



UNDER 14S · KICKING COMES INTO THE GAME

PENALTIES, KICKS AT GOAL AND DROP-OUTS

A guide for U14 parents — what you are watching, how to help your child, and what the referee is looking for.

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Under 14s is the first season of **15-a-side on a full-size pitch** — 100 metres by 70 metres, plus 5 metres for each in-goal area. It is also the season kicking properly arrives: **penalties** replace free kicks for the serious offences, teams can **kick at goal** for points, and box kicks and drop goals are allowed. This guide explains what each whistle means and how play restarts.

WHERE THE RULES IN THIS GUIDE COME FROM

The rules come from **RFU Regulation 15, Appendix 8 — the Under 14s 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 (effective 1 August 2026) still points to it. For restarts in the in-goal area we follow **RugbyReferee.net's 2026/27 U14 sheet and grid**, which record the RFU's latest clarification — see page 4. If anything here ever disagrees with the RFU, **the RFU is right**. Where we give coaching advice rather than a rule, we say so. Links are at the back.

FOUR BIG CHANGES AT U14

1 PENALTIES

For **foul play** (including a high tackle), **offside**, and **not releasing or rolling away** at the tackle. Free kicks stay for squeezeball and diving off feet.

2 KICKS AT GOAL

Conversions after a try and **penalty kicks at goal** are allowed — and so are **drop goals** and **box kicks**.

3 KICK-OFFS

After a score, the **team that did not score kicks off**. At U13 they could choose to kick or receive.

4 TRY-LINE DROP-OUTS

New for 2026/27. When an attack takes the ball into in-goal and does not score, play restarts with a **drop-out from the try line**, as in adult rugby.

ALSO NEW SINCE U13 — RUGBYREFeree.NET GRID, 2026/27

- **15 a side** (13 at U13)
- **Full-size pitch**, 100 m × 70 m
- Match ends if the points gap passes **50**
- **Hand-offs**: no height limit, but must be safe
- **Lineouts** replace free passes from touch
- **No 50:22** yet — that comes at U15



THE WHISTLE

PENALTY OR FREE KICK?

World Rugby defines a **penalty** as awarded “for a serious infringement” and a **free kick** for a lesser one. Up to U13, free kicks were used for almost everything, partly so teams could not kick a penalty to touch to gain ground. At U14, with lineouts arriving, the serious offences become penalties.

PENALTY

- **Foul play** — including a **high tackle**
- **Offside**
- **Not releasing or rolling away** at the tackle, or stopping the tackled player passing
- Opponents **within 10 metres** of the mark when a penalty is taken

FREE KICK

- **Squeezeball** — going to ground head first and pushing the ball back between the legs
- **Diving off feet** — falling on or over a player on the ground with the ball, or players with the ball between or near them

WHAT A TEAM CAN DO WITH EACH

TAP AND GO

Either kick: the ball must visibly leave the hand, or clearly leave the mark, and then the kicker can run or pass.

KICK TO TOUCH

From a **penalty**, the kicking team **throws in** to the lineout where the ball went out. From a **free kick**, the **other team** throws in (World Rugby Law 18).

KICK AT GOAL

Penalties only — a penalty goal can be scored only from a penalty. The team must say they are kicking at goal, and then must kick at goal, within 60 seconds (Law 8).

SCRUM

A team awarded a penalty may choose a scrum instead (Law 20).

10 METRES

At both, the opponents must **retreat 10 metres** towards their own goal line. At a free kick the U14 rules add that they cannot start moving until the ball has been played.

THE TACKLE AND THE HAND-OFF

HIGH TACKLE

The tackler must grip and hold the ball carrier **below the base of the sternum** — the tummy or below. Anything higher is a **penalty**. The ball carrier must not go into contact with shoulders below hips, dip late and low, or put their head into the opponent's head space.

HAND-OFF

Allowed, with no height restriction — but it must be safe (RugbyReferee.net 2026/27). At U13 it had to be below the armpit. World Rugby Law 9: a hand-off must not use **excessive force**.



POINTS ON THE BOARD

KICKS AT GOAL AND KICKING IN PLAY

5

TRY

2

CONVERSION

3

PENALTY GOAL

3

DROP GOAL

7

PENALTY TRY

Points values: World Rugby Law 8. A penalty try is awarded when foul play stops a try that would probably have been scored; no conversion is taken.

CONVERSION

After a try, a **place kick or drop kick** taken in line with where the try was scored. It must go over the crossbar and between the posts.

PENALTY GOAL

From a penalty only. The other team must **stand still, hands by their sides**, while the kicker runs up (Law 8).

DROP GOAL

A drop kick over the bar **in open play**. Allowed at U14 — at U13 drop goals and box kicks were not permitted.

KICK-OFFS

WHO AND WHERE

A **drop kick from the centre of halfway** starts each half and restarts play after every score. After a score, **the opponents of the team who scored** kick off.

POSITIONS

The kicker's team behind the ball; the receiving team **at least 10 metres** back from halfway.

NOT 10 METRES

If an opponent plays it first, play on. If it falls short, or the kicking team plays it first: **re-kick or a scrum** on halfway.

STRAIGHT TO TOUCH

The receiving team chooses: **re-kick**, or **accept the kick and have a lineout on halfway**.

PLAYERS IN FRONT

If the kicker's team mates are in front of the ball: **scrum on halfway** to the receiving team.

INTO IN-GOAL

Kicked into in-goal without touching anyone, then touched down or made dead: **re-kick or scrum** on halfway.

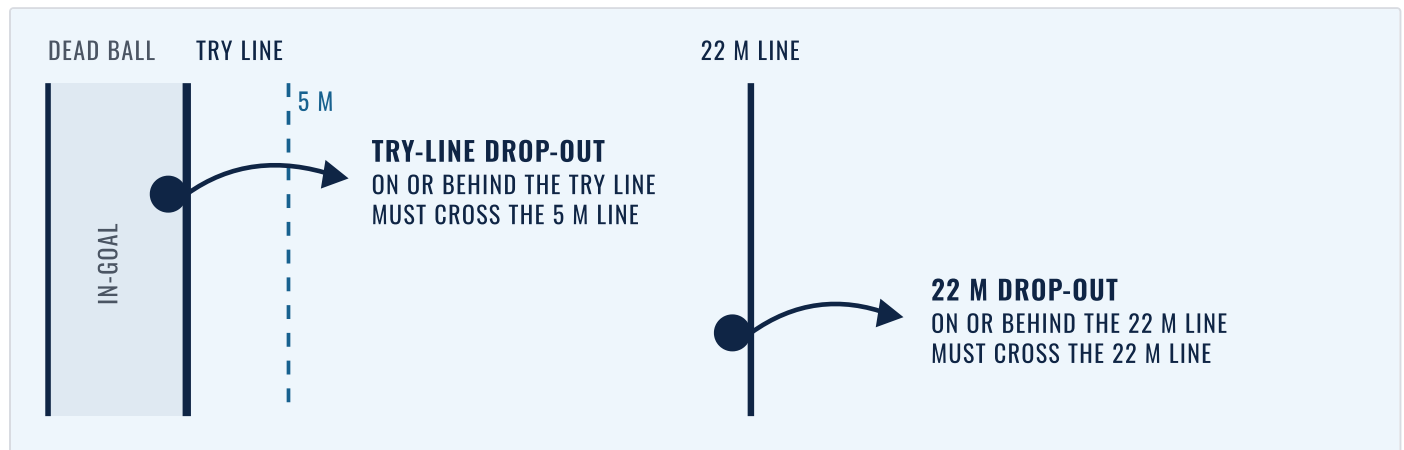
KICKING IN OPEN PLAY

- **Box kicks, drop goals and fly-hacks** (kicking a loose ball on the ground) are all allowed.
- **Kicked directly into touch from outside the 22:** lineout to the other team, level with where it was kicked. From **inside** the 22: level with where it crossed the touchline — unless the ball was passed back into the 22 with no tackle, ruck or maul since, and no opponent had touched it.
- **No 50:22 at U14.** A kick that would be a 50:22 in adult rugby is a throw-in to the non-kicking team.
- **Offside at a kick:** anyone in front of the kicker, or within 10 metres of an opponent waiting for the ball, is offside.

NEW FOR 2026/27

DROP-OUTS AND IN-GOAL RESTARTS

A drop-out is a drop kick that restarts play after the ball has gone dead in or through the in-goal area. There are now two kinds at U14, taken from two different lines.



Where each drop-out is taken, and the line it must cross (World Rugby Law 12). The defending team takes both.

TRY-LINE DROP-OUT

The attack **played, kicked or carried** the ball into in-goal, did not score, and it went dead:

- a **defender grounds** the ball in in-goal
- the ball carrier is **held up** in in-goal
- an attacker **knocks on** in in-goal
- the ball carrier is taken **over the dead-ball or touch-in-goal line**

22 M DROP-OUT

- A **failed penalty goal or drop goal** is made dead by the defence, or goes dead through in-goal
- A kick in open play goes **dead through in-goal** — the defending team may choose a scrum where it was kicked instead (Law 21)

5 M SCRUM

- A knock-on in the field of play goes into in-goal: **defence** puts in
- The defence take the ball into their own in-goal and it does not come out: **attack** puts in

WHAT CHANGED FROM LAST SEASON

In 2025/26 there were no try-line drop-outs at U14: a ball kicked in and grounded by the defence was a 22 drop-out, and a ball carrier held up in in-goal was a 5-metre scrum. For 2026/27 RugbyReferee.net records a **Regulation 15 change**: try-line drop-outs **as per adult law**, based on RFU clarification about in-goal restarts. The RFU's U14 web page, dated August 2025, still shows the old wording. One line on RugbyReferee.net's U14 sheet also still lists a kick grounded by the defence as a 22 drop-out; its restarts section, its age grade grid and World Rugby Law 12 all say try-line drop-out, which is what we follow.



FOR VOLUNTEER REFEREES — AND CURIOUS PARENTS

REFEREEING PENALTIES AND RESTARTS

If you are refereeing an U14 game — or you would simply like to understand the whistle — this routine takes a penalty in the order things happen. The routine is practical advice; the rules it enforces are the RFU's and World Rugby's.

- 1 IS IT SAFE?** Foul play first. A high tackle is anything above the base of the sternum.
- 2 ADVANTAGE?** Sanction only what affects the other team, and play advantage wherever it is safe. The U14 rules add a note under foul play: no advantage.
- 3 PENALTY OR FREE KICK?** Penalty for foul play, offside, not releasing. Free kick for squeezeball and diving off feet.
- 4 MAKE THE MARK.** Usually where it happened; for offside at a ruck, maul or scrum, on the offending team's offside line; never within 5 metres of the try line (Law 20).
- 5 10 METRES.** Get the opponents moving back straight away. Further offences can move the mark 10 metres forward.
- 6 ASK THE QUESTION.** "Kicking at goal?" If yes, they must kick at goal, within 60 seconds, with the opponents still.
- 7 CARD?** A yellow card at U14 means **5 minutes** in the sin bin — not the 10 minutes of adult rugby.
- 8 RESTART RIGHT.** Kick-off by the non-scoring side; try-line or 22 drop-out by how the ball went dead.

MATCH MANAGEMENT

- **The 50-point rule.** The match ends if the points difference becomes more than 50 (RugbyReferee.net 2026/27).
- **Rolling substitutions**, unlimited, when the ball is dead and with the referee's permission.
- **Coaches off the pitch** while the game is in play.

THE HALF GAME RULE

RFU Regulation 15.13: every player in the match day squad must play **at least half** of the available playing time. For a standard U14 match of two 25-minute halves, that is **25 minutes**. Time in the sin bin still counts.

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 — practise kicking with the club's ball size (size 4) where you can.

- **Kick both ways.** Drop kicks for restarts and drop goals; place kicks for conversions and penalties.
- **A routine.** The same steps back and to the side every time. Kickers under pressure fall back on habit.
- **Know the numbers.** Five for a try, two for a conversion, three for a penalty or drop goal — and why a penalty given away can cost three points.
- **Talk about discipline.** Stay onside, release after the tackle, tackle below the sternum. Penalties now really cost the team.

ON THE TOUCHLINE

- **Quiet for kicks at goal.** Players must not shout at a kicker; we ask spectators for the same courtesy.
- **Praise the right things** — a quick tap penalty, a brave chase of a drop-out, getting back 10 metres.
- **Let the coaches coach and respect the referee** — very often a volunteer.
- **Cheer effort** from both teams. Our 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 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

U14 RULES

[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

LAST 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

ON ONE PAGE

[RugbyReferee.net — U14 regulations, season 2026/27 \(PDF\)](#)

rugbyreferee.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-27-u14s-RRNet-RFU-Regulations-1.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 — U15–U18 Variations to the Laws \(Reg. 15, Appendix 9\)](#)

englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby/regulation-15-appendix-9-u15-u18-variations-to-the-laws-of-the-game

EVERY AGE

[RugbyReferee.net — Age grade rules grid, 2026/27 \(PDF\)](#)

rugbyreferee.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/2026-27-RRNet-RFU-Age-grade-rugby-regulations-grid.pdf

THE LAWS

EVERY LAW

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

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

FOUL PLAY

[World Rugby — Law 9: Foul play](#)

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

IN-GOAL

[World Rugby — Law 21: In-goal](#)

passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/laws-by-number/21-in-goal

SIGNALS

[World Rugby — Referee signals](#)

passport.world.rugby/laws-of-the-game/match-official-signals/primary-referee-signals

SAFE TECHNIQUE

TACKLING

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

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

TACKLE STAGES

[World Rugby — Tackle Ready](#)

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

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