DUBAI EXILES

RUGBY & NETBALL SINCE 1966



A PARENTS' GUIDE TO THE RULES · SEASON 2026/27

U12

YEAR 7 · CONTACT RUGBY · 15-A-SIDE

ONE TEAM. ONE FAMILY.
ONE EXILES.

U12 AT A GLANCE

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Your child is now playing **Under 12s (Year 7)**: the first season of **full 15-a-side rugby** on a near full-size pitch. Kicking out of hand, conversions and the eight-player scrum all arrive this year, so the game starts to look a lot like the one on television.

All rules in this guide are the official 2026/27 UAE Rugby Federation (UAERF) & RCC Mini & Youth Law Variations (Rev.2), which every club in the UAE plays to. Anything not listed follows normal World Rugby law.

THE NUMBERS

what you will see on match day

15 a-side
PLAYERS ON THE PITCH
Scrum of 8, lineout of 7.

22
MAX SQUAD SIZE
Rolling substitutions, on and off as often as coaches like.

2 × 25 mins
LEAGUE MATCH
Maximum. Tournaments: 2 × 15.

60 × 90 m
MAXIMUM PITCH SIZE
A full-size pitch.

Size 4
BALL
One size down from the full-size 5 used from U15.

50 %
EVERYONE PLAYS
Every player must be on the pitch for at least half of every match.

WHAT'S NEW AT U12

compared with U11 Year 6

	U11 YEAR 6	U12 YEAR 7
TEAM & SQUAD	12-a-side, squad of 18	**15-a-side, squad of 22**
PITCH & BALL	40 m × 70 m, size 4 ball	**60 m × 90 m, size 4 ball**
LEAGUE MATCH	2 × 20 mins or 4 × 10 mins	**2 × 25 mins**
SCRUM	6 players, contested, 1 m push	**8 players, contested, 1 m push**
LINEOUT	5 + thrower, contested, no lift	**7 + thrower, contested, no lift**
KICKING	No kicking in open play	**Kicking out of hand allowed**
SCORING	Try 5 (7 in the try zone)	**Try 5, conversion 2**
KICK-OFF	Drop kick, defence 7 m back	**Drop kick, defence 10 m back**
PENALTY	Tap & pass, defence 7 m back or scrum	**Tap & pass, defence 10 m back or scrum or kick to touch**
DISCIPLINE	5-minute substitution	**10-minute substitution**

STILL NOT IN THE GAME AT U12

No penalty goals or drop goals and no lifting in the lineout. These arrive in the older age groups.

MATCH DAY BASICS

TIME, TEAMS, SCORING & RESTARTS

TIME ON THE PITCH

HOW LONG IS A GAME?

- **League:** 2 halves of 25 mins (maximum).
- **Tournaments & festivals:** 2 halves of 15 mins (maximum).
- **Daily limit:** no player may play more than **90 minutes in one day**, however many games there are.

SELECTION

EVERYONE PLAYS

- The **"50% rule"**: every child in the squad must play at least half of every match.
- Substitutions are **rolling**. Players can go off and come back on any number of times, so coming off is not a bad sign.
- Squads are capped at **22** so that the 50% rule is workable.

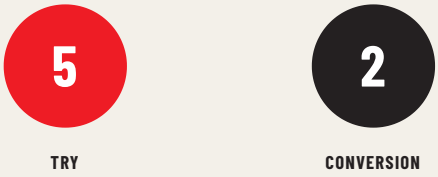
POINTS

HOW DO YOU SCORE?

- **Try = 5 points.** Ball grounded over the try line under control.
- **Conversion = 2 points.** Taken in front of the posts, 10 m back from the try line.
- **No penalty goals and no drop goals** yet. These arrive at U13.

DIAGRAM

POINTS ON THE BOARD



GETTING THINGS GOING

KICK-OFFS & RESTARTS

- Each half starts with a **drop kick** from the middle of the pitch.
- The receiving team must stand **10 m back**, and the kick must travel at least 10 m.
- After a try, the team that **did not score** restarts the game with a drop kick. Scoring means you have to win the ball back.

NEAR THE TRY LINE

IN-GOAL & THE "22" RESTART

- If an attacker is **held up** over the try line (unable to ground the ball), the defending team restarts with a **goal-line drop-out**, as in the senior game.
- When the defence makes the ball dead in their own in-goal, play restarts with a **22 drop-out**: a drop kick taken from on or behind the 22 m line.

OFFENCES

PENALTIES & FREE KICKS

- The team awarded a penalty may **tap and pass**, take a **scrum**, or **kick for touch** and get the lineout throw. The opposition must retreat **10 m**.
- **No kicking for goal** from penalties yet. Penalty goals arrive at U13.
- Common penalties you will hear: *offside, not releasing the ball, hands in the ruck, not rolling away, high tackle.*

KICKING

KICKING OUT OF HAND

Players may now **kick the ball out of hand** in open play: to touch, chips over the defence, grubbers along the ground. **"Fly hacking"** (kicking a loose ball on the ground) is not allowed for safety.

A player catching an opposition kick cleanly inside their own 22 may call **"mark"** and take a free kick.

CONTACT & SET PIECE

TACKLE, RUCK, MAUL, SCRUM & LINEOUT

CONTACT

THE TACKLE

- Full tackling to normal **World Rugby Law 14**: below the line of the shoulders, wrap the arms, then release and roll away.
- **No "swinging" tackles.** A defender may not grab an arm or a shirt and swing the ball carrier around or to the ground.

AFTER THE TACKLE

THE RUCK CONTESTED

- Once a player is tackled, both teams compete for the ball on the ground. This is a **ruck**, fully contested under **World Rugby Law 15**.
- Defenders may **counter-ruck** (drive the attackers off the ball) and **jackal** (grab the ball while on their feet before a ruck forms).
- Everyone must enter from their own side ("through the gate") and stay on their feet.

STANDING TACKLES

THE MAUL

When the ball carrier is held up standing and team-mates bind on, that is a **maul**. If it stops and the ball is not out within **5 seconds**, the referee awards a **scrum to the team that had the ball** (World Rugby Law 16).

Collapsing a maul is a penalty offence, as in World Rugby law.

BALL CARRIER

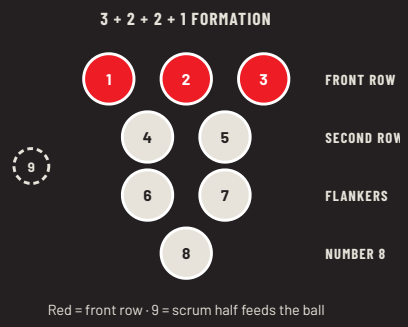
FENDING & THE "SQUEEZE BALL"

- Ball carriers may **fend** (push a tackler away with an open hand) but **only to the chest or below**. Never to the face or neck.
- **No "squeeze ball".** A tackled player may not curl up over the ball and push it back between their own legs. Present it to the side.

SET PIECE

THE SCRUM CONTESTED

- **8 players** per side in a **3 + 2 + 2 + 1** formation: a front row of three, two second rows, two flankers and a number 8.
- The scrum is **contested**, but the push is limited to a **maximum of 1 metre**. Driving further is a penalty.
- The **number 8 cannot pick the ball up** from the base. Only the scrum half may play it.
- The **scrum half can pass or run** from the scrum.
- The **defending scrum half may not go past the middle of the scrum**, giving the attacking 9 space to clear the ball.



Red = front row · 9 = scrum half feeds the ball

SET PIECE

THE LINEOUT CONTESTED

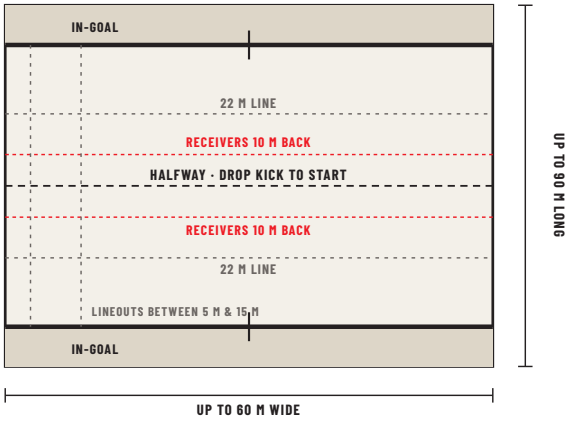
- When the ball goes into touch, play restarts with a lineout of **7 players per team plus the thrower**, formed between **5 m and 15 m** in from the touchline, as in the senior game.
- Both teams may **jump and compete** for the ball, but there is **no lifting** or supporting of jumpers.
- The catching team may **"catch and drive" for a maximum of 5 metres** before the ball must come out.
- Everyone not in the lineout must stay **10 m back** until it is over.



THE PITCH & THE JARGON

WHERE THINGS HAPPEN, AND WHAT THE WORDS MEAN

THE U12 PITCH



Maximum sizes, not to scale. Exact markings vary from venue to venue.

DISTANCES TO REMEMBER

KICK-OFF	receivers 10 m back
PENALTY / FREE KICK	opposition 10 m back
LINEOUT	backs 10 m back
SCRUM PUSH	max 1 m

WHERE TO FIND THE FULL RULES

This guide summarises the U12 (Year 7) column of the *2026/27 RCC & UAERF Mini & Youth Law Variations, Rev.2*. Your age-group coach has the full document covering every age group from U6 to U18. If in doubt, ask them rather than the referee.

JARGON BUSTER

what the words mean

TAP & PASS
The player taps the ball with their foot and passes to a team-mate to restart play. Used for penalties, free kicks and many restarts.

RUCK
Players from each team, on their feet, over a ball on the ground after a tackle. Once a ruck forms, hands are not allowed.

JACKAL
A defender staying on their feet and grabbing the ball from a tackled player before a ruck forms.

MAUL
Like a ruck, but the ball carrier is still standing and held by players from both sides.

SCRUM
The forwards bind together while the scrum half feeds the ball in. Restarts play after minor errors such as a forward pass or knock-on.

LINEOUT
Restarts play after the ball goes into touch. Two lines of players compete for a ball thrown in from the touchline.

KNOCK-ON / FORWARD PASS
Dropping the ball forwards, or passing it forwards. Both give possession to the other team.

OFFSIDE
Being in front of the ball, or on the wrong side of a ruck, scrum or lineout. The most common penalty at every age.

BEHAVIOUR

DISCIPLINE

There are no yellow cards in the senior sense. Any **misconduct** (dangerous play, backchat, repeated foul play) is dealt with by a compulsory **10-minute substitution**. The player comes off, cools down with the coach and can come back on after 10 minutes. It is a teaching moment, not a punishment for life.

ON THE SIDELINE

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Referees at this age are often young or volunteer coaches applying these variations for the first time. Decisions will not always be perfect. Please back the referee, let the coaches coach, and cheer effort as loudly as tries.

One team. One family. One Exiles.