RugbyReferee.net

England Rugby Age Grade Regulations
u9s – Season 2026-27

u9s is the first age group where the tackle is introduced. Gameplay is very much about preparing players for future rugby. Subsequent seasons build on these areas of the game.

	U9s
Number of players	7
Length of match	15 mins - Match ends if score difference rises to more than six tries
Ball size	3
Pitch size	60 metres x 30 metres
Kick offs & restarts	No kicking Game start & restarts = free pass (defenders 7m back) Referee calls “play” to signal ball to be passed back to a teammate - No crash ball (all players stationary before ball is passed)
Tackle	When ball carrier is held by one or more opponents and brought to ground No competition for ball - no rucks/mauls If ball carrier stays on feet referee calls “tackle” - ball carrier must pass to teammate within 3 seconds (can keep going forward) Ball carrier cannot score if “tackle” call been made - referee should wait 3 seconds before calling if 1m from goal line to see if try is scored. High tackle = above base of sternum (tummy/belly or below) Ball carrier must not go into contact with shoulders below hips, or dip down late and low or otherwise place their head into the headspace of opponent. No ripping/grabbing the ball by defenders Ball carrier’s teammate may rip ball from them, but must pass Ball carriers’ teammates cannot bind onto/drive ball carrier forward **Transitional variation when players ready**: Team has 6 tackles to score a try before ball handed to opposition for free pass on 7th.

	Offside only occurs at the time of a tackle - must be behind teammate
Scrum	None
Ruck and maul	No rucks or mauls
Lineout	No lineouts Play restarts with free pass 5m from touch. Ball must be passed before anyone runs (i.e. no charging onto a pass) Other side 7m back
Fly hacking (kicking loose ball on floor)	No fly hacking
Kicking	No kicking
Penalties	Free pass awarded for forward pass, knock on, kicking ball, a fend with ball, hand off, foul play, high tackle, offside, pulling/ripping ball from ball carrier, off the ball contact, blocking a pass by ball carrier at tackle No hand off or fending with ball or hand/arm High tackle = above base of sternum (tummy/belly or below) Ball carrier must not go into contact with shoulders below hips, or dip down late and low, or otherwise place their head into the headspace of opponent. Defenders need to be back 7m
Sin bin length	Non - referee to manage issues with particular players/actions with coaches Sides remain equal
Subs	Rolling subs – unlimited allowed Half Game rule applies

Correct as at 1 August 2026
Author: Keith Lewis - with info taken from Regulation 15 Appendix 3 - u9s:
https://www.englandrugby.com/run/rules-governance/rfu-rules-and-regulations/regulation-15-age-grade-rugby/regulation-15-appendix-3-u9-rules-of-play

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