



**PRIMARY**  
**RUGBY LEAGUE**  
**COACHES FESTIVAL DOCUMENT**

**2026**

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## PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE

For many children, Primary Rugby League is their first sporting experience, so ensuring these experiences are right for them is vital to offering the first step to a lifelong involvement with sport and physical activity.

Children's motivations for taking part in sport are very different from adults. Adults have a responsibility to cater to children's motivations to make the experiences FUN and ENJOYABLE.

### **If children are to take part in Rugby League and enjoy it, they must;**

- Have opportunities to feel competent
- Improve skills
- Experience the exciting parts of Rugby League; running, evading and scoring tries
- Be encouraged by adults
- Experience positive environments

A great way to create environments that foster motivation is to place importance on Personal Improvement and Mastering Skills, this will encourage children to improve the basic skills needed to play the game and motivate them to keep coming back.

### **Competition**

Competition plays an important part in a child's development because it allows them to test their abilities and assess their competence. However, we must remember that children's readiness for competition depends on many factors, including physical, psychological and social development.

### **How can adults support children through competition?**

Encourage, don't criticise, Rugby League is a complex sport, so mistakes are going to happen. View these as an essential part of the learning process. Don't place the emphasis on winning, praise the children's efforts and skill attempts, and they will enjoy the experience more and be motivated to keep coming back. All adults have a responsibility to create a playing environment that fosters respect.

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## PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE FESTIVALS

Primary Rugby League festivals provide all children with the opportunity to take part in a more developmentally appropriate game. The format played in the festivals also increases the children's participation levels, allowing them to take part in more skills of the game, such as running with the ball, catching and passing, beating defenders, and scoring tries.

### **Benefits of the smaller-sided games**

Research shows that children who play small-sided games have more opportunities to take part in the skills of the game, and doing this has the following benefits;

- Improved SKILL DEVELOPMENT
- Improved INTRINSIC MOTIVATION leading to sustained participation
- Improved SELF ESTEEM

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## PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE

Primary Rugby League festivals run in four stages: pre-planning, set up, delivery, and take down. The following checklists will help you deliver a festival that all children enjoy.

### Pre-Planning Stage

Tick	One Week Before
	Away teams contacted, and the relevant details have been provided (address, parking, postcode).
	Away teams contacted, and number of visiting players established. Consider a WhatsApp Group
	Confirm the festival with the GameDay Manager.
	Volunteers are given roles for the day.
	Pitch space checked and agreed with the fixture's secretary.
	Ensure enough cones, balls, tags and bibs are available.
	Work out the number of pitches and Games Coaches required (remember, away teams will provide Games Coaches as well), and agree with the visiting teams.
	Complete a fixture list using the 'Festival Format' card in the resource pack.
	Contact all the parents and let them know the festival details.
	Final email sent to all involved parties confirming details.

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## PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE

Tick	One Day Before
	Check in with all other teams to ensure they are still coming and an update on planned numbers
	Re confirm venue and timings with the teams
	Double check everything is fine with the club
	Ensure you have all the necessary equipment ready for tomorrow, if not ask other clubs to bring with them to support
	Have purchase relevant refreshments/raffle prizes
	Get a good nights sleep

Tick	One Hour Before
	Check the pitch is clear of any foreign objects.
	Start setting up the pitches and rope off a spectator area.
	Confirm Games Coaches from both teams and allocate to the relevant pitch.
	Confirm the number of players and complete final fixture list.
	A club member to meet and greet arriving coaches, parents, and players.

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## PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE

### Set Up

Tick	Playing Area
	Enough pitches are set up for all the teams.
	Warm-up areas are set up.
	A designated spectator area is clearly marked out.
	A timekeeper is allocated.
	A festival brief is delivered to all the coaches on pitch one, explaining the timings, start positions, fixtures, and rotations.

### Delivery

Tick	During The Festival
	Teams are allocated to the relevant pitch (Children to keep their water bottle with them).
	Warm-up activities delivered.
	Games start, indicated by the timekeeper.
	Rotations managed as per the festival fixture list.
	Let the players have fun.

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## PRIMARY RUGBY LEAGUE

### Take Down

Tick	After The Festival
	Children collect cones.
	Coaches bring kids to a central area.
	Ask children what they enjoyed and congratulate them.
	Players line up and go through the tunnel.
	Present any after match awards/certificates
	Where allowed try and get a group picture and post that to social media to celebrate the day/event

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## GAME COACH ROLE

The Games Coach role is to support the coaches and children through managing the smaller-sided games. This role is crucial to providing children with positive experiences of sport. Some handy tips for the Games Coach are.

### Top Tips

1. Ensure all children get equal opportunity during the games.
2. Encourage effort, not just performance.
3. Encourage the players to solve problems themselves and offer praise when the move well, make a good pass, etc.
4. If players are struggling, it is OK to suggest they look for space or for whom they can pass to.
5. Make sure you support and encourage both teams equally.
6. Do not tolerate any bad or inappropriate language from the players.
7. Encourage the players to support and encourage each other with positive language

### Top Tips for Language

1. Keep language positive, remember children are sensitive and throwaway comments can easily turn them off sport.
2. Keep instructions short and simple and avoid jargon.
3. Don't be afraid of silence, telling children what to do all the time removes the decision-making process and can demotivate children.
4. When a team is defending, encourage them to get onside by using the term 'come to me'.
5. Use a 'wait' call to let the defence know they cannot move.
6. Encourage the tackled player to pass the ball by using a 'pass' call.
7. Say 'go' when it is OK for the defending team to advance.
8. Using questions is better than making statements, some examples are below;

- How can you work together to stop them scoring?
- How can you work together to score more tries?
- Where is the best place to attack? Why?
- How can you involve all the players to create space?
- When is the best time to pass the ball wide? Why?

**Remember, it is about developing the young people as well as the young players.**

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## PLAYERS AND TEAMS

When running your event, it may be worth trying to create an even number of teams.

Players	Teams	Pitches & GC
20	5 x teams of 4 or 4 x teams of 5	2
21	4 x teams of 4 1 x team of 5	2
22	3 x teams of 4 2 x teams of 5	2
23	2 x teams of 4 3 x teams of 5	2
24	6 x teams of 4	3
25	5 x teams of 4 1 x team of 5	3
26	4 x teams of 4 2 x teams of 5	3
27	3 x teams of 4 3 x teams of 5	3
28	7 x teams of 4	3
29	6 x teams of 4 1 x team of 5	3
30	6 x teams of 5	3
31	4 x teams of 4 3 x teams of 5	3
32	8 teams of 4	4
33	7 teams of 4 1 team of 5	4
34	6 teams of 4 2 teams of 5	4

Players	Teams	Pitches & GC
35	7 teams of 5	3
36	9 teams of 4	4
37	8 teams of 4 1 team of 5	4
38	7 teams of 4 2 teams of 5	4
39	6 teams of 4 3 teams of 5	4
40	8 teams of 5	4
41	9 teams of 4 1 team of 5	5
42	8 teams of 4 2 teams of 5	5
43	7 teams of 4 3 teams of 5	5
44	11 teams of 4	5
45	9 teams of 5	4
46	9 teams of 4 2 teams of 5	5
47	8 teams of 4 3 teams of 5	5
48	12 teams of 4	6
49	11 teams of 4 1 team of 5	6