

THE RUGBY CONTINUUM 2006-07

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1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RUGBY CONTINUUM

- 1.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The Rugby Football Union (RFU) and the Rugby Football Union for Women (RFUW) are most grateful to the many volunteers who are organising and encouraging rugby for children in England.
- 1.2 THE RUGBY CONTINUUM:** The Rugby Continuum is a playing and coaching pathway by which Clubs and Schools introduce the game of rugby to young players. This is done in three incremental stages (referred to as “Mini-Midi Rugby”) so that by Under 13 players have acquired the skills and knowledge required to participate in the full 15-a-side game. Each stage has its own rules distinguishing it from the adult game and should not be considered as being merely a shortened version of senior rugby. This progression has been structured to accommodate the changing developmental abilities of children as they mature with the emphasis being on the improvement of individual skills through purposeful and enjoyable activity. Provision is made for testing these skills in match situations during a limited number of competitive fixtures and festivals/tournaments each season.
- 1.3 RUGBY VALUES:** Through the Rugby Continuum, the RFU wishes to promote the “spirit of rugby”. This means the enjoyment of learning a challenging team sport that values effort as much as achievement. In the past, some adults involved in developing Mini-Midi Rugby promoted a “win at any cost” culture to the exclusion of the wider values of the game including enjoyment, teamwork and respect for the efforts of others. The Rugby Continuum includes Codes specifically designed to overcome such negative attitudes for the greater good of the game.
- 1.4 THE STAGES:** The three Stages of Mini-Midi Rugby are as follows:
- **STAGE 1:** The Under 7 and Under 8 age grades both play **Mini Tag Rugby** to the same rules except that Under 8s can only be tagged a maximum number of times.
 - **STAGE 2:** The Under 9 and Under 10 age grades both play **Mini Rugby** to the same rules except Under 9s have uncontested scrums and line-outs and Under 10s have contested scrums and line-outs.
 - **STAGE 3:** The Under 11 and Under 12 age grades both play **Midi Rugby** to the same rules. Except Under 11s have five in the scrum and Under 12s six in the scrum.
- 1.5 PLAYING RULES:** The Rugby Continuum includes the playing rules for Mini-Midi Rugby at each age grade which both players and match officials should endeavour to follow, including various modifications to the Laws of the Game issued by the International Rugby Board (IRB). These modifications are gradually reduced as a player progresses through each age grade. Where no modifications have been made, the IRB Laws of the Game should be followed. The IRB Laws of the Game can be found on the International Rugby Board’s website at www.irb.com.
- 1.6 REGULATIONS AND INSURANCE:** In addition to the playing rules for each age grade, the Rugby Continuum also contains what are described as “regulations” and “recommendations”. The distinction is important because failure by Clubs/Schools, their match officials and coaches to observe the “regulations” may invalidate the compulsory insurance cover provided by the RFU. In contrast, “recommendations” represent best practice and Clubs and Schools must endeavour to follow these.
- 1.7 DISPENSATIONS:** The Rugby Continuum includes a limited number of permitted exceptions to certain regulations (referred to as “Age Grade dispensations”). The procedure for applying these dispensations is contained within the Regulations for each Age Grade. No other Dispensations can be granted or considered by the RFU.”
- 1.8 AGE GRADES:** The RFU, whilst wishing to maximise the enjoyment of young players, also places importance on their safety and for this reason the Rugby Continuum provides

that players are not allowed to play up or down an age grade unless this is permitted under a valid dispensation.

- 1.9 SAFETY:** Through the Rugby Continuum, the RFU has established a framework within which those involved with rugby can provide playing opportunities for players. In doing so the responsibility to try and ensure the safety of both players and those providing such opportunities must not be overlooked and any Club, School or Constituent Body providing rugby opportunities to young players should only do so having considered carefully the issue of safety. This means avoiding exposure of players, coaches and match officials to situations that are too risky for the particular circumstances. Coach education courses for Mini/Midi Rugby have therefore been designed specifically to give individuals (whether in Schools or in Clubs) the opportunity to gain an understanding of coaching young players safely. Further guidance on the provision of a safe rugby environment can be obtained from the RFU by contacting James Winterbottom at Twickenham by e-mail at jameswinterbottom@rfu.com.
- 1.10 ADMINISTRATION:** Every Club and School providing Mini-Midi Rugby is responsible for its proper administration in accordance with the Rugby Continuum. The administration of Mini-Midi Rugby is overseen by Constituent Bodies and County Schools' Unions which are required to ensure that affiliated Clubs and Schools adhere to the Rugby Continuum.
- 1.11 RUGBY CONTINUUM CHANGES:** In preparing the Rugby Continuum the RFU has made great efforts to ensure that the regulations and recommendations reflect the way Mini-Midi Rugby is played in practice whilst also establishing a framework that will promote the development of a positive rugby culture. This is a constantly evolving process driven by the Rugby Continuum Review Group which welcomes constructive suggestions as to how the Rugby Continuum can be further improved. Any suggestions should be sent to the Chairman of the Continuum Review Group at the RFU and, if agreed and adopted, will become part of the Rugby Continuum.
- 1.12 RUGBY CONTINUUM FORUM:** A Rugby Continuum Forum can be found in the Forum/Chat section of the RFU web site (www.rfu.com). It provides information, promotes discussions and advises on a range of coaching and refereeing topics. Mini-Midi coaches, parents and others can use the Forum to ask questions, seek advice, share ideas and express their views. Andy Dixon, an experienced coach, hosts the Forum.