



UNDER 11S · THE FIRST SEASON OF KICKING

KICKING, THE MARK & RESTARTS

A guide for U11 parents — why the ball is suddenly in the air, what “Mark!” means, and what the referee is looking for.

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Under 11s is the season the boot arrives. Until now every game has restarted with a pass. From this season kick-offs are **drop kicks**, players may **kick tactically** in open play, and a clean catch can win your team a free kick. Some of the rules are made just for this age — including one that looks wrong from the touchline until you know why it is there. This guide explains them in plain English.

WHERE THE RULES IN THIS GUIDE COME FROM

Every rule here comes from **RFU Regulation 15, Appendix 5 — the Under 11s Rules of Play**, and the World Rugby Laws of the Game they build on. The RFU page reads “*Effective from 1st August 2025*”; RFU Regulation 15 for 2026/27 still points to these Rules of Play, so they are current this season. A few details that the RFU page does not spell out come from RugbyReferee.net's 2026/27 summary, and we say so where they do. If anything here ever disagrees with the RFU page, **the RFU page is right**. Coaching advice is labelled as advice.

WHAT IS NEW AT U11

1 DROP-KICK RESTARTS

Each half, and every restart after a score, begins with a **drop kick from the centre of the halfway line**. It must travel **7 metres**. After a score, the team that was scored against chooses to **kick or receive**.

2 KICKING IN OPEN PLAY

Players may kick from the hand to gain ground or find space. **Box kicks, drop goals and kicking the ball along the ground** are still not allowed.

3 THE MARK

Catch an opponent's kick cleanly, **anywhere on the pitch**, and your team gets a **free kick**. In the adult game you can only do this in your own 22.

4 A DROPPED CATCH IS NOT PUNISHED

If a player tries to catch an opponent's kick in open play and knocks it on, their own team still gets the **scrum**. It is there to encourage children to go for the catch — see page 4.

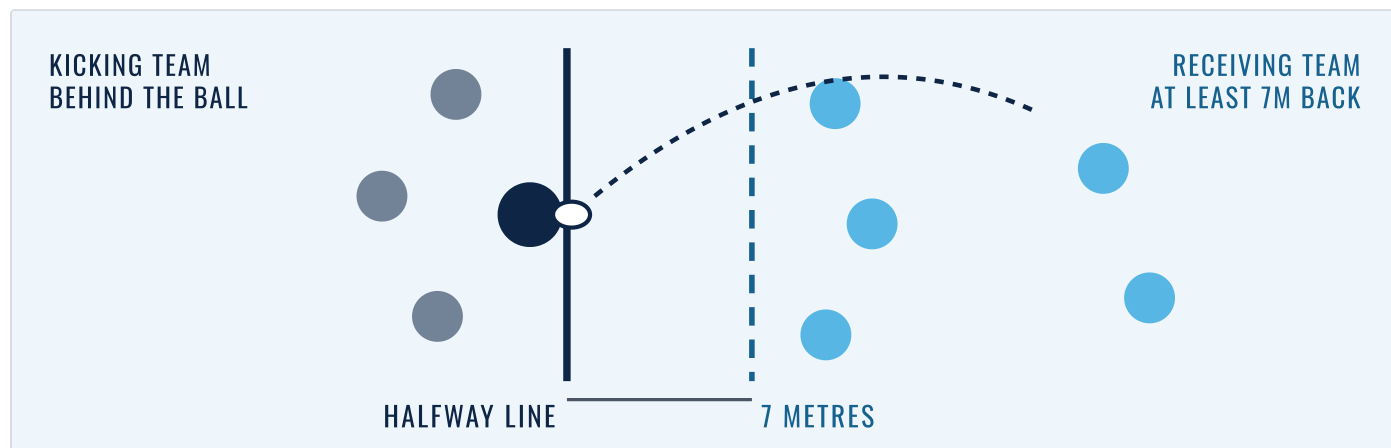
ALSO GROWING THIS SEASON

Teams are **9-a-side** on a pitch up to **60 by 43 metres**. Rucks and mauls grow to **three per team**, and **both hookers may strike** for the ball in the scrum. There is more on these on page 4.

STARTING AND RESTARTING THE GAME

KICK-OFFS AND RESTARTS

A drop kick is when the ball is dropped from the hands and kicked **as it rises from its first bounce** (World Rugby's definition). At U11 it is taken from the centre of the halfway line.



The kick-off at U11: the kicker's team behind the ball, the other team at least 7 metres back. In the adult game both distances are 10 metres.

WHEN THE KICK GOES WRONG

SHORT	It does not go 7 metres , or a kicking-team player touches it first, or it goes straight into touch : the other team chooses a scrum at the centre of halfway or a re-kick .
SHORT, BUT...	If it falls short but an opponent plays it first , play simply carries on.
PLAYERS IN FRONT	If a kicking-team player is in front of the ball when it is kicked, the other team gets a scrum at the centre of halfway.
INTO IN-GOAL	If it reaches the opponents' in-goal untouched and is touched down or made dead straight away, or goes into touch in goal, the other team chooses a scrum at halfway or a re-kick .

RESTARTS NEAR THE TRY LINE

THE "22" DROP-OUT

At U11 a line **15 metres** from each goal line does the job of the adult 22, and the rules call it "the 22". A drop-out from it is given when the attack kicks the ball into in-goal and a defender makes it dead, or the ball is kicked, sent or carried into in-goal by the attack and goes over the dead ball line or touch-in-goal.

NO TRY-LINE DROP-OUTS

Adult rugby now restarts with a **try-line drop-out** in some cases. Those laws do not reach England's age grades until U14 (RugbyReferee.net). At U11, if the attack carries the ball into in-goal and is **held up**, it is a **5-metre scrum** (RugbyReferee.net grid).

Any scrum awarded within 5 metres of the goal line is taken 5 metres out, and the defending backs must stay on or behind their goal line until it is over.

THE BOOT IN OPEN PLAY

KICKING IN OPEN PLAY

Kicking is a new tool, not a new game. Most U11 rugby is still running and passing — but a well-placed kick can turn defence into attack, and it asks the other team to catch.

ALLOWED

- ✓ **Tactical kicking from the hand** — to gain ground, find space or chase
- ✓ A **drop kick** for kick-offs, restarts and drop-outs
- ✓ A kick at a **free kick** — a tap to themselves, or a kick to gain ground

NOT ALLOWED

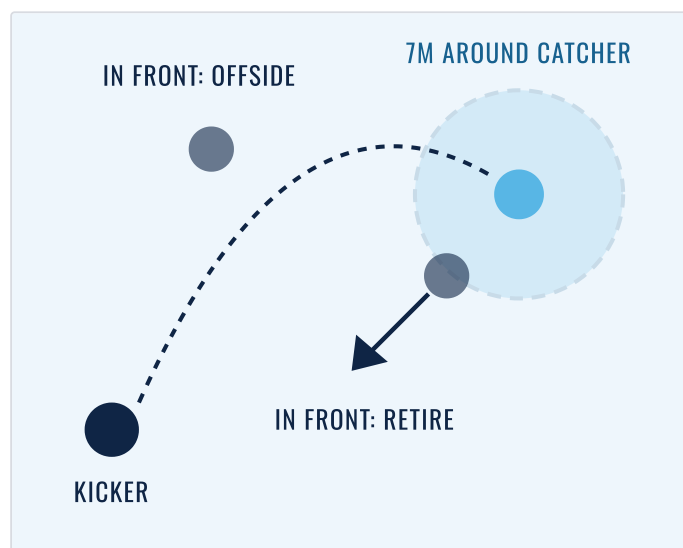
- ✗ **Fly-hacking** — kicking the ball along the ground
- ✗ **Box kicks**
- ✗ **Drop goals**
- ✗ **Conversions** (RugbyReferee.net 2026/27)

OFFSIDE WHEN A TEAM MATE KICKS

Anyone **in front of the ball when it is kicked** is offside. So is anyone within **7 metres** of an opponent waiting to play the ball, or of the place where it will land.

World Rugby's law says players in front of a kicking team mate must **retire** behind a line near where the ball lands and must not interfere with play. In the adult game that line is 10 metres away; at U11 the distance is 7.

What you will see: players in front of the kicker stopping, then walking back towards their own goal line — never chasing the catcher from close range.



KICKS INTO TOUCH — AND NO LINEOUTS

FROM OUTSIDE YOUR OWN “22”

Kicked directly into touch: a **free pass** to the other team, 5 metres in, **level with where the ball was kicked**. No ground is gained.

FROM INSIDE YOUR OWN “22”

Kicked directly into touch by the defending team: the free pass is **level with where the ball crossed the touchline**. If a team mate passed it back into the 22 and nothing has happened since — no tackle, ruck, maul or touch by an opponent — it goes back to where it was kicked.

FREE PASS

Taken 5 metres from touch, opponents 7 metres back. On **“Play”** the ball is passed backwards through the air, and **nobody runs until the pass is made**.

QUICK THROW

Instead of the free pass, the other team may take a **quick throw-in** — with the same ball, provided nobody but a player has touched it.

There are **no lineouts** at U11, and **no 50:22** — that does not arrive until U15 (RugbyReferee.net). A free kick may be kicked into touch, but the free pass that follows always goes to the other team (RugbyReferee.net 2026/27).



CATCHING THE BALL

THE MARK AND THE DROPPED CATCH

THE MARK — WORLD RUGBY, LAWS OF THE GAME

"A method of suspending play and winning a free-kick by directly catching an opponent's kick in the catcher's own 22 or in in-goal and shouting 'mark'."

At U11 the RFU goes further: a mark may be made **anywhere on the pitch**, from a catch direct from an opponent's kick — but **not from a restart or a free kick**. The referee awards a free kick to the catcher's team.

IS IT A MARK?

MARK

An opponent kicks in open play.
Your child **catches it before it touches the ground or anyone else** and calls **"Mark!"**. Free kick.

NO MARK

The catch comes from a **kick-off**, a "22" drop-out or a free kick. Play simply carries on.

NO MARK

The ball **bounces first**, or touches another player on the way. It is not a direct catch.

THE DROPPED CATCH — WHY IT LOOKS WRONG

Normally a knock-on gives the other team the scrum. At U11 there is an exception. If a player tries to catch an **opponent's kick** while it is **in the air** and knocks it forward, the scrum goes to **their own team**, from where they touched it. If they fumble it backwards, the referee plays advantage to their team, and if nothing comes of it, **their team still gets the scrum**.

Why? This is the first season of kicking. The rule means a child who is brave enough to go for the catch is never punished for not holding it — so they keep trying. It applies only at U11.

The exception does not apply to a kick-off or restart, a free kick, or a charge down (RFU Rules of Play 9(d)). RugbyReferee.net's one-page U11 sheet says it applies to kick-offs too; its age grade grid and the RFU page do not. We follow the RFU page — if in doubt on the day, the referee decides.

ALSO CHANGING AT U11

RUCKS AND MAULS: THREE PER TEAM

After a tackle, **two supporting players from each team** may go for the ball. No more than **three from each team** — including the ball carrier and their opponent — can be in a ruck or a maul. Not using the ball within 5 seconds of **"Use it"** now gives the other team a **scrum**.

SCRUMS: BOTH HOOKERS STRIKE

Still the nearest **three players** from each team, on **"Crouch, Bind, Set"**, and still **no pushing**. New this season: the **contested strike** — both hookers may strike for the ball. The scrum half must pass it away; they cannot run with it.



FOR VOLUNTEER REFEREES — AND CURIOUS PARENTS

REFEREEING KICKS AND RESTARTS

Many U11 games are refereed by a coach or parent volunteer. This routine takes a kick in the order things happen. The routine is practical advice; the rules it enforces are the RFU's.

- 1 SET THE KICK-OFF.** Drop kick from the centre of halfway. Kicker's team behind the ball; the other team 7 metres back. After a score, ask the team scored against: kick or receive?
- 2 DID IT GO 7 METRES?** If not — or it went straight into touch, or the kicking team touched it first — the other team chooses a re-kick or a scrum. If an opponent played it first, play on.
- 3 IN OPEN PLAY: WHAT KIND OF KICK?** From the hand is fine. A box kick, a drop goal or a fly-hack is not.
- 4 WATCH THE CHASERS.** Anyone in front of the kicker, or within 7 metres of the catcher, is offside until put onside. Tell them early: "Blue, back!"
- 5 THE CATCH.** Clean and direct from an open-play kick, with a call of "Mark": free kick. Knocked on trying to catch it: scrum to the catcher's team.
- 6 INTO TOUCH?** Where was it kicked from — inside or outside the kicker's own 15-metre "22"? That decides where the free pass goes. Allow a quick throw with the same ball.

A FREE KICK IS AWARDED FOR

- Foul play
- Offside
- A fend or hand-off — still not allowed at U11
- Squeezeball
- Falling on or over players on the ground with the ball
- Pushing in the scrum
- A tackle above the base of the sternum
- Opponents go **7 metres** back, towards their own goal line

ADVANTAGE

The RFU asks referees to sanction only infringements that affect the other team, and to **play advantage wherever it is safe** to do so.

There is **no sin bin** at U11. Problems are sorted out with the coaches and the sides stay equal (RugbyReferee.net).

WANT TO REFEREE PROPERLY?

England Rugby's entry course is **Ready 2 Referee**, and Devon RFU supports new referees locally. Both links are on the last page.



YOUR PART IN IT

HELPING YOUR CHILD

AT HOME

Coaching advice — kicking and catching are safe to practise in the garden or park.

- **Play catch with a high ball.** Hands up early, eyes on the ball, bring it into the chest. Start with gentle throws before you kick.
- **Practise the drop kick.** Drop the ball, let it bounce once, and kick as it rises. Aim for distance first, then direction.
- **Say “Mark!”** Make the call part of every catch, so it comes naturally on a Sunday.
- **Talk about the game.** Ask where the free pass went after a kick into touch, and why.

ON THE TOUCHLINE

- **Cheer the attempt.** A child who goes for a high ball and drops it has done exactly what the U11 rules want.
- **Don't shout “Kick it!”** Let the coaches decide when kicking is the right choice.
- **Respect the referee.** It is very often a volunteer, refereeing to help children learn — and the knock-on rule really does look wrong.
- **Cheer effort** from both teams. Our values are the game's values: Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship.

CONCUSSION

The UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport sum it up in five words: **“If in doubt, sit them out.”** Nobody should return to sport within 24 hours of a suspected concussion, and the guidelines advise calling **NHS 111** within those 24 hours.

England Rugby's free **HEADCASE** e-learning has a version written for parents of age grade players. It explains how to recognise concussion and what to do, and takes about half an hour.

READ MORE: PARENTS, WELFARE AND CONCUSSION

AGE GRADE RUGBY

[RFU — Age Grade Rugby overview](https://englandrugby.com/play/parents-guardians/age-grade-rugby-overview)

englandrugby.com/play/parents-guardians/age-grade-rugby-overview

CONCUSSION

[RFU — HEADCASE concussion information](https://englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/headcase)

englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/headcase

UK GUIDANCE

[UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport](https://sportandrecreation.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/concussion/concussion-guidelines-for-grassroots-sport)

sportandrecreation.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/concussion/concussion-guidelines-for-grassroots-sport

BEHAVIOUR

[RFU — Code of conduct](https://englandrugby.com/play/parents-guardians/code-conduct)

englandrugby.com/play/parents-guardians/code-conduct

FREE COURSE

[RFU — HEADCASE e-learning](https://englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/headcase-e-learning)

englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/headcase-e-learning

Questions? Speak to your child's coach or your Parent Rep.



SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

FIND OUT MORE

The rules come from the RFU; the laws and definitions from World Rugby. Every link was checked on the day this guide was created — tap a title to open it. Links on welfare and concussion are on page 6.

THE RULES

U11 RULES

[RFU — Under 11s Rules of Play \(Reg. 15, Appendix 5\)](#)

[englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby/regulation-15-appendix-5-u11-rules-of-play](#)

NEXT SEASON

[RFU — Under 12s Rules of Play \(Reg. 15, Appendix 6\)](#)

[englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby/regulation-15-appendix-6-u12-rules-of-play](#)

EVERY AGE GRADE

[RugbyReferee.net — England age grade regulations 2026/27](#)

[rugbyreferee.net/refereeing-junior-rugby/england-rugby-age-grade-regulations-2026-27](#)

THE LAWS OF KICKING

EVERY LAW

[World Rugby — Laws of the Game 2026 \(PDF\)](#)

[passport.world.rugby/media/jxnmptk/2026en-laws-of-the-game-compressed.pdf](#)

RESTARTS

[World Rugby — Law 12: Kick-off and restart kicks](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/12-kick-off-and-restart-kicks](#)

OFFSIDE

[World Rugby — Law 10: Offside and onside in open play](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/10-offside-and-onside-in-open-play](#)

TOUCH

[World Rugby — Law 18: Touch, quick throw and lineout](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/18-touch-quick-throw-and-lineout](#)

SAFE TECHNIQUE

SCRUMMAGING

[World Rugby — Rugby Ready: The scrum](#)

[passport.world.rugby/injury-prevention-and-risk-management/rugby-ready/the-scrum](#)

REFEREEING

JUNIOR RUGBY

[RugbyReferee.net — Refereeing junior rugby](#)

[rugbyreferee.net/refereeing-junior-rugby](#)

LOCALLY

[Devon RFU — Become a rugby referee](#)

[devonrfu.co.uk/become-a-rugby-referee](#)

ALL AGE GRADES

[RFU — Regulation 15: Age Grade Rugby](#)

[englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby](#)

ON ONE PAGE

[RugbyReferee.net — U11 regulations, season 2026/27 \(PDF\)](#)

[rugbyreferee.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-27-u11s-RRNet-RFU-Regulations.pdf](#)

DEFINITIONS

[World Rugby — Definitions \(drop-kick, mark...\)](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/definitions](#)

THE MARK

[World Rugby — Law 17: Mark](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/17-mark](#)

KNOCK-ONS

[World Rugby — Law 11: Knock forward or throw forward](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/11-knock-forward-or-throw-forward](#)

FREE KICKS

[World Rugby — Law 20: Penalty and free-kick](#)

[passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/20-penalty-and-free-kick](#)

INJURY PREVENTION

[RFU — Activate injury prevention programme](#)

[englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/activate](#)

REFEREE COURSE

[RFU — How to book a Ready 2 Referee course](#)

[help.rfu.com/support/solutions/articles/103000161012](#)