

**RETURN TO RUGBY STAGE D1 & D2:**

# **A GUIDE TO ACTIVITY**

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**MARCH 2021**

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**England  
Rugby**

## INTRODUCTION

The progression to stage D1 on the [Return to Rugby Roadmap](#) from the 29th March 2021 means that contact activity except scrum and maul can take place in training and inter-club Tag, Touch and Ready4Rugby fixtures can restart. The progression to stage D2 on the [Return to Roadmap](#) from the 26th April 2021 means contact fixtures under temporary law variations (no scrum or maul) can take place.

This is an extension of the overall guidance outlined in the [Return to Community Rugby Guidance](#). Clubs should continue to work within these guidelines to ensure that all facility,

pre-activity and other general operational practices are safe and appropriate.

Clubs are now able to organise Tag, Touch and Ready4Rugby at stage D1 and contact fixtures under temporary law variations, which remove the scrum and maul at stage D2. Clubs should only do this once they have carried out an appropriate risk assessment to take into account additional considerations that may be required during the Covid-19 pandemic, for example total number of people on site and adhering to social distancing. Clubs should ensure they are appropriately setup and prepared for safely welcoming other clubs and

individuals to their facilities. More information is available in the [Return to Community Rugby](#) and [Facility Reopening Guidance](#).

The 'progressive' reintroduction of contact activity is important to ensure players can continue to practice core skills and are able to start preparing and conditioning themselves appropriately as the game continues to progress back to normality with regular training and matches. Clubs found to be in breach of permitted activity may face disciplinary action and/or invalidate their liability insurance.

## STAGE D - TRAINING ACTIVITY GUIDANCE

In Stage D, initial training sessions should focus on building players general fitness levels and rugby skill development along with non-contact game play such as Tag, Touch and Ready4Rugby. Contact training activities should be introduced incrementally, building up to a maximum of 20 minutes duration per session.

**Coaches and session organisers should apply the following key mitigations to reduce exposure risk amongst players.**

- No scrum or maul activity permitted.
- Incremental build up to a maximum of 20 minutes contact activity within a single training session.
- Activity should last no longer than 15 minutes without a break to sanitise.
- Team play activities Tag, Touch and Ready4Rugby formats.
- During a session (contact activities and Tag/Touch/Ready4Rugby activities combined) players should avoid face to face exposure of more than 3 seconds and more than 15 minutes of exposure at less than 1 metre with another player.
- Coaches and players should remain social distanced during breaks.
- Coaches should remain socially distanced when giving players instruction, observing and giving feedback.
- Ensure all players clean hands and equipment is sanitised after contact skills training.
- Team huddles should be avoided. Spitting and chewing gum should also be avoided.
- Ensure there is appropriate first aid cover for a contact session.



**TOTAL TIME OF ALL CONTACT ACTIVITY SHOULD NOT EXCEED 20 MINUTES PER SESSION**

There are no restrictions on group size, however we recommend adoption of recommended coach to player ratios. Players may be returning from an extended period of inactivity, not just rugby activity and coaches should consider an incremental reintroduction for players such as duration, intensity and type of activities.

Coach to player ratios: U7 1:6 | U8 1:8 | U9-U18 1:10 | Adult 1:15



**TACKLING**

- Safe legal technique by ball carrier and tackler.
- Introduce incrementally starting with contact with floor.
- Reintroduce tackling 1v1 to develop ball carry and tackle technique.
- Small group activity, preferably with players working in pairs.
- Use of tackle bags, shields and pads that are cleaned and sanitised after each player use.
- A focus on the key coaching points.
- Ensure players are confident and physically ready before increasing intensity.



- No upright tackles.
- No holding the ball carrier up in the tackle.
- No equipment such as tackle pads, bags and shields to be used by multiple people without cleaning and sanitising.
- Coaches must NOT hold pads or shields or bags for age grade players.



**RUCK**

- Incremental introduction of the ruck into training sessions.
- Reduce numbers in the practice to build confidence and refine technique.
- Build intensity in line with players stage of development.
- Ensure all activity is within the laws of the game.



- Coaches must not hold tackle shields for players.
- No equipment such as tackle pads, bags and shields to be used by multiple people without cleaning and sanitising.



**LINEOUT**

- Incremental introduction starting with jumping and landing
- Lifting of a jumper (u15 and above only)
- Start uncontested building to contested
- Reduce the time the front lifter and a jumper are face to face in lineout set up to under 3 seconds.



- No maul to be formed after ball secured.



**SCRUM**

- Individual body shape including harness/ resistance band and neck strength exercises permitted.



- No scrum practice with others, including on scrum machines, sleds and unit practice.



**MAUL**

- No maul practice activity allowed, including from a lineout.



## EQUIPMENT

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- Any equipment such as tackle pads, shields, bags should be cleaned and sanitised after each individual players use.
- All other equipment including tags and rugby balls should be cleaned and sanitised after a maximum of 15 minutes activity.
- The holding of tackle shields, pads or bags must not be carried out by a coach or adult for any age grade player. [Watch the Holding a Tackle Pad Safely video for more information.](#)
- Sharing of equipment should be avoided at all times including bibs and playing shirts on match days.
- Players should refrain from touching or removing their mouth guard, and if they do so must wash their hands. Mouth guards must not be left on shared surfaces and should be placed in a personal container and stored with personal possessions.
- Any protective clothing such as head guards and shoulder pads must comply with World Rugby guidance. Head guards and shoulder pads must not be shared during sessions.
- Players should bring their own water bottles and team water bottles should not be used.



## COACHES TOP TIPS

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- Revisit the key coaching points for the core skills of the game.
- Practice observation and analysis skills by watching footage of games and individual player actions.
- Use of England Rugby session guidance template available from 22nd March 2021 on coronavirus resources page [englandrugby.com](https://www.englandrugby.com)

Useful links: [Coaching page](#) [Player position workshop series](#)

## STAGE D2

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From the 26th April we expect to move to stage D2 on the Return to Rugby Roadmap.

This allows for contact matches to take place under temporary law variations removing the scrum and maul. Fixtures are optional and clubs should look to discuss with coaches and players before arranging fixtures as players will be returning in different stages of readiness and putting players in fixtures too quickly and too frequently could lead to a higher risk of injury.

When organising fixtures consider using the [GAME ON](#) principles such as match duration and using quarters instead of halves.

Match officials refereeing the law variations should visit the coronavirus resources page for more information on officiating these law variations.

## SESSION PLANNING

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As we return to activity Coaches should consider what they are returning players for. We hope that the start of the 21/22 season in September will see the reintroduction of competitive full contact rugby union and with this in mind the aim should be to have players in the best state of readiness for the 21/22 season.

When planning sessions for players to return, coaches should consider the following:

- Adjust session durations and frequency to bring players back safely.
- Plan sessions in 3- 4 session blocks to have a long term view of integrating the players back.
- Plan the intensity of the activity as well as the activity itself. This should start with low intensity building.
- Do not try to progress players too quickly. Players will return at different levels of readiness and activity should reflect this. Players should not progress until confident and physically safe to do so.





## GUIDE RESOURCES

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**ALL RESOURCES REFERENCED IN THIS  
GUIDANCE DOCUMENT CAN BE FOUND ON THE  
CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES PAGE**

CLICK HERE:

<https://www.englandrugby.com/participation/running-your-club/coronavirus/coronavirus-resources>