



UNDER 13S · THE CONTESTED SCRUM

THE PUSHING SCRUM

A guide for U13 parents — who is in the scrum, how it is kept safe, and what the referee is looking for.

CREATED 15 SEPTEMBER 2026

Under 13s is the season the scrum becomes a real contest. Until now scrums have been a gentle restart: no pushing, and the scrum half had to pass. From this season **six players** from each team form the scrum, both sides may **push** — but only a little way — and the scrum half may pick up and run. The steps are built so that children learn to push safely before the full eight-player scrum arrives at U14.

WHERE THE RULES IN THIS GUIDE COME FROM

Every rule here comes from **RFU Regulation 15, Appendix 7 — the Under 13s Rules of Play**, and the World Rugby Laws of the Game they build on, including World Rugby's **Under-19 scrum variations**, which the RFU page applies. 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 come from RugbyReferee.net's 2026/27 summary, and we say so. If anything here disagrees with the RFU page, **the RFU page is right**. Coaching advice is labelled as advice.

WHAT CHANGES FROM U12

	U12 LAST SEASON	U13 THIS SEASON
Players	5, in a 3-2 shape	6, in a 3-2-1 shape — the six forwards
Pushing	Not allowed	Allowed, up to 1.5 metres
Hookers	Both may strike	Both may strike
Scrum half	Must pass the ball away	May pass, or pick up and run
Number 8	—	Bound on, and may not pick up the ball
Wheeling	—	Reset if it turns more than 45 degrees

U12 column: RugbyReferee.net 2026/27 age grade grid.

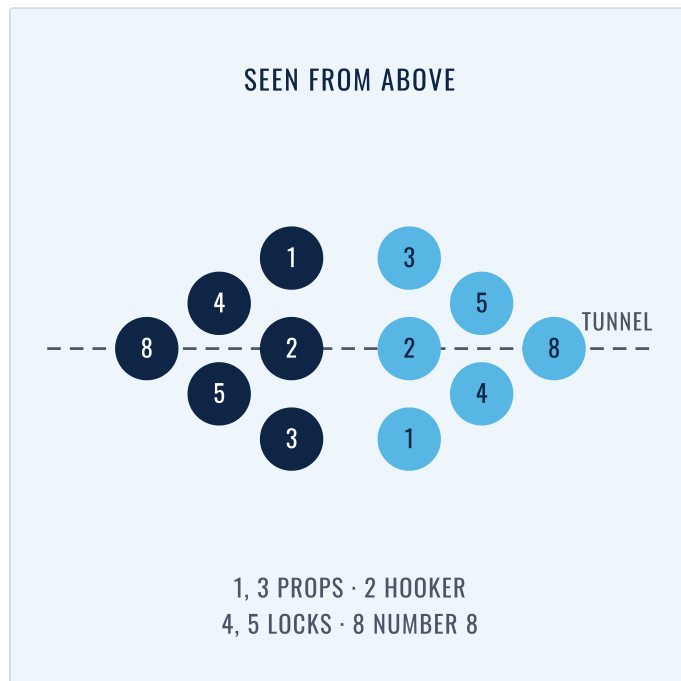
CONFIDENT AND COMPETENT

The RFU asks for **six confident and competent players** from each team. If a team cannot field six suitably trained players — because they are not available, or one is injured or sent off with no trained replacement — the referee **must order uncontested scrums**. That is not a punishment; it is the rule working as it should.

WHO GOES WHERE

THE 3-2-1 SCRUM

A **front row** of three — a prop either side of the hooker — two **locks** in the second row, and a **number 8** bound between the hips of the two locks.



FRONT ROW

Two props and a hooker. They crouch first, and on “Bind” each prop binds with the **outside arm** onto the body or side of their opponent.

LOCKS

Bind onto each other with the **inside arm**, and put the **outside arm around the hips** of the prop in front.

NUMBER 8

Bound between the hips of the two locks — **bound to both** (RugbyReferee.net).

BALANCED

Scrum numbers must be **balanced** — six against six.

THE LOCKS' BIND

AT U13

- ✓ Outside arm **around the hips** of the prop in front
- ✓ Inside arm bound onto the other lock
- ✓ Stay bound until the scrum half plays the ball

NOT AT U13

- ✗ A **crutch bind** (RugbyReferee.net: “no crutch bind”)
- ✗ A lock or number 8 **unbinding** to pick up the ball

“Normal” binding for the second row and number 8 arrives at U14, with the eight-player scrum (RugbyReferee.net grid).

BODY POSITION — EVERY PLAYER, EVERY SCRUM

Front rows must **not charge** at each other. Props' bodies stay **parallel to the touchline**, their **head and shoulders no lower than their hips**, and there must be **no downward pressure**. If they set too close together with necks and backs bent, the referee stops the scrum and it forms again.

CROUCH, BIND, SET — THEN PUSH

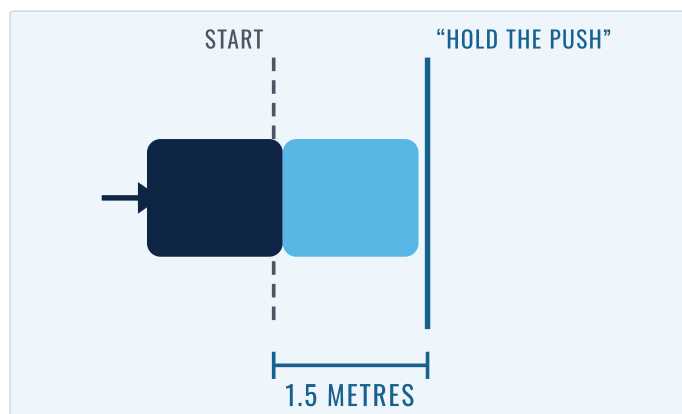
ENGAGING AND PUSHING

- 1 **"CROUCH"** — the front rows crouch.
- 2 **"BIND"** — props bind with the outside arm on their opponent; the locks bind on each other and around the props' hips.
- 3 **A PAUSE** — the referee calls "Set" **only when the front rows are ready**.
- 4 **"SET"** — the front rows engage. The team awarded the scrum throws the ball in.
- 5 **THE CONTEST** — both hookers may strike for the ball, and both packs may push.

THE 1.5-METRE PUSH

A scrum may be pushed only **1.5 metres**. This comes from World Rugby's **Under-19 variations**, which the RFU applies at U13: pushing the scrum more than 1.5 metres towards the opponents' goal line is a **free kick**.

As the limit approaches, referees call **"Hold the push"** or **"Stop the push"** (RugbyReferee.net). The pack going forward must stop driving; the ball must then come out.



WHEELS AND COLLAPSES

WHEEL

If the scrum **turns more than 45 degrees**, it is **reset**, and the team that threw the ball in throws it in again. (In the adult game a scrum is reset only past 90 degrees.) Wheeling a scrum on purpose is an offence.

COLLAPSE

If a scrum collapses, the **whistle must go immediately**, and the referee either awards the right sanction or resets the scrum.

LIFTED

If a player is lifted or forced up out of the scrum, the referee blows at once so everyone stops pushing (World Rugby Law 19).

PERSISTENT

A player persistently involved in **collapsing or illegal binding** takes no further part in the scrum, and a player whose lack of technique or strength is a danger **must be replaced**.



BALL IN, BALL OUT

THE SCRUM HALF AND THE BACK ROW

PUTTING THE BALL IN

The scrum half holds the ball in **both hands**, its long axis level with the ground and the touchline, midway between their knees and ankles. They release it from **outside the tunnel**, so it lands midway between the two front rows and beyond the nearer prop's shoulders. They put it in **straight, from the middle of the gap** (RugbyReferee.net). Referees watch closely that the scrum half is not **"feeding"** their own side.

GETTING IT OUT

SCRUM HALF

New at U13: may **pass** the ball, or **pick it up and run** from the base of the scrum. At U12 they had to pass.

NUMBER 8

May not pick up the ball from the back of the scrum. That arrives at U14 (RugbyReferee.net grid).

LOCKS AND 8

May not unbind to pick up the ball, and must **stay bound** until the scrum half plays it.

OFFSIDE AT THE SCRUM

THE BACKS

The back line of both teams stays **5 metres behind the scrum** until the ball comes out, or the opposing scrum half lifts it from the ground.

OTHER SCRUM HALF

The scrum half without the ball may start **right alongside** their opponent, but must not move beyond the **middle line of the scrum** until the ball has come out. They cannot follow the ball round.

NEAR THE LINE

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

WHEN IS A SCRUM GIVEN?

- A **forward pass**
- A **knock-on**
- The ball does not come out of a **ruck or maul** — including not using it within 5 seconds of "Use it"
- The ball becomes **unplayable**
- An attacking player carries the ball into in-goal and is **held up**: 5-metre scrum, attack's ball (RugbyReferee.net)
- A **knock-on in in-goal**: 5-metre scrum, defence's ball (RugbyReferee.net)
- An **accidental** fall on or over players on the ground: scrum to the team in possession

FREE KICKS, NOT PENALTIES

Up to U13, offences are punished with **free kicks** rather than penalties (RugbyReferee.net grid). **Pushing illegally in the scrum** — including past the 1.5-metre limit — gives the other team a free kick, and they must go **10 metres** back.



FOR VOLUNTEER REFEREES — AND CURIOUS PARENTS

REFEREEING THE SCRUM

This routine takes a U13 scrum in the order things happen. The routine is practical advice; the rules it enforces are the RFU's.

- 1 BEFORE KICK-OFF.** Check each team has six suitably trained scrum players, and trained replacements. If not: uncontested scrums.
- 2 MARK AND SHAPE.** Six against six, 3-2-1. Front rows close but not bent over; bodies parallel to the touchline.
- 3 "CROUCH — BIND".** Props' outside-arm binds on the opponent. Locks around the props' hips — no crutch bind. Number 8 bound to both locks.
- 4 PAUSE, THEN "SET".** Only when both front rows are ready. No charge.
- 5 BALL IN.** Straight, from the middle of the gap. Watch the feed.
- 6 WATCH THE PUSH.** Straight and level. Call "Hold the push" before 1.5 metres. Free kick if it carries on.
- 7 WHEEL OR COLLAPSE?** Past 45 degrees: reset, same side's ball. Collapse: whistle straight away.
- 8 BALL OUT.** Number 8 cannot pick up. Other scrum half stays level with the middle line; backs 5 metres back.

WORLD RUGBY, RUGBY READY — REFEREE TIPS AT THE SCRUM

- "Ensure both packs are ready before initiating the engagement sequence"
- "Ensure neither front row is driving down or have their shoulders below their hips"
- "If the scrum becomes unstable, blow the whistle early and loudly"
- "If you have any safety doubts, go to uncontested scrums"

ADVANTAGE

The RFU asks referees to sanction only infringements that affect the other team, and to **play advantage wherever it is safe**. At the scrum, safety comes first.

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 — keep scrummaging for training.

- **Practise the strong position.** Feet apart, knees bent, back flat, head and shoulders above the hips, eyes up. Hold it for ten seconds and make it a game.
- **Leave the pushing to the coaches.** Scrumming against anyone at home, even gently, is not safe. It belongs at training, with proper supervision.
- **Talk about the game.** Ask what the referee called at the scrum, and why.

ON THE TOUCHLINE

- **Don't shout "Push!"** The 1.5-metre limit is the rule. A pack that stops on "Hold the push" is doing it right.
- **Praise the right things** — a steady scrum, a good bind, a clean strike, a quick ball.
- **Back the referee on safety.** A reset or uncontested scrums keeps children safe. It is often a volunteer refereeing.
- **Cheer effort** from both teams, in the scrum as much as out wide. 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](#)

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.



SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

FIND OUT MORE

The rules come from the RFU; the laws, variations and safety guidance 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

U13 RULES

[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

NEXT SEASON

[RFU — Under 14s Rules of Play \(Reg. 15, Appendix 8\)](#)

englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby/regulation-15-appendix-8-u14-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

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 — U13 regulations, season 2026/27 \(PDF\)](#)

rugbyreferee.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-27-u13s-RRNet-RFU-Regulations.pdf

THE LAWS OF THE SCRUM

THE SCRUM

[World Rugby — Law 19: Scrum](#)

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

DANGEROUS PLAY

[World Rugby — Law 9: Foul play](#)

passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/9-foul-play

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

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

LOCALLY

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

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

UNDER-19 VARIATIONS

[World Rugby — Under-19 variations: Scrum](#)

passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/variations-7s-10s-u19-game-on/under-19/19-scrum

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

EVERY LAW

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

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

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