers to learning through investigation and discovery.

Drills are better suited for closed skills which are basically the repetition of movement patterns. Open skills that require a degree of creativity and decision-making on possible courses of action are better suited to problem-solving.

In learning either open or closed skills, the problem-solving approach will usually lead to a better understanding and retention by the player of what is involved in the correct skill performance.

### Mental or Physical Practice

Physical practice of a skill is necessary for improved skill performance and is what most players are

accustomed to. Mental practice can also be used by picturing the performance in one's mind. This can be done using mental imagery, viewing the performance (live or on video), and reading or listening to instructions.

A combination of both physical and mental practice makes for the most effective learning.

Factors that affect the ability of a player to learn new skills:

- Stage of growth and development.
- Physical capacity.
- Facilities and equipment.
- Experience playing the sport.

**EXPLANATION**

This informs the player what they are doing, how they will do it and why they are doing it.

Explanations should be:

- specific
- in simple language
- short and to the point

## Giving an Effective Demonstration of Skill



The purpose of a demonstration is to increase the players' understanding of the skill by providing an accurate model from which to learn. For players to make appropriate decisions on how to execute skills, coaches need to provide an explanation and a demonstration so that players can learn and practise. An effective skill demonstration requires careful planning by the coach. Consider the following questions:

### WHY IS THE SKILL IMPORTANT?

Understanding the importance of the skill in the context of the sport and competition will assist both the coach and player in teaching and learning the skill.

### HOW WILL THE SKILL BE DEMONSTRATED AND EXPLAINED?

Select an appropriate method of teaching the skill taking into account the type of skill and the experience and ability of the players. Generally, it is recommended that the whole skill should be demonstrated first to show the players what the skill will look like when performed correctly, then broken down into various skill components (whole-part-whole). Remember players need to be able to observe the demonstration at different angles. Show both left- and right-handed ways to execute the skill. Make a note in your session plan of two or three teaching points and some key words or phrases to emphasise important parts of the skill. Keep the instructions simple and avoid the use of jargon where possible. Players should be asked to concentrate on only one or two aspects of the skill at any one time.

### WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED?

Coaches need to determine what equipment will be required to give an effective demonstration and ensure that appropriate equipment is available and ready to use when the time comes. For example if you are using a video have everything set up ready to press 'play' before you start the session.

### WHERE WILL THE SKILL BE DEMONSTRATED?

When planning your demonstration, take into account any possible distractions for your players such as the position of the sun or bright lights. Depending on how many players there are, decide on an appropriate formation which enables them all to see and hear the demonstration clearly. One of the most common and effective formations is a semi-circle with the coach or demonstrator standing in front.

### WHEN WILL THE DEMONSTRATION TAKE PLACE?

The most obvious time to give a demonstration is when the players are learning a new skill; this should take place early in the training session while the players' minds and bodies are relatively 'fresh'. Demonstrations can also be used when giving feedback or to remind players of a previously learned skill. It can also be useful to repeat the demonstration at the end of training so players can be reminded of what to work on.

### WHO WILL DEMONSTRATE THE SKILL?

It is important that whoever is chosen to demonstrate can perform the skill correctly. Coaches will often demonstrate skills themselves, but they can also use players, sports persons from outside the

team or even videotapes as part of the demonstration.

Choose players with a range of skills to demonstrate. Asking the star of the team to demonstrate all the time can be discouraging for the less skilled and the learners. For most players, being chosen to demonstrate is seen as a reward for good performance. Be aware, however, that some players find this embarrassing – as a coach you should respect their feelings.

### HOW WILL YOU KNOW THE PLAYERS UNDERSTOOD THE DEMONSTRATION?

Ask specific questions after the demonstration has been given. Avoid simply asking "Did you understand?" as players tend to nod a yes response whether they think they understand or not. Ask specific points about the demonstration and get the players to 'show you' what they have learned. Their responses to questions and the way they perform the skill will tell you whether they understood or not.

If a player has not understood the demonstration or, after a series of sessions they have not yet grasped the concept, then it is up to the coach to modify the information and/or the teaching method to assist the player's understanding. Everybody learns differently and it is one of the coach's roles as a teacher to find a teaching method that suits the player's learning.

## Plan for a Skill Practice

When planning a skill practice there are a number of practical considerations for the coach.

### THE TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

Consider the number of players you have, the amount of space available, what equipment there is,



and any possible safety hazards.

Ensure that there is enough equipment for all the players to practise with. Keeping the equipment well maintained will save both time and money – there is nothing worse than arriving at training and finding all the balls are flat or a piece of essential equipment is broken. Adapt the activities and equipment to meet the players' developmental needs and to suit the skill practice. For example, try using less time and space for the more skilled and more time and space for the less skilled players.

## MANAGING TIME

The amount of time devoted to training is an issue when planning a skill. To reach a high level of skill ability, the player needs to perform the skill thousands, perhaps millions, of times during their sporting life.

It is important to give the players many opportunities to practise, and where possible, minimize the time that players are not on task. Establishing organisational routines for your training sessions at the beginning of the season can maximise use of time. For example, a signal for players to come in, routines for dividing into groups and for getting equipment out.

Other factors that increase time practising a skill include providing activities with high participation rates, decreasing instruction time (focus on the key factors) and decreasing the time it takes to move from one activity to another (transition).

## ORGANISING GROUPS AND FORMATIONS

Organising the players into groups so there is maximum opportunity to practise can be a challenge when planning to teach a skill. There are a multitude of ways to organise players into groups. One of the quickest ways to organise groups is to say "get a partner" of "get into groups of four". To organise teams, use the numbering-off system or have your teams pre-organised in your session plan.

A coach should be aware of the players' self-esteem when organising groups. For example, when players choose teams themselves it is often the same person who is chosen last. They may be a player who either has low skill level or has a behavioural problem. The coach should consider the appropriate ways to deal with these individuals so that they are included.

## TRAINING GRIDS

## TRAINING GRIDS

Planning activities to practise the skill that involves all players in the space and time allocated can be a challenge. The grid system has evolved as a means of achieving this.

A grid is an area of playing space that has been sub-divided using lines or cones. The number and size of each grid depends on the number of players and type of activities, and the players are divided accordingly. The principal advantage of using grids is that large groups can be organised efficiently. The coach can observe the activities from outside each grid or as they walk through and is easily able to monitor player skill acquisition, correct individual faults and acknowledge correct

Grids can be used for a variety of different games and drills. You can have players practising the same skills in grids or you may have different skills in each grid that the players rotate around. The grid system can also be used to develop fitness, particularly if space is limited.

When finalising the plans about how to teach the skills or tasks of the training session, it is important to consider the steps involved for learning the skill. If the steps for learning are too large, the players can experience failure and lose their enthusiasm and motivation. If the steps are too small, the players can become bored. For the appropriate progression of a skill coaches should be able to draw on their own knowledge and break down each skill they plan to teach into smaller components.

## PRACTICE FOR COMPETITION

While basic skill training and practice is essential to skill development, it is one thing to master these skills at practice but another thing entirely to perform those same skills under the pressure of competition.

Therefore, it is important to include opportunities for the players to practise their skills in conditions that resemble as closely as possible the actual competitive situation. This can be achieved by dividing your players into teams opposing one another at practice or by arranging friendly preseason games with other teams in the club or competition.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTISE AND IMPROVE

The more opportunities players have to practise, the more likely there will be an improvement in skill. As a coach you should endeavour to provide all players with the maximum opportunity to improve and practise their skills.

Coaches often give more time to either the higher skilled players, to ensure that their players reach their highest level of ability, or to the lower skilled players, because they need the most help. By focusing on either of these skill levels, the other players in the middle tend to be ignored.

## Give Effective Feedback

The information a coach gives to the players about their performance is one form of extrinsic feedback. The purpose of feedback is to compare the players' actual performance in the practice with the desired performance. Effective feedback should help the player learn and develop his or her skills to improve performance.

How the coach gives feedback to the player and how the player receives that feedback are important considerations for effectiveness. Both the coach and the player's communication skills can be a limiting factor in giving and receiving effective feedback.

Following are some guidelines for providing (extrinsic) coach feedback:

- Feedback should be positive and encouraging, particularly for younger players.
- Feedback should be constructive – if an error is identified then the coach should provide reasons for the error and possible solutions.
- Feedback should be given immediately following the performance while it is still fresh in the mind of the player.
- Feedback should be specific to what the player was asked to perform.
- Feedback should be consistent with the player's stage of growth and development.
- Encourage your players to feel the movement to develop their own intrinsic feedback.

When giving feedback, keep in mind that information stays with learners for between 20 and 30 seconds, so it is important to get players practising as soon as possible after feedback. Keep the instructions short and have the player focus on only one or two elements at a time.



# MODULE 5 – HOW TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

*See Training templates at back of manual or visit www.rugbytoolbox.co.nz

## TOPIC 1 - WARM-UP, COOL-DOWN & STRETCH

"RUGBY WARM-UPS" is a complete warm-up programme to reduce injuries among male and female rugby players aged 14 years and older.

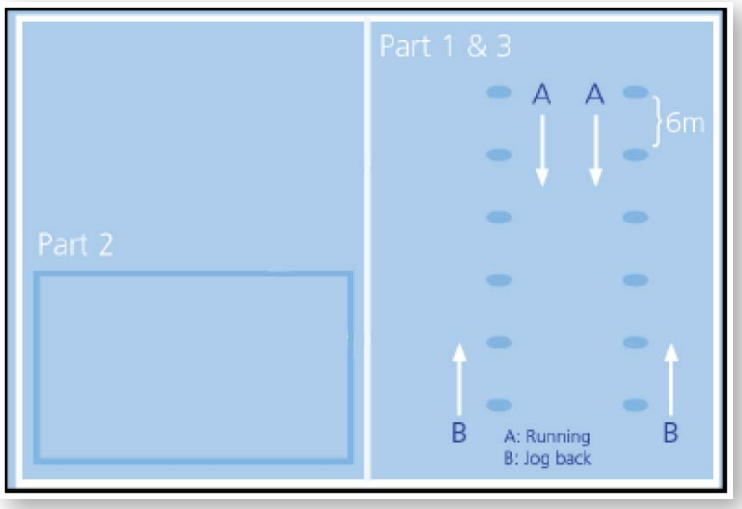
The programme was developed by an international group of experts, and its effectiveness has been proven in a scientific study. Teams that performed the warm-up at least twice a week had 30-50% fewer injured players.

The programme should be performed, as a standard warm-up, at the start of each training session and it takes around 20-25 minutes to complete. Athletes should complete Part 1, one level of Part 2 and Part 3 in the order provided. Prior to matches, only Part 1, the Rugby Specific, and Part 3 should be performed. For all exercises, correct performance is of great importance. Therefore, the coach should supervise the programme and correct the players if necessary.

### FIELD SET-UP

The course is made up of 6 pairs of parallel cones, approx. 5-6m apart.

Two players start at the same time from the first pair of cones, jog along the inside of the cones and do the various exercises on the way. After the last cone they run back along the outside. On the way back, speed can be increased progressively as players warm up.



## PART ONE — RUNNING EXERCISES

### 1. STRAIGHT AHEAD

Jog straight to the last cone. Make sure you keep your upper body straight. Your hip, knee and foot are aligned. Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Run slightly more quickly on the way back. ***2 sets.***



### 2. HIP OUT / HIP IN

Walk or jog easily, stopping at each pair of cones to lift your knee and rotate your hip outwards. Alternate between left and right legs at successive cones. ***2 sets.*** Repeat, but this time rotate hip inwards.



### 3. CIRCLING PARTNER

Jog to the first cone. Shuffle sideways towards your partner, shuffle an entire circle around one other (without changing the direction you are looking in) and then shuffle back to the first cone. Repeat until you reach the other side of the pitch. ***2 sets.***



## PART TWO — STRENGTH POLYMETRICS BALANCE

### 5. SHOULDER CONTACT

Jog to the first cone. Shuffle sideways towards your partner. In the middle, jump sideways towards each other to make shoulder-to-shoulder contact. Land on both feet with your hips and knees bent. Shuffle back to the first cone. Repeat until you reach the other side of the pitch. ***2 sets.***



### 5. QUICK FORWARDS & BACKWARDS

Run quickly to the second cone then run backwards quickly to the first cone, keeping your hips and knees slightly bent. Repeat, running two cones forwards and one cone backwards until you reach the other side of the pitch. ***2 sets.***



## 6. THE BENCH

### L1. STATIC

**Starting Position:** Lie on your front, support upper body with forearms. Elbows directly under shoulders.

**Exercise:** Lift upper body, pelvis and legs up until your body is in a straight line from head to foot. Pull in stomach and gluteal muscles and hold the position for 20-30 sec. ***3 sets.***

**Important:** Do not sway or arch your back. Do not move your buttocks upwards. ***2 sets.***



### L2. ALTERNATE LEGS

**Starting Position:** Lie on your front, support upper body with forearms. Elbows directly under shoulders.

**Exercise:** Lift upper body, pelvis and legs up until your body is in a straight line from head to foot. Pull in stomach and gluteal muscles. Lift each leg in turn, holding for a count of 2 sec. Continue for 40-60 sec. ***3 sets.***

**Important:** Do not sway or arch your back. Do not move your buttocks upwards. Keep pelvis stable and do not let it tilt to the side.buttocks upwards. ***2 sets.***



### L3. ONE LEG LIFT & HOLD

**Starting Position:** Lie on your front, support upper body with forearms. Elbows directly under your shoulders.

**Exercise:** Lift upper body, pelvis and legs up until your body is in a straight line. Pull in stomach and gluteal muscles. Lift one leg about 10-15cm off the ground and hold the position for 20-30 sec. Repeat with other leg. ***3 sets.***

**Important:** Do not sway or arch your back. Do not move your buttocks upwards. ***2 sets.***



## 7. SIDEWAYS BENCH

### L1. STATIC

**Starting Position:** Lie on your side with the knee of lowermost leg bent to 90 degrees, support yourself on forearm and lowermost leg. Elbow of supporting arm directly under shoulder.

**Exercise:** Lift pelvis and uppermost leg until they form a straight line with your shoulder and hold the position for 20-30 sec. Repeat on other side. ***3 sets.***

**Important:** Keep pelvis stable and do not let it tilt downwards. Do not tilt shoulders, pelvis or leg forwards or backwards.



### L2. RAISE & LOWER HIP

**Starting Position:** Lie on your side with both legs straight, support yourself on forearm. Elbow of supporting arm directly under shoulder.

**Exercise:** Raise pelvis and legs until your body forms a straight line from the uppermost shoulder to the uppermost foot. Lower hips to the ground and raise them back up again. Continue for 20-30 sec. Repeat on other side. ***3 sets.***

**Important:** Do not tilt shoulders or pelvis forwards or backwards. Do not rest your head on your shoulder.



### L3. WITH LEG LIFT

**Starting Position:** Lie on your side with both legs straight, support yourself on forearm and lower leg. Elbow of supporting arm directly under shoulder.

**Exercise:** Raise pelvis and legs until your body forms a straight line from the uppermost shoulder to the uppermost foot. Lift uppermost leg up and slowly lower it down again. Continue for 20-30 sec. Repeat on other side. ***3 sets.***

**Important:** Keep pelvis stable and do not let it tilt downwards. Do not tilt shoulders or pelvis forwards or backwards.



## 8. HAMSTRINGS

### L1. BEGINNER

**Starting Position:** Kneel with knees hip-width apart; partner pins your ankles firmly to the ground with both hands.

**Exercise:** Slowly lean forward, while keeping your body straight from the head to the knees. When you can no longer hold the position, gently take your weight on your hands, falling into a press-up position. ***3-5 repetitions.***

**Important:** Do exercise slowly at first, but once you feel more comfortable, speed it up.



### L2. INTERMEDIATE

**Starting Position:** Kneel with knees hip-width apart; partner pins your ankles firmly to the ground with both hands.

**Exercise:** Slowly lean forward, while keeping your body straight from the head to the knees. When you can no longer hold the position, gently take your weight on your hands, falling into a press-up position. ***7-10 repetitions.***

**Important:** Do exercise slowly at first, but once you feel more comfortable, speed it up.



### L3. ADVANCED

**Starting Position:** Kneel with knees hip-width apart; partner pins your ankles firmly to the ground with both hands.

**Exercise:** Slowly lean forward, while keeping your body straight from the head to the knees. When you can no longer hold the position, gently take your weight on your hands, falling into a press-up position. Min. ***12-15 repetitions.***

**Important:** Do exercise slowly at first, but once you feel more comfortable, speed it up.



## 9. SINGLE-LEG STANCE

### L1. HOLD THE BALL

**Starting Position:** Stand on one leg, knee and hip slightly bend and hold the ball in both hands.

**Exercise:** Hold balance and keep body weight on the ball of your foot. Hold for 30 sec, and repeat on the other leg. Exercise can be made more difficult by lifting the heel from the ground slightly or passing the ball around your waist and/or under your other knee. ***2 sets on each leg.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Keep pelvis horizontal and do not let it tilt to the side.



### L2. THROWING BALL WITH PARTNER

**Starting Position:** Stand on one leg, face a partner at a distance of 2-3m.

**Exercise:** Keep balance while you throw the ball to one another. Hold in your stomach and keep weight on the ball of your foot. Continue for 30 sec. and repeat on the other leg. Exercise can be made more difficult by lifting the heel from the ground slightly. ***2 sets on each leg.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Keep pelvis horizontal and do not let it tilt to the side.



### L3. TEST YOUR PARTNER

**Starting Position:** Stand on one leg, at arm's length from your partner.

**Exercise:** Keep balance while you and your partner in turn try to push the other off balance in different directions. Continue for 30 sec. and repeat on the other leg. ***2 sets on each leg.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Keep pelvis horizontal and do not let it tilt to the side.



## 10. SQUATS

### L1. WITH TOE RAISE

**Starting Position:** Stand with feet hip-width apart, hands on your hips.

**Exercise:** Slowly bend hips, knees and ankles until your knees are flexed to 90 degrees. Lean upper body forwards. Then straighten upper body, hips and knees, and stand up on your toes. Then slowly lower down again, and straighten up slightly more quickly. Repeat for 30 sec. ***2 sets.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Lean upper body forward with a straight back.



### L2. WALKING LUNGES

**Starting Position:** Stand with feet hip-wide apart, hands on your hips.

**Exercise:** Lunge forward slowly at an even pace. Bend hips and knees slowly until your leading knee is flexed to 90 degrees. The bent knee should not extend beyond the toes. 10 lunges on each leg. ***2 sets.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Keep upper body straight and pelvis horizontal.



### L3. ONE-LEG SQUATS

**Starting Position:** Stand on one leg, loosely hold on to your partner.

**Exercise:** Slowly bend your knee, if possible until it is flexed to 90 degrees, and straighten up again. Bend slowly then straighten slightly more quickly. Repeat on the other leg. 10 squats on each leg. ***2 sets.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Keep upper body facing forward and pelvis horizontal.



## 11. JUMPING

### L1. VERTICAL JUMPS

**Starting Position:** Stand with your feet hip-width apart, hands on your hips.

**Exercise:** Slowly bend hips, knees and ankles until your knees are flexed to 90 degrees. Lean upper body forwards. Hold this position for 1 sec. then jump as high as you can, and straighten whole body. Land softly on the balls of your feet. Repeat for 30 sec. ***2 sets.***

**Important:** Jump off both feet. Land gently on the balls of both feet with your knees bent.



### L2. LATERAL JUMPS

**Starting Position:** Stand on one leg. Bend hips, knee and ankle slightly and lean upper body forwards.

**Exercise:** Jump from your supporting leg approximately 1m to the side onto the other leg. Land gently on the ball of your foot and bend your hips, knee and ankle. Hold this position for about a second and then jump on the other leg. Repeat for 30 sec. ***2 sets.***

**Important:** Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Keep upper body stable and facing forward and pelvis horizontal.



### L3. BOX JUMPS

**Starting Position:** Stand with feet hip-width apart, imagine a cross you are standing in the middle of.

**Exercise:** Jump with both legs forwards and backwards, from side to side, and diagonally across the cross. Keep upper body slightly leaned forwards. Jump as quickly and explosively as possible. Repeat for 30 sec. ***2 sets.***

**Important:** Land softly on the balls of both feet. Bend hips, knees and ankles on landing. Do not let your knee buckle inwards.



## 12. KNEE PRESS-UPS

**Exercise:** Start by lying face down with hands shoulder width apart. Bend your knees and raise body up off floor by extending arms with body straight. Both upper and lower body must be kept straight throughout the exercise. Your forefeet can remain on floor as long as body is pivoting on knees. Keep your body straight and knees bent. Then lower body to floor by bending arms. Push body up until arms are extended. 6-12 reps. ***2 sets.***



## 13. CORE PRESS-UPS

**Exercise:** Start by lying face down with hands shoulder width apart. Feet shoulder width apart. Keeping your knees and hips straight raise your body up off floor by extending the arms. The emphasis is on keeping your body in straight alignment. This is the start position. It is important to keep your body in a straight line as you do these. 6-12 reps. ***2 sets.***



## 14. CORE PRESS-UPS WITH TWIST

Once you have mastered the normal core press-up you can progress and add a twist like this: Like the normal core press-up begin in the start position.

**Exercise:** From here lower your body to the floor by slowly bending the arms. Hold this position briefly before pushing your body back up by straightening your arms until your arms are fully extended. At the top of the press-up rotate your body so your body weight is supported on one arm only and reach the other arm to the sky. Hold this final position briefly before returning the start position by doing things in the reverse order. The emphasis should be on maintaining good stability of your upper body by concentrating on engaging the muscle around your shoulder. 6-12 reps whilst alternating each side. ***2 sets.***



## 15. CORE PRESS-UPS WITH TWIST AND LEG RAISE

Start in the standard press-up position again.

**Exercise:** From here lower your body to the floor by slowly bending the arms. Hold this position briefly before pushing your body back up by straightening your arms until your arms are fully extended. At the top of the press-up rotate one of your arms off the ground and reach for the sky as before. Once you have rotated to a side on position lift the leg on the same side into the air by abducting the hip. Keep both your arm and leg straight as you do this. Hold this final position briefly before returning the start position by doing things in the reverse order. The emphasis should be on maintaining good stability of both your upper and lower body by concentrating on engaging the muscle groups around your shoulder and your hip. 6-12 reps whilst alternating side with each press-up. ***2 sets.***



## 16. TACKLE TECHNIQUE

Can use a hit shield or on another player.

**Exercise:** Start by lying face down with hands shoulder width apart. Bend your knees and raise body up off floor by extending arms with body straight. Both upper and lower body must be kept straight throughout the exercise. Your forefeet can remain on floor as long as body is pivoting on knees. Keep your body straight and knees bent. Then lower body to floor by bending arms. Push body up until arms are extended. 6-12 reps. ***2 sets.***



### 17. ACROSS THE PITCH

Run approx. 40m across the pitch at 75-80% of maximum pace and then jog the rest of the way. Keep your upper body straight. Your hip, knee and foot are aligned. Do not let your knees buckle inwards. Jog easily back. ***2 sets.***



### 18. BOUNDING

Take a few warm-up steps then take 6-8 high bounding steps with a high knee lift and then jog the rest of the way. Lift the knee of the leading leg as high as possible and swing the opposite arm across the body. Keep your upper body straight. Land on the ball of the foot with the knee bent and spring. Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Jog back easily to recover. ***2 sets.***



### 19. PLANT & CUT

Jog 4-5 steps straight ahead. Then plant on the right leg and cut to change direction to the left and accelerate again. Sprint 5-7 steps (80-90% of maximum pace) before you decelerate and plant on the left foot and cut to change direction to the right. Do not let your knee buckle inwards. Repeat the exercise until you reach the other side of the pitch, then jog back. ***2 sets.***





## FAQ

### WHY DOES THE "RWU" NOT INCLUDE STRETCHING EXERCISES?

Research has shown that static stretching exercises have a negative influence on muscle performance, and results on the preventive effect of dynamic stretching are inconclusive. Stretching exercises are not recommended as part of a warm-up programme, but can be performed at the end of the training session.

### CAN THE "RWU" BE PERFORMED IN ANY ORDER?

No, the sequence was chosen to provide a deliberate warm-up and progression.

### WHEN SHOULD PLAYERS PROGRESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL OF THE "RWU"?

Players should begin with level 1. Only when an exercise can be performed without difficulty for the specified duration and number of repetitions should the player progress to the next level of this exercise.

### COOL-DOWN AND STRETCH

Cooling-down after playing or training increases the rate of recovery, so players are better able to front up for the next week's activities. It's also the best time to improve flexibility.

Cooling-down and stretching for rugby should last for 10 – 15 minutes and consist of:

1. Aerobic exercise. Slow jogging or brisk walking around the field with a ball is one of the best ways to cool down.
2. Static stretching. Stretch for 10 minutes after the light jogging. If you want to achieve greater flexibility, hold the stretches for 60 seconds during the cool-down as this will help the muscles relax and reduce tension.
3. Recovery. After any exercise, make sure players rehydrate. Treat any injuries with the R.I.C.E.D. procedure.



## TOPIC 2: INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

## INTRODUCTION

Individual skills are the fundamentals of rugby performance. Key skill areas have been identified. The coach must understand and apply the "Key Factors" of Individual Skills to effectively improve player performance. The first skill set have been covered in the Small Blacks grades, therefore we will be concentrating on the second set of skills. If you are unfamiliar with the Phase One Skill Set, please refer to www.rugbytoolbox.co.nz for further information.

KEY FACTORS are prioritised actions that will result in a skill being performed successfully.

**PHASE ONE SKILL SET U13 (Primary and Intermediate Age)**

**PHASE TWO SKILL SET TEENAGE**





CONTACT



TACKLING



RUNNING




KICKING

# STAGE TWO SKILL SET KEY FACTORS






# AND COACHING POINTS

**ATTACK** **DEFENCE** **BOTH**

## DROP PUNT

### Objective

To apply pressure to opposition by putting the ball into touch.

### Key Factors

- Hold the ball in two hands in an upright position.
- Stand facing the direction of the intended kick.
- Step forward and plant non-kicking foot in the direction of the kick.
- Swing kicking foot back and contact the ball just behind and under the point.
- Follow-through toward the target with toes pointed at target.

### Common Errors

- Lifting head too early.
- Turning shoulders at the point of contact with the ball.
- Trying to kick too far.
- Trying to kick too hard, so losing balance and power.
- Throwing the ball into the air to kick.
- Contacting the ball too late.
- Pointing toes up towards the sky.

## THE FEND/PUSH-OFF



## Objective

To create space whilst running by pushing away a defender.

## Key Factors

- Ball in two hands.
- Prepare to sidestep or swerve around an opposing player.
- The ball carrier needs to get within arm's length of the defender.
- While sidestepping or swerving, use an open hand to push the tackler away.

## Common Errors

- Attacker raising arm too early, allowing tackler to drive underneath.
- Straight arm, as opposed to bent arm, pushing away on contact.
- Not focussing on the target or contact zone on the defender.

# ACCELERATION



## Objective

To increase speed.

## Key Factors

- Keep your weight on balls of feet.
- Make vigorous punching actions with arms.
- Drive off one leg and follow it with short explosive strides.
- Keep low over the first few strides then lengthen.
- Eyes up.

## Common Errors

- Rocking from side to side.
- Turning feet/knees inwards or outwards from the running line.
- Tense body.



## RUNNING IN DEFENCE

### Objective

To be able to apply pressure, reduce options, make the tackle, and regain possession.

### Key Factors

- Anticipate the point of the opposition attack. Communicate giving players around you responsibility and direction.
- Position on the inside shoulder of the ball-carrier limiting the ball-carrier's options.
- Tackle.
- Regain possession.

### Common Errors

- Lack of communication.
- Coming up too straight on the ball-carrier.
- Not following the defensive pattern.



## THE UP-AND-UNDER (BOMB)

### Objective

To apply pressure by putting the ball high into the air, allowing attacking players to contest possession.

### Key Factors

- Hold ball in upright position.
- Keep the head down and eyes on the ball.
- Head over the top of the ball.
- Turn slightly side-on to protect the ball.
- Swing hips into the kick.
- Contact the ball just behind and under the point.
- Raise toes on contact.
- High follow-through.
- Protect ball from opposition.

### Common Errors

- Kick goes too far or not far enough.
- Kicker lifts head too early.
- Ball not placed correctly on the foot.
- Follow-through not high enough.
- Non-kicking foot leaving the ground creates imbalance.



# PLACE KICK

## Objective

To kick ball accurately to convert a try or score a penalty goal.

## Key Factors

- Lean the ball slightly forward to expose the "sweet spot".
- Before moving back stand over the ball in the kicking position.
- Move back to a comfortable position.
- Concentrate on the "sweet spot".
- Relax.
- Focus – use key words.
- Use imagery to picture the complete kick.
- Approach by running in an arc.
- The non-kicking arm is ahead of the body, drawing the non-kicking shoulder forward so that the player is side-on to the ball.
- Place non-kicking foot hip width from the ball and aligned to the target.
- Swing through the strike zone.
- Keep head over the ball so body weight is moving forward through the strike zone.
- Contact with the bone at the top of the instep.
- Rise onto the toes of the non-kicking foot.
- Follow straight through.
- Return to balanced stance.

## Common Errors

- Lifting head.
- Leading shoulder too open.
- Non-kicking foot too far from the ball.
- Follow through is in an arc rather than straight through.
- Unbalanced finishing position.



## CHIP KICK

### Objective

To apply pressure and or regain possession by kicking the ball over the line of defence.

### Key Factors

- Look for space behind the defence to place kick.
- Hold ball in upright position.
- Make contact just behind or on the point of the ball.
- Head down, eyes on ball.
- Leg is fully extended on contact with a short follow through.
- Raise kicking toe to impart backspin.
- Keep head and shoulders still.
- Chase kick and regain the ball from the kick.

### Common Errors

- Kicking too hard.
- Kicking to opposition player.
- Not following kick through.
- Kicking too close to defender and getting kick charged down.



## TRAPPING THE BALL

### Objective

To control the loose ball without using your hands.

### Key Factors

- Make the decision to trap the ball with your foot based on the circumstances.
- Run towards the bouncing ball.
- Keep square to the ball if possible.
- Keep the arms away from the ball.
- Trap the ball using the inside of the appropriate foot or the front of the body/ legs.
- Keep your eyes on the ball.
- When the ball is still pick it up.

### Common Errors

- Poor decision – probably should have caught it.
- Timing wrong with foot. Not letting the ball come to you.
- Misjudged the speed or distance so that the ball bounces away from a firm or mistimed trap.
- Awkward bounce which necessitates a change of method.



## BALL AND ALL TACKLE

### Objective

To stop forward momentum of ball-carrier and prevent ball-carrier from releasing the ball. Regain possession.

### Key Factors

- Sight target.
- Move forward towards the ball-carrier.
- Plant the foot as close to the ball-carrier as possible.
- Drive with a shoulder firmly to make contact at the position of the ball.
- Wrap with the arms to prevent the ball being released.
- Continue to drive the ball-carrier back.
- Use the tackler's weight and body strength to take the ball to the ground or hold the ball carrier off the ground to create a turnover.
- Stay on feet or regain feet.
- Contest possession.

### Common Errors

- Too high.
- Passive contact.
- Not moving forward into tackle.
- Head down, eyes closed.



## DISPOSSESSING

### Objective

To be able to rob the opposition of the ball in a standing situation.

### Key Factors

- Bend down at the knees below the height of the ball.
- Bring the arms under and up between the body and arms of the ball-carrier.
- Grip the ball over the top.
- Push up and forward before suddenly ripping down.
- Use the weight of the body in the pulling action.

### Common Errors

- Poor body position. Generally, too upright.
- Not pulling down explosively.
- Not using the weight of your body.



## POP PASS

### Objective

To pass the ball to a teammate to put them into a gap or to give time for a teammate to run onto the ball.

### Key Factors

- Hands positioned under the ball.
- Listen for call/timing. Look for support runner.
- Moves toward the defender to create space for the receiver.
- Pass in one movement following through with fingers pointing in direction of the pop.
- Aim to pop pass at chest height, out in front.
- Take speed off the ball given it 'some air' by a little flick in the wrists, so that it 'waits' for the support player.

### Common Errors

- Ball carrier not looking before the pass is made and not finding the target.
- Passing too early or too late.
- Not enough elevation on the ball so that the ball and the runner do not meet.
- The ball carrier not creating space for the support runner before the pass is made.



## SPIRAL PASS

### Objective

To transfer the ball quickly and accurately over a longer-than-normal distance.

### Key Factors

- Turn the ball long ways with fingers across the seam.
- In the passing action use the passing hand to give power and to impart spin.
- Use the guiding hand to provide stability and direction.
- Follow through with fingers pointing towards the receiver.

### Common Errors

- Not focussing on a target.
- Lifting head too early.
- No follow-through with fingers pointing to the target.
- Lack of spin and pace because ball is not placed in a spiralling position and not enough strength is imparted from the bottom hand.
- Drifting with the pass.



## LOB PASS

### Objective

To pass the ball over an opponent to a teammate or to give time for a teammate to run onto the ball.

### Key Factors

- Two hands on the ball.
- Free up arms.
- Use swing or chest pass.
- Soft hands.
- Follow-through.
- Pass gives supporting players time to catch the pass.

### Common Errors

- Not enough elevation on the ball.
- Passing to opponent.
- Too soft or too hard.



## PASS THROUGH THE TACKLE

### Objective

To fully commit defenders and then offload the ball.

### Key Factors

- Sight and run at space between defenders.
- Hold the ball firmly in two hands.
- Win the contact before you make the offload.
- Power step into contact.
- Extend arms through, upwards and behind the tackler.
- Slightly rotate towards receiver.
- Keep arms free by lifting them up above the level of the tackle.
- Pass ball to space receiver is running into.
- Supporting players must maintain the right depth to make an offload effective.

### Common Errors

- Not running into space between defenders.
- Not holding the ball in two hands.
- Not power stepping into contact.
- Not freeing arms.



## ON BACK PASS (PASSING AFTER THE TACKLE)

### Objective

To transfer the ball from a tackled position on the ground to a supporting teammate.

### Key Factors

- Player rolls on to their side or their back after the tackle to sight their support players.
- Player looks and decides – pass or place.
- Listen for a call /sight support player/s.
- Pop ball with hands underneath the ball upwards to targeted player.

### Common Errors

- Not focusing on a target.
- Throwing the ball too hard because the pass is too rushed.
- Not enough 'air'.
- Receiver is too flat.
- Too many players around which makes an accurate pass difficult.

## OFFLOAD



## Objective

Pass the ball using one hand to supporting players while on your feet and in contact with one or more tacklers.

## Key Factors

- Win the contact before you make the offload.
- Lean slightly in toward the tackler as you need to use the space between you and the opposition to present the ball across the body in one hand.
- Supporting players must maintain the right depth to make an offload effective.
- Bend your elbow up and push your hand toward the target (like you are about to flick a ball back up over your own shoulder).
- Flip the ball to your support player using the wrist (as the elbow comes up) and extend arm toward the target for accuracy.

## Common Errors

- Running into heavy traffic.
- Trying to offload in a ball in all tackle.
- Your support from teammates is too slow.

# CUT OUT PASS



## Objective

To transfer the ball past a decoy player to another teammate to destabilise the defensive screen.

## Key Factors

- Long, flat, and quick pass.
- Aim through decoy's hands.
- The Decoy runner must be able to receive the pass, or this won't distract the defenders.
- Pass In front of the receiver.
- The spiral pass is a good option.

## Common Errors

- Not focusing on a target.
- No follow-through with the arms and fingers.
- Ball propelled on incorrect plane. Too high; too low; not in front.
- Decoy not effective.
- Drifting with the pass which allows the defender/s to drift off early and cover the ball receiver.



## SCISSORS PASS OR SWITCH

### Objective

To change the direction of an attack or out manoeuvre an opponent.

### Key Factors

- After initially running straight to commit defenders the ball-carrier should step sharply across the path of the receiver and accelerate laterally for a few paces. This will create some space on the inside of the ball carrier.
- Show the ball to the defenders until the transfer is about to be made.
- Transfer the ball to the runner who is running back against the flow as they run in to the space that has been created by the ball carrier taking off on their lateral run.
- The pass is made across the front of the body in the direction of the run and releasing the ball behind the body after sighting the runner on the switch.
- The pass needs to be made so that it is popped up in front of the runner.

### Common Errors

- Not focusing on a target for the pass.
- Both players changing the angle of their run too early.
- Receiver takes the wrong angle because they have not looked to see where the space is going to be.
- Players not changing pace as they change angles.
- Ball-carrier misses signal for scissors.



## DUMMY PASS

### Objective

To make the opposition believe that a pass has been made so that they will attempt to tackle the player who they believe is about to receive the pass.

### Key Factors

- Conviction and vision.
- Make a passing motion without releasing – look at the receiver.
- Short movement.
- Quick action and accelerate into the space that has been left.

### Common Errors

- No conviction.
- Ball not out in front and held in two hands.
- Target is not believable as they don't look like they are going to receive the ball.



## STANDING IN THE TACKLE

### Objective

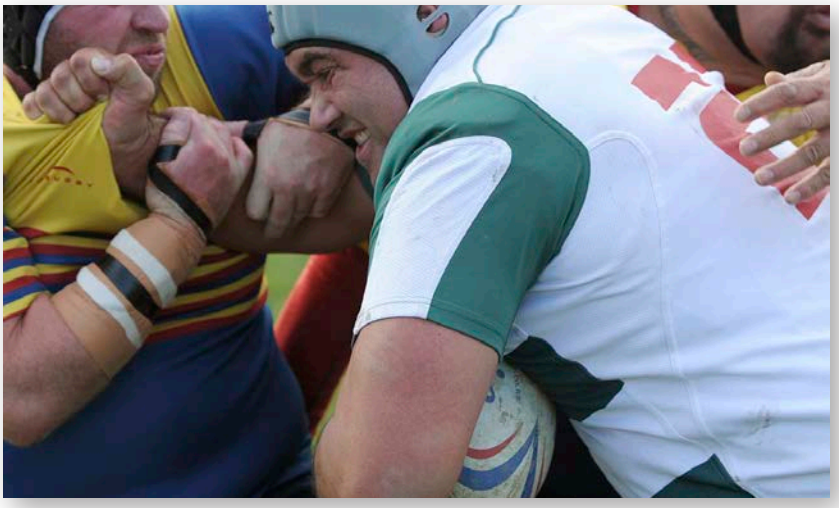
To retain possession while engaging opposition. To set an effective target for supporting players or utilise options created by support players.

### Key Factors

- Create weak shoulder, step, and target the outside of a shoulder of the defender.
- Chin off chest; eyes open.
- Low body position, bend at knees.
- Ball in two hands, away from contact.
- Small steps on approach.
- Plant front foot close to defender's feet.
- Drive through contact. Hit with the hard parts - shoulder-elbow-hip.
- Snap the hips through and rotate the body to be square on/side on with the ball away from the defence.
- Maintain low, stable base. Get the ball low so the next player can drive above it.
- Brace for impact (from defence support).
- Transfer ball after initial contact and forward movement.

### Common Errors

- Leading with ball.
- Too upright.
- Narrow base of support.
- Shoulders below hips.
- Holding the ball in one hand.
- Holding ball too high meaning support cannot effectively drive.



## ON THE GROUND

### Objective

To engage the opposition. To retain possession. To set an effective target for the supporting players.

### Key Factors

#### PRE-CONTACT

- Look to create a weak shoulder by stepping, go forward into space.
- Eyes up, chin off chest.
- Compact (tight) body position.
- Ball in two hands – shift away from contact.
- Small steps.

#### IN CONTACT

- Get square in contact.
- Take a big step just on contact.
- Pump legs to drive past defender.
- Drive forward before going to ground.

#### POST CONTACT

- Have control of the ball as ball carrier goes to ground.
- On the ground, place ball back towards support and hold onto it until team support arrives.
- On the ground, work hard to rotate your body back towards your team so that ball is placed away from opposition.

### Common Errors

- Ball-carrier leading with the ball.
- Body position too high – easily turned toward opposition.
- Going to ground too early so that the defenders are still on their feet and can attack the ball.
- Poor leg drive.
- Poor presentation of the ball to support or incorrect choice of placement.



## HIT AND SPIN

### Objective

To engage the opponent. To spin off to maintain momentum. To continue forward movement.

### Key Factors

- Focus on the contact area. Spin to the left – focus on defenders' right shoulder with your left shoulder.
- Eyes open and up.
- Compact body position.
- Ball in two hands. Can shift away from contact (body before ball).
- Small steps on approach.
- Plant front foot close to defender's feet. Spinning left – left foot near defender's right foot.
- Target to the side of the defender's shoulder.
- Contact side-on, with hard parts; spin to the outside of the shoulder contacted maintaining momentum.
- Maintain balance by keeping feet apart – three big steps (hit, step away, step across, and accelerate)
- Once facing forward, burst away.

### Common Errors

- Leading with the ball.
- Contacting centre of defender, stopping forward momentum.
- Spinning the wrong way, presenting the ball to the defending team.



## CLEANING OUT

### Objective

An area is successfully cleared after one side drives the opposition away from the ball.

### Key Factors

- Hands up and elbows in, with weight on balls of their feet.
- Face up.
- Contact under the shoulder of opposition.
- A good rule of thumb is to 'take off like a plane' – low to high.
- Squeeze arms of opposition with scissors movement removing your target from the congested area.

### Common Errors

- Leaving your feet.
- Driving from high-to-low.
- Assessing too early.
- Not between 'the gates'.



## JACKAL

### Objective

To regain possession from a tackle.

### Key Factors

- Get into a low body position on your feet over the ball.
- Feet close to ball carrier on ground.
- Shoulders above hips.
- Have a wide stable base.
- Reach out with strong arms and put hands on the ball.
- Shorten neck, chest over feet.
- Stay strong and maintain position.
- Get ball to your support players.

### Common Errors

- Head up looking for oncoming opposition.
- Shoulders too low below the hips.
- Not supporting body weight.



## TOPIC 3: UNIT SKILLS

### SCRUM

#### Objective

To restart play following a stoppage.

#### Introduction

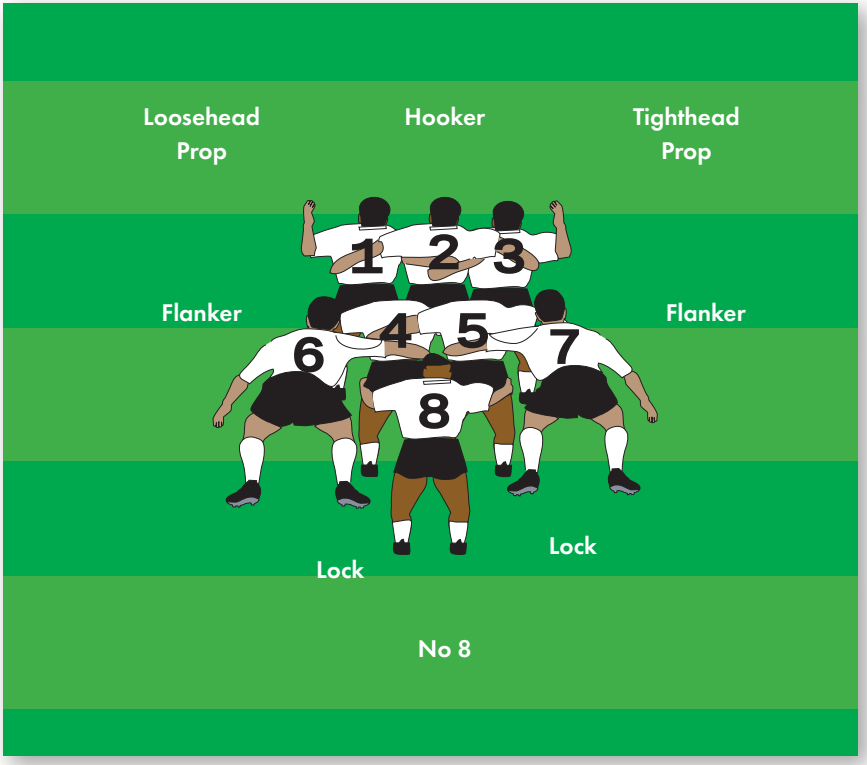
The scrum is a restart that binds large numbers of players in a small area allowing greater space for others to attack in.

#### Functional Roles

1. Hooker
2. Props
3. Locks
4. Loose Forwards
5. Deliverer
6. Link Player

#### Definition

The role of an individual player.



# 1. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - HOOKER

## Key Factors

- Coordinate the assembly.
- Bind over the props.
- Eyes open.
- Chin off chest.
- Hips below shoulders.
- Spine in line.
- Sight target.
- Crouch – Bind – Set.
- Hook ball.

## Coaching Points

- The hooker must take the responsibility for the assembly of the scrum.
- Bind firmly at the armpits over the props' shoulders.
- Players may choose the option of binding first and crouching, or crouching first then binding.
- Engage from the crouched/bound position on referee's call (same as props).
- Pull the chest through on 'bind' so that the position is a strong one.
- On the strike turn the hips but not the shoulders which must be kept low.
- Coordination with the deliverer will allow the ball to be hooked then channelled between the legs of the loosehead.
- Defensive hookers contest possession; or they can channel their strength into pushing to slow down the speed of the hook. Drive in off both feet for this.



## 2. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - PROPS

### Key Factors

- Weight on balls of feet and heels on the ground.
- Feet shoulder - width apart.
- Bind with the hooker; shoulders square.
- Eyes open.
- Chin off chest.
- Hips below shoulders.
- Spine in line.
- Sight target.
- Crouch – Bind – Set.

### Coaching Points

#### SET UP

- 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.
- The props approach from behind to bind up starting at the bottom. Place the inside foot near the foot of the hooker and point it straight up field.
- The hips are then squared up and placed alongside the hookers hips.
- The props then grip the hooker (bind) and finally the hooker binds on the props.

#### CROUCH

- 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.
- Squeeze the toes and keep the feet on the ground.

#### BIND

- 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.

#### ENGAGE

- 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.)
- The front rows must interlock (ear to ear) so that no players head is next to the head of a teammate. They should offset before the engagement.
- Transfer the scrum's weight to the opposition by maintaining body position with a straight back, face in neutral

position, shoulders above the level of the hips forward of the knees and maintaining tight grips.

- Drive in pushing the chin, chest and shoulders forward to create pressure.
- Maintain pressure until the ball is out by sinking and pushing forward by extending knees and taking small steps to maintain balance and apply pressure until ball is delivered.



## 3. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - LOCKS

### Key Factors

- Bind together.
- Head enters between hooker and prop.
- Assume pushing position.
- Bind with props.
- Eyes open.
- Chin off chest.
- Hips below shoulders.
- Spine in line.
- Sight target.
- Push on engagement.
- Feet square when pushing.

### Coaching Points

#### SET UP

- Bind around the body. As a general rule, the taller lock binds over the top of the shorter lock to ensure their shoulders and hips are square.
- Either squat or kneel on the inside knee and come up into a position under the buttocks of the props and hooker. Too high and the push is ineffective. Too low and you will be pushing against the props hamstring.
- Bind with the free arm on to the props between the legs and onto the waistband. This may be tightened by moving the hand across the waistband onto the inner hip.

#### ENGAGE

- On 'bind' the locks should be in a position with knees off the ground to drive straight forward.
- Follow front row into engagement and maintain the pressure.
- Upon contact, feet must be shoulder-width apart and parallel.
- Apply weight by sinking and straightening the knees; thrusting the chin and chest forward.
- Take small steps to maintain balance and apply pressure until the ball is delivered.

## 4. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - LOOSE FORWARDS

### Key Factors

- Bind firmly.
- Assume pushing position.
- Eyes open; chin off chest.
- Understand options.
- Scrum first, think about post-scrum option second.

### Coaching Points

- Ensure all loose forwards are bound onto scrum prior to engagement.
- The flankers should reach over and bind on the far side of the closest lock.
- The loosehead flanker positions their feet to ensure the ball does not shoot out the side of the scrum.
- The flankers should have continual shoulder contact with the buttock of the prop and they should push parallel to the locks.
- The number 8 should join the scrum on the 'bind' call if they is not already in.
- The No 8 should channel the ball to their right. This may involve a change in the No 8's positioning.
- Develop delivery options for all circumstances including the scrum being

pushed back.

- For a quicker delivery option, pack No 8 between loosehead flanker and lock. (Not applicable below senior level according to the Domestic Safety Law Variation.)
- After engaging the No 8 can make this movement as long as they have re-packed prior to the ball being fed into the scrum.

## 5. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - DELIVERER

### KEY FACTORS

- Be ready early.
- Coordinate put-in.
- Communicate weight application.
- Choose best options.

### COACHING POINTS

- By being ready prior to the scrum engaging there is no delay in putting the ball in. This will reduce the risk of the front rows collapsing or our team losing our forward momentum.
- Throw the ball in upon receiving the referees ok. Must co-ordinate put in with hooker. This is essential for the push–feed–strike phases to be coordinated.
- Once the ball is channelled through the scrum, the deliverer will move around to behind the No 8. At this stage, a decision will be made as to what option will be used to clear the ball.
- If the deliverer is to clear the ball, the best position for this is on the right of the No 8.
- Any pre-planned attack option will involve the deliverer.
- In most cases the deliverer will be the halfback.



## 6. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - LINK PLAYER

### Key Factors

- Understand the options.
- Communicate.
- Carry out.

### Coaching Points

- Know the preferred attacking option.
- Be alert to option changes resulting from the actions of the opposition.
- Coordinate the delivery of the ball.
- Decide best option – communicate it – carry it out.
- This player is normally the halfback or Number 8.

### General Coaching Points

- Safety is paramount. The most effective pushing position is the safest.
- All members of the scrum are pushers.
- Scrum first, as a basic philosophy.
- General awareness, understanding the post-scrum options and knowing where to go are all important.
- In defence, flanker normally takes the first ball-carrier, No 8 the second.



# LINEOUT

## Objective

To restart play following the ball going into touch.

## Introduction

Like the scrum, the lineout groups large numbers of players in a small area. In contrast to the scrum, the lineout forms only between 5- and 15-metre lines, thus allowing full width of the field for teams to attack. The opposing backlines must be 20m apart until the lineout finishes which gives time and space for attacking options.

Lineout laws are quite complex and players should know what they can and can't do.

## Functional Roles

1. Thrower
2. Jumpers/Catchers
3. Lifters
4. Support Players
5. Link Player



## 1. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - THROWER

### Key Factors

- Understand the options.
- Know the call.
- Throw accurately.
- Support as required.

### Coaching Points

- The skill of throwing, while unique to each individual should, to be successful, demonstrate the following key factors:
  1. Fingers spread on the side of the ball with the thumbs providing stability under the ball.
  2. Ball held directly above the head.
  3. Push elbows forward.
  4. Power to come from wrist and forearm.
  5. Follow-through by pointing the fingers at the target and leaving them up there.
- It is important that throwers understand likely options at various field positions.
- Know the call – both the position of the jumper and the type of jump. Communication between thrower and jumper can be verbal or non-verbal.
- Throw using the type of throw wanted by the jumper. These are generally faster and flatter or slower and lobbed.
- Most jumpers have a minimum of 2 throws (i.e. front and back).
- Once the ball is thrown in, the thrower can do one of two things:
  a. Take up position within the 5-metre line to prevent opponents from moving around the front.
  b. Take up a drive position in the lineout, if this is the best option.
- On the opposition throw, the non-thrower has several options. The two most likely are:
  a. Cover the 5-metre area in front of the lineout.
  b. Support the front jumper.
- Following an opposition lineout win, the role of the player in the 5-metre area is to put pressure on the ball around the front of the lineout.

## 2. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - JUMPER/CATCHER



## Key Factors

- Understand the options.
- Step and drive upward from a strong position (two feet together).
- Stay strong in the jump by pointing your toes and stabilising your abdomen.
- Eyes on ball.
- Soft hands but aggressive body position.
- Controlled delivery.

## Coaching Points

- Create space.
- Space is created by out-manoeuvring opponents before the throw is made. By moving back, the opposition is drawn back, creating space in front; by moving forward, space is created behind.
- Move into the space on the throw so that the jump is vertical.
- Alternatively take up a position and receive a quick and early throw before the opposition are set.
- Adjust arm position to prevent opponents blocking arm movement.
- Two-foot take-off ideal for timing, i.e. one foot forwards, stop, together, then up.
- Drive explosively up towards the ball by starting low and driving up with arms.
- Catch with soft hands so the ball is not tapped in an uncontrolled way.
- Confidence in support players is critical to allow jumper to concentrate only on retrieving the ball.
- Ball that is caught in two hands should be moved immediately away from the centre line and opponents by pivoting to face halfback - jumper is reliant on supporters to assist with this.



## 3. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - LIFTERS

### Key Factors

- Understand the options.
- Create space.
- Face jumper.
- Coordinate jump.
- Step forwards and inwards.
- Feet shoulder-width apart.
- Drive upwards.
- Both lifters squeeze in on the jumper.
- Lock elbows with arms at full stretch.
- Control the descent.

### Coaching Points

- Lifter must create space by turning and stepping across. Their body position occupies space and prevents the opposition moving into the space they have created for the catcher.
- Take cue off the jumper as to when support is applied.
- Once the jump commences, both lifters need to step towards the jumper and grip on to the shorts (back lift) and not below the thighs (front lift), then drive upwards, using the legs and arms, from a low position.
- When the lifters are supporting the jumper through the jump phase, it is important that they stabilise the jumper by locking the elbows with the arms held at full stretch, feet shoulder-width apart.
- The jumper should be held in position until the catch is made.
- Support of the jumper through the descent phase is important whether the ball has been caught or not.
- The lifters should provide the stability, blocking and driving for the jumper once they are back on the ground.
- NB. It is the jumper's responsibility to initiate the jump.



## 4. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - SUPPORT PLAYERS

### Key Factors

- Understand the options.
- Know the role.
- Eyes on the ball.
- Be proactive.
- Support immediately.
- Protect the ball.
- Go forward.

### Coaching Points

- Roles of support players are:
  a. Initially move forward and across towards the jumper and bind to form a protective screen for the ball.
  b. Sight the ball throughout.
  c. If the ball is not taken cleanly, recover ball while still keeping in the line.
  d. If the ball is taken cleanly and is going to be delivered immediately, hold the line. Keep in the line or drive forward, depending on the options.
  e. The support player on driven ball needs to position early, parallel to the touchline and directly behind the jumper. When the jumper reaches the ground the drive can immediately be started.
  f. Other support players on driven ball hold the line until the ball is caught.



## 5. FUNCTIONAL ROLE - LINK PLAYER

### Key Factors

- Understand the roles.
- Communicate.
- Carry out.

### Coaching Points

- Know the preferred attacking option.
- Be alert to option changes resulting from the actions of the opposition.
- Coordinate the delivery of the ball.
- Decide on the best option, communicate and carry it out.

### General Coaching Points

- Be creative, i.e. vary roles, vary options, and use deceptions.
- Every player in lineout must understand options and carry out roles as communicated.
- Generally, ball won at front of lineout is best driven.
- Backs prefer ball delivered off the top of the lineout from middle or back which allows them more time and space to attack.



# CONTINUITY SKILLS

## Objective

To utilise support players to retain possession until the team scores.

## Introduction

Continuity is reliant on the ball-carrier, having and choosing the best option to continue the attack. The ball-carrier and the supporting players must understand and effectively carry out their individual roles at contact.

The key functional roles in terms of continuity skills are:

1. Ball-Carrier
2. First Support Player
3. Additional Support Players

In the modern game, players are called upon to use continuity skills more often than any other skill component.

**BALL-CARRIER**
Standing in the tackle

**See individual skills*

**BALL-CARRIER**
On the ground

**See individual skills*

**BALL-CARRIER**
Hit and spin

**See individual skills*



## FIRST SUPPORT PLAYER
## BALL OFF GROUND (IE. BALL-CARRIER ON FEET)

### Objective

To secure the ball. To establish/maintain forward movement at the contact point. To transfer possession from the ball-carrier.

### Key Factors

- Approach ball-carrier from depth.
- Identify role i.e. receive pass or latch onto ball carrier and drive forward.
- Call for pass if best option; or
- Assume low driving position, i.e. lower knees and hips; spine in line; chin off chest; eyes up; sight target.
- Drive onto the ball-carrier, with your shoulder the first point of contact.
- Shoulder contact made above ball in lower chest area of ball-carrier.
- Drive forward with legs; wrap arms around the ball-carrier.
- Maintain leg drive.
- Reposition arm for ball transfer.
- Secure and transfer ball.
- Communicate for pass or instruct to stay on feet.

### Coaching Points

- If the best option is to receive pass then communicate this to the ball-carrier.
- There is no offside line when only the ball carrier and defender are in contact.
- Seal ball off by leading with the opposite shoulder to that used by the ball-carrier.
- Generally the ball-carrier will be held up by a defender. The priority is to get forward movement and control.
- Reaching for the ball instead of hitting with the shoulder first by the supporting player will lead to an ineffective impact and drive.
- The alternative is to bind a support player to either side of the ball-carrier to seal off the ball.
- The first support player may rip and pass or rip and run immediately if they have further support and the defence is scarce.

### Common Errors

- Head down; eyes closed.
- Contact shallow from side causing sideways, not forward, movement.
- First support player reaching for ball instead of driving on to the body with the shoulder.
- First support player ripping ball and becoming isolated.
- Ball-carrier holding ball too high creating an inefficient driving platform.
- First support player driving in too high.
- First support player not maintaining leg drive after contact.




## FIRST SUPPORT PLAYER
## BALL-CARRIER ON GROUND

## Objective

To retain the ball, remove the threats or take the space over the ball and protect it.

## Key Factors

- Approach grounded ball from depth parallel to the touchline.
- Identify role.
- Assume low driving position, i.e. lower knees and hips; spine in line; chin off chest; eyes up.
- Entry through 'the gate'.
- Retain feet.
- Drive forward binding onto the opposition and past the ball, or over the ball to protect it, or pick up the ball and drive forward.

## Coaching Points

- If the grounded ball is in the open or only two grounded players are nearby, there is no offside line so the quickest route to the ball is required.
- The support player must retain feet and claim the ball and space around the ball before the opposition arrive.
- By straddling the ball carrier and contacting an opponent, a ruck is formed.
- Consequently an offside line is established.

## Common Errors

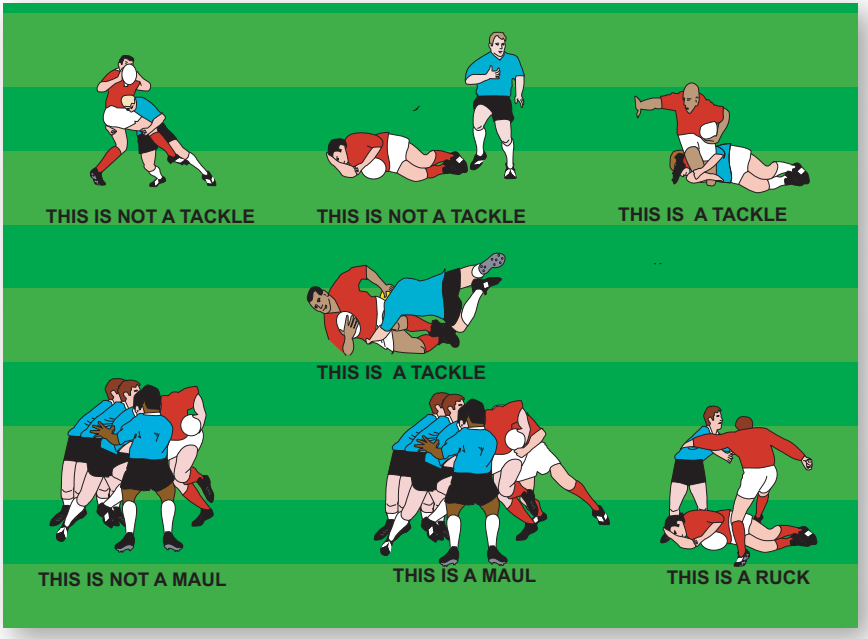
- Not understanding the options.
- Diving into the contact area for the ball.
- Chin on chest; eyes closed.
- Falling over due to an unstable body position. Feet too close together. Not crouched.
- Too upright when attempting to pick up the ball.
- Hesitation going into the contact area.



# MAUL AND RUCK

## Introduction

The maul and ruck are two distinct phases of play. Good teams have the capacity to deliver quality ball with equal effectiveness in either phase.



# MAUL

## Definition

Ball held up above ground. The ball-carrier and one other from each team are in physical contact around the ball (minimum of three players).

## Objective

To engage and group the opposition. To move forward. To present the ball to continue the attack. NOTE: Refer to Key Factors for the following functional roles:

(i) Ball-Carrier - Standing in the Tackle

(ii) First Support Player(s) - Ball off Ground

## Key Factors

### SECOND AND THIRD SUPPORT PLAYERS

- Identify role; sight the target area. Choosing the correct spot is crucial.
- Approach the ball-carrier and first support player with depth, parallel to the touchline.
- Assume a low, effective driving position.
- Hit with the shoulder and bind and drive either side of ball-carrier, forming a wedge to protect the ball.
- Maintain a strong forward leg drive throughout using short steps.
- Be aware of where the ball is in the maul.

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PLAYERS

- Identify each role; sight the target area.
- Approach the maul from depth, parallel to touchline.
- Assume a low, effective driving position.
- If possible, bind with a teammate and drive forward.
- Ensure balanced numbers approach either side of the maul.
- Bind and drive onto the maul at the hind-most foot.
- Maintain a strong forward leg drive throughout using short steps.
- Transfer the ball to the back of the maul, communicating its position throughout. Only two or three players should handle the ball. The rest should be low and driving forward.
- Deliver to the halfback or initiate further play.

## Coaching Points

- Players must be coached to ensure ball security. Body before ball / ball carrier to turn as they make contact.
- Balance is crucial to forward movement. An even number of players must join the maul from either side of the ball.
- The most effective pushing position is common through scrum, ruck and maul: knees and hips below shoulders; spine in line; chin off chest; eyes up.
- Communication is crucial within the maul with regard to the position of ball and the attacking options.
- A maul can become a ruck by:
  1. the current ball-carrier going to ground and the bound support moving forward over the grounded ball-carrier.
  2. the ball being placed on the ground.
- Alternative set for maul: first two support players bind either side of ball-carrier with third support player driving in on the ball.

NB: Players joining a maul must do so from behind hind-most foot.

## Common Errors

- Ineffective work of the ball-carrier and/or the 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 the front of the maul.
- Failing to continue with the leg drive after the initial contact.
- Poor communication in the 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 the ball when the maul becomes stationary or told to "use it" by the referee.

# RUCK

## Definition

Ball on the ground. One or more players from each team on their feet in physical contact over the ball (minimum of two players).

## Objective

To engage and group the opposition. To move forward.

To present quick ball to continue the attack.

NOTE: Refer Key Factors for the following Functional Roles:

(i) Ball-Carrier - on the ground

(ii) First Support Player - Ball-carrier on the Ground

## Key Factors

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PLAYERS

- Identify role; sight the target area.
- Approach the ruck from depth, parallel to touchline.
- Fast – to ruck. Balance – sighting the area. Explode – binding and driving.
- Bind onto a teammate or onto an opposition player.
- Drive forward past the ball or remain over the ball to protect it.
- Use feet to ruck ball clear of congestion.
- Stay on feet at all times.

## Coaching Points

- For stability and an effective driving position, encourage the players to bind with teammates and drive through rucks or bind on to an opposition player and drive them backwards.
- Players must stay on their feet to drive forward effectively. Eyes up. Hips down.
- Quick ruck ball moving forward is conducive to good phase play.

## Common Errors

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

# BACK ATTACK

## Objective

To penetrate the opponent's defence. Maintain continuity. Score.

## Introduction:

The backline will perform best if the ball is presented from a solid platform going forward.

## Key Factors

- Awareness
- Alignment
- Angles of running
- Depth and width
- Timing
- Vision
- Speed
- Skill
- Penetration
- Continuity

## Coaching Points

- The need to identify the situation and communicate the best option available.
- The backline formation is dependent on the skill level and running speed of the players, the phase of play and the defensive line speed.
- Players should run as straight as possible to threaten the opposition which will 'hold' the defence and create more space.
- Players should be:
  a. deep enough to pass the ball through the hands to space;
  b. close enough to the opposition to keep the defence from drifting on to the next attacker;
  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 feet, hands and thought determines a backline's ability to penetrate to score.
- Timing of the attack is relative to the position of the tackle line.
- The continued practise and development of skills is crucial to backline effectiveness.
- Players can penetrate a defence by:
  a. threatening and passing
  b. running and agility
  c. kicking



## LINES INFLUENCING ATTACK

### THE ADVANTAGE LINE (GAIN LINE):

An imaginary line running parallel to the try line through the middle of a lineout, scrum, ruck or maul. Breaking this line ensures forward movement.

### THE ATTACK LINE:

The backline alignment of the team in possession.

### THE DEFENCE LINE: (OFFSIDE LINE)

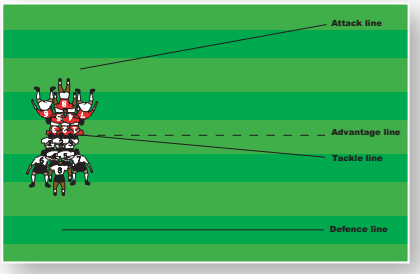
The line which the defence adopts as allowed by the offside law.

### THE TACKLE LINE:

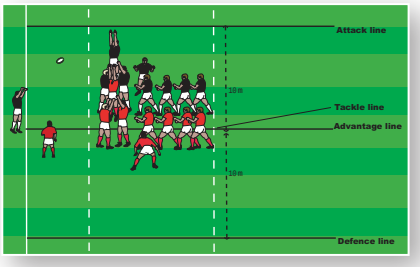
Connects the points at which defenders will tackle the attackers. It is approximately halfway between the defence line and the attack line but is often closer to the attack line than the defence line based on the defence moving forward more quickly.

NB Of significance to the attack is the tackle line, because it is at this line that the attack meets the defence.

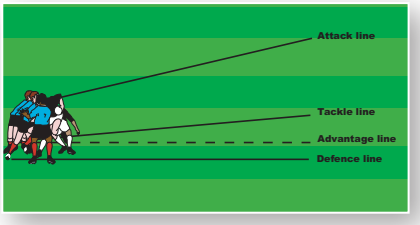
### Scrums




### Lineouts




### Second Phase



# ATTACK

## Functional Roles

The following terminology explains the functional roles of players in attack. The roles may change. Every player must be conversant with each role as they may change during the course of the attack.

**DISTRIBUTOR:**
The passer, who sets the backline in motion.

**PLAYMAKER:**
The pivot of the attack and decision-maker.

**OPTION RUNNER:**
Creates uncertainty in the defensive line. Quite often the decoy runner.

**PENETRATOR:**
Looks to break through the defence.

**SUPPORT PLAYERS (FINISHERS):**
Support ball-carrier, initially on either side, in behind, and with depth.

## Coaching Points

- Distributor should run relatively straight to commit defenders. They will then pass and support. If the defence moves away they will attempt to penetrate.
- The playmaker should run aggressively to commit the defender. An accurate pass to penetrator in space is essential. The pass can be before or through the tackle.
- The decoy/s position themselves strategically in view of the defence and moves to draw defenders away from the penetrator, creating a gap. They may receive a pass and then become a penetrator.
- The penetrator must appear in the gap as late as possible to receive the ball in space.
- The penetrator may position inside or outside the gap for the best angle of penetration. They must accelerate through the gap on receiving the pass. They can look to change the angle of attack and link with support players. It is important that the play does not stop if the penetrator is tackled.
- Support players run in arrowhead formation behind the ball-carrier to run onto a pass from depth or hit the contact zone if the penetrator is tackled.. They must communicate with the ball carrier.

***Communication Is The Key To All Attacks.***

## Common Errors:

- Creeping, causing there to be little forward momentum.
- Incorrect timing, i.e. outsides moving before 1st 5/8 receives the ball.
- No communication.
- Backs too shallow or too deep in alignment. Shallow alignment-run in balance; pass quickly. Deep alignment – run faster; pass when defender is committed; outside players hold depth.
- Inaccurate pass to receiver, hence slowing forward momentum.
- Backs running across field. Run at the defender and pass away from the pressure point.
- Not supporting the ball-carrier once the pass is made.
- Unbalanced support, favouring one side and limiting the options.
- Poor presentation of the ball in contact.
- Not working hard enough off the ball.
- Not achieving penetration close to the tackle line.
- No continuity at the passing/contact point through a poor decision or poor technique.

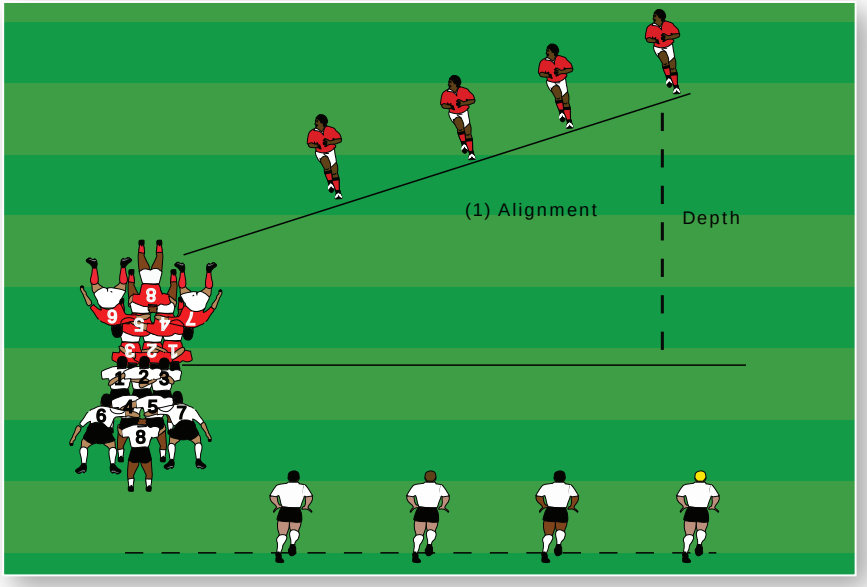
# ATTACK
# ALIGNMENT, ANGLE AND DEPTH

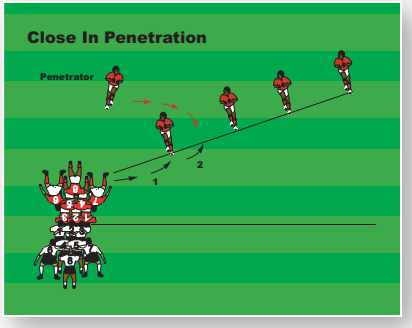
## Factors affecting Depth

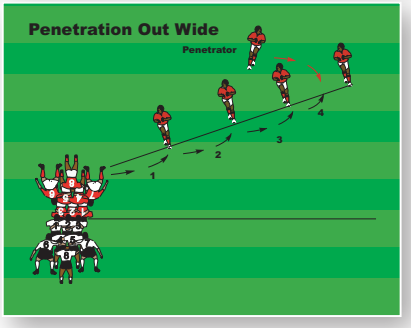
1. Handling skills of players.
2. The number of passes - NB the wider the penetration, the deeper the alignment, unless miss passes are used.
3. Defensive line-speed.

## Coaching Points

- Avoid players being too far apart: ball is often "heaved", not passed, and the transfer is too slow.
- Avoid players being too close together: one defender marks two attackers.
- A "sympathetic" pass provides receiving options: close-in, midway and wide.



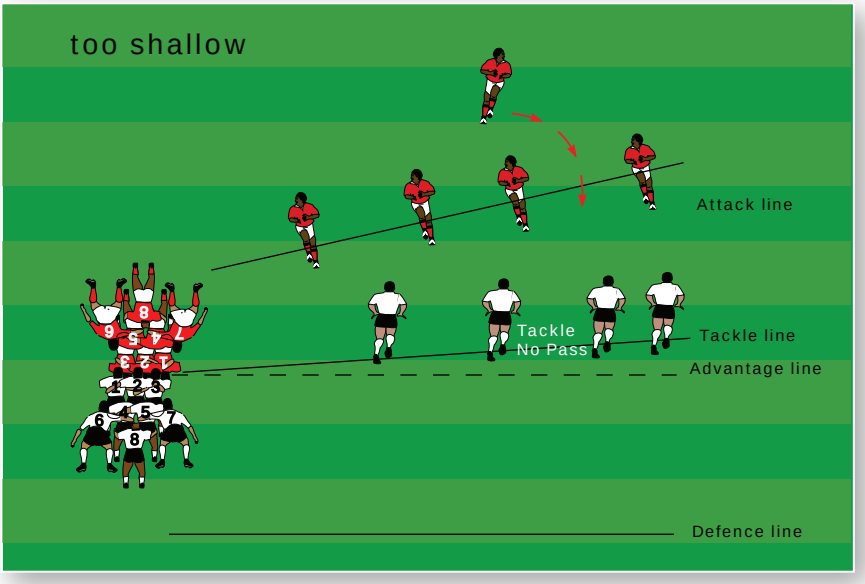



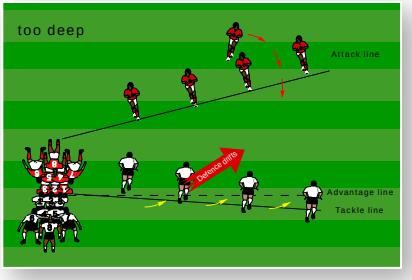
## DEPTH OF PENETRATION

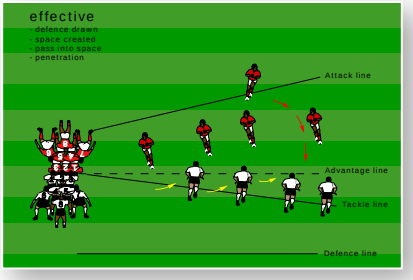
## PENETRATION OUTSIDE CENTRE

### Explanation

The three scenarios below highlight the importance of penetration occurring on or slightly before the tackle line.



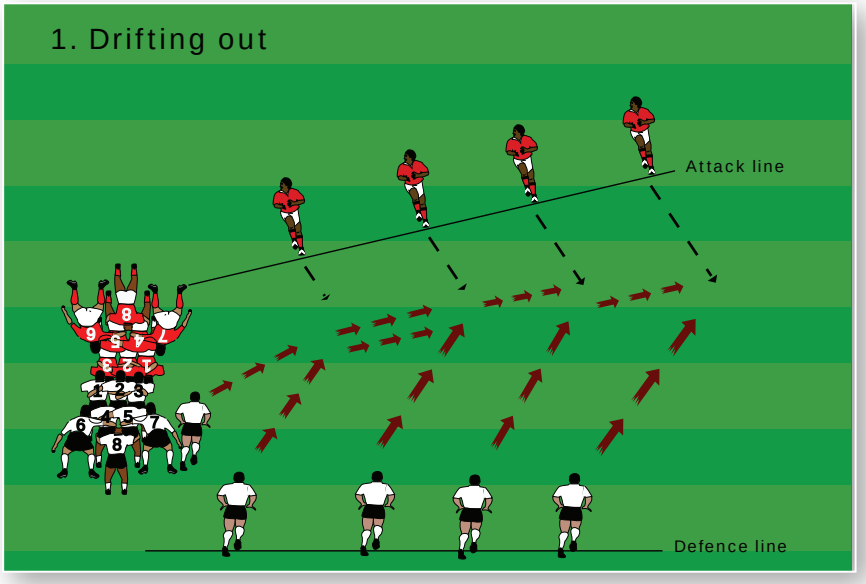



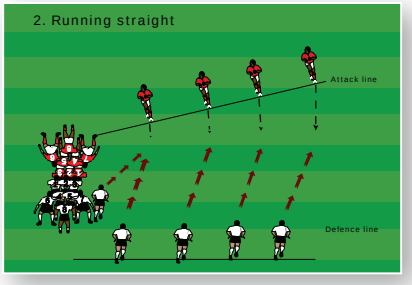



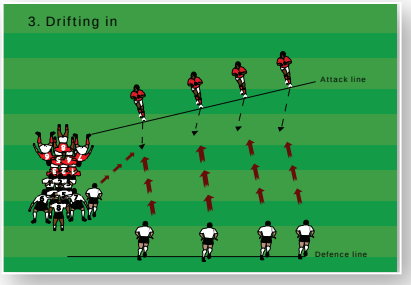
## ANGLE OF RUNNING

### Explanation

1. Drifting out – attacker running across the field allows the defenders to drift across
2. Running straight – limits the ability of defenders to drift and thus they have to concentrate on the ball carrier coming towards them.
3. Drifting in – attacker running back in towards defender 'holds' them i.e. keeps them honest



# ATTACK
# BLINDSIDE ATTACK

## Objective

To penetrate the opposition defences containing the least numbers in order to score.

## Key Factors

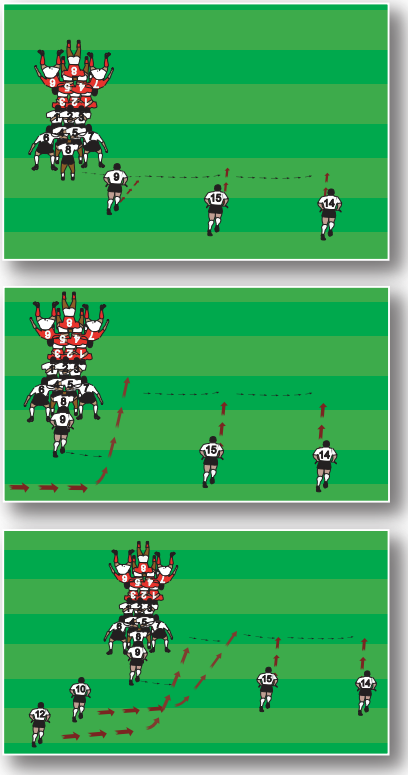
- Awareness
- Alignment
- Angles of running
- Depth and width
- Timing
- Vision
- Speed
- Skill
- Penetration
- Continuity

## Coaching Points

- Look at providing an option on the open-side.
- Don't show intentions to the opposition backs.
- Run flat on the blindside and wide enough to evade the cover tackle.
- Commit the tackler before passing.
- Be aware of passing options both inside and outside.
- Provide support on either side of ball-carrier.
- Quick ball is essential to ensure defence is disorganised.
- Communication and timing with the forwards is essential.

## Common Errors

- Receiving the ball too deep from scrum or phase play.
- Telegraphing blindside option to the opposition backs.
- Not looking to change angle of attack when required.
- Not having support players.
- Lack of awareness of blindside option by the whole team.
- Lack of communication.
- Poor timing of attackers' run.



- Release of the ball too slow scrum or phase.

**First five-eighths** – *playmaker* and maybe *penetrator* (depending on behaviour of blindside flanker).

**Fullback** – *penetrator* or *support*

**Wing** – *support* or *finisher*

# ATTACK
# TACTICAL KICKING

## Objective

To gain territory. To put opposition under pressure by putting ball in space. To regain possession by:

- forcing opposition to put the ball into touch;
- regathering the kick; or
- receiving ball kicked back by the opposition.

To relieve pressure.

Types of Kick:

- Up-and-under (Bomb)
- Grubber kick
- Chip kick
- Kick for territory
- Wipers (across the field)

## Coaching Points

- Identify the situation, communicate the best option and execute (awareness).
- Tactical kicking should reflect the formation of the opposition's defence, i.e. if winger up, put flat kick in behind.
- Tactical kicking must be accurate.
- Chasers must follow up kicks to put pressure on opposition (in a line across the field).
- Kickers must communicate kicking option to support players.

## Common Errors

- Kicking straight to the opposition.
- Kicking when a passing option would have been a better choice.
- Not communicating with supports.
- Not following up kicks.
- Kicking before the defenders bring the defensive line forward.



# DEFENCE

## Objective

To prevent the opposition team from scoring. To create pressure and regain possession.

## Introduction

Defence is the use of a system with specific roles for each individual to stop the opposition attack going forward. The prime objective is for the defenders to tackle aggressively, stop the opposition scoring, regain possession, launch a counterattack and score.

## Key Factors

- Contest possession.
- Have awareness of attackers' options and communicate them.
- Tackler identifies player they are responsible for and communicates. (This is fluid and will change as the attack works their plays).
- Align on opponents inside or outside shoulder depending on defensive pattern selected.
- Move forward in a line with support to cut down opponent's options.
- Hold inside defensive positions in the line and keep pushing up and across from the inside until at least two passes are made.
- Make an effective tackle.
- Release tackled player and get to feet immediately.
- Regain possession or counter-ruck.
- Counterattack.

# PRINCIPLES OF DEFENCE

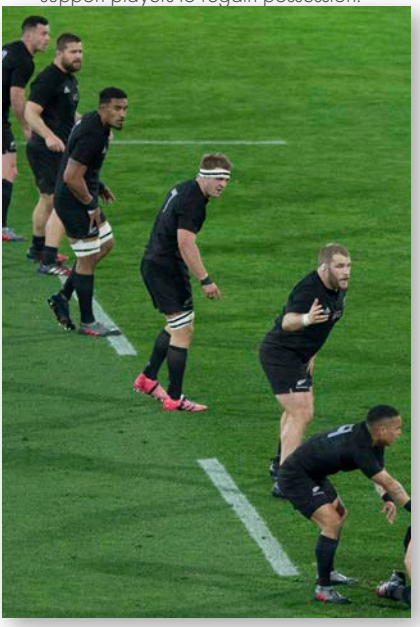
## Objective

To deny opposition space and time. To stop penetration. To regain possession.

## Key Factors

## Coaching Points

- Instruct players to move forward together in defence to avoid gaps appearing.
- One player organises defence and makes sure communication goes right through the team.
- Communication must be specific to ensure defenders are tackling the correct opponent.
- Tackle with intent to regain possession or disrupt opposition's quality of possession. This is every player's responsibility.
- Provide immediate support to tackler and other defenders outside.
- Understanding laws of the game as it relates to the tackle situations is essential.
- Putting the ball-carrier on the ground means the ball must be released immediately.
- This gives opportunities for the tackler's support players to regain possession.



### THE FRONT DEFENSIVE LINE

- Identify and form alignment (man on or man out).
- Communicate with each other and identify who they are responsible for.
- Move forward in a line to exert pressure. Stay in the line.
- Tackle effectively, release player and get to your feet.
- Support/Cover.

### THE BACK DEFENSIVE LINE

- Provide effective cover defence.
- Move up into the defensive line as necessary.
- Position to counter any kick option.
- Communicate with each other to ensure all options are covered.

## Coaching Points

- Communication must be specific. Players have a responsibility to use key words which reinforce the system being used.
- The front defensive line must defend together as a unit. It is normal to form a tight line, which gives the visual impression of an impregnable defensive wall.
- From a set-piece, if the first line is broken, blindside winger or halfback/loose forward and fullback should be in position to tackle the ball-carrier.
- From a set-piece, if attack goes wide:
  - > open-side wing joins front three;
  - > fullback covers behind open-side wing; and
  - > blindside wing covers midfield.
- Positioning will depend on weather conditions and opposition's patterns, strengths and weaknesses.
- Coach 'fast-balance-explode' as the defenders go forward to the tackle.

## Common Errors

- Staggered alignment (creates big gaps).
- Lack of communication.
- Coming up too fast (no balance and ability to tackle or shift out to the next attacker) or too slow (which allows the attack too much time and space).
- Coming up too straight and getting beaten.
- Low work-rate (not covering).
- Ineffective tackling.
- Not holding the channel after the pass is made.
- Not understanding pattern



## BASIC DEFENSIVE PATTERNS – SET PIECE

### BASIC MAN-ON-MAN DEFENCE

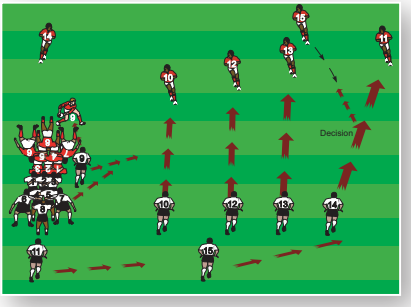
- A good option if the opposition are not bringing in extra players.
- The first pair of hands to receive and pass the ball (usually halfback) is tackled by the flanker.
- Defensive halfback pressurises and drops back to cover along with blindside winger.
- The second pair of hands is tackled by the 1st 5/8.
- The third pair of hands is tackled by the 2nd 5/8.
- The fourth pair of hands is tackled by the centre.
- The fifth pair of hands is tackled by the winger.
- If there is a sixth pair of hands, then normally the fullback will make the tackle.
- If an extra person enters the backline the rules remain the same.
- It is important that tackler stays in the line and moves on to the next attacker once the player he is marking has passed the ball.

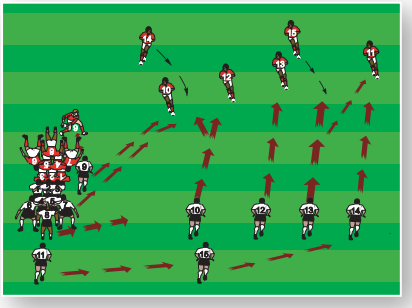
### BASIC ONE-OUT DEFENCE

- A good option if the opposition are bringing in extra players.
- The first pair of hands, i.e. the halfback, is tackled by the defending halfback. Option is for halfback to defend straight on 1st 5/8.
- The second pair of hands, i.e. the 1st 5/8, is tackled by the defending flanker and/or halfback.
- The third pair of hands, usually the 2nd 5/8, is tackled by the 1st 5/8.
- The fourth pair of hands, usually the centre, is tackled by the 2nd 5/8.
- The fifth pair of hands is tackled by the centre.
- This leaves a sixth pair of hands to be tackled by the wing.
- Fullback is available to tackle seventh attacker out wide if needed.

#### EXAMPLE

In the event of an extra man joining the attack between 2nd 5/8 and centre, the extra man is tackled by the 2nd 5/8 and so on. The remaining defenders number off to tackle remaining attackers.



## PHASE PLAY DEFENCE

### FUNCTIONAL ROLE – BOOTMAN

- The Bootman's job is to organise the defensive system, in particular Defender 1 + 2.
- The Bootman needs to keep the defensive line tight, ensuring the low defensive stance of those in the defensive line.
- The Bootman must communicate to the defensive line which defending players are marking which attacking players.
- The Bootman also needs to sweep and defend if there is a line break.
- The Bootman is normally the halfback.

### FUNCTIONAL ROLE – DEFENDER 1

- Defender 1 assumes a position with outside foot forward and hips towards the opposition halfback.
- Defender 1's job is to claim the space close to the ruck with a primary aim of preventing the pick and go.
- They indicate their position by raising their hand – this enables the defensive line to set themselves off this Defender.
- If the attacking halfback runs laterally Defender 1 stays and fills the gap to cover the in pass.

### FUNCTIONAL ROLE – DEFENDER 2

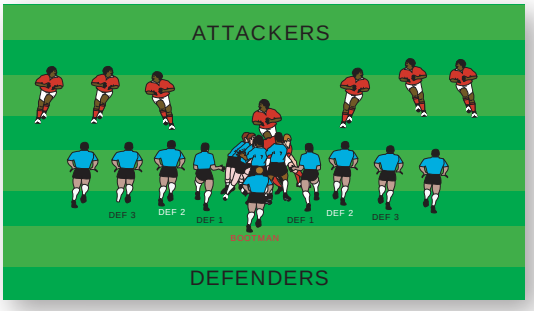
- Defender 2 assumes a position with their outside shoulder in line with the opposition's sternum, pushing up on the attack from the inside outwards.
- In this system Defender 2 calls the line-up.

### FUNCTIONAL ROLE – DEFENDER 3

- Defender 3 assumes a position with inside foot forward, scans the attack and marks up with their outside shoulder in line with the sternum of the player in their channel. This will often be the first back receiver.
- Defender 3 marks up from the inside outwards.
- Defender 3 leads the line up.
- When the attacking team has moved the ball past Defender 2 the defensive line must keep their space and push up and across together.

### FUNCTIONAL ROLE – ADDITIONAL DEFENDERS

- Additional defenders mark up from the inside outwards.
- This means they can join the defensive line from the inside and push the defenders on their outside further across.
- Otherwise they can fill a hole in the line. Halfbacks are often required to do this.



## COUNTERATTACK

### Objective

To attack with ball that has been regained from the opposition.

The opportunity to counterattack occurs immediately after possession is regained from a recovered kicked ball; the attack losing the ball; the ball that is turned over by the ball-carrier; or the pass is intercepted.



## Key Factors

- A positive attitude is required.
- Regain possession.
- Assess the space available.
- Identify support.
- Communicate with support.
- Support players repositioning quickly.
- Hold defenders.
- Pass ball to players in space.
- Run to support the ball-carrier.

## Coaching Points

- All players must have a positive attitude to want to get back to support the ball carrier to initiate a counterattack and to reposition quickly and support if the ball is turned over.
- Once the ball is regathered the support players should quickly move to an area to attack, assess and communicate options.
- Move the ball into space where there are few defensive players.
- Once the pass is made, offer support.
- Support should move to be inside, outside and behind the ball-carrier with depth. If there is only one support player they should move in to an area where they can receive a pass in space or run against the natural angle of the defence.
- If the ball is regathered in front of your team, immediate counterattack is best option.
- When the ball is gathered behind your team there are three options:
    1. Counterattack.
    2. Kick to regain possession.
    3. Engage opposition to regroup them.

This allows you to create continuity and develop further attacking options.

- If there are no passing and running options available the ball-carrier can create space by seeking close quarter support and forming a ruck or maul from which play can develop.
- Patterns of play can be practised for the counterattack: pass wide where there is more space and support / run and pass back down the shorter side if the defence is drifting across the field / make a pass and run in one direction and then cut back and have a line attacking the other direction.

## Common Errors

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

# KICK STARTS AND RESTARTS

# DROP KICKS
# KICK STARTS AND RESTARTS – KICKING TEAM

## Objective

To regain possession or gain territory by kicking off accurately and applying pressure.

## Key Factors

- Communicate intentions of kick.
- Accurate kick.
- Apply pressure.
- Contest possession.
- Regain possession.

## Coaching Points

- A range of starts and restarts may be used e.g.:
  1. Kick to an opposing player behind the majority of their teammates, just outside the 22m zone so the receivers cannot kick the ball directly into touch on the full or mark the ball. Nominated fast chasing players may be able to tackle or hold the catcher, forcing the opposition to retreat before they can go forward. A turnover of possession may occur and pressure can be applied.
  2. A deep kick to the corners with several fast chasing players applying pressure may force a hurried return kick or create a tackle well inside the attacking 22.
  3. Varied shorter distance kicks to individual catchers allows the chaser/s to arrive from different angles and regain possession directly by catching it in the air before the opponent has that opportunity.
- Players from the kicking team should angle their run away from the touchline so that they are running in-field towards the ball. This enables them to see the ball clearly throughout its flight.
- As they leap to catch the ball they will be able to turn in the air and back onto opponents.

## Common Errors

- Not communicating the option.
- Poor kicking technique resulting in poor execution.
- Chasers taking their eyes off the ball.
- Lack of effort by chasers.
- Ineffective kick chase. A lack of pressure applied through a lack of chasers.
- The kicker should kick the ball high enough so that:
  1. Chasers have time to catch or guide the ball down.
  2. Fast chasers can apply maximum pressure to a long kick.



## RECEIVING TEAM

## FUNCTIONAL ROLE – JUMPERS / CATCHERS

### Objective

To secure possession from the kick-off.

### Key Factors

- Awareness of their role and the options.
- Call for the ball.
- Move towards the ball.
- Get side-on to the ball. Hard parts facing the opponents. Elbow, shoulder, hip, knee.
- Keep eyes on the ball.
- Catch ball above eye level. Arms up and fingers pointing upwards.
- Place body between ball and opposition.
- Jump forward and catch the ball off the ground.
- Catch ball in a strong position if still on the ground. Side on; feet apart; take ball in to body.
- Coordinating the jump and the lift with the lifters (if this method is utilised)
- Catcher goes through the same sequences as above.

### Coaching Points

- The initial positioning of the catchers is important as is the positioning of the lifters (if they are used).
- Catchers must be able to move towards the ball. All players can be utilised to cover kick-off options.
- Generally the best leapers will be in the key receiving spots with lifters close by and ready to move in to the appropriate position.
- The lifters and catchers must work in unison.
- NB: Forward-moving players should have priority in contesting the ball.
- Communication: a clear concise call is vital.
- Catching the ball is always preferable to deflecting it.
- The catcher and lifters (or blockers) must set a strong platform so that the team can move on to the next phase.

### Common Errors

- Calling from a poor position or not calling.
- Not moving forward to the ball and taking the ball flat-footed.
- Taking eyes off the ball.
- Slapping at the ball; knocking on. Generally caused by not getting in to a good position before the jump/lift.



## RECEIVING TEAM

## FUNCTIONAL ROLE – LIFTERS

### Objective

To assist the jumper/catcher to contest possession.

### Key Factors

- Communicate effectively with the jumper.
- Watch the jumper not the ball. In some cases follow the jumper (back lifter). In other cases move towards the jumper or with the jumper (front lifter).
- Take up a strong position with a stable base as the jumper prepares to be lifted.
- Back lifter get tight on the shorts and take control of the lifted player.
- Front lifter get on the legs and squeeze them together.
- Support the jumper in air.
- Stay in contact with jumper.
- Support with hands and legs to full extension.
- Support the jumper back to ground.
- Bind in tightly from a low position and initiate the drive, if this is the best option.
- Ensure the player and ball are secure.

### Coaching Points

- Pair up with a jumper, assisting that player into the air to catch the ball and provide stability for that player while in the air.
- Communication between jumper and lifter is vital.
- Lifters are usually props who perform a similar role at lineout time.
- After supporting the player and the catch is made, the lifter becomes a supporter in order to go forward.
- Even if ball is to be delivered immediately, lifters should protect the jumper/catcher and move forward.

### Common Errors

- Not communicating with the jumper.
- Being separated from the jumper.
- Not supporting the jumper back to the ground.
- Not initiating the drive once the ball is caught.



## RECEIVING TEAM

## FUNCTIONAL ROLE – ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PLAYERS

### Objective

To provide protection of the ball to initiate the best attacking option.

## Key Factors

- Awareness of likely kick options.
- Communicating the direction of the kick.
- To recover any deflected ball.
- Be prepared to create an attacking option.
- Communicate and exercise the best available option.

## Coaching Points

- The receiver's initial movement must be towards the ball.
- The sweepers must ensure that any deflected ball is recovered.
- If the ball is caught, the sweepers must quickly move to take the best available option.
- The support players may also provide an option to run off the ruck or maul or in the backline.
- Communicate specifically to help jumpers and lifters contest the ball successfully.

## Common Errors

- Standing flat-footed.
- Not exercising the best option available.



## KICK STARTS AND RESTART OPTIONS

**Examples of restart variations could be:**

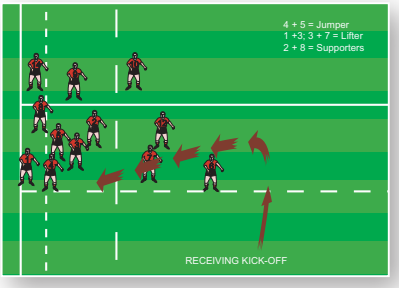
- Split-field kicks, i.e. half forward pack on each side of field. Kick to your perceived advantage.
- Short kick to loose forward on the full or along the ground (applies to 22m drop-out).
- Short tap over the line to retrieve ball immediately (applies to 22m drop-out).

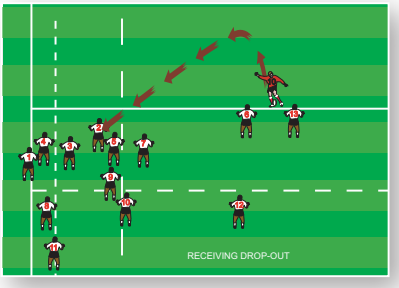
***Accuracy of the Kick-off is Paramount to Regaining Possession***

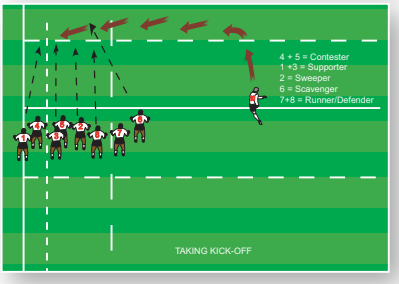
## STANDARD KICK-OFF / RESTART FORMATIONS

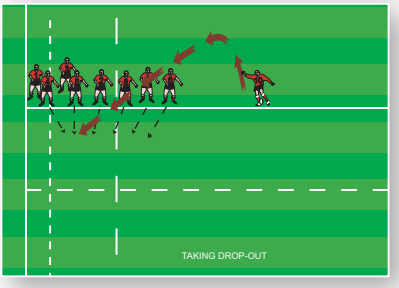
### Coaching Points

1. Kickers must practise various kicking options prior to involving the rest of the team and then do it live.
2. Practise all options, not just the standard kick.
3. Make sure you have a well-prepared back-up kicker if the usual player is out for any reason.
4. Practise both taking and receiving.
5. Develop practice with full opposition.
6. Spend time on support players shadowing the jumpers.
7. Emphasise the need for control before transferring the ball backwards.
8. These formations are suggestions only.



## POSITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

### OUTSIDE BACKS

- Safe under high ball
- Sound tackler
- Acceleration and top-end speed
- Understands role in defence
- Able to communicate/organise back three
- High work rate in cover defence, counterattack and backline entry
- Vision, running lines and timing for backline penetration (extra man)
- Strength in the tackle – able to stay on feet
- Provides threat on blindside

### MIDFIELD BACKS

- Accurate passing skills
- Vision - can put outsides into space
- Strong, accurate, intimidating tackler
- Strength for go-forward and able to stand in tackle
- Straightness in attack
- Able to confront/commit opponent and get ball away under pressure
- Able to kick accurately off either foot
- Excellent communication/organisation skills
- Understands/reads the game
- Speed to make outside break
- High work rate in support play

### INSIDE BACKS

- Understands the game tactically
- General awareness/alertness
- Excellent vision
- Good communication/organisation skills
- Able to "call the shots"
- Decisive/authoritative
- Accurate passer and kicker off either hand/ foot
- Good tackler (doesn't shirk confrontation)
- Acceleration to make initial break
- Able to threaten defence (commit opponents)
- High work rate in support/cover defence
- Organises defence
- Able to withstand pressure (physical/ mental)

### LOOSE FORWARDS

- High work rate in support/cover
- Speed to breakdown/speed endurance
- Good running and linking skills
- Strong tackles
- Understand role in defensive pattern
- Able to drive ball-carrier back around fringes and turn ball over in tackle
- Knows running lines in attack/defence
- Possible lineout option
- Understands laws (particularly tackle ball/ ruck and maul)
- Wins ball on ground
- Vision and awareness in tackle situations
- Exceptional fitness levels
- Relentless – not intimidated
- Good all-round skills

### LOCKS

- Win own lineout ball
- Contest opposition ball when required
- Strong and durable, with physical presence
- Agile in air, good hands and timing
- Strength in scrum, ruck and maul
- Low body position in contact and pushing/ grouped phases
- Able to concentrate on set phase first then get quickly to breakdown/in support
- Strong in the tackle
- Able to "pick and go" through middle of ruck
- Relentless - never gives in

### PROPS

- Strong scrummager, technically correct
- Strong at supporting/lifting in lineouts/ at kick-off
- Mobile – quick to breakdown
- Possible lineout option at front

- Low body position in contact, scrum, ruck and maul
- Very strong in upper body and legs
- Durable, mentally tough
- Agile, explosive for pick and go through rucks
- Good tackler, high work rate
- Not intimidated

### HOOKER

- Accurate thrower to lineout
- Strong scrummager
- General awareness at lineout and second phases – knows when to stay out/go in
- Strong tackler
- Exceptional fitness levels
- Able to apply pressure physically and psychologically, e.g. "eyes and ears" at lineout
- Strong in upper body and legs
- Able to catch, pass and run effectively with ball
- Accurate in ball retention

### GENERIC QUALITIES

- Will to succeed
- Desire
- High standards
- Team ethos
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Selflessness
- Work ethic
- Not easily intimidated
- Understanding the game

