

SMALL BLACKS[®]

U13[®]

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INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

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

U13 SKILLS

OFF-GROUND PASS

Objective: To clear the ball quickly off the ground from a congested area.

Key Factors

- 1 Foot beside the ball
- 2 Widen the base
- 3 Sweep the ball



Coaching Points

This pass is used usually by the halfback to clear the ball away from the source of possession to less congested areas. To clear this area the player must be able to pass quickly to a receiver some distance away. This is achieved by spiraling the ball in the action of passing. The ball is usually on or near the ground when it is given to the halfback.

Common Errors

- Not keeping eyes on ball.
- Lifting the head.
- Reaching for the ball rather than getting the passing foot into position.
- Being square on to the ball.

DIVE PASS

Objectives: To avoid interference whilst clearing the ball from a congested area.

Key Factors

1. Weight over the ball
2. Hand position on ball
3. Hard leg drive
4. Flick the wrists
5. Regain feet immediately



Coaching Points

- The Dive Pass momentarily puts the passer out of play.
- This is because the passer is on the ground when the pass has been completed. Therefore this pass is only used when the passer cannot use the clearing pass.
- The Dive Pass is used to get the passer out of trouble. It clears the ball from a congested area to space.

Common Errors

- Not keeping eyes on ball.
- Poor feet position.
- Standing up before passing.
- No follow-through.

FALLING ON BALL

Objective: To claim, protect and control the ball.

Key Factors

1. Sight ball.
2. Slide toward the ball on the hip and thigh, feet first.
3. Claim the ball, positioning body between ball and opposition.
4. Continue attack by:
 - ▶ Immediately regain feet and pass to support or,
 - ▶ Immediately regain feet and set a drive target or,
 - ▶ Immediately pass from ground to support or,
 - ▶ Immediately place and release ball for support.



Coaching Points

- Note: This technique breaks the law if it is performed in close proximity (1m) to a tackled player.
- Communication from supporting teammates determines what option is taken.

Common Errors

- Sliding too close to or far from the ball.
- Knocking ball away from body.
- Holding ball on ground.

CATCHING HIGH BALL

Objective: To regain possession of the ball by catching it.

Key Factors

1. Move under ball
2. Keep eyes on ball
3. Contact with ball above eye, elbows in, fingers spread
4. Stay balanced and side on
5. Bring ball into body



Coaching Points

- By being in a position to attack the ball, the catcher can leap to catch it, or upon catching it continue to move into, or away from, opponents.
- Extending the leading arm in the direction of the ball allows the catcher to judge its flight and watch it into the hands, arms and body. Being side-on presents thigh, hip and shoulder to opponents, protecting the catcher should a tackle be made. In addition this ensures that the ball is not knocked forward should the catcher be unable to catch the ball cleanly.
- Communication is essential to prevent teammates all trying to catch the ball. Calling “my ball” achieves this.
- Players should be coached to catch above eye level. To catch the ball in a basket formed by the arms at waist level can result in the ball bouncing out. Catching the ball above eye level then bringing it into the body with the arms will prevent this from happening.
- It is important that the catcher jumps into the air to catch the ball if an opponent, by also jumping, is contesting possession. The catcher duplicates all the key factors mentioned above while jumping in the air. The jump will

be higher and the catch more successful if the catcher is in a position to run and leap towards the ball.

- The catcher will be able to judge if opponents are going to make contact once the ball has been caught. The side-on body position in a crouch will enable the catcher to withstand this impact.

Common Errors

- Taking eyes off ball.
- Not side-on.
- Not calling.
- Misjudging position.
- Catching below eye level.

DROP KICK

Objective: To apply pressure to opposition from kick off, in order to regain possession and go forward. To score points from field of play.

Key Factors

1. Hold ball with point downwards
2. Eyes on ball
3. Step forward onto non-kicking foot
4. Drop ball onto point
5. Swing through line of the ball
6. Contact ball at the top of instep
7. Follow through
8. Raise opposite arm for balance



Coaching Points

- Ball dropped to ground to the side of planted foot and in front of kicking foot.
- Non-kicking foot facing the target, flexing at the knee.
- Keep the shoulders and head still while kicking.
- For low kicks, strike the ball close to the ground; for high kicks, let the ball bounce higher.
- Make sure you follow through to target with kicking foot.

Common Errors

- Not dropping ball in same alignment as it is held.
- Lifting head too early.
- Taking eyes off the ball.
- Turning shoulders with kick.
- Not contacting the ball correctly on foot.
- Trying to kick too hard and losing timing.

GRUBBER KICK

Objective: To apply pressure and/or regain possession by kicking the ball along the ground into space just in behind the opposition defence line. To kick the ball into touch when outside 22m line.

Key Factors

1. Hand position on ball
2. Point toe to ground
3. Body weight over top of ball
4. Place ball on foot
5. Push ball forward on to ground
6. Short stabbing motion
7. Follow kick through



Coaching Points

- Run into space between defenders before kicking.
- Move forward into kicking position.
- Keep eyes on the ball, push it forward with the top of the kicking foot.
- At point of contact the knee of the kicking foot is bent.
- The striking action is a short stabbing motion with the foot.
- The aim is to have the ball roll end over end, to allow fellow players an easy pick up.
- The ball should only travel at a distance that makes it easy for support players to reach it, unless kicking for touch.

Common Errors

- Kicking too far.
- Spiralling the kick rather than end over end.

- Ball contacting the ground too far in front of kicker, i.e. more than 2 metres.
- Drop Kicking instead of Grubber Kicking.
- Kicking into opponent's legs.
- Toe upwards.

FRONT-ON TACKLE

Objective: To stop an opponent with the ball and regain possession.

Key Factors

1. Sight target
2. Eyes up
3. Feet alive
4. Head to side
5. Brace/contact/stick
6. Thrust and Squeeze
7. Use legs
8. Bounce up



Coaching Points

- It's important to focus on elements that will keep the player safe! Feet movement; head on correct side with shoulder on; and eyes up and open. Less focus on power, driving and dominating at this level.
- In most circumstances with Small Blacks, it is safer and more effective to 'turn with the impact'. Upon completion of the tackle, the tackler is usually on top and better able to stand up and regain the ball.

Common Errors

- Too high.
- Planting feet.
- Head down.
- Weak arms.
- Not regaining feet.

RUNNING IN SUPPORT

Objective: Utilise space: provide continuity options for ball carrier.

Key Factors

1. Anticipate point of attack
2. Stay inside the ball initially
3. Maintain depth
4. Communicate your position



Coaching Points

- Points of attack need to be identified and communicated to all players. Staying inside the ball initially provides defensive balance should the ball be lost.
- Depth provides the ball carrier with an inside and outside support option as well as allowing time and space to identify and communicate best option e.g. if no inside defender, run into that space and demand the ball.

Common Errors

- Too long to get into a support position.
- Too flat.
- Neither communicating nor reading the situation.
- Over-running the ball.

GETTING UP

Objective: To get quickly back into the game by getting off the ground.

Key Factors

1. Push up with arms
2. Jump to feet immediately
3. Drive forward, pumping arms
4. Low body position



Coaching Points

- If stationary, spring to feet immediately.
- If moving, player can adopt a rolling-on-shoulder technique.
- Two hands on the ground gives the player a powerful base for further movements.

Common Errors

- Looking for options while on the ground.
- Using one arm and one leg to get to feet.
- Slow reactions.

CONTACT

Objective: To engage opposition. To maintain possession. To give teammates time and opportunity to support.

Key Factors

Pre-Contact

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



At Contact

1. Contact side-on
2. Maintain low stable base
3. Turn towards support

Post-Contact

1. Position body between ball and opposition
2. Consider options

Coaching Points

- The ball carrier is the “determinator” of ball retention at contact. This person will have the single greatest influence on ball retention.
- They must effectively shield the ball from opponents by positioning ball away from contacts.
- Low body position and power step increases force and stability of contact.

- Every player on the field will take ball into contact, therefore every player must understand and be competent in the key factors of this skill.
- The contact option, if taken, must be more advantageous than continuing the passing movement.
- Setting a target for support is not the only option when taking the ball into contact. Other options include:
 - ▶ Hit and go to ground
 - ▶ Hit and spin
 - ▶ Hit and pass

Common Errors

- Too upright at contact.
- Narrow base of support at contact causing instability.
- Front foot planted too far from defender.
- Too frontal at contact.
- Shoulders below hips.

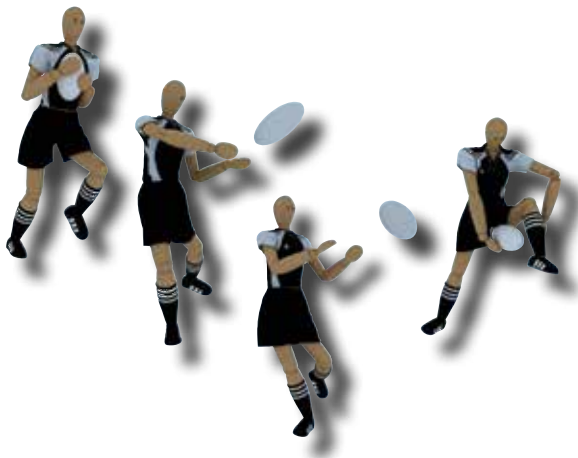
CORE SKILLS

Running with ball

Basic pass

Receiving pass

Ball familiarisation



UNIT SKILLS

- Lineout
- Scrum
- Attack
- Defence
- Continuity

THE LINEOUT (8)

At this grade, the lineout should not only be seen as a restart of play. They should be seen as a contest for possession.

Note: On the number of players who can participate in the lineout, there must be 8 from each side.

The Thrower

The types of throwing-in will vary at this level because of the strength and size of the individual executing this skill. Use an underarm throw for young players or the conventional overhead throw for more capable players.

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

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

Common Errors

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

THE JUMPER

Lineouts in this grade are contested so make sure that all lineouts are thrown in straight and the jumpers attempt to jump for the ball. There is no lifting in this grade.

Key Factors

1. Understand options.
2. Drive upward.
3. Eyes on ball.
4. Soft hands.
5. Controlled delivery.

Coaching Points

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

Common Errors

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

THE SUPPORT PLAYERS

Key Factors

1. Understand options.
2. Eyes on ball.
3. React quickly.
4. Support immediately.
5. Go forward.

Coaching Points

- Players closest to jumper move forward and bind on jumper to form a protective screen for the ball.
- Other support players may bind up and drive forward if ball is not delivered immediately to halfback.

Common Errors

- Losing sight of ball.
- Binding too late.
- Allowing gaps for opposition players.
- Too upright on drive.

THE SCRUM (8)

The scrum at this level should not just be seen as a restart of play for the non-offending team. In the U12 and U13 grade there is some contest (The push is limited to 1/2 metre maximum). Nevertheless, it is always necessary to ensure safety at all times when forming scrums.

Pre-Engagement and Engagement

- Before the two front rows come together they must be standing not more than an arm's length apart.
- Props bind with the hooker anywhere between armpit and hip. Hookers bind anywhere between armpit and hip or on top of Props shoulder blades.
- Position correctly on referee's call.
"Crouch"
- Sink down into a crouch position, face in neutral position, eyes open, looking forward.

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

How To Build A Front Row

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

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

Building The Complete Scrum

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

- The locks should bind firmly together, generally the taller lock will bind over the top of the shorter lock, if one lock is substantially taller than the other, and it is uncomfortable for the taller lock to bind over the shorter lock, then the taller lock should bind underneath. They should then squat down together on their haunches, put their heads between the props and the hooker. At the same time the locks should bind around the waist of their respective props and grip at the top of the shorts. Ensure the locks' feet are parallel, their heads up (chin off chest), they are looking forward and have a straight back (see front row assembly).
- Next the flankers should bind, with one arm, over the back of their lock and squat down on their haunches, placing their shoulder under the buttock of their prop. Their feet should be parallel and on engagement they should be in the pushing position with their heads up, back straight and looking forward.
- The number 8 should squat down on their haunches, at the same time bind around each of the locks on the outside of the top of the shorts area. Then place their head between the locks hips so both of their shoulders are under the two locks buttocks. Again the feet should be parallel, and on engagement they should be in the pushing position with their head up, eyes looking forward and their back straight.

Note:

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

The referee will call “crouch” then “bind”. The front rows crouch and using their outside arm each prop must bind. A loose head prop must bind on the opposing tight head prop by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the tight head and gripping the tight head prop’s jersey on the back or side. A tight head prop must bind on the opposing loose head prop by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the opposing loose head prop and gripping the loose head prop’s jersey with the right hand only on the back or side. The props must not grip the opponent’s chest, arm, sleeve, or collar. Following a pause the referee will then call “set” when the front rows are ready. The front rows may then engage. The “set” call is not a command but an indication that the front rows may come together when ready.

ATTACK

Basic Attack

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

Key Factors

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

Coaching Points

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

Common Errors

Combination of missing key factors.

COUNTER ATTACK

Objective: To attack with ball regained from opposition.

Key Factors

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

Key Words

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

Coaching Points

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

3. Engage opposition to regroup them. This allows you to create continuity and develop further attacking option.

Common Errors

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

DEFENCE

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

Key Factors

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

Key Words

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

Coaching Points

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

Common Errors

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

CONTINUITY

Maul

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

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

Key Factors

Second and Third Support Players

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

Additional Support Players

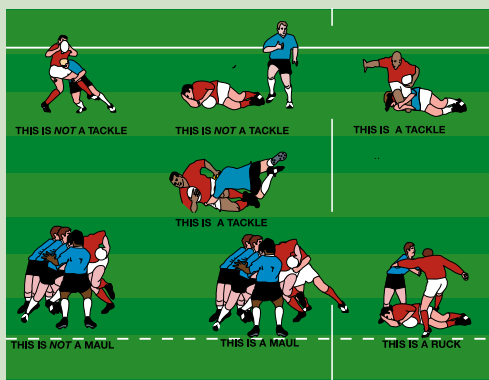
- Identify role, sight target area.
- Approach maul from depth, parallel to touchline.
- Assume low, effective driving position.
- If possible, bind with teammate and drive into 'mini maul'.
- Ensure balanced numbers approaching either side of maul.
- Bind and drive on to maul at the hindmost foot.
-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

Coaching Points

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

Common Errors

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



RUCK

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

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

Key Factors

Additional Support Players

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

Coaching Points

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

Common Errors

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

THE TACKLE CLINIC

Tackle sessions should be carried out by all U13 coaches during the season. Please ask your provincial union for support if needed.

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

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE TACKLE CLINIC

Objective of Tackle Clinic

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

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

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

Brief Outline:

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

KEY TACKLE WORDS

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

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

WHEN COACHING TACKLING, YOU SHOULD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

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

KEY FACTORS

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

- **HEAD BEHIND/HEAD TO SIDE** - head to side of ball-carrier's body and shoulder on target. If the head goes in front of the ball-carrier, you open yourself up to injury.
- **BRACE/CONTACT /STICK** - hands come out from a catching position in front of chest. Tense muscle groups to prepare for contact.
- **THRUST & SQUEEZE** - push arms beyond attacker, then tighten. A firm grip is essential or else the ball-carrier will break through. Avoid swinging arms.

Falling in Tackle

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