

# HOW TO RUN A TOUCH/TAG RUGBY TOURNAMENT

## INSTRUCTIONS

Tag Rugby, or Touch Rugby\*, is a fun and rapidly growing sport which provides an opportunity to practically make use of the enthusiasm surrounding major championships.

It may either:

- a) help Christians be pro-active in sharing both the gospel and their lives with friends, family and colleagues; or
- b) help those who are not church-goers to engage with their local church.

\*Both Tag Rugby and Touch Rugby will be referred to as "rugby" throughout this document.

## **EVENT IDEAS**

When organising a rugby event, it is important to make clear whether the event is for adults (14+) or youth (U14) and whether teams will be male, female or mixed. It is also useful to consider the purpose of the event, e.g. a chance for someone to speak and explain the gospel or a sporty person from a local church to share their testimony, or primarily a chance to engage with the local community and encounter people.<sup>1</sup>

Below are 3 ideas for a rugby event.

### **1. An informal game before or after church.**

Really relaxed, creates a natural bridge to speak about church and invite to church. May be kept small-scale and informal, organized by individuals who invite friends, or advertised locally.

### **2. An informal rugby tournament**

Very relaxed, individuals can get a team together and invite friends or combine with others to form a team. May be kept small scale and informal e.g. 3 or 4 teams turn up and every team plays each other.

Both the informal game or informal rugby tournament can be used for a variety of purposes, from simply a chance to spend time with people to deliberately evangelistic e.g. someone (ideally one of the players) giving a 2-3 minute thought on the Christian faith or a short testimony at half-time or between games.

### **3. Rugby Festival**

A rugby festival is a larger event primarily for a community, within a school or at your local rugby club. People may arrive with teams or join up with others to form teams. It would be a strong encouragement for Christians to invite friends along and form a team. This would require a more deliberate & organised advertising campaign locally.

Rugby games or tournament may be run for multiple groups e.g. U12, U16, Adult; men's, women's, mixed.

Skills Clinics or Workshops can be put on for people to "give it a go" or improve specific skills.

The rugby may be run alongside other activities e.g. bouncy castles, face painting, food, drinks, BBQ etc.

Churches are able to make themselves known through a stand or tent, meet people, provide information and share the gospel on an individual basis.

Depending on scale and resources, it may be possible to have a chance to share the gospel more directly with attendees. For example, if there is a screen with speakers, videos from [www.engagemediahub.com](http://www.engagemediahub.com) could be shown which include interviews with rugby players and a short evangelistic film. If a big screen is not available these could be shown on a laptop on a stall for individuals to watch.

In most cases, a prize is recommended for the winner of the rugby tournament. Depending on the situation, this could vary from a crate of beer (18+ only) or a box of chocolates or sweets to a trophy and medals (perhaps for a youth competition).

It might be possible to run a festival or tournament at your local rugby club, especially if it has a mini or juniors section.

If these mini and junior sections are playing every Sunday morning one idea would be for the local church or churches to provide lunch after their matches and then host an intergenerational tag or touch tournament. This would be an opportunity for mums and dads to join in with the kids and the church family. The non-contact nature of tag rugby makes this an ideal opportunity. It may be sensible to choose one or two of the age groups particularly if there is Christian adult already present as a coach or parent and will ensure the task is manageable. This offers an opportunity to organise something that many clubs do not have the time or energy to do.

Of course care will need to be taken to ensure that this is played in the correct spirit with fun and enjoyment overriding winning 'at all costs.' There is then the chance to share the Christian faith during this tournament (see below for ideas) or by simply explaining why the local church has joined in.

# RULES

## Basic Touch Rugby

These are the basic touch rules. Most importantly ensure everyone is playing by the same rules. For full rules see:

<http://englandtouch.org.uk/wp/index.php/about/basics/>

Aim: To score a try by putting the ball down in the end zone without being touched. The team with the most tries wins.

- 1) Equal numbers on each team (usually 6);
- 2) The ball may only be handled – no kicking;
- 3) The ball may only be passed backwards;
- 4) To start the game put the ball on the floor at the half way line. On the referee's whistle tap it with the foot, pick it up and run;
- 5) A "tackle" or "touch" is made by touching the player in possession of the ball (with 1 or 2 hands, agreed by the teams or referee(s) in advance). Touches can be made anywhere on the body but must not be made with excessive force;
- 6) The defending player should call "touch" when a touch is made (it is a game of honesty as sometimes touches cannot be felt by the attacker);
- 7) When the player with the ball is "touched", the player must "dump" the ball. This means they stop running, return to where they were touched (if they kept running), face the opposition, place the ball on the floor and roll the ball between their legs using their hand. Another attacking player must pick up the ball to continue the game;
- 8) When a "touch" occurs, the defending team must get back "on-side" by retreating 5 metres from the line of the "touch" toward their own line and wait until the ball is picked up before advancing forward again;
- 9) A team has 6 plays in which to score a try by placing the ball over the opposition's line. One "play" begins when the ball is picked up after a touch (or the referee begins play) and ends when the next touch is made;
- 10) If a player is "touched" at the end of the 6th play, the player with the ball must stop, place the ball on the floor and then he and the rest of his team retreat 5 metres and defend. Possession is turned over to the other team;
- 11) Possession of the ball passes from the attacking to the defending team if: the ball is dropped, the ball is passed forward, a kick is made, a player runs off the edge of the pitch, over-vigorous or aggressive play is made by the attacking team;
- 12) A "penalty" is awarded meaning the attacking team has another 6 "plays" if: a defender knocks the ball down onto the floor, the defending team have not all retreated 5 metres, over-vigorous or aggressive play is made by the defending team;

- 13) To start a set of 6 plays, place the ball on the floor and roll between the legs;
- 14) Overly aggressive conduct can be disciplined by sending a player off for 2 minutes, or in severe cases for the rest of the match;
- 15) Rolling subs are allowed. An on-field player must come off the pitch near the half way line before the sub can go on to the pitch near the half way line. In a mixed game to gender ratio must be maintained.

### **Basic Tag Rugby**

These are the basic tag rules. Most importantly ensure everyone is playing by the same rules. For full rules see:

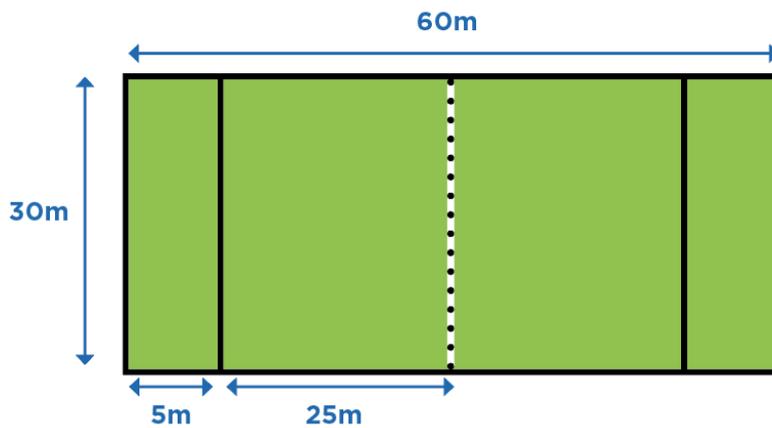
<http://www.tagrugbyevents.org/rules.php>

Aim: To score a try by putting the ball down in the end zone without being tagged. The team with the most tries wins. Try by male = 1 point; try by female = 2 points (although you do not have to enforce this rule!)

- 1) Equal numbers on each team (usually 7);
- 2) Shirts should be tucked in at all times with the tags positioned on either side of the hips;
- 3) The ball may only be handled – no kicking;
- 4) The ball may only be passed backwards;
- 5) A “tap and pass” at the centre of the pitch is used to start the game – put the ball on the floor, on the referee’s whistle tap it with the foot, pick it up and pass. Defenders must be 7m back from the ball, and cannot advance until the pass is made;
- 6) A “tackle” is made by removing one of the two tags from the belt of the player in possession of the ball;
- 7) The defending player should hold the tag above their head and shout “tag”;
- 8) When the player with the ball is tagged, the attacker must pass the ball within 3 seconds and within 3 steps (for young or new players this could be increased to 5);
- 9) When a tag occurs, the defending team must get back “on-side” by retreating 1 metre from the line of the tag towards their own line and wait until the ball is passed before advancing forward again;
- 10) Both the attacker and tagger are momentarily out of the game. To be live again the tagger must give the tag back to the attacker in a sporting manner (not throw it on the floor) and the attacker must stick the tag back to their belt;
- 11) The ball carrier must hold the ball in 2 hands when within 3m of the defenders, to avoid instinctive protection of his/her tags; he/she cannot spin or jump to avoid being tagged;
- 12) A team has 5 plays in which to score a try by placing the ball over the opposition’s line (for young or new players this could be increased);

- 13) If a player is tagged at the end of the 5th play, the player with the ball must stop, place the ball on the floor and then he and the rest of his team retreat 7m and defend;
- 14) Possession of the ball passes from the attacking to the defending team if: the ball is dropped or knocked on, the ball is passed forward, a kick is made, a player runs off the edge of the pitch, contact is initiated by the attacking team, attackers take longer than 3 secs or more than 3 steps after being tagged to pass the ball, attackers don't hold the ball in 2 hands within 3m of defenders; attackers spin or jump;
- 15) A "penalty" is awarded meaning the attacking team has another 5 "plays" if: a defender knocks the ball down onto the floor, the defending team are off-side and interfering with play (1m from a tag or 7m from a tap and pass), contact is initiated by the defending team;
- 16) To start a set of 5 plays, place the ball on the floor, wait for the whistle then tap and pass;
- 17) There is strictly no contact. Players must run at spaces not faces! Players can be disciplined for initiating contact by being sent off for 2 minutes, or in severe cases for the rest of the match;
- 18) Rolling subs are allowed. An on-field player must come off the pitch, give their tags to their sub, before the sub can go on to the pitch. In a mixed game to gender ratio must be maintained.

## PITCH SUITABLE FOR TAG AND TOUCH



The diagram above is a recommended pitch size and layout. Lines can be marked with cones (if on grass, avoid green cones if possible).

To mark the halfway line, a different coloured cone on the edge of the pitch is suitable.

The size of pitch can change depending on the agility and fitness of the players. The wider the pitch, the more space there is between players and so the game becomes easier, faster and higher scoring. The longer the pitch, the more difficult it is to score within the given number of plays.

If pitches are adjacent, a 2-3 metre gap (minimum) between pitches is recommended.

*For international touch rugby, the pitch is 70m x 50m, 6 players on each team.*

## **FIXTURES**

In Appendix 1 there are suggested schedules for between three and ten teams.

For the games to run smoothly print out the schedule, score sheets and scorecards. Score sheets and scorecards can also be found in Appendix 1.

## TIMINGS

The length of a game is variable and at the discretion of the organiser, but for a tournament or festival, games are recommended to be between 8 and 15 minutes long. Time between games is also important to factor in, anywhere between 3 & 10 minutes. The length of game and length of break may also depend on the expected fitness of the teams turning up.

The other key consideration for length of game will be how long the tournament should last. Below is an example of a late morning tournament with 6 rounds of 10 minute games (e.g. 2 groups of 4, played on 2 pitches) followed by knockouts (1st & 2nd from each group go through to the semi-finals).

Pre-10.30	Organisers arrive and lay out pitches
10.30	Teams arrive & register
10.50	Welcome & Introduction
11.00	Round 1
11.10	Break
11.15	Round 2
11.25	Break
11.30	Round 3
11.40	Break
11.45	Round 4
11.55	Break
12.00	Round 5
12.10	Break
12.15	Round 6
12.25	Extended Break
12.45	Semi finals
12.55	Break
13.00	Final
13.10	Prize-giving & Wrap up / BBQ / Talk or testimony

The 'Extended Break' between the group stages and the knockout stages is recommended for two reasons:

1. To allow the organisers time to work out the results & rankings from the group stages and so work out the teams playing in the knockout stages.
2. To allow the players some time to rest before the knockout stage and engage with any stalls, tents etc.

## **TOURNAMENT PRACTICALITIES**

### **Key Equipment:**

- Rugby balls
- Open space
- Markings for the pitch (preferably cones, but could even be jumpers!)
- For players, active clothing and a pair of trainers is fine (you may want to suggest or prohibit studs or moulded boots depending on the situation)
- Whistles if referees are available
- Scorecards / pens /stopwatch / air-horn / gazebo if formal game/festival
- Tag Rugby equipment if Tag Rugby is preferred by the organisers.

### **Venue:**

A local park is probably the easiest and most sensible place to play. However using or hiring pitches (including 3G or 4G astro) at a local sports club may be a good opportunity to engage with the community and the local club(s). If hiring a venue it is recommended to book an extra 30 mins at the beginning and end for setting up and clearing away.

### **Weather:**

Touch and Tag rugby are outdoor games and, with suitable footwear, can be played in wet conditions. However, the weather is something to factor into your plans. It is useful to have a gazebo for some shelter outside in case of rain, especially for admin. An indoor sports hall may be suitable for a small number of teams, where diving is not allowed! For safety reasons to score a try on hard ground the ball carrier has to simply run with the ball into the try zone, not place the ball on the ground.

### **Water:**

Tag/Touch Rugby is an active sport so ensure water and/or other refreshments are available. Players should bring their own water bottles but it is sensible to bring along some communal water e.g. large bottles / urns of cold water and plastic cups. Ensure there are plenty of black sacks / bins available.

### **Advertising:**

It is recommended advertising in local sports clubs (football, rugby, cricket, hockey, tennis, gyms etc.) as well as through individuals. There are several ways to advertise including:

- Flyers / posters
- Social media
- Email
- Notices in church news sheets.

Essential requirements include:

- Event details – date, time, venue, size of teams
- Contact details – name, email, contact number
- Cost (if applicable)
- How to register a team...or just turn up

### **Registration:**

Ideally have teams book their place in advance as it is helpful for planning! However, experience shows that even if teams register in advance, there are late drop outs and possible additions. If teams have pre-registered you will need one or two registration volunteers on the day. Their objective is to:

- Welcome
- Register
- Collect any outstanding money (if applicable)
- Distribute information about the day/schedule

### **Referees:**

Very useful, and essential in a tournament or more formal competition setting. You will need as many referees as you have pitches. The role of the referee includes:

- Ensure appropriate clothing and footwear is being worn by players;
- Familiarise themselves with the rules, ensure all players know the rules and enforce these fairly during play. Be firm and consistent;
- Encourage positive application and attitude from all players;

- Keep the scores clearly for each game.

### **Atmosphere & Sound:**

This is always a desired, but difficult, ingredient to have at a festival. Regardless of the size of the festival, we recommend having a sound system with microphones so that:

- a) the festival is much friendlier and more professional than shouting;
- b) it is much easier to announce games and other information;
- c) you are able to play background music.

### **First Aid:**

Ensure there is someone first aid trained available as far as possible. Ensure a basic first aid kit is available, and that you have a mobile phone for medical emergencies.

### **Scorer/Admin:**

You will need one person in charge of time keeping, collecting scorecards and updating the master score sheets. For a festival, start and end games with an air-horn to distinguish from the referees whistle.

### **Christian Content:**

Why not show the Born to Play video at some point during the tournament or one of the rugby testimonies found on the Christians in Sport website?

If you are planning to do a short talk or testimony here are a few pointers:

- Bible based – use a verse/verses to bring the truth of the gospel
- Short and simple – 10 mins max is a good length to aim for. Don't overcomplicate the message.
- Relevant – can the talk have a sporty theme? Try to apply the truth to the world of sport with which the attendees have a common link.

## **RFU GUIDELINES – SAFEGUARDING & INSURANCE**

The RFU Regulation 15.74 regarding Non-contact Rugby states:

*Players of all ages and both sexes may train and play together in non-competitive, non-contact rugby provided that: (a) the organiser and/or coach has assessed the session and/or match to be safe for all players; (b) under no circumstances is any element of contact rugby permitted and the training session and/or match should be conducted with the best practice principles set out in the guidance available at [www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance](http://www.rfu.com/Regulation15Guidance)*

Therefore it is acceptable for teams to be mixed age and mixed gender, however some caution is advised. The RFU Guidance for Summer Activities<sup>5</sup> states that Touch and Tag rugby can cross age groups and may include family members but should only be played by U9s and older i.e. year 4 upwards.

The RFU Safeguarding Policy does not explicitly talk about summer festivals, but if it is a one-off festival with U18s, it is recommended those running the festival on the day have received safeguarding training and have been previously DBS checked by the church / organisation responsible for the festival.

Since the rugby festival is non-contact, insurance for rugby will not be necessary, but it is recommended to make participants aware that accidents happen, slips, trips and injuries are possible and they play at their own risk.

# APPENDIX 1

## **Schedules & Scorecard**

Below are different match schedules for 3, 4, 5 & 6 teams, depending on the number of teams who turn up.

If 3 or 4 teams turn up, have each of the teams to play each other twice.

If 5 or 6 teams turn up, have each of the teams play each other once. If desired, a final can be played between the top two teams.

If 7 or 8 teams turn up, split them into a group of 3 and a group of 4, or 2 groups of 4. Have each team play each other once or twice in the group stage (depending on time and fitness levels). Then have either the top 2 from each group go into a semi-final; or have a final between the top team from each group to find out the winner.

If 9 teams turn up, split them into 3 groups of 3. Have each team play each other twice in the group stage and then use the rankings to make 3 new groups made up of either 1st place, 2nd place or 3rd place from each group. With the new groups, have each team play each other once. The winners of these new groups are the winners of the Cup (1st), Vase (2nd) & Bowl (3rd) respectively.

If 10 teams turn up, separate them into 2 groups of 5. When the group stage is over, run a knockout competition. Either the top 2 teams can go into semi-finals, or the top 4 teams can go into quarter finals.

If more than 10 teams turn up... split them into appropriate group sizes and use the schedules. Then you may either have a play off between the winners of each group or run a knockout competition!

### 3 TEAM SCHEDULE

[1 PITCH AVAILABLE – TEAMS PLAY EACH OTHER TWICE]

Game	Pitch	Rest Team
1	1v2	3
2	1v3	2
3	2v3	1
<i>Half Time [end here if teams only play each other once]</i>		
4	1v2	3
5	1v3	2
6	2v3	1

### 4 TEAM SCHEDULE [1 PITCH AVAILABLE – TEAMS PLAY EACH OTHER ONCE]

Game	Pitch 1	Rest Teams
1	1v2	3 4
2	3v4	1 2
3	1v3	2 4
<i>Half Time</i>		
4	2v4	1 3
5	1v4	2 3
6	2v3	1 4

### 4 TEAM SCHEDULE [2 PITCHES AVAILABLE – TEAMS PLAY EACH OTHER TWICE]

Game	Pitch 1	Pitch 2
1	1v2	3v4
2	1v3	2v4
3	1v4	2v3
<i>Half Time [end here if teams only play each other once]</i>		
4	3v4	1v2
5	2v4	1v3
6	2v3	1v4

### 5 TEAM SCHEDULE

Game	Pitch 1	Pitch 2	Rest Team
1	1v2	3v4	5
2	3v5	1v4	2
3	1v3	2v5	4
4	2v4	1v5	3
5	4v5	2v3	1

## 6 TEAM SCHEDULE [1 PITCH AVAILABLE]

Game	Pitch 1	Pitch 2	Pitch 3
1	1v2	3v4	5v6
2	3v5	2v6	1v4
3	1v3	2v5	4v6
4	2v4	1v5	3v6
5	1v6	2v3	4v5

## 6 TEAM SCHEDULE [2 PITCHES AVAILABLE]

Game	Pitch 1	Pitch 2	Rest Teams
1	1v2	3v4	5 6
2	3v5	2v6	1 4
3	1v3	4v6	2 5
4	2v4	1v5	3 6
5	1v6	2v3	4 5
6	5v6	1v4	2 3
7	2v5	3v6	1 4
8	4v5	-	1 2 3 6

## 6 TEAM SCHEDULE [3 PITCHES AVAILABLE]

Game	Pitch 1	Pitch 2	Pitch 3
1	1v2	3v4	5v6
2	3v5	2v6	1v4
3	1v3	2v5	4v6
4	2v4	1v5	3v6
5	1v6	2v3	4v5

## LEAGUE TABLE EXAMPLE

Team	Team Name	Wins	Losses	Tries Scored	Tries Conceded	Final Ranking
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

## SCORECARD EXAMPLE (FOR REFEREE TO FILL IN)

Game	Pitch	Team 'A' name	Tries scored by 'A'	Tries scored by 'B'	Team 'B' name