

DUBAI EXILES

RUGBY & NETBALL SINCE 1966

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

U9

YEAR 4 · CONTACT RUGBY · 7-A-SIDE

ONE TEAM. ONE FAMILY.
ONE EXILES.

U9 AT A GLANCE

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

This is the big one: **Year 4 is the first year of contact rugby**. Tackling is introduced, along with a gentle version of the ruck and an uncontested scrum. Coaches spend a lot of the season on safe tackle technique, and the law variations below are designed to keep everything slow, safe and fun.

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

7 a-side
PLAYERS ON THE PITCH
Scrum of 3, lineout of 2.

12
MAX SQUAD SIZE
Rolling substitutions, on and off as often as coaches like.

2 × 15 mins
LEAGUE MATCH
Maximum. Can also be played as 4 × 7 mins. Tournaments: 2 × 10.

35 × 60 m
MAXIMUM PITCH SIZE
A small pitch, so the ball is never far away.

Size 3
BALL
A smaller ball that fits young hands. A full-size ball is a size 5.

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

WHAT'S NEW AT U9

compared with U8

	U8	U9 YEAR 4
CONTACT	Rip the tag, no tackling	**Full tackling**
RUCK	No rucks	**Semi-contested, 2 defenders may compete**
KICK-OFF	Tap & pass, defence 5–7 m back	**Drop kick, defence 5–7 m back**
PENALTY	Tap & pass, defence 5 m back	**Tap & pass, defence 7 m back**
FENDING	Not allowed	**Chest and below only**

Everything else is unchanged from U8. 5 things change this season.

STILL NOT IN THE GAME AT U9

No kicking in open play, no conversions, no penalty goals or drop goals, no lifting in the lineout, no driving mauls, no pushing in the scrum and no competing at 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 15 mins (maximum), or 4 quarters of 7 mins.
- **Tournaments & festivals:** 2 halves of 10 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 **12** so that the 50% rule is workable.

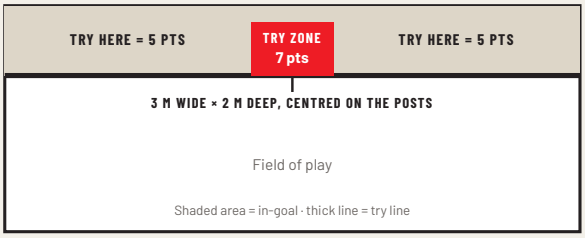
POINTS

HOW DO YOU SCORE?

- **Try = 5 points.** Ball grounded over the try line under control.
- **Optional 7-point "Try Zone".** Some leagues and festivals mark 3 m × 2 m box in the middle of the try line. A try scored inside it is worth **7 points**. This rewards teams for working the ball back towards the middle rather than just sprinting down the wing.
- **No conversions**, no penalty goals and no drop goals. There is no kicking for points at all at this age.

DIAGRAM

THE 7-POINT TRY ZONE



GETTING THINGS GOING

KICK-OFFS & RESTARTS

- Each half starts with a **drop kick** from the middle of the pitch. This is the only kicking you will see at this age.
- The receiving team must stand **5–7 m back**, and the kick must travel at least 5–7 m.
- After a try, the team that **did not score** restarts the game with a tap and pass. Scoring means you have to win the ball back.

NEAR THE TRY LINE

IN-GOAL & THE "22" RESTART

- If the ball goes dead in the in-goal area or the attacker is **held up** (over the line but unable to ground the ball), the **defending team** restarts with a **tap and pass** 5 m out from their goal line. The attackers must stand 7 m back.
- What would be a "22 drop-out" in senior rugby is replaced by a **free tap and pass** to the team in possession, 10 m out from the try line.

OFFENCES

PENALTIES & FREE KICKS

- Penalties are always a **tap and pass**. The opposition must retreat **7 m**.
- There is no kicking for touch and no shot at goal.
- Common penalties you will hear: *offside, not releasing the ball, hands in the ruck, not rolling away, high tackle.*

KICKING

NO KICKING IN OPEN PLAY

Apart from the drop kick to start each half, **kicking is not allowed**. No kicks to touch, no chips, no grubbers. This keeps the ball in hand and encourages passing and running. There is also no "mark".

Kicking out of hand, conversions and the mark arrive at U12 (U14 for the girls' Quick Rip game).

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.
- Coaches spend most of this first contact season on **safe tackle technique**: head to the side, cheek to cheek, arms wrapped.

AFTER THE TACKLE

THE RUCK SEMI-CONTESTED

- After a tackle, one or more attackers may **"bridge"** over the ball and the tackled player to protect it. The first player over the ball sets the offside line.
- Only the **main tackler and the next defender** may compete for the ball or counter-ruck, and both must come from an onside position.
- Everyone else must wait for the ball to come out. This keeps the pile-up small and safe.

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).

BALL CARRIER

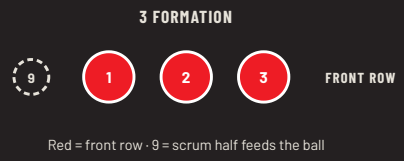
FENDING & THE "SQUEEZE BALL"

- 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 UNCONTESTED

- **3 players** per side in a **3** formation: a front row of three: two props and a hooker.
- The scrum is **uncontested**: the team putting the ball in wins it, and there is **no pushing**. It is simply a safe way to restart play and learn the body positions.
- The backs of both teams must stay **5 m behind** the scrum.
- The **scrum half must pass** from the scrum: no running from the base.
- 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 UNCONTESTED

- When the ball goes into touch, play restarts with a lineout of **2 players per team plus the thrower**, formed **3 metres in** from the touchline.
- The lineout is **uncontested**: the throwing team wins the ball, and the defence may not jump for it.
- **No driving mauls** from a lineout. Once caught, the ball must be passed or run.
- Everyone not in the lineout must stay **7 m back** until it is over.

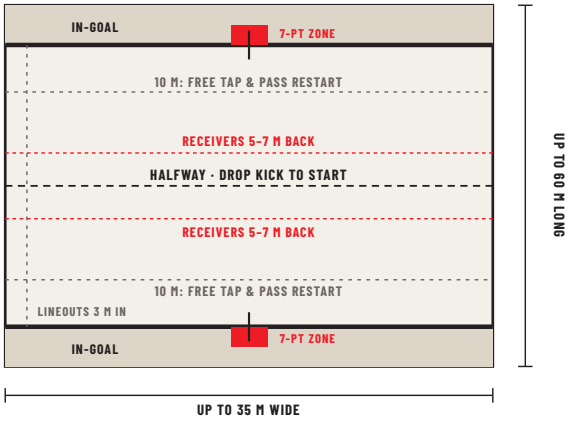


No lifting

THE PITCH & THE JARGON

WHERE THINGS HAPPEN, AND WHAT THE WORDS MEAN

THE U9 PITCH



Maximum sizes, not to scale. Clubs usually mark this pitch across part of a full-size field, so distances vary by venue.

DISTANCES TO REMEMBER

KICK-OFF	receivers 5–7 m back
PENALTY / FREE KICK	opposition 7 m back
LINEOUT	backs 7 m back
SCRUM	backs 5 m back
RESTART NEAR TRY LINE	5 m out, attackers 7 m back

WHERE TO FIND THE FULL RULES

This guide summarises the U9 (Year 4) 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.

BRIDGING
An attacker leaning over the tackled player and ball to protect it, without going off their feet.

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.

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

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.

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

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

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 **2-minute substitution**. The player comes off, cools down with the coach and can come back on after 2 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.