



# TOUCH RUGBY

*basic rules*

## **THE AIM**

To score as many tries (touchdowns) as possible by placing the ball on or over the scoreline. A try is worth one point. A match consists of 2x 20-minute halves with a 5-minute break.

## **THE PITCH**

A competition-sized pitch is 70 metres long (scoreline to scoreline) and 50 metres wide. Substitution boxes measuring 20 metres in length are situated on each side of the field at the halfway point. The box is set a metre back from the sideline. Each half of the pitch has a broken line marking 10 metres from the halfway line and five metres before the scoreline. The Try Area is a five to 10 metre long area beyond the scoreline.

## **THE TEAM**

A maximum of six players is permitted on the field at any time. A minimum of four players per team is required for the match to commence. A competition team may consist of up to 14 players. A competition mixed team is made up of a ratio of male/female players. A mixed team is not permitted to field more than three male players at any time nor is it permitted to field less than one male player at any time.

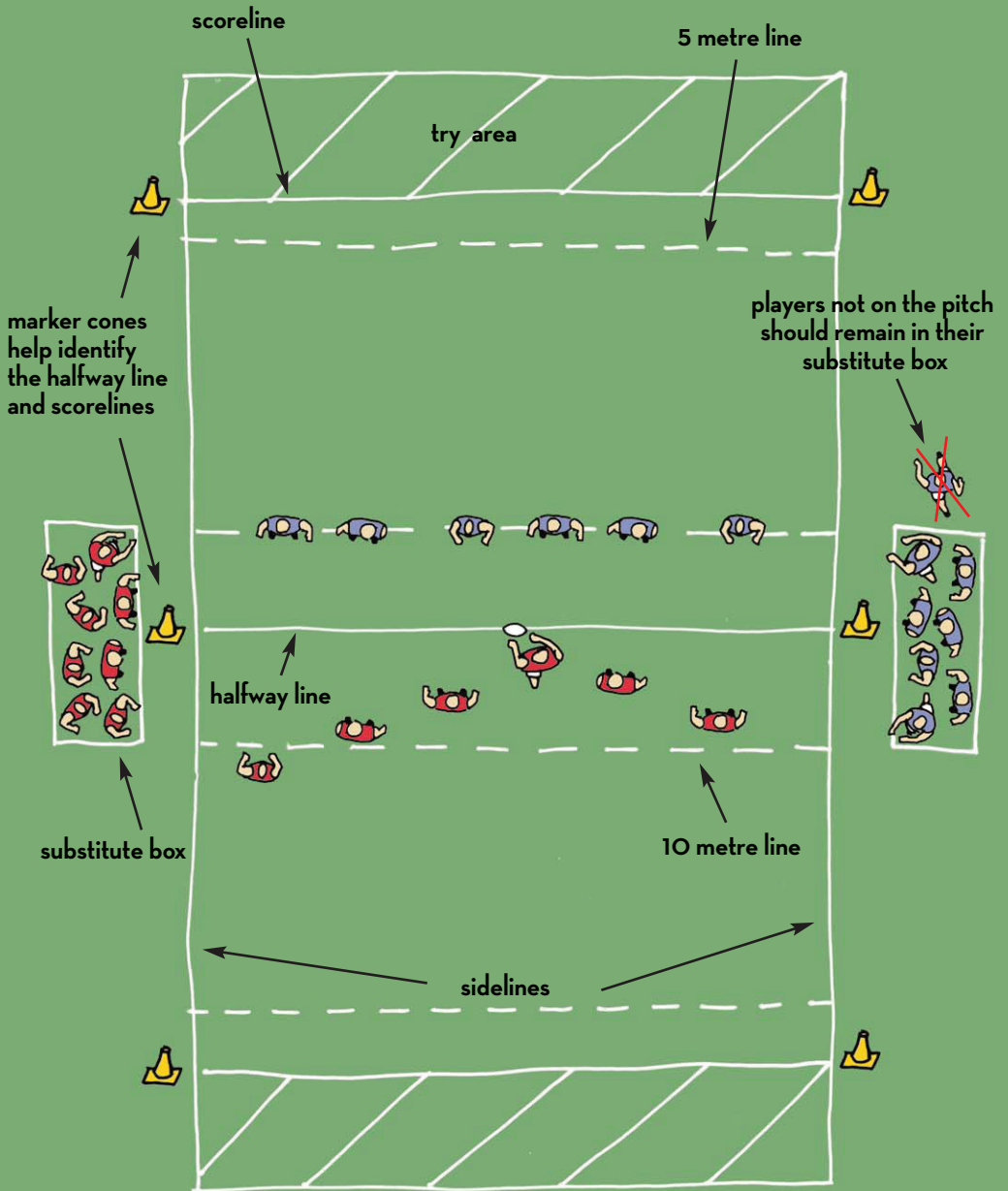
Bare feet, spikes and footwear with screw-in studs are not permitted. Players are not to wear any item of jewellery or watches that might be dangerous. Check also that fingernails are not sharp or too long. When playing in a competition, numbered shirts are required.

## **THE TOSS**

The team winning the toss shall receive possession of the ball, a choice of direction and choice of substitution box. The team that loses the toss shall recommence play after the half-time break. The referee shall supervise the toss carried out with the team captains.

## **SUBSTITUTIONS**

Substitute players must remain in their sub-box. Teams may substitute any number of players at any time. Substitute players going on to the field during play may not leave the sub-box until the player being replaced has entered the sub-box, except after a try has been scored and the game hasn't restarted yet, or in case of an injury.



The game is about to start, the red team has won the toss and is preparing to “tap off”.  
 The blue team must remain inside on their own 10 metre line.

## Taking the Tap



place the ball on the mark



release both hands



tap with your foot



pick up and run forwards

A tap is used to start the game, restart after a try and restart after a penalty has been given. The ball may not roll more than one metre.

## **THE GAME**

The game starts with a tap at the halfway line. The defence must be onside on or behind its own ten metre line. It may only move forward after the tap has been made.

The attack moves forwards and may pass the ball backwards between players in an attempt to score a try.

Once the ball carrier has been touched, the attack must immediately perform a rollball at the mark, and the defence must retreat at least five metres to an onside position. Only once the defence has reached an onside position may it advance again to effect a touch. The attacking player who has performed the rollball may not then pick up the ball. That must be done by the dummy-half.

Player may not pass the ball once they've been touched. After six touches there is a change of possession, and the defending team now attacks.

After a try has been scored, there is a change of possession and the game is restarted with a tap at the halfway line. If a penalty is given, the non-offending team gains possession, and a penalty is taken at the mark. The defending team must move back 10 metres to be onside at a penalty.

## **THE TAP**

The tap is taken by placing the ball on the ground at the mark, releasing the ball from both hands, tapping the ball with either foot a distance of not more than one metre and picking up the ball cleanly. Any player from the attacking team may take the tap.

*A player taking the tap may face any direction to take the tap and may be forward of the halfway line. The player taking the tap must wait until the referee indicates the mark prior to tapping the ball.*

## **THE MARK**

The mark is where the ball is placed to perform a rollball or penalty tap. For a rollball, it is the position where the attacker was when he was touched, not the position of the defender. The mark for a penalty is usually where the infringement took place.

*Players may take the ball behind the mark up to a maximum of 10 metres for a tap. No sideways movement from the mark is allowed.*

## **OFFSIDE AND ONSIDE**

After a touch has been made, all defending players must retire at least five metres from the mark. Defending players cannot move forward until the dummy-half has touched the ball or being told by the ref to do so. When a penalty has been awarded, all defending players must retire 10 metres from the mark.

*Attacking players who are offside are non-effective and should return to an onside position as soon as possible. Offside defending players must at all times make an effort to retire to an onside position.*

*Once a defender has started to move backwards, he must do so in a straight line and not zig-zag or extend his arms to obstruct an attacker.*

## **PASSING**

A player may pass, knock, throw or otherwise deliver the ball to any onside player in the attacking team. Passing forward is NOT permitted. The ball is not to be kicked.

*A player who, in attempting to control the ball, juggles it in the air, is not to be penalised, provided the player regathers the ball.*

## **A TOUCH**

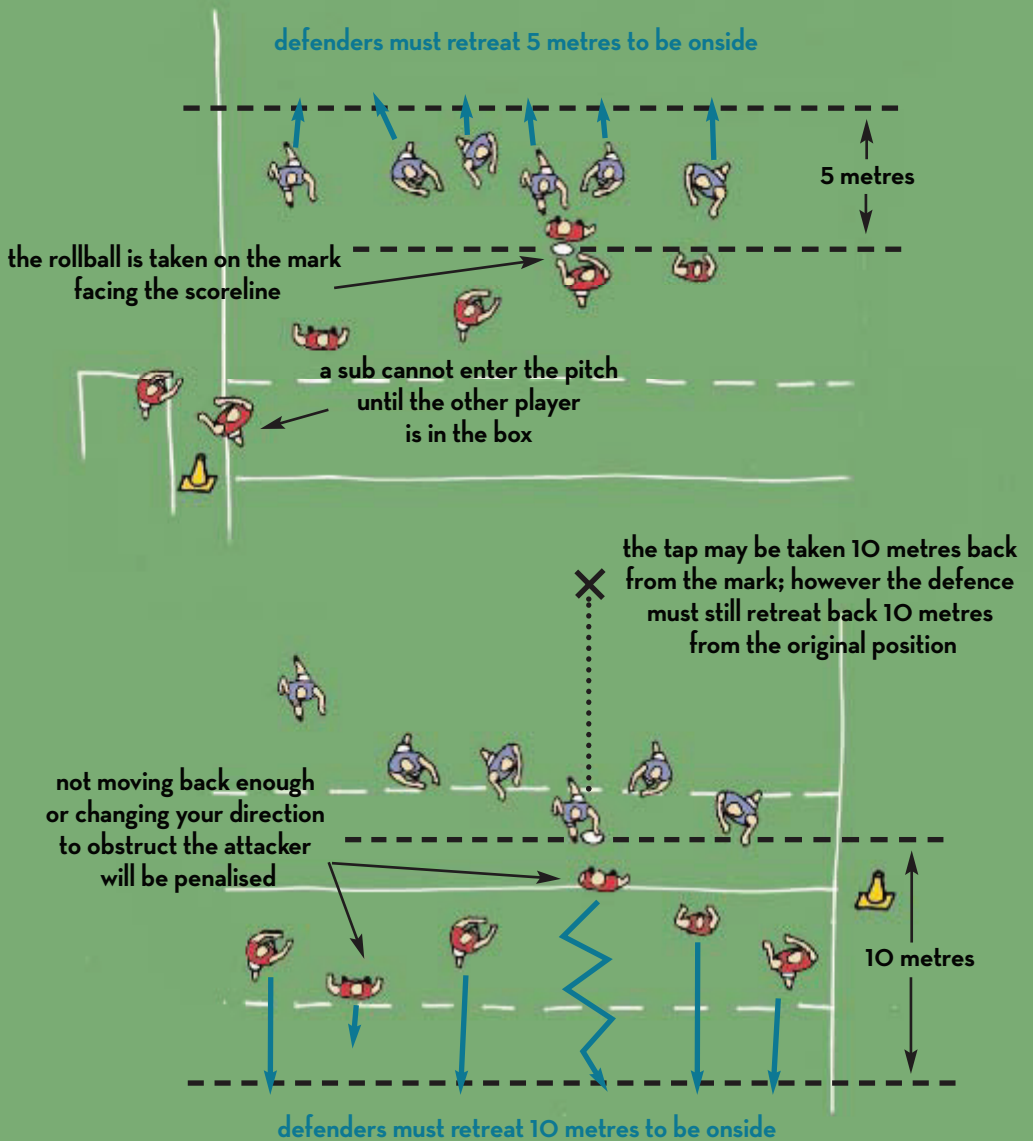
Players from both teams are permitted to effect the touch. A touch is contact with any part of the body, ball, clothing or hair. Minimum force is to be used at all times when effecting a touch. The team in possession is entitled to six touches.

*Should a touch be effected on a player in possession while the ball is physically in his hands (e.g. while juggling or trying to maintain control), the touch is to count.*

*Providing the same player retrieves the ball prior to it going to ground, any knock forward resultant from an intercept is allowed.*

*If a touch is effected on or over the scoreline before the ball is grounded, no try/ touchdown results. The player in possession is to move from that point to a position 5 metres from the scoreline to perform a rollball, provided it is not the sixth touch.*

tip: to make sure the rollball is made on the mark and at speed, the player in possession of the ball may initiate the touch.



Offside at the rollball (top) and at a penalty tap (bottom). In both cases the defence must move back or be penalised

## THE ROLLBALL

Players must perform the rollball on the mark while facing their opponent's defending scoreline and either rolling the ball backwards between their legs a distance of not more than one metre, stepping over the ball, or pushing the ball backwards with one foot. Players must not delay performing the rollball. The player who performs the rollball is not permitted to pick the ball up.

*If in doubt as to the location of the mark for the rollball, the player in possession should check with the referee.*

*Attacking players cannot delay the rollball while waiting for a half to be in position.*

*Rollballs between the 5 metre and scoreline may be brought back to the 5 metre line.*

*If there is no dummy-half at the rollball, any onside defender can immediately go forwards to claim the ball. To do so he must simply touch the ball with his hand or foot and then perform a rollball.*

## THE DUMMY-HALF

The dummy-half is the person who picks up the ball after a teammate has performed a rollball. If touched, the attacking team loses possession. A dummy-half cannot score.







## **A TRY (TOUCHDOWN)**

A try will be awarded when a player places the ball on or over the scoreline prior to being touched. A try is worth one point.

*If a player places the ball on the ground and releases it short of the scoreline while attempting to score a touchdown, a touch is counted and the player is required to do a rollball to restart play at the position of contact with the ground. However, a try/touchdown results if an untouched player (other than the half) slides the ball along the ground to or beyond the scoreline. If a player does not release the ball from their hands, no touch is counted and the match continues.*

## **THE SIDELINE**

If the player with the ball touches or crosses the sideline s/he is deemed to be out of play and a change of possession occurs. Play restarts with a rollball 5 metres in from where the player went out. If a touch is made before the player goes out, the touch counts.

*If, in attempting to score, a player either makes contact with the corner marker or crosses the extended sideline, no touchdown is awarded and the match is recommenced by the opposition with a rollball 5 metres from the scoreline and 5 metres in from the sideline.*

## **LOSS OF POSSESSION**

A change of possession and a rollball restart shall occur when:

- The ball is dropped to ground.
- The dummy-half is touched while in possession.
- The sixth touch occurs.
- The dummy-half places the ball on or over the scoreline.
- A rollball is performed incorrectly.
- A tap is performed incorrectly.
- The player in possession steps on or over the boundary of the field of play.

## **PENALTIES**

When a player/team is penalised, the non-offending team shall restart play with a tap. The tap is taken at the mark and the defending team must retire 10 metres from the mark until the ball has been tapped.

Play restarts with a tap when the following infringements occur:

- Forward Pass
- Touch and Pass
- Performing a rollball prior to a touch being made
- Performing a rollball off the mark
- Using more than the minimum force to effect a touch
- Claiming a touch when the touch was not effected
- Defenders offside at the rollball (5 metres)
- Defenders offside at the Tap (10 metres)
- Incorrect substitution
- Falsely claiming a touch
- Misconduct
- Playing more than the allowable number of players
- Deliberately delaying play
- Obstruction

*The player who is to take the tap is required to wait until the referee indicates the location of the mark before the tap can be taken. However a player may take a quick tap providing the referee acknowledges such a request and providing the tap is taken at or behind the correct mark.*

*For any tap, players may take the ball directly behind the mark up to a maximum of 10 metres.*

*If a player chooses to rollball instead of a tap, the player who receives the ball is not deemed to be a half and may be touched without loss of possession.*

## **TOUCH AND PASS**

A player is not to pass the ball after a touch has been made.

## **OBSTRUCTIONS**

Players of the attacking team are not to obstruct defending players from attempting to effect a touch. Defending players are not to obstruct or interfere with attacking players supporting the ball carrier.

*A player supporting the player in possession is entitled to run as necessary to obtain the best supporting position. However, in moving to a supporting position, attacking players must not deliberately interfere with defending players.*



tap off



fifth touch



sixth touch



six again



dummy caught



penalty



try scored



ball to ground



forward pass

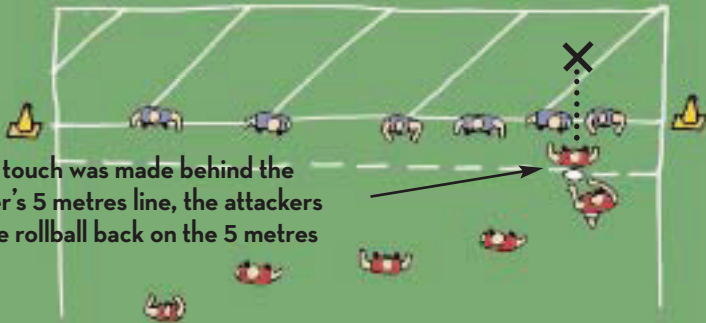


touch and pass

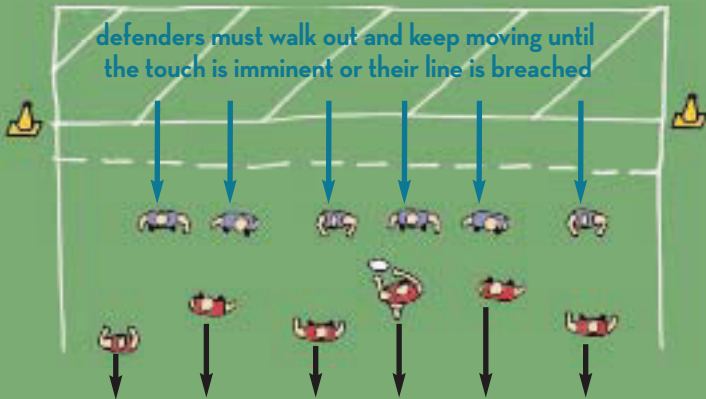


Some common refs signals:  
those in **black** will also be simultaneously verbally communicated,  
those in **white** verbally and preceded by a short whistle,  
those in **purple** verbally and preceded by a long whistle,  
and those in **blue** with just a long whistle.

if the touch was made behind the defender's 5 metres line, the attackers take the rollball back on the 5 metres

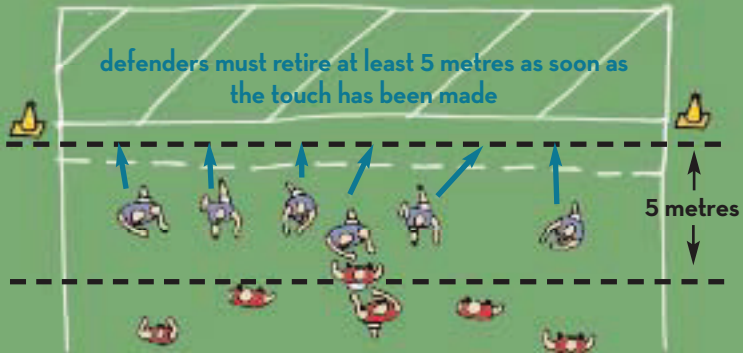


defenders must walk out and keep moving until the touch is imminent or their line is breached



attackers pull back to create more space

defenders must retire at least 5 metres as soon as the touch has been made



When defending a rollball on the scoreline, both defenders feet must be on or behind the scoreline. Once the rollball has been made, defenders must move forward or be penalised.

## **SCORELINE AND STANDOFF**

When defending a rollball on the scoreline, both defenders' feet must be on or behind the scoreline. When defending a rollball on or within the 5 metres, immediately after rollball is made, the defence must walk up and continue moving forward until the touch is made, or the defensive line is breached.

## **SIX AGAIN**

If while attempting to catch the ball as it is being passed between two attackers, a defender intentionally touches the ball and regardless if it then grounds or is caught by an attacker the touch count will be restarted.

*Unintentional contact by a defending player includes contact on the arms and hands providing an attempt is not made to secure possession.*

## **MISCONDUCT**

Players guilty of misconduct will be penalised and could be excluded from the match. Misconduct includes:

- Continual breaches of the rules
- Swearing
- Back-chatting referees or other match officials
- Bad sporting behaviour
- Fighting
- Using physical force in making a touch
- Attacking the head of an opponent
- Tripping
- Any other action which is not in the spirit of the game.

## **FOUL PLAY**

Any foul play (the referee being the sole judge) will result in the offending player being penalised, sent to the sin bin for a period of time, or being sent from the field for the remainder of the match, depending on the severity of the offence.

## **EXTRA TIME**

When a match is drawn and a single winner is required, the match is stopped, teams drop off 1 player each and extra time is played. Teams drop off a player every 2 minutes until down to 3 players. The first team to score a try/touchdown in extra time wins the match.

## **THE REFEREE**

The referee is the sole judge on matters of fact and is required to adjudicate on the rules of the game during play. The referee may impose any sanction necessary to control the match. All officials, players and coaches involved in the match are under the control of the referee.

*The referee's decision is final, arguing with him will only result in a penalty taken ten metres forwards from where the offence took place.*

*Play the whistle, don't stop playing just because you thought a decision should have been made.*

## **PLAYER'S TIPS**

### **TALK**

The team that talks and communicates well with each other stands a better chance than one who is silent.

### **GO FORWARDS**

You waste energy and time by going sideways. A good team have no trouble defending this.

### **PLAY THE WHISTLE**

The ref has control of the game, don't stop because you think he got it wrong. And whatever you do, don't argue.

### **RESPECT DECISIONS**

Be it the defender claiming a touch, or a ref deciding it was a forward pass, respect the decisions made and play the game fairly.

### **SUBSTITUTE A LOT**

Aim to be on the pitch for only two to three sets of six. This keeps the game fast and gives everybody a good amount of playing time.

### **HAVE FUN**

Touch is fun; even at an international game the atmosphere is friendly and good-natured. Play the game in that spirit.

This material was based on “Touch for Dummies” from 2007, created by Touch Deutschland, Touch Austria and Swiss Touch. .

## **CONTACTS AND LINKS**

The complete 4th Edition of the Playing Rules can be found on [www.internationaltouch.org](http://www.internationaltouch.org)

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Illustration Gideon Yeomans