



SRU Age Banding Guideline (U7 - U19)

The purpose of this guideline is to ensure that children and youth in contact rugby are playing within acceptable age bandings to ensure safe practices and mitigate risk of injury.

Age grades are set at the start of a season and define the age a player will become during that season. For example, an 8-year-old on 1st January (the start of the season) is a U9 and will become 9 years old during or after that season.

As rugby has multiple entrance points to the game with no age limitations, the age banding guideline aims to allow players to play within an age banding that promotes enjoyment of the game at the relevant skill level.

Playing a young person out of their age grade, either 'up' or 'down', requires careful assessment by an experienced or qualified teacher, coach or team manager. Any decision should take into account the following points and should be governed by what is in the best needs of the individual:

- The social and personal development of the young player
- The physical development of the individual in relation to the rest of the team
- The skill level of the individual
- The position that they are playing within a team
- The level that they are playing is appropriate
- The impact this will have on others in the team and opponents

SRU AGE BANDING GUIDELINES:

- a) 3 Year Age Band
- b) Cut off date: 1st January in the year of competition
- c) Categories:
 - Junior Rugby: 12 years and below
 - Youth Rugby: 13 years to 17 years
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***There is a clear divide between the 2 categories, clubs & coaches are strongly advised to adhere to this.**

- d) There is no provision for 16-year old's to play adult rugby.
- e) 17-year old's will need dispensation to play adult rugby*.

*It is important to note that players yet to reach their 17th birthday must not play adult rugby, or engage in contact training with adults. Once a player has reached 17 they may submit a dispensation request to SRU to play adult rugby.



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CONSENT

A parent or guardian should give consent to any club's assessment for a child to play up or down an age grade; it is important that any identified extra risks are explained in the discussion with the parent. Schools will have their own procedures for assessment and for informing or consulting with parents. In a school year group there are occasional over or under age children, who will routinely train and play with their peers. Unless there is a significant physical difference, and subject to assessment, their inclusion in that age grade team is permitted; this means a child in a lower year group at school, may be allowed to play down an age grade at rugby.

COMPETITION

However, age rules in a competition may preclude them from playing in that competition. It is therefore important to always read the competition rules carefully.

DUTY OF CARE & EARLY NOTICE to opposition (Friendly games)

Managers or coaches of the opposition must be advised whenever a selected a player is "playing down". We recommend that managers and coaches give each other at least 48 hours' notice. Clear communication is key, and any decisions should be based around the players welfare.