



UNDER 12S · THE SCRUM GROWS

THE FIVE-PLAYER SCRUM

A guide for U12 parents — who is in the scrum this season, what the new players do, and what the referee is looking for.

CREATED 15 SEPTEMBER 2026

At U10 and U11 the scrum was three a side. At Under 12s it becomes **five a side**: the same front row of prop, hooker and prop, with **two locks** bound on behind them. Some things stay exactly as they were — the referee still calls “**Crouch, Bind, Set**”, **nobody pushes**, and both hookers may strike for the ball, as at U11. This guide explains what is new, so you can enjoy it, help your child, and follow what the referee is calling.

WHERE THE RULES IN THIS GUIDE COME FROM

Every rule here comes from **RFU Regulation 15, Appendix 6 — the Under 12s Rules of Play**, and the World Rugby Laws of the Game they build on. The RFU page reads “*Effective from 1st August 2025*”. Regulation 15 for 2026/27 took effect on 1 August 2026 and still names the Rules of Play as its appendices, which have not been reissued, so they were the current rules on the day this guide was created. Where RugbyReferee.net's **2026-27 U12 sheet** adds detail, we say so. If anything here ever disagrees with the RFU page, **the RFU page is right**. Where we give coaching advice rather than a rule, we say so. Links are at the back.

THE U12 SCRUM AT A GLANCE

1 FIVE, IN A 3-2

The **five players nearest the stoppage** from each team: a front row of three and two locks behind. A sixth player is the scrum half, the “9”. Everyone else forms the back line.

2 CROUCH, BIND, SET

The same calls as before. The locks now crouch and bind too, and **must stay bound** for the whole scrum.

3 PUT-IN AND STRIKE

The 9 puts the ball in **straight, from the middle of the gap**. **Both hookers may strike** for it. **Neither team may push**.

4 AFTER THE SCRUM

The 9 must **pass** — not pick up and run, and not kick. The other 9 **cannot follow round**. Backs stay **5 metres** back until the ball is out.

WHY U12 SCRUMS ARE BUILT THIS WAY

The RFU lists two key elements of U12 rugby as the “**continuation of the contested strike**” and the “**nearest 5 players in a scrum (all players trained, late specialisation)**”. The scrum grows one step at a time, and every child still learns every job in it.



THE SET-UP

FORMING THE SCRUM

WHEN

For a **forward pass** or a **knock on**; when the ball **does not come out of a ruck or maul**, or is not used within five seconds of "Use it"; and when the ball **becomes unplayable**. Scrums on halfway also restart some faulty kick-offs.

WHO

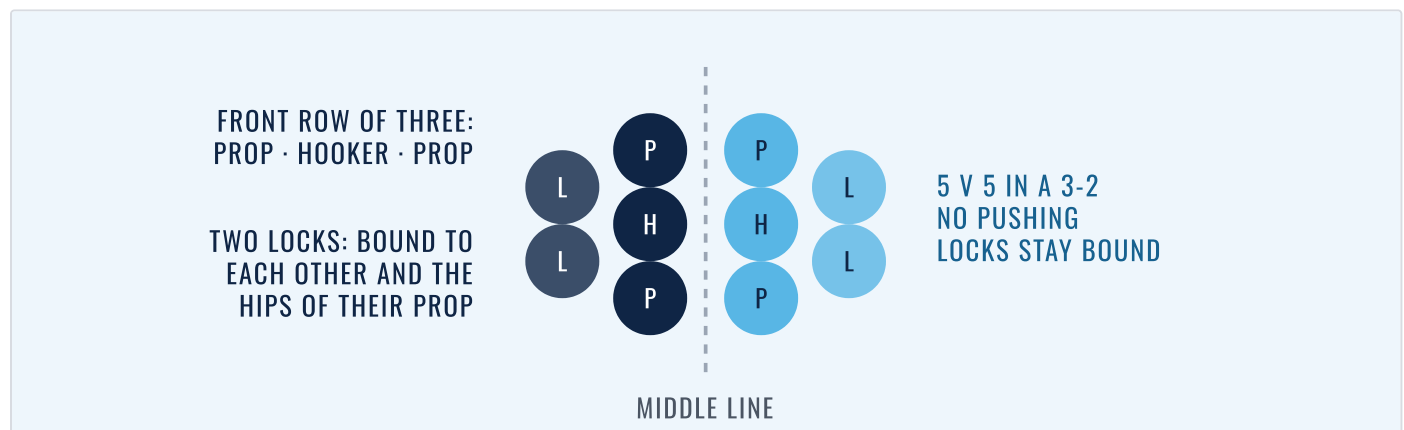
The nearest **five players** from each team — prop, hooker, prop in the front row, two locks in the second row — with a sixth as scrum half. All players should be encouraged to take part.

NEAR THE LINE

A scrum awarded within 5 metres of the goal line is moved out so that its middle is **5 metres from the goal line**. The defending backs stay on or behind their goal line until it is completed.

CROUCH, BIND, SET

- 1** "CROUCH" — the front rows crouch. The second rows crouch too.
- 2** "BIND" — using their **outside arm**, each prop binds onto the **back or side** of their opponent. The two locks bind onto **each other with their inside arm**, and put their **outside arm around the hips** of the prop in front.
- 3** **PAUSE** — the referee waits, and calls "Set" **only when the front rows are ready**.
- 4** "SET" — the front rows may engage. They must **not charge** at each other.



Seen from above. The locks may not unbind to pick up the ball, and must remain bound to the scrum.

THE SHAPE THE RULES ASK FOR

- ✓ Props' bodies **parallel to the touchline**
- ✓ Head and shoulders **no lower than the hips**
- ✓ **No downward pressure** on anyone

STOPPED AND REFORMED

- ✗ Front rows charging at each other
- ✗ Setting too close together, with necks and backs bent — the scrum **must be stopped and reformed**



THE RULES

THE PUT-IN, AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

THE PUT-IN

The 9 puts the ball in **straight, from the middle of the gap** (RugbyReferee.net 2026-27 U12 sheet). The RFU asks referees to make sure the 9 is not “feeding” their own players: ball held in **both hands**, long way parallel to the ground and touchline, **midway between knees and ankles**, released from outside the tunnel so it lands **midway between the two front rows**.

THE STRIKE

Only the hookers may strike for the ball — and **both** may.

NO PUSHING

Neither team may push. Pushing gives away a **free kick**.

THEIR 9

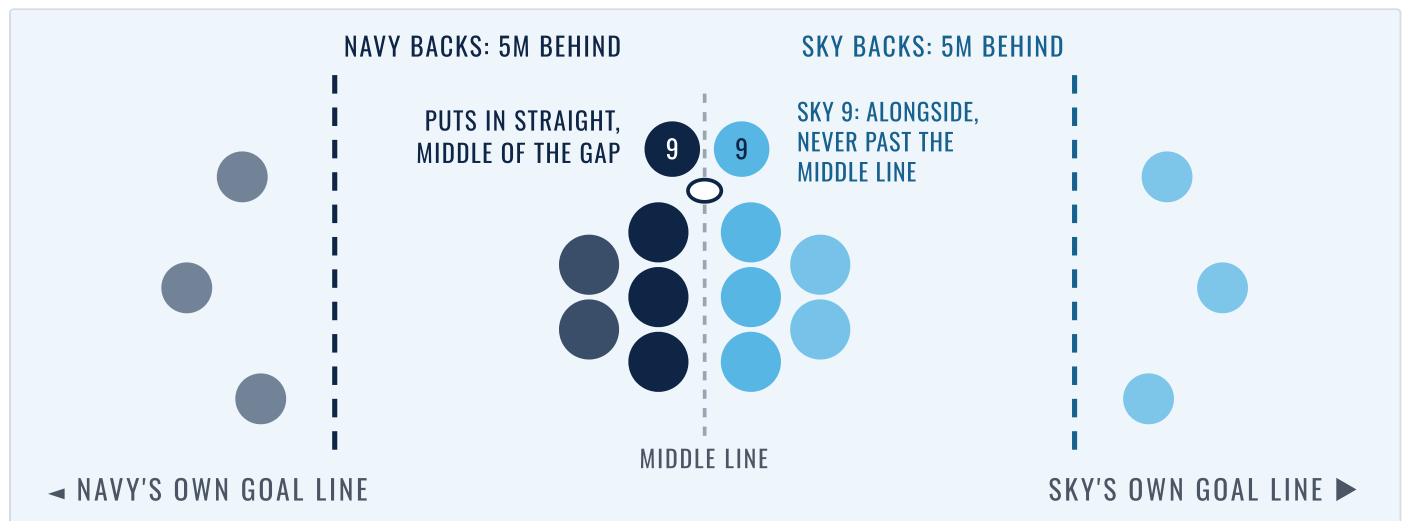
Passes from the base of the scrum and **cannot run** with the ball. The 2026-27 RugbyReferee.net sheet adds: **cannot pick and run or kick**.

THE OTHER 9

May start **directly alongside** their opponent, but must **not move beyond the middle line** of the scrum until the ball has come out or the 9 with the ball lifts it — they **cannot follow round**.

THE BACKS

Both teams stay **5 metres behind the scrum** until the ball comes out or the 9 lifts it.



Seen from above: navy have the put-in. The sky 9 may stand next to the navy 9, but stays on their own side of the middle line until the ball is out. Every back stays behind their team's 5-metre line.

SAFETY FIRST — THE RFU'S NOTE

If the scrum **collapses**, the whistle goes immediately. A player who keeps collapsing or binding illegally takes no further part in the scrum, and a player whose technique or strength makes them a danger is **replaced**. Everyone, replacements included, should be suitably trained.

ALSO AT U12: OFFSIDE AT A KICK

A player is **offside if they are in front of the ball when it is kicked**, or within 7 metres of an opponent waiting to play it. RugbyReferee.net's sheet: they **must stay still or retire**. The same rule applied at U11. Box kicks and drop goals are not allowed at U12.



FOR VOLUNTEER REFEREES — AND CURIOUS PARENTS

REFEREEING THE SCRUM

Many U12 games are refereed by a coach or a parent volunteer. This routine takes a scrum in the order things happen. The routine is practical advice; the rules it enforces are the RFU's.

- 1 IS IT A SCRUM?** Forward pass, knock on, ball not out of a ruck or maul, not used after “Use it”, or unplayable.
- 2 WHO'S IN?** The nearest five from each side, in a 3-2; a sixth as the 9. Encourage everyone to take a turn.
- 3 SQUARE AND READY.** Both packs in shape, not too close, necks and backs straight.
- 4 “CROUCH” — “BIND” — PAUSE — “SET”.** Check the props' binds and the locks' binds before “Set”.
- 5 PUT-IN.** Straight, from the middle of the gap, both hands, released from outside the tunnel — not fed to their own side.
- 6 STRIKE, DON'T PUSH.** Both hookers may strike. Any push is a free kick.
- 7 OFFSIDE.** The other 9 not past the middle line; both sets of backs 5 metres back.
- 8 OUT AND AWAY.** The 9 passes — no pick and run, no kick. Anything unstable — whistle straight away.

WORLD RUGBY'S REFEREE TIPS

From Rugby Ready: The scrum.

- ✓ Before the match, speak to front rows and scrum halves to explain the engagement sequence
- ✓ Be directive throughout
- ✓ Make sure both packs are ready before starting
- ✓ Check nobody is driving down or has shoulders below hips
- ✓ Check correct binding, and that the ball goes in straight
- ✓ If the scrum becomes unstable, **blow the whistle early and loudly**

WHEN EVERYTHING HAPPENS AT ONCE

Safety first, then offside, then keeping the game flowing.

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 U12: repeated problems are managed with the coaches, and the sides stay equal (RugbyReferee.net 2026-27 U12 sheet).

Looking ahead to U13: the RugbyReferee.net 2026-27 grid shows the scrum growing to **six players in a 3-2-1**, with a limited push of 1.5 metres. **Want to referee properly?** England Rugby's entry course is Ready 2 Referee, and Devon RFU supports new referees locally — links on the last page.



YOUR PART IN IT

HELPING YOUR CHILD

WORLD RUGBY · SCRUM READY

"Players should NOT play in the scrum until they are Scrum Ready."

Scrum Ready builds up in stages, and a player only moves on once they can show a strong, stable shape at each one. Its later stages are exactly this season's scrum: **a five-player scrum against a machine**, then **five against five**. That work happens at training.

AT HOME

Coaching advice — keep scrummaging for training.

- **Practise the shape, not the scrum.** Scrum Ready's key points: head in a neutral position, shoulder blades back, chest out, tummy muscles tight, knees slightly bent, feet shoulder-width apart and pointing forwards, weight on the balls of the feet.
- **Talk through the lock's job.** Bind to the other lock, arm around the prop's hips, and stay bound until the scrum is over.
- **Leave engagement to the coaches.** Coming together, binding and hooking belong at training, with the proper calls and supervision.

ON THE TOUCHLINE

- **Praise the right things** — a straight back, a good bind, a clean strike, a quick pass from the 9.
- **Don't shout "push!"** Nobody pushes at U12; it gives away a free kick.
- **Cheer whoever is in.** The RFU wants all players trained and no early specialists.
- **Respect the referee.** It is very often a volunteer. 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.

READ MORE: PARENTS, WELFARE AND CONCUSSION

AGE GRADE RUGBY

[RFU — Age Grade Rugby overview](#)

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

CONCUSSION

[RFU — HEADCASE concussion information](#)

englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/headcase

UK GUIDANCE

[UK Concussion Guidelines for Grassroots Sport](#)

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

BEHAVIOUR

[RFU — Code of conduct](#)

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

FREE COURSE

[RFU — HEADCASE e-learning](#)

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

Questions? Speak to your child's coach or your Parent Rep. For rucks and mauls at U12, see our companion guide, **Full rucks and mauls**.



SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

FIND OUT MORE

The rules come from the RFU; the laws, definitions and safety programmes 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 5.

THE RULES

U12 RULES

[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

LAST SEASON

[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

ON ONE PAGE

[RugbyReferee.net — U12 regulations, season 2026/27 \(PDF\)](#)

rugbyreferee.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-27-u12s-RRNet-RFU-Regulations.pdf

ALL AGE GRADES

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

englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby

NEXT SEASON

[RFU — Under 13s Rules of Play \(Reg. 15, Appendix 7\)](#)

englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby/regulation-15-appendix-7-u13-rules-of-play

THE LAWS OF THE SCRUM

EVERY LAW

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

passport.world.rugby/media/jxnmptk/2026en-laws-of-the-game-compressed.pdf

THE SCRUM

[World Rugby — Law 19: Scrum](#)

passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/19-scrum

DEFINITIONS

[World Rugby — Definitions \(scrum, bind...\)](#)

passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/definitions

SAFE TECHNIQUE

SCRUMMAGING

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

passport.world.rugby/injury-prevention-and-risk-management/rugby-ready/the-scrum

STEP BY STEP

[World Rugby — Scrum Ready](#)

passport.world.rugby/injury-prevention-and-risk-management/rugby-ready/the-scrum/scrum-ready

INJURY PREVENTION

[RFU — Activate injury prevention programme](#)

englandrugby.com/run/player-welfare/activate

CONTACT & LOAD

[RFU — Age Grade contact training, match load and recovery](#)

englandrugby.com/run/coaching/coach-resources/contact-guidance

REFEREEING

JUNIOR RUGBY

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

rugbyreferee.net/refereeing-junior-rugby

REFEREE COURSE

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

help.rfu.com/support/solutions/articles/103000161012

LOCALLY

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

devonrfu.co.uk/become-a-rugby-referee