

MINI & YOUTH SPORTS FESTIVAL DUBAI 2026

TAG Rugby Rules – Mini & Youth Sports Festival 2026

The attached is provided for consistency.

All are reminded that TAG rugby is played by young players and continual disruption of play does not aid learning or enjoyment, referees are therefore encouraged to use their discretion in applying these rules (except those underlined) to provide equitable and appropriate 'solutions'.

- TAG rugby is a non-contact sport
- No forward passes or kicking of any kind is allowed
- A tackle is made by removing one or both tags of the opposing player carrying the ball (only)
- Tacklers/taggers should stop, hold the tag out (ideally above their head) and shout "TAG!"
- When 'tagged' the ball-carrier must pass the ball within three seconds
- Turnover occurs on the sixth tackle, or when a player steps into touch
- Re-starts occur when a player is tackled and does not pass in accordance with the rules, or when the ball is inadvertently 'knocked on' and there is no advantage to the other team
- A try is scored with downward pressure onto the ball beyond the try line

WINNING IS A REWARD, BUT NOT THE AIM – HAVE FUN!

THANK YOU TO ALL THE REFEREES, COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS!



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GENERAL

1. Tag rugby is a non-contact sport.
2. The object of the game is to score the most tries through running with the ball, evading defenders and passing to team-mates, in the process learning and developing the basic skills of rugby.
3. Playing of advantage is encouraged wherever possible and safe to do so.
4. A try is scored try with downward pressure onto the ball beyond the try line and within any marked in-goal area. A ball placed correctly on the try line is a try. Diving to score a try is permitted (it's fun!) provided it is not undertaken in a manner dangerous to the ball carrier or opponents. A tag taken in the act of scoring is not a valid tag and a try should be awarded (we want positive play!).
5. A try is worth 5 points. There are no conversions or kicks.
6. If an attacking team fails to score when the 6th tackle (tag) has been made, they will lose possession and the opposition will restart from the position of the last tackle ('turnover').

PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

7. Teams consist of 7 players and rolling substitutes: i.e. a substituted player may return.
8. Substitutes should only be made during a stoppage in play and the referee should be informed.
9. Tags must be a minimum of 5 cm x 33 cm and fixed to the tag belt by Velcro. The Velcro shall be no wider than the width of the tag. The tag shall be capable of removal from the tag belt by a child without unreasonable force. Tag belts must be worn around the waist and on the outside of the clothing with the tags positioned on the hips, not at the front or back, one on each side of the player. To avoid complications in taking the tag, shirts should be tucked into shorts at all times. Excess length of tag belts should not hang loose.
- 10.
- 11.

PASSING THE BALL

12. The ball should be passed sideways or backwards to transfer possession amongst team-mates and must NOT be passed forward or repeatedly handed to team-mates; The referee will re-start from the point of infringement
13. Any player may pick up a loose ball from the floor to gain possession. If a player does this by crouching or lying on the floor, they should be allowed to return to their feet to then pass the ball or run with it if no tag has been taken. If possession of a ball is disputed between 2 players, the referee should act to avoid any unnecessary physicality and award possession to one team.



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THE TACKLE

14. A tackle occurs when the ball carrier has a tag or tags removed by an opponent
 - the referee should signal a tackle has been made and the number of tackles made (i.e. shout “Tackle-1”, “Tackle-2”, etc)
15. Once taken, tags should be left in the immediate vicinity of the tackle and not thrown away or carried.
16. A tackler must only remove a tag from a player in possession of the ball.
 - If the tackle is simultaneous with the pass, or the tag is not taken legitimately for any reason, no action is taken and the tackled player should replace their tag whilst the referee shouts “ball away” or “play on”.
17. The tackled player must pass immediately (within 3 seconds) and not have gained material additional territory (no more than 3 steps if travelling at speed).
 - Referees should restart at the point of tackle for a breach of this rule. However, at the referee’s discretion, repeat offenders should be penalised by possession being given to the opposition (effectively a penalty).
18. A tackled player must replace both of their tags before re-joining the game.
 - If a player has or takes possession of the ball with less than 2 tags, the referee should stop the game, restarting with a tap and pass once tags are replaced; this includes instances where the tag falls off accidentally with the exception of 28 (below).
19. An attacker carrying the ball must NOT use a free hand or the ball to fend off, interfere or block a defender in any way, including blocking of access to his tags.
 - Players should be encouraged to carry the ball in 2 hands
 - An attacking player may not block the path of a defender. Sanction: Turnover
20. Players should not make contact with another player.
 - If deliberate and/or repeated contact is made by a defending player the Referee should restart at the point of tackle.
 - If deliberate and/or repeated contact is made by an attacking player a turnover should be awarded.
 - If the contact is above the chest, excessive or dangerous, at the referees discretion the tag count can also be reset to zero – if both deliberate and dangerous, substitution of the player can, at the referees discretion, also be required.

DEFENSIVE LINES

21. Defenders may only advance after the tap of a ball and the first pass is made at a restart, not on the referees whistle or tap alone.
The defence must retire 1-metre from the tackled player immediately after the tag is taken. Coaches should proactively assist in this.
22. • Crowding of a tackled player does not afford continuity of play or the ability to pass swiftly and effectively. Continual disruption or offside may be sanctioned by re-setting the tag count to zero.





RE-STARTS

23. A player in possession of the ball who is in contact with the touchline with any part of their body is "in touch". Possession is awarded to the opposition, restarted as below.
24. Restarts after a try or at the commencement of a half should be taken from the centre mark.
25. All other restarts are taken, on a signal from the referee (quick restarts are not permitted), from the point of infringement or tag, or the point at which the player left the field of play, subject to:
 - When a player is in touch, the restart is taken from a point parallel to the touchline, 2m into the field of play.
 - Other restarts to be taken near the touchline, should be moved infield to a point parallel to and 2m from the touchline.
 - A restart to be taken within 5m of the try line or within the in goal area (by defence or attacking team) shall be taken 5m from the try line.
26. All restarts or penalties are taken facing the opposition and by tapping the ball on the foot before passing the ball. The player taking the restart cannot run with the ball prior to passing. There is no other kicking.
27. The defensive line should be 5m back from the mark (where the restart / penalty is taken from). It is helpful if referees indicate this

FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR COACHES AND REFEREES

28. A try should not be disallowed if a tag falls off whilst the player is running unchallenged to score.
29. On-field coaches should not touch players during play, but may assist in the retrieval of tags from the floor.
30. If a player or players are continually disrupting the flow of the game through repeat offences (e.g. taking tags whilst offside, being in offside positions preventing swift passes, running with the ball after a tag), referees should use their discretion to increase the sanction, such as giving a turnover ball or restarting the tackle count in order to provide a fair and balanced game. The referee should make the player and the coach aware of this action and why it has occurred.