

Adult TAG Rugby Rules



Compiled by Nick Leonard
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This set of rules has been compiled by Nick Leonard. They are largely a combination of the two versions of TAG Rugby developed over the years in the northern and southern hemisphere.

Note: The standard set of rules for the adult form of recreational/social games of TAG Rugby are Rules 1-13 as described in Section D and E. Rules in Section F (Rules 14-17) are purely optional additional rules which are only recommended for more advanced and experienced players.

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Section A – Glossary of Terms

ADVANTAGE

If an infringement or offence has occurred, rather than blow the whistle and stop play immediately, the referee will allow play to proceed if it is to the territorial or tactical advantage of the team which has not committed an offence or infringement.

ATTACKING TEAM/ATTACKER

Is the team/player that has possession of the ball.

BALL AWAY

When a ball carrier is tagged simultaneously in the act of passing and the referee has ruled in favour of the attacking team and played on. In this situation the referee should call “ball away, play on”.

BALL CARRIER

Is a member of the attacking team who has possession of the ball.

CAPTAIN

The captain is a player nominated by the team. Only the captain is entitled to consult the referee during the match.

CHANGEOVER

Is the surrendering of the ball to the opposition; the game restarts with a *tap & go* to the team now in possession of the ball.

DEAD BALL LINE

A line parallel to and five metres (5m) behind the *try-line* defining the end of the *In-Goal Area*.

DEFENDING TEAM/DEFENDER

Is the team/player without possession of the ball.

DEFENSIVE LINE

This is an imaginary line across the ground from one *touch-line* to the other, parallel to the *try-line*. The position of this line is seven metres (7m) back

from a *roll-the-ball* or *tap & go*. All defenders, except for the *marker* at a *roll-the-ball*, should retire back behind this line to be on-side when play restarts.

DROP KICK

The ball is released from the hand and is kicked as it rises from its first bounce.

FORWARD PASS

Passing the ball forward towards an opponent's *try-line*.

Note: A pass directly sideways is allowed.

GROUNDING THE BALL

A player grounds the ball by holding the ball and touching the ground with it in the *in-goal area*. 'Holding' means holding in the hand or hands, or in the arm or arms.

GRUBBER KICK

A low kick along the ground which is permitted in games for more experienced players

IN-GOAL AREA

The area between the *try-line* and the *dead ball line* where the ball can be grounded to score a *try*. It includes the *try-line* but not the *touch-lines* or the *dead ball line*.

KICKING TEAM

Is the team kicking the ball.

KICK-OFF

The *Kick-Off* occurs at the start of the match and the restart of the match after half time and shall be by way of *Drop-Kick*.

KNOCK-ON

When a player attempting to catch the ball fumbles it with the hand or arm and knocks it forward to the ground in the direction of the opponents' *try-line*.

LATE TAG

When a defender removes a tag **after** the ball carrier has passed or kicked the ball.

MARK

The position on the pitch where a *tap & go* or *roll-the-ball* is awarded.

MARKER

Is the defending player who stands no more than one metre (1m) from and directly opposite the ball player during a *roll-the-ball*. It is optional for a defending team to have a *marker*.

OFF-SIDE

A defending player not back the required distance of seven metres (7m) at a *roll-the-ball* or *tap & go*.

OUT OF PLAY

This happens when the ball or the *ball carrier* has touched the *touch-line*, *touch-in-goal line*, or the *dead ball line* or anything or anyone on or beyond these lines.

PENALISE

Is to award a *tap & go* against an offending player or team.

PENALTY

This is awarded against a player or team that has committed an offence and there has been no advantage gained by the non-offending team. Play is restarted with a *tap & go* being awarded to the non-offending team at the place the offence was committed.

PENALTY TRY

If a player would have probably scored a *try* but for foul play by an opponent, a *Penalty Try* is awarded.

PHANTOM TAG

When a defender calls “tag” without physically removing a tag. This is penalised by awarding a *tap & go* to the non-offending team.

PRE TAG

When a defender removes a tag **before** an attacking player is in possession of the ball.

PUNT

The ball is released from the hand or hands and is kicked before it touches the ground.

RESTART-KICK

Restart-Kicks occur after a *try* is scored and shall be taken by way of *Drop-Kick* by the team who scored the *try*.

ROLL-THE-BALL

When the ball carrier rolls the ball straight back through his/her legs to the *scrum-half*. A *roll-the-ball* should be taken at the *mark* where the actual tag took place or anywhere behind it on a line through the *mark*. For safety, players must use the hand to roll the ball back. The ball must be rolled along the ground to the *scrum-half*; it cannot be passed or flicked up to them.

SCRUM-HALF

Is the attacking player who takes up a position immediately behind the ball player at a *roll-the-ball* situation.

SEVEN-METRE (7M) LINE

These lines run from one *touch-line* to the other and are seven metres (7m) from each side of the half-way line.

SPINNING

When the ball carrier deliberately rotates their body around in a pirouette type movement to avoid being tagged by a defender. This is an illegal

movement in TAG Rugby and is penalised by awarding a *tap & go* to the non-offending team.

'TACKLE' (TAG)

A 'tackle' (tag) is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two ribbons (tags) from the ball carrier.

TAG

Either refers to one of the two tags (ribbons) attached to a player's TAG belt or TAG shorts, or to a 'tackle' being made when a defender removes one of the tags (ribbons) from the ball carrier.

TAG COUNT

For every time a player is tagged whilst in possession of the ball the team's *Tag Count* increases i.e. from Tag 1, Tag 2, etc. The referee should normally call out the *Tag Count* after each tag e.g. "tag one", "tag two" etc.

TAP & GO

A *Tap & go* is used to start the game from the centre of the half-way or to restart play at the place where the ball went out of play or where an infringement or *changeover* took place.

To restart play at a *tap & go*, the player in possession of the ball must deliberately touch the ball with the foot whilst it is in the hands or on the ground. Bouncing the ball on the knee is not properly taking a *tap & go* and the referee should request for it to be retaken. No quick *tap & go* is allowed; the attacking team must wait for the referee to call "play" before restarting play.

TOUCH-LINE

The line that marks the lateral edge of the pitch.

TOUCH-IN-GOAL

The *touch-lines* in the *in-goal area*.

TRY

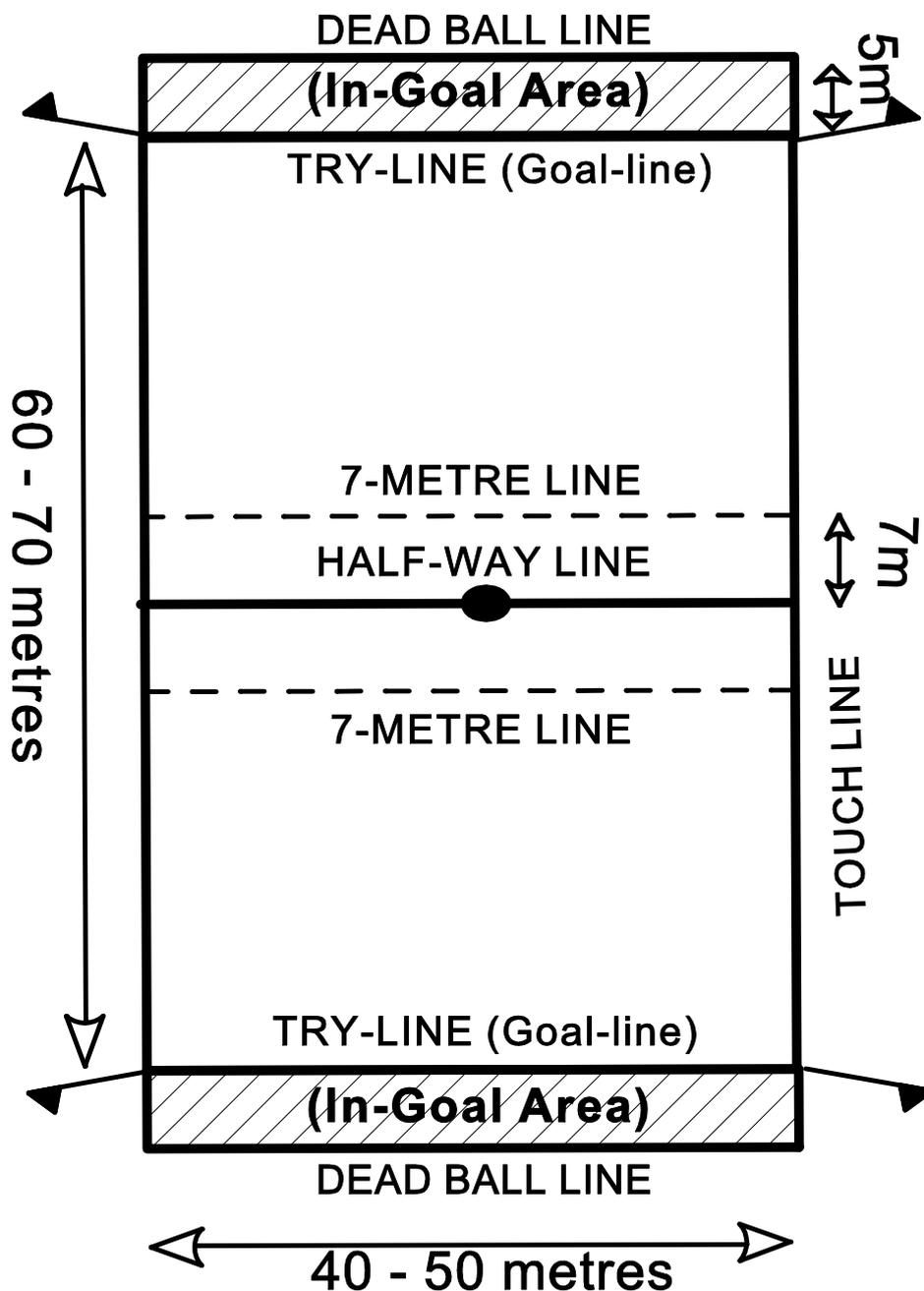
This is the only method of scoring in TAG Rugby; a *try* is scored when the ball is *grounded* by an attacker on or over the *try-line* but before the *dead ball line*. A *try* is worth one (1) point in TAG Rugby however, to encourage greater team work when playing in mixed games, a try is worth two (2) points if scored by a female.

TRY-LINE (GOAL-LINE)

The horizontal line at either end of the pitch, over or on which a *try* is scored.

Section B - The Playing Area for Adult TAG Rugby

For recreational and social games of TAG Rugby it is by no means essential to have available a fully marked pitch, as shown below, to play on. Such games can easily be played on a pitch marked out as a simple rectangle showing only the location of the two touchlines and try lines.



Note: One large adult step is roughly equal to one metre. A TAG Rugby pitch is more or less half the size of a normal rugby pitch. By playing across half of the pitch the touch lines of the normal pitch can be used as the try lines for the TAG Rugby pitch.

Section C - The Object of the Game

The object of the game is to score tries. This is achieved by holding the ball and touching it down on the ground on, or over, the opponents' *try-line*. The player in possession of the ball (*attacker*) may run or pass the ball to achieve this but is not allowed to kick it (a *Grubber kick* is allowed in the rules for more advanced players). The ball may only be passed either sideways or backwards and not forwards to the opponents' *try-line*. It is the object of the team without the ball (*defensive team*) to prevent progress of the attacking team by removing a tag (ribbon) from the ball carrier. The attacking team have four (4) "tags" or "plays" to score. If a fifth (5th) tag is made a *changeover* occurs and the defending team is given possession of the ball and then becomes the attacking team.

Section D - A Quick 20 Step Guide to the Rules

1. **How many players in a team?** - There is a maximum of seven (7) players per team on the field at any one time from a squad of twelve (12). In mixed or social games there must be a minimum of three (3) players of the opposite sex (subject to local rules) on the pitch at all times. Rolling subs are allowed at any time during the game but in mixed/social games the appropriate number of each sex must be maintained.
2. **How long are matches?** - This is subject to local rules but the normal duration of a match is two halves of twenty (20) minutes each, with a five (5) minute interval for half time. For festival type events, matches normally consist of two seven (7) minute halves with one (1) minute for half time.
3. **Players clothing** - All players wear either the official TAG Rugby match shorts or, a TAG Rugby belt. **Shirts should be tucked in at all times.** The tags (ribbons) must be properly positioned on either side of the hips. No player can participate in the game without both tags being properly in place. Players are not allowed to wear anything that might prove dangerous to other players, e.g. any jewellery & watches.
4. **How do players score in TAG Rugby?** - There is only one way of scoring in TAG Rugby and that is by scoring tries. A *try* is awarded to the attacking team when they touch the ball down on the ground on, or over, the *try-line*.

A *try* is worth one (1) point but to encourage more team play in mixed games, a *try* is worth two (2) points if scored by a female.

5. **Are there any scrums or line-outs?** - There are no scrums or line-outs in TAG Rugby.
6. **Is there any kicking allowed?** Kicking is not normally allowed in games for beginners, except for the Kick-Off and Restart Kicks (see below for further details). However, in games for more experienced players, players are allowed to *Grubber Kick* after the 4th tag. (Visit www.tagrugby.org for a more detailed explanation of the rules regarding a *Grubber kick*).
7. **Can you bash into other players?** - There is strictly **NO CONTACT** allowed between players; both attackers and defenders have a responsibility to avoid each other at **ALL TIMES**. The ball carrier is not allowed to run directly into defenders and defenders are not allowed to block the progress of the ball carrier. No hand-offs, or using your hand, elbow or ball to block or shield your tags (ribbons) in any way is allowed. No pulling of clothing or pulling/knocking the ball out of the ball carrier's hand is permitted. Any player that initiates contact should be penalised.

“Run at spaces not faces”

8. **How do you ‘tackle’ (tag) in TAG Rugby?** - Only the ball carrier can be tagged and a ‘tackle’ (‘tag’) is simply the removal by a defender of one of the two tags (ribbons) from the ball carrier. The defender then holds the tag above his/her head and shouts “tag” for all to hear. An attacking team has 4 “tags” or “plays” to score. If a 5th tag is made a *changeover* occurs and the defending team is given possession of the ball and restarts play with a *tap & go*.
9. **What happens after a ‘tackle’ (tag)?** – After a tag has been made the game then comes to a temporary halt; the defender drops the tag on the ground, marking the position where the actual tag took place, and the game restarts with the attacker who was tagged taking a *roll-the-ball* from this *mark*.

10. **What is a *roll-the-ball*?** – A *roll-the-ball* takes place after a *tag* has been made. At a *roll-the-ball* the player tagged must return to the location where the actual tag took place. Play restarts when this player rolls the ball straight back between his/her legs, using his/her hand, to a team-mate standing directly behind him/her, the *scrum-half*. Only **after** rolling the ball back, should the attacker pick up and re-attach his/her tag and he/she is then able to rejoin the game.

A *roll-the-ball* is also used to restart play after a *Knock-on* or *Forward Pass* has occurred and cannot be taken any closer than five metres (5m) from the *try-line*.

11. **What must the defensive team do at a *roll-the-ball*?** - At a *roll-the-ball* the defensive team must retire back a minimum of seven metres (7m), or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is nearer. One defender may choose to act as a '*marker*'. The '*marker*' must stand directly in front of a *roll-the-ball* and cannot move or interfere with play until the ball is back in play. '*Markers*' are optional.

12. **What is the rule about carrying the ball in two hands?** - To encourage more passing and to avoid the ball carrier deliberately, or instinctively, trying to protect his/her tags, the ball carrier **MUST**, when they are within three metres (3m) of defenders, **HOLD THE BALL IN TWO HANDS.**

13. **What is a *tap & go*?** - A *tap & go* is used to start the game at the place the ball went out of play or an infringement or *changeover* took place. The ball may be placed on the ground or held in the hand and on the instruction "play" by the referee, **and not before**, the attacker must tap the ball with the foot, or lower leg, to restart play. At a *tap & go* the opposition players must retire back seven metres (7m) towards their own *try-line*, or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is nearer.

A *tap & go* cannot be taken any closer than five metres (5m) from the *try-line*.

14. **What happens to the *tag count* at a *tap & go*?** - When a *tap & go* is awarded the number of tags (*Tag Count*) starts back to zero. This is a good incentive for the defensive team not to deliberately infringe.

15. **What is *off-side*?** – Defending players are only ever *off-side* if they have not moved back the required seven metres (7m) to the *defensive line*, or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is nearer, at a *roll-the-ball* or *tap & go* situation.
Attacking players are only *off-side* if they are in front of the ball at a *tap & go* or *roll-the-ball* situation. There is no *off-side* in open play.
16. **When should players be penalised for being *off-side*?** - Players should only ever be penalised for *off-side* if they are ***Off-SIDE AND INTERFERING WITH PLAY***. If players find themselves accidentally *off-side* they must make every effort to get back on side; but if they are in no way interfering with play, then they should **not** be penalised and play should be allowed to continue. Players who are *off-side* are temporarily out of the game.
17. **How quickly can a *tap & go* and *roll-the-ball* be taken?** - A *tap & go* **cannot** be taken quickly but only after the referee has given the defensive team time (about five seconds) to retire the required seven metres (7m) and given the instruction 'play'. However, a *roll-the-ball* **can** be taken quickly and as soon as the ball carrier is on the *mark* of the tag and ready to do so.
18. **Can players dive to score?** – No player can **deliberately** dive to score a *try* or to secure a loose ball on the floor; instead, players must remain on their feet to play the ball.
Note: Providing it is safe to do so, defenders are permitted to dive to execute a tag but at no stage are they allowed to make contact with the opposition.
19. **How do you Kick-Off?** - This kick is by way of an **uncontested Drop-Kick** and is used to start each half and restart play after a *try* is scored. In mixed games female players have the option to *Kick-Off* by means of a simple *Punt Kick*. The team that score Kick-Off.
20. **What happens when somebody does something wrong?** – Whenever the TAG Rugby rules are broken, a *tap & go* is awarded to the non-offending team at the place the infringement took place and the number of tags (*Tag Count*) starts back to zero. If the infringement took place over the *try-line*, or

within five metres (5m) of it, the *tap & go* is awarded five metres (5m) out from the *try-line* to create some space.

Note: If an infringement took place by the attacking team at a Kick Off then the defending team are awarded a tap & go at the centre of the half-way line.

Code of conduct

All players and coaches will be expected to abide by the rules of the tournament and decisions made by the officials and referees. They will be expected to play fairly and demonstrate good sportsmanship both on and off the pitch. In the event of misconduct and/or repeated and deliberate breaking of the rules or dangerous play, then the referee/tournament officials shall, at their discretion issue players with a red or yellow card.

Section E – The Rules in More Detail

RULE 1 - Teams/Clothing

There are seven (7) players per team on the field at any one time from a squad of twelve (12). In mixed or social games there must be a minimum of three (3) players of the opposite sex on the pitch at all times (subject to local rules).

All players must normally wear the official TAG Rugby approved match shorts (subject to local rules). If playing with TAG belts, the belts must be worn around the waist and on the outside of the clothing. **Shirts should be tucked in at all times.** The tags must be properly positioned on either side of the hips and teams are distinguished by the colour of tags they wear.

Penalty: *Tap & go*

The referee will normally issue each team with seven (7) sets of tags prior to the commencement of the match. If a player is replaced during the game he/she gives his/her tags to the new player coming on. If using TAG belts rather than TAG shorts, a replacement is allowed to wear the velcro belt itself but must not have any tags attached to it until he/she is given them by the player he/she is replacing. A team may not use any other tags during the game.

Note: Playing to this rule means a team can never have more than seven players involved in the game at any one time.

All tags must be returned to the referee at the end of the game.

Rolling substitutions/replacements are allowed at any time during the game but in mixed/social games, the appropriate number of each sex must be maintained. The replaced player should leave the field of play before the replacement can participate in the game. All replacements during the game should be from the same side of the field.

Players are not allowed to wear anything that might prove dangerous to other players, e.g. any jewellery & watches. If jewellery cannot be

removed, e.g. wedding rings, then they must be completely covered by tape with no sharp or raised edges exposed.

Footwear should be suitable for the weather and surface. The preferred and recommended footwear for grass is boots with moulded studs or blades, or trainers if ground conditions are dry and firm.

Headgear, headscarfs, baseball caps, etc. are permitted as long as they do not present a threat to the safety of either the player wearing the head gear or any other player on the pitch.

Players may not wear spectacles or sunglasses. Contact lenses or sports goggles are permitted.

RULE 2 - Duration of Play/Start of the Game

2.1 Games consist of two (2) halves of twenty (20) minutes each with a five (5) minute interval for half time, at half time teams change ends.

The duration of games at festival type events will vary depending on the size and nature of the event and time available. As a guideline games normally consist of two (2) halves of seven (7) minutes duration with an interval of one (1) for half time. If time available is an issue, then games can be ten (10) minutes one way with no half time.

2.2 The captain who wins the toss can choose either, which direction his/her team will play or, possession at the start of the game. The captain who lost the toss can then choose the remaining option.

2.3 The game starts with an adapted kick-off (*see Rule 4*) at the centre of the half-way line.

RULE 3 - Scoring

3.1 There is only one way of scoring in TAG Rugby and that is by scoring tries. A *try* is awarded to the attacking team when they *ground the ball* on or over the *try-line* in the *in goal area*. If the ball is grounded on the *touch-in-goal line* or the *dead ball line*, then a *try* should **NOT** be

awarded and the game will restart with a *tap & go* to the defensive team, five metres (5m) out from the *try-line*.

- 3.2 One point is awarded for a *try*. In mixed games, if a female scores a *try* then it is worth two (2) points. However, it **must** be a female who actually carries the ball over the *try-line* for the two points to be awarded. A male player cannot pass to a female player **after** crossing the *try-line*, nor can he run back into the field of play to pass to a female player. If this does occur and a *try* is scored, only one (1) point will be awarded for the *try*.
- 3.3 For safety, no player can **deliberately** dive to score a *try*. However, if in the view of the referee, a player has accidentally lost their balance or, has only placed a knee(s) down on the floor, in the act of scoring, then the *try* should be awarded.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 3.4 After a *try* has been scored, the team that scored restarts play with an uncontested *Drop-Kick* (see Rule 4) which must be taken at the centre of the *half-way line*. The referee should allow sufficient time for the defending team to get in position to receive the kick before restarting play.

RULE 4 - Kick-Off & Restart Kick

This kick is by way of an uncontested *Drop-Kick* and is used to start each half and restart play after a *try has been* scored.

Note: To encourage maximum inclusion, in mixed games female players have the option to Kick-Off by means of a simple Punt Kick.

- 4.1 The Kick Off is taken on or behind the centre of the *half-way line*. The ball can be kicked to any height but must travel seven metres (7m) forward towards the opposing team's *try-line* before any player from the kicker's team may attempt to play the ball.

Sanction: *Tap & go (to be taken at the centre of the half-way line)*

- 4.2 **Who takes the Kick-Off?** – After a *try*, the team that has scored kicks off.

4.3 **Kick-Offs are uncontested** - The *Kicking Team* players must stay at least two metres (2m) from the receiver whilst the ball is in the air. The *Kicking Team* may **NOT** take possession of the ball or make any contact, obstruct, or deliberately distract the receiving team in any manner until the ball has been played /touched by the receiving team, or until it has bounced in the field of play after having travelled forward at least seven metres (7m) .

Sanction: *Tap & go*

4.4 **Position of the *Kicking Team* at the *Kick-Off*** – All of the *Kicking Team* must be behind the ball when it is kicked. If they are not, they are Off-side and if they interfere with play then a *tap & go* is awarded to the non-offending team at the centre of the *half-way line*.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

4.5 The *Kicking Team* may not play the ball if it has not travelled at least seven metres (7m) forward towards the opposing team's *try-line* however the receiving team may opt to play the ball if it has gone less than seven metres (7m) and in this case play shall continue.

4.6 **Ball goes directly into touch** – The ball must land in the field of play. If it is kicked directly into touch, a *tap & go* is awarded to the non-offending team at the centre of the *half-way line*.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

4.7 If the ball is kicked so that it bounces first before touching or crossing the *touch-line* then it is deemed that the ball has gone out of play and a *tap & go* is awarded five metres (5m) in from the *touch-line* to the team who was not in last possession of the ball, or last touched the ball, before it went into touch.

4.8 If the ball is kicked over the opposing team's *try-line*, without being touched by a player, the opposing team have three options:

a) To *ground the ball* (touch the ball down over their own *try-line* as if scoring an 'own try')

- b) To make the ball dead (by carrying it on or over the *dead ball line* or on or over the *touch-in-goal lines*)
- c) To play on.

If the opposing team *ground the ball*, or if they make it go dead, or, if the ball becomes dead by going on or over the *touch-in-goal lines* or on or over the *dead ball line*, a *tap & go* is awarded to the non-offending team at the centre of the half-way line.

If the defending team opt to *ground the ball* or make it dead, they must do so without delay. Any other action with the ball by a defending player means that the player has elected to play on.

Note: If playing beach rugby on soft sand where a Drop-kick would be difficult to execute, or when playing with beginners, then at the referees discretion Kick-Offs and Restart Kicks can be replaced with a simple Punt kick.

RULE 5 - Playing the Game

- 5.1 **No Contact Rule-** There is strictly no contact allowed between players. Both attackers and defenders MUST avoid contact with each other at all times. The ball carrier must not deliberately charge into defenders and defenders must not deliberately block the progress of the ball carrier or any other attacking player in any way whatsoever. Defenders should tag from the side and not reach across the attacker's body to remove a tag. A defender must, in the referee's opinion, be attempting to remove a tag and not be deliberately impeding the progress of the ball carrier, or any other attacking player, with any part of his/her body or he/she risks being penalised. Any player that initiates contact should be penalised.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

“Run at spaces not faces”

- 5.2 **Ball in Two Hands Rule-** If the ball carrier holds the ball in just one hand or under one arm when close to defenders, there is every likelihood that his/her 'free hand' will in some way, either deliberately, or instinctively,

interfere, block or fend off a defender attempting to effect a tag. This often leads to frustration on behalf of defenders and ultimately to unnecessary contact between players. To avoid this occurring, and at the same time encourage more passing, in TAG Rugby **THE BALL CARRIER MUST HOLD THE BALL IN TWO HANDS WHEN THEY ARE WITHIN THREE METRES (3m) OF DEFENDERS.** Where possible, referees are encouraged to reinforce this rule by shouting out “two hands” when necessary, but should penalise the ball carrier if he/she ignores this warning, or has used their free hand to interfere, block or fend off a defender in anyway.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

Note: Although carrying the ball in two hands may feel quite alien at first to some players, experience has shown that once they get use to this rule it soon becomes second nature to them when playing TAG Rugby and they seldom get penalised for breaking it.

Passing the ball with one hand is permitted as long as the other hand is in no way protecting the player from being tagged.

5.3 No *forward passes* or *knock-ons* are allowed.

Sanction: *Roll-the-Ball.*

RULE 6 - The ‘Tackle’ (Tag) and Tag Count

6.1 Only the player with the ball can be tagged and a ‘tackle’ (tag) is simply the removal of one of the two tags (ribbons) from the ball carrier. Ball carriers can run or dodge defenders attempting to make a tag, but cannot fend them off or guard or shield their tags in any way. This includes using the ball or their elbows.

6.2 Once a defender has removed a tag he/she holds the tag above his/her head and shouts “tag” for all to hear. The referee will then confirm a legitimate tag has taken place by also shouting “tag”, followed by the number of tags that team have used up at that stage, the *tag count*, e.g. “tag one”, “tag two” etc. The game then comes to a temporary halt; the defender drops the tag on the ground marking the position where the actual tag took place and the game restarts with the attacker who was tagged taking a *roll-the-ball* from this *mark*.

If necessary, the referee will blow his/her whistle first to temporarily stop the game before calling out *the tag count*.

6.3 If the ball carrier is tagged simultaneously in the act of passing, i.e. the ball is simultaneously leaving the ball carrier's hands the moment he/she is tagged, the referee will always rule in favour of the attacking team and play on. The referee should communicate this decision to players by calling "ball away, play on".

6.4 The attacking team have four (4) consecutive 'tags' or 'plays' to score a *try*. If a fifth (5th) tag is made, a *changeover* occurs and the opposition are awarded a *tap & go* at the place the fifth (5th) tag took place.

Note: The total number of tags in a Tag Count before there is a changeover of possession may be subject to local rules depending on the age and ability of the players and the size of the pitch being played on.

6.5 After making a tag, the defender must not throw the tag away. If it is thrown or dropped more than one metre (1m) away from the place where it was removed a *tap & go* may be awarded to the non-offending team.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

6.6 When the ball carrier has been tagged he/she must return to within one step (1m) of the *mark* (the position on the pitch where the actual tag took place) and *roll-the ball* from this position.

6.7 Whenever a *tap & go* is awarded the *tag count* starts back to zero. This is a good incentive for the team not in possession of the ball not to deliberately infringe.

6.8 If the ball carrier is tagged over the *try-line*, prior to placing the ball down for a *try*, this counts as a tag. The **try is not awarded** and the attacking team shall have a *roll-the-ball* five metres (5m) out from the *try-line*. If it was the fifth (5th) tag then a *changeover* will be awarded to the defending team five metres (5m) out from the *try-line*.

- 6.9 For a tag to count, the ball must still be in the hands of the ball carrier at the moment the tag is made. If a defender **deliberately** removes a tag from the ball carrier after he/she has passed the ball, or before the player has received the ball, the defender will be deemed to have made an illegal tag. In both instances the referee should, if the non-offending team gain no advantage, award a *tap & go* to the non-offending team at the place the offence occurred. (See also *Advantage Rule 10.3*).

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 6.10 If a defender calls “tag” without physically removing a tag (a *phantom tag*) then the attacking team shall be awarded a *tap & go* if the attacking team have gained no advantage.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 6.11 If the ball carrier accidentally falls or slips to the ground while in possession of the ball (this includes if the knee or elbow touches the ground) and a defender is within tagging distance, a tag will be deemed to have been made.

- 6.12 No player can participate in the game without both tags being correctly in place, except in the situation where the referee is playing *Advantage* (See *Advantage Rule 10.3*).

Sanction: *Tap & go*

However, in the spirit of the game, if the referee believes the tag has only dropped off a player’s shorts/belt by accident and that player is in possession of the ball, the referee can stop the game and award a roll-the-ball to the ball carriers team, counting this as one of the tag counts. The place where this roll-the-ball is taken is at the discretion of the referee, but is normally either, where the tag originally dropped off, or where, in the view of the referee, the ball carrier would probably have been tagged by a defender if the tag was properly in place. If this is the 5th tag in the tag count it is a changeover of possession.

RULE 7 - Roll-the-Ball

A *roll-the-ball* takes place when a *tag*, *Knock-On* or *Forward Pass* has occurred.

7.1 Once the referee has confirmed a *Knock-on*, *Forward Pass* or legitimate tag has occurred, then there is a temporary stoppage in play and the game is restarted with a *roll-the-ball*. If awarded because a *tag* has taken place then the tagged ball carrier must return to the location where the actual tag took place. If awarded for a *Knock-on* or *Forward Pass* then it is taken from where the ball left the players hands. Play then restarts when this player rolls the ball straight back between his/her legs, using his/her hand, to a team-mate standing directly behind him/her, the *scrum-half*. The attacking player can restart play as soon as he/she is on the *mark* of the tag and ready to do so; he/she **does not** have to wait for any instruction from the referee to restart play as they do for a *tap & go*.

7.2 At a *roll-the-ball*, one (1) player from the defending team can choose to stand no more than one metre (1m) from and directly opposite the attacking player performing the *roll-the-ball*. This player is called the '*marker*'. It is optional for a defending team to have a *marker*. The remaining players of the defending team must retire back at least seven metres (7m) towards their own *try-line* or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is nearer to the *mark* of the *roll-the-ball*. Defensive players, including the *marker*, can only move forward once the attacking player has rolled the ball back.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

7.3 The *marker* must stand directly in front of a *roll-the-ball*, but no closer than one metre (1m) from the *mark*, and cannot move or interfere with play until the attacking player has rolled the ball back.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

7.4 For safety, the attacking player must roll the ball back using his/her hand only, not his/her foot. The ball must be rolled back along the ground; it cannot be flicked or passed directly up to the *scrum-half*.

If a *roll-the-ball* is taken incorrectly the referee should insist it is retaken properly.

- 7.5 The *scrum-half* takes up a position immediately behind the ball player during a *roll-the-ball* and once the ball has been rolled back to them they can choose to either run with it, or pass it, from this position.
- 7.6 Any member of the attacking team can act as the *scrum-half* and this player can be changed at each new *roll-the-ball* situation.
- 7.7 If a member of the defensive team, besides the *marker*, has not retired back the required seven metres (7m) at a *roll-the-ball*, and play has restarted, then the defender is deemed *off-side* and must not take any further part in the game until he/she has done so. If an *off-side* player does indeed interfere with play, and no advantage is gained by the attacking team, he/she should be penalised with a *tap & go* being awarded at the *defensive line* to the non-offending team.
- Sanction:** *Tap & go* (but only if defending players are *off-side* **AND** interfering with play, otherwise play should continue)
- 7.8 The ball carrier, whose progress was halted, can restart play with a *roll-the-ball* as soon as he/she is on the *mark* and ready to do so. He/she **does not** have to wait for any signal from the referee.
- 7.9 Only **after** rolling back the ball should the attacking player pick up his/her tag and replace it.
- Note: If the roll-the-ball has been awarded for a Knock-on or Forward Pass then the attacking player does not need to place his/her tag on the floor and can execute a roll-the-ball with both tags in place.*
- 7.10 At no stage during or after a *roll-the-ball* is the attacking player allowed to block or interfere with the *marker*.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

7.11 The attacking player executing a *roll-the-ball* must stand square on and must not intentionally dummy or deliberately delay the playing of a *roll-the-ball*.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

7.12 If a player is tagged within five metres (5m) of the *try-line* or over his/her own *try-line*, then the ensuing *roll-the-ball*, or *changeover* if it is the fifth (5th) tag, is awarded five metres (5m) out from the *try-line* to create some space.

7.13 The attacking player has the option of taking the *roll-the-ball* at the *mark* itself or, if they wish to create some more time and space, anywhere behind it on a line through the *mark*. The *marker* however must always remain one metre (1m) back from the *mark*.

RULE 8 - Tap & go

8.1 A *tap & go* is used to restart the game after an infringement or *changeover* takes place or the ball or ball carrier goes out of play. The place at which the *tap & go* is awarded is called the *mark*. Any player may take a *tap & go* awarded to their team.

At a *tap & go* the attacker stands at the *mark*; the ball may be placed on the ground or held in the hand and on the instruction “play” by the referee, **and not before**, the attacker must tap the ball with the foot, or lower leg, to restart play. After tapping the ball, the attacker can either choose to run or pass the ball.

Tapping the ball with the knee is not allowed and the referee should stop play and request the *tap & go* be retaken in the proper manner.

8.2 At a *tap & go*, the defending team must retire back seven metres (7m) towards their own *try-line* to an imaginary line called the *defensive line*, or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is nearer. Defending players are not allowed to move forward from this *defensive line* until an attacking player has restarted play by tapping the ball with his/her foot or lower leg.

Sanction: *Tap & go (to be taken at the defensive line)*

- 8.3 The referee will usually indicate to defensive players precisely how far back they should retire at a *tap & go* by standing on the *defensive line* and calling “on me” to the players. All defensive players should take up a position in line with the referee or further back from the referee towards their own *try-line*, or they risk being penalised for *off-side*.
- 8.4 At a *tap & go* it is **always** the referee, (or opposition captain if there is no referee) who restarts the game by calling out “play”. **No quick tap penalties are allowed.** Referees should only allow just enough time (about five (5) seconds) for the defensive team to quickly get back to the *defensive line* and should not delay restarting play for too long. If, defensive players are slow to get back, the referee can, at his/her discretion, still choose to restart play. Any defensive player who has still yet to get back the required seven metres (7m) will be deemed *off-side* and must not take any further part in the game until he/she has done so.
Sanction: Tap & go (to be taken at the defensive line)
- 8.5 If a defending player is *off-side* and interferes with play, the referee can award a *tap & go* if the attacking team gain no advantage. This *tap & go* is awarded at the *defensive line* the defending players should have retired to, not where the offending player was actually standing *off-side*.
Sanction: Tap & go (to be taken at the defensive line)
- 8.6 If an infringement takes place over the *try-line*, or within five metres (5m) of it, a *tap & go* is awarded five metres (5m) out from the *try-line* to create some space.
- 8.7 If a *tap & go* is awarded but the offending team is guilty of further misconduct before the *tap & go* is taken e.g. disputing the referees decision, the referee cautions or orders off the guilty player and advances the mark of the *tap & go* seven metres (7m) forward. Further misconduct can result in the referee advancing the mark a further seven metres (7m).

RULE 9 – Off-side

- 9.1 **When can players be penalised for being *off-side*** - Players can only ever be penalised for *off-side* at a *tap & go* or *roll-the-ball* situation, **there is no *off-side* in open play.** Referees should only penalise players for being *off-side* if they are *off-side* **AND** interfering with play. If players find themselves accidentally *off-side* they must make every effort to get back on side; but if they are in no way interfering with play, then they should **not** be penalised and play should be allowed to continue. Players who are *off-side* are temporarily out of the game.
- 9.2 **What defending players need to do to avoid being penalised for *off-side*** - At a *tap & go* or *roll-the ball* the defending team, except for the *marker* at a *roll-the-ball*, must retire back at least seven metres (7m) towards their own *try-line* to an imaginary line called the *defensive line*, or until they have reached their own *try-line* if this is nearer. Players must not take any further part in the game until they have done this otherwise they risk being penalised for *off-side*. Defensive players, including the *marker*, can only move forward once play has restarted.
- 9.3 **What attacking players need to do to avoid being penalised for *off-side*** - At a *tap & go*, *roll-the ball*, *kick-off* or restart kick after a *try*, the attacking team must be behind the ball until it is played.
- 9.4 If a defending player is penalised for *off-side*, a *tap & go* is awarded to the non-offending team on the *defensive line* where the defending player should have moved back to.
Sanction: *Tap & go (to be taken on the defensive line)*
- 9.5 To assist referees, players who find themselves accidentally *off-side* should raise both hands above their head to indicate to the referee that they are aware they are *off-side* and they have no intention of trying to interfere with play.

RULE 10 - Advantage

- 10.1 Except where safety is an issue, advantage will be played wherever possible to allow the game to flow.

10.2 The advantage rule states that if an infringement has occurred, rather than blow the whistle and stop play immediately, the referee will allow play to proceed if it is to the territorial or tactical advantage of the team which has not committed an offence or infringement. The referee should communicate this to the players verbally by calling out “play advantage” and physically, by giving the correct referee’s hand signal for advantage (an arm outstretched, waist high, towards non-offending team). However, if the non-offending team does not in fact gain an advantage, the referee shall whistle and bring play back to the place of the original infringement and award a *tap & go* to the non-offending team.

10.3 **Late (& Pre) Tags**

If an attacking player is tagged by a defender(s) **after** passing or kicking the ball (*Late Tag*), or before receiving the ball (*Pre Tag*), then the referee should play advantage and allow that attacking player to continue to play on. This may result in this player scoring with one or no tags on. This attacking player can be stopped if a defender removes the remaining tag, if approaching from the side of the remaining tag, or comes within one metre (1m) of the side of the missing tag.

At the next stoppage of play this attacking player **must** then replace both tags before rejoining play. Failure to do so should result in that player being penalised if they interfere with play.

Where possible the referee should indicate to players a *Late Tag*, or *Pre Tag*, has occurred by calling out “*Late Tag*” (or “*Pre Tag*”).

If no advantage is gained after a *Late* or *Pre Tag* the referee should stop the game and penalise this by awarding a *Tap & go* to the non-offending team.

Defenders consistently late tagging players should be penalised with a sin bin.

Note: *If an attacking player has their tag(s) removed during the actual act of passing the ball the referee should call “Ball Away” and play should be allowed to continue. In this situation the attacking player **must** replace both tags before they can rejoin play.*

RULE 11 – Ball out of Play

- 11.1 If the ball or the ball carrier touches the *touch-line* or anything or anyone on or beyond the *touch-line*, the ball is out of play and a *tap & go* is awarded to the team who was not in last possession of the ball or last touched the ball before it went into touch. This *tap & go* should be taken five metres (5m) in from the *touch-line* to create some space.
- 11.2 If the ball or the ball carrier touches the corner post, the *touch-in-goal line*, or the *dead ball line* or the ground beyond these lines, the ball becomes dead. If the ball was carried into the *in-goal area* by the attacking team, a *tap & go* is awarded to the defending team. If the ball was carried into the *in-goal-area* by a defender, the attacking team are awarded a *tap & go*. In both cases, the *tap & go* should be taken in the centre of the pitch, five metres (5m) out from the *try-line*.

RULE 12 - Things to Avoid

- 12.1 **No Contact** – strictly no contact or grabbing a player's clothing. Both attackers and defenders have a responsibility to avoid each other at all times.
Sanction: *Tap & go*
- 12.2 **No Kicking** – no kicking is normally allowed with beginners, except for the *Kick-Off* and *Restart Kick* after a *try* has been scored.
Note: See Rule 15 regarding the Grubber kick for more experienced players.
Sanction: *Tap & go*
- 12.3 **No Hand-offs** - no hand-offs on the body or face or to swipe a defender's hand away to stop him/her taking your tags. This includes using the ball or elbows to fend off or block defenders.
Sanction: *Tap & go*
- 12.4 **No Diving on the Ball** - for safety, players are not allowed to deliberately dive on a loose ball but, instead, must remain on their feet to play it.
Sanction: *Tap & go*

Note: Providing it is safe to do so, defenders are permitted to dive to execute a tag but at no stage are they allowed to make contact with the opposition.

- 12.5 **No Spinning/Jumping** - ball carriers are not allowed to deliberately rotate their body around in a pirouette type movement or jump up to avoid being tagged by a defender.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 12.6 **No Deliberate Barging into Defenders** - for safety, attackers and defenders should attempt to avoid contact with each other at all times.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 12.7 **No Diving to Score a Try** - TAG Rugby is often played during the summer months on hard grounds. For safety and to minimise contact, players are not allowed to **deliberately** dive to score.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 12.8 **No Pulling or Knocking the Ball out of the Ball Carrier's Hands** - at any time.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 12.9 **No Player** can participate in the game without both tags being correctly in place except when the refereeing is playing the Advantage Rule 10.3.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 12.10 **No Carrying the Ball Under One Arm** – The ball carrier must hold the ball in two hands when within three metres (3m) of a defender(s).

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 12.11 **No Obstruction** - Attackers cannot deliberately get in the way of a defender attempting to make a tag, and defenders cannot deliberately impede the progress of the ball carrier or any other attacker.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

Whenever the TAG Rugby rules are broken, a *tap & go* is awarded to the non-offending team at the place the infringement took place and the number of tags (*Tag Count*) starts back to zero. If the infringement took place over the *try-line*, or within five metres (5m) of it, the *tap & go* is awarded five metres (5m) out from the *try-line* to create some space.

RULE 13 - Discipline

- 13.1 All players and coaches will be expected to abide by the rules of the tournament/festival and decisions made by the officials and referees. They will be expected to play fairly and in the correct spirit of the game. However, in the event of misconduct and/or repeated and deliberate breaking of the rules or dangerous play, then the referee/tournament officials shall, at their discretion, caution, sin bin (five (5) minutes) yellow card, dismiss (send off) red card the player or request he/she leaves the tournament area altogether. Any player sent off or sin binned cannot be replaced. A player sin binned must give his/her tags to the referee and take up a position behind the opposition's *dead ball line* for the duration of the five (5) minutes. If a player is sin binned just before the half time break, the duration of half time does not constitute as any part of the five (5) minutes suspension period. If a player is sent off (red carded) in a match during a festival/tournament, then that player is excluded from taking part in any other match in that festival/tournament.
- 13.2 Coaches, team managers and captains are expected to lead by example and encourage their players to play by the rules, accept the referee's decision and display good sportsmanship at all times.

Section F –

Further Rules for More Experienced Players (Optional)

Note: Rules in this Section (Rules 14 - 17) are purely optional additional rules which are only recommended to be introduced to more advanced and experienced players.

Adult TAG Rugby can be developed with more experienced players to include some, or all, of the following rules.

RULE 14 - Quick Tap & go

14.1 When a team is awarded a *tap & go* they no longer have to wait for the instruction “play” from the referee to take it. Instead they can choose to take it as soon as they are on the position of the mark and ready to do so.

Note: Besides the modified Kick-Off (see Rule 4) only the following type of kick is allowed in TAG Rugby

RULE 15 - Grubber Kick

This is a low kick along the ground that can be made in general play. Local rules usually restrict the *Grubber kick* to a kick that can only be made on the 4th and final tag in the *Tag Count*.

Note: Particular consideration should be made before introducing Rule 15, The Grubber Kick, as this kick can sometimes be overused by less able or inexperienced players, which results in too much kicking taking place in the game. One method of avoiding this is to restrict the use of the grubber kick to something a player can only carry out on the 4th and final tag of the Tag Count. By restricting kicking in this way it will help to maintain the running, passing and evasion skills that TAG Rugby aims to promote as the main focus of the game.

15.1 The ball carrier must have the ball under his/her control before it is kicked. There is no fly hacking allowed i.e. no kicking at a ball that is loose or bobbing around on the ground.

Sanction: *Tap & go (to be taken at the origin of the kick)*

- 15.2 The ball must not travel above the height of the referee's waist before it makes contact with the ground, or directly after the first bounce. However, if the ball does bounce higher than the referee's waist height on the second or subsequent bounces, play should continue.

Sanction: *Tap & go (to be taken at the origin of the kick)*

- 15.4 Only the attacking players, who are behind the kicker when the ball is kicked, are on-side. If an attacking player is on-side he/she may chase the ball down field to retrieve the kick or to make a tag.

15.5 **Being put on-side**

If an attacking player is in front of the kicker when the ball is kicked, this player is *off-side* and cannot move forward or attempt a tag until he/she has been put on-side. There are the four following ways by which an *off-side* player can be put on-side by either the actions of that player or by his/her team-mates, or by the actions of the opposing team players:

- (a) When the kicker, or any other team-mate who is on-side, runs in front of the *off-side* player, that player is put on-side.
- (b) When an opponent, who gathers the ball, runs five metres (5m) with the ball, the *off-side* player is put on-side.
- (c) When an opponent, who gathers the ball, passes or kicks the ball, the *off-side* player is put on-side.
- (d) When an opponent intentionally touches the ball having failed to catch it, the *off-side* player is put on-side.

15.6 **Off-side under the Seven Metre (7m) Rule**

When a team-mate of an *off-side* player has kicked ahead, the *off-side* player is considered to be taking part in the game if he/she is in front of an imaginary line across the field of play, which is seven metres (7m) from the opponent waiting to play the ball, or from where the ball lands. The *off-side* player must immediately move behind the imaginary seven metre (7m) line. While moving away, the player must not obstruct an opponent or interfere with play in any way.

Sanction: *Tap & go*

- 15.7 If the ball is kicked and lands in the field of play and then goes out of play, there is a *changeover* of possession with the team, who was last in possession of the ball, or last touched the ball before it went into touch, being awarded a *tap & go* five metres (5m) in from the *touch-line* at the point where the ball went out of play.
- 15.8 If the ball is kicked and it goes directly into touch on the full (i.e. without bouncing first in the field of play), there is a *changeover* of possession and the defending team are awarded a *tap & go* five metres (5m) in from the *touch-line*, in line from where the ball was kicked.
- 15.9 If the ball is kicked and crosses the defending team's *try-line* and is grounded by a defender (the defender touches the ball down in the *in-goal area*, as if scoring an 'own try') there is a *changeover* of possession and the defending team are awarded a *tap & go* five metres (5m) out from the *try-line*, in line with where the ball crossed the *try-line*.
- 15.10 If the ball is kicked and touches a defender first before crossing the defending team's *try-line* and is then grounded by a defender, the attacking team is awarded a *tap & go* five metres (5m) out from the *try-line* in line with where the ball crossed the *try-line*.
- 15.11 If the ball is kicked and touches the *touch-in-goal line*, or the *dead ball line*, or the ground beyond these lines, the ball becomes dead and the defending team is awarded a *tap & go* at the point where the ball was kicked.
Sanction: *Tap & go* (to be taken at the origin of the kick)
- 15.12 If a ball is kicked and touches an attacking player who is standing in front of the kicker a *tap & go* is awarded to the defending team at the point of contact.
Sanction: *Tap & go* (to be taken at the point of contact)
- 15.13 If an attacking player regains possession of the ball after a kick and is then subsequently tagged, the *tag count* is a continuation of the *tag count* before the ball was kicked.

- 15.14 If the ball **accidentally** strikes a defender and an attacking team player then regains possession of the ball and is subsequently tagged, the *tag count* is a continuation of the *tag count* before the ball was kicked.
- 15.15 If a defender **deliberately** attempts to play the ball and makes contact with the ball and the attacking team then regains possession of the ball, the *tag count* reverts back to zero, i.e. the next occasion a player is tagged it will be "Tag 1".
- 15.16 If from a grubber kick, the ball is blocked or charged down by a defender, it is "play on", even if the ball has gone forward from the defending player's hand(s) or arm(s). If however, the defender attempts to catch the ball from a kick, and, in doing so, knocks the ball on, it will be a *changeover*, with a *tap & go* being awarded to the attacking team (the team that originally kicked the ball), at the place the defender knocked the ball on.
Sanction: *Tap & go*
- 15.17 If from a grubber kick the ball is blocked or charged down by a defender, and then an attacking team player regains possession of the ball and is subsequently tagged, the *tag count* is a continuation of the *tag count* before the ball was kicked.
- 15.18 Players must remain on their feet to play the ball and must not dive on the ball or go to ground with it.
Sanction: *Tap & go*
- 15.19 If players from opposite teams are attempting to recover a ball that has been kicked, the referee may, at his/her discretion, blow the whistle and stop play to prevent a potential contact situation occurring. The game is restarted with a *tap & go* being awarded to the defending team.

RULE 16 - The Line-out

As an option, when the ball goes out of play, contested or uncontested line-outs can be introduced if teams are not mixed in, sex, age or ability. This always assumes that the players have previously been taught the

appropriate techniques and safe practices for the line-out. All relevant laws of the game, as described in the 'IRB (International Rugby Board) Laws of the Game' for the line-out and off-side, will apply.

Note: For further information regarding the various age group laws and safety at line-outs, visit the Rugby Football Union website at www.rfu.com

RULE 17 - The Scrum

As an option, when there is a *knock-on* or a *forward pass*, contested or uncontested scrums can be introduced if teams are not mixed in, sex, age or ability. This again assumes that the players have previously been taught the appropriate techniques and safe practices for scrummage. All relevant laws for the 7-a-side game, as described in the IRB (International Rugby Board) Laws of the Game for the scrummage and off-side, will apply.

Note: For further information regarding the various age group laws and safety at scrums visit the Rugby Football Union website at www.rfu.com

Section G – Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT – How should we behave?

The game of TAG Rugby should be enjoyed by all involved. To help create an environment for this to take place it is important that we remember a few basic ethics of sport.....

1. **Recognise the importance of fun and enjoyment for all involved.**
2. **Play fairly and by the rules of the game.**
3. **Be positive with the referee and develop a team respect for them. Don't argue with them or constantly question their decisions. Remember, they are unpaid volunteers giving up their own free time and without them there would be no game!**
4. **Be a good sport - applaud good play whether by your own team or by your opponents.**
5. **Help create an enjoyable environment in which to play the game.**
6. **Do not ridicule or shout at players who lack ability or make mistakes.**
7. **Praise efforts, not results.**
8. **Support all efforts to remove any verbal or physical abuse from the game.**