



# Junior Rugby Team Coaching

This Junior Rugby Team Coaching Template is designed to

1. Promote fundamental skill development.
2. Make it easy for junior team coaches to deliver a high value rugby practice.
3. Give junior rugby players an enjoyable and beneficial rugby experience.

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# Junior Rugby Team Coaching Training Flow

Arrive before training starts and set up training area.

At training start time call kids in and address them briefly about last week's game, what went well and what the team needs to get better at.

Be positive about the future regardless of the last match result. Then get on with the training:

1. **Evasive Grid Running** – 4 mins  
1st set **Down & Ups** – 1 min
2. **Power Ball Running** – 3 mins  
2nd set **Down & Ups** – 1 min
3. **Perfect Ball Presentation** – 3 mins
4. **Ruck Clean Out** – 3 mins
5. **Pick & Go or Pick & Pass** – 3 mins  
3rd set of **Down & Ups** – 1 min
6. **Passing Waves** – 6 mins
7. **Draw, Pass, Back up** – 5 mins  
4th Set of **Down & Ups** – 1 min
8. **Tackle Set Up** – 1 min
9. **Safe Strong Tackling Progression** – 1 - 2 mins

10. **Incoming Tackle Repetitions** – 3 mins

11. **Power Tackling vs Stationary Target** – 3 mins

12. **Safe Strong Tackling vs Moving Target** – 5 mins

13. **Ball Runner vs Tackler** – 5 mins

5th Set of **Down & Ups** – 1 min

**Complete training with a game of your choice**

The first few training runs you do using this programme will require detailed explanation before each drill. As you and the kids familiarise yourselves with the programme, the transition between drill and explanation time will become shorter.

These skill drills trained at intensity for the suggested time frames and with efficient transitions between drills, will take your training session to approximately the 55 minute mark. If you like, complete the training with a fun game of your choice.

Encourage the kids to train with intensity. Encourage and commend 100% effort.

*Coach Positive!*

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# Junior Rugby Team Coaching Field Set Up

7-Draw, Pass, Back up

10M

- 8-Tackle Set Up
- 9-Safe, Strong Tackle Progression
- 10-Incoming Tackle Repetitions
- 11-Power Tackling vs Stationary Target

- 12-Safe Strong Tackling vs Moving Target
- 13-Ball Runner vs Tackler

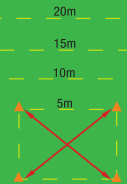
22M

6-Passing Waves

- 3-Perfect Ball Presentation
- 4-Ruck Clean Out
- 5-Pick & Go, Pick & Pass

2-Power Ball Running

1-Evasive Grid Running



TRY LINE



## Watch Videos Online

[www.leslierugby.co.nz/juniorteamcoaching](http://www.leslierugby.co.nz/juniorteamcoaching)

Click online to watch an 8 minute video that runs through all the Skill Drills.



You can also download a PDF version of all these Drill cards.



# Junior Team Coaching



## Fitness Drill: **Down & Ups**

### Notes

Get your team rugby-fit and strong with Down & Ups.

One set of Down & Ups is 10 x 5 Metre sprints. Go to ground (chest touching ground) at the end of each sprint, get up as fast as possible, and repeat until complete.

Use Down & Ups as a transition activity between skill drills.

5 sets of 10 Down & Ups completed in full with correct technique per training is a good goal.

Down & Ups are a positive drill for getting everyone fit for rugby.

Down & Ups are a very successful drill to focus and get control of kids / team.

Make sure drill is done 100% correct.

While team is doing Down & Ups, constantly give positive verbal encouragement to your team and individuals.

### General Coaching Tip

Enjoy Game Day. Smile, shake hands with the ref and the opposition coaches, and wish the opposition kids all the best for a great game of rugby **before the match kicks off**.

**You are a Leader.** Your team and the parents of your team will follow your example, so lead in a generous spirit and with sportsmanship. Give all your players a fair run. If you must yell from the sideline, always keep your words positive. If you become annoyed about something, don't overreact and do keep your cool.

You are doing a great thing, adding value to your community and club by coaching a junior rugby team. Don't spoil your great work and your reputation for the sake of an argument or poor sportsmanship at a kids' rugby game.



# Fitness Drill: **Down & Ups**

STEP 1

Start



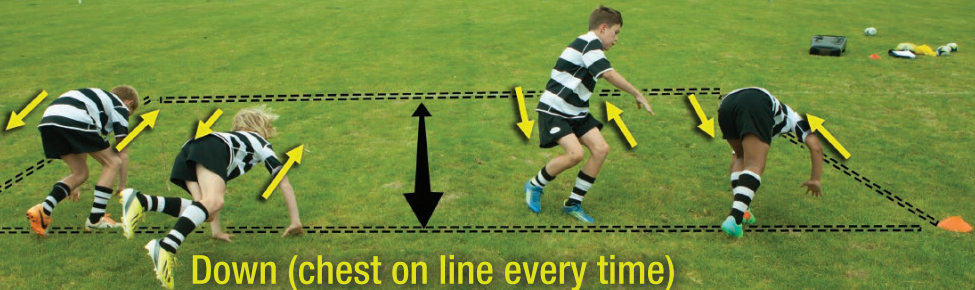
STEP 2

Up & go for 5 metres



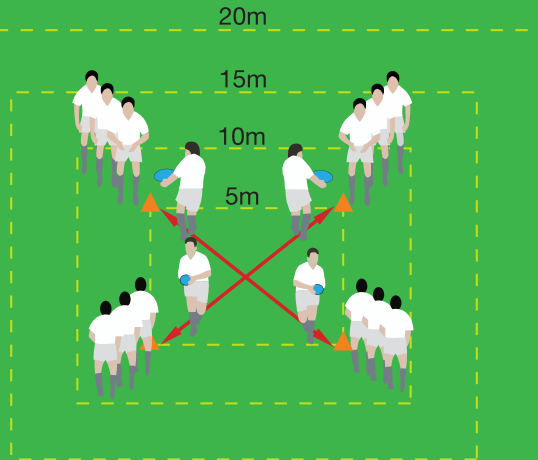
STEP 3

Down (chest on line every time)  
and up and run again  
Repeat 10x shuttles for one set



## Skill Drill 1: Evasive Grid Running

Run fast to opposite corner, avoid collisions, practise side stepping and swerving. Pop pass ball to team mate and join back of line.



### Notes

Start with a small 5m<sup>2</sup> grid then progress to 10m<sup>2</sup>, 15m<sup>2</sup>, 20m<sup>2</sup> grids.

Use evasion and agility skills to avoid collisions.

Add more than 4 balls to the drill so wait line is minimised. Go for 6, then 8, then 10 balls in the drill.

Encourage calling for the ball, running fast and practising evasive running skills.

Encourage popping the ball up so it's easy to catch at ball transfer.

### General Coaching Tip

Deconstruct skill into sub skills at the start of each drill.

Clearly break down key body positions for correct technique.

Demonstrate yourself or get your most competent player to demonstrate as correct example.

During practice give immediate and constant feedback to players on skill just attempted while training is in progress. Keep coaching feedback skill orientated, never personalised.



# Skill Drill 1: Evasive Grid Running

STEP 1

Hands out, fingers spread  
ready to catch



STEP 2

Power step,  
change direction



STEP 3

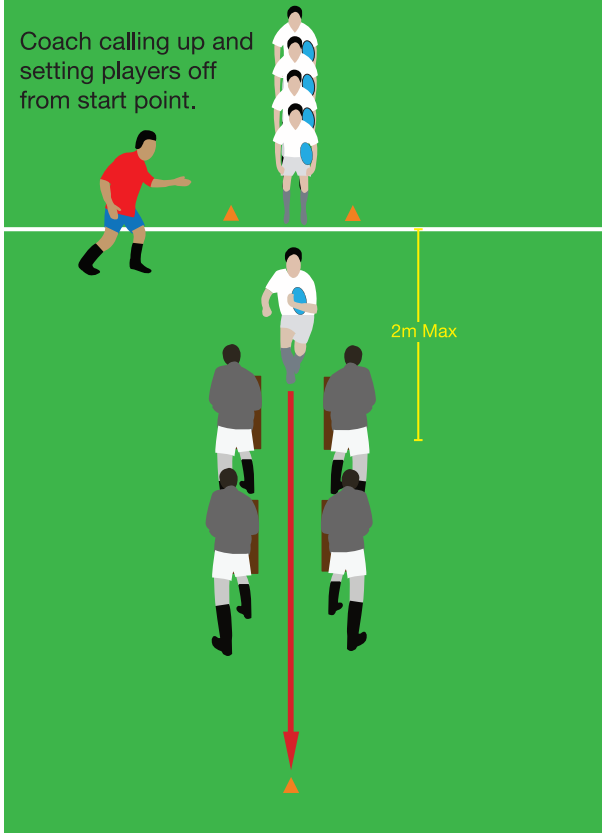
Sprint & swerve





## Skill Drill 2: Power Ball Running

Coach calling up and setting players off from start point.



### Notes

Player body and head position set up to be safe and strong.

Stay square through contact and generate forward momentum with front foot leg drive.

Gauntlet to give some resistance, but never to be rough or intimidating.

### General Coaching Tip

**Maximise skill attempts per training.** The more skill attempts your players practice with good technique, the better they will become.

So, have at least 1 ball per 2 players for training. One ball per player is best. Lack of balls will slow your training and decreases skill attempt opportunities.

Keep distance between the start point and skill attempt short so more skill attempts per practice happen.

Make start point clear. Young players will naturally move back from start point. Continuously move them to the start point and set them off, rapid fire, as soon as path is clear.

Have multiple lines for skill drills – long wait lines are unproductive and hard to manage.

Tool up with balls, cones, a whistle, and hit shields.

Set skill grids up before training starts for efficient transition between drills.



# Skill Drill 2: Power Ball Running

STEP 1

## Strong 3-point ball hold



1. Grip with hand
2. Lock inside arm
3. Ball into body

STEP 2



Head in neutral

Eyes forward

Straight back

Strong, safe body position

Power into & through gauntlet with leg drive

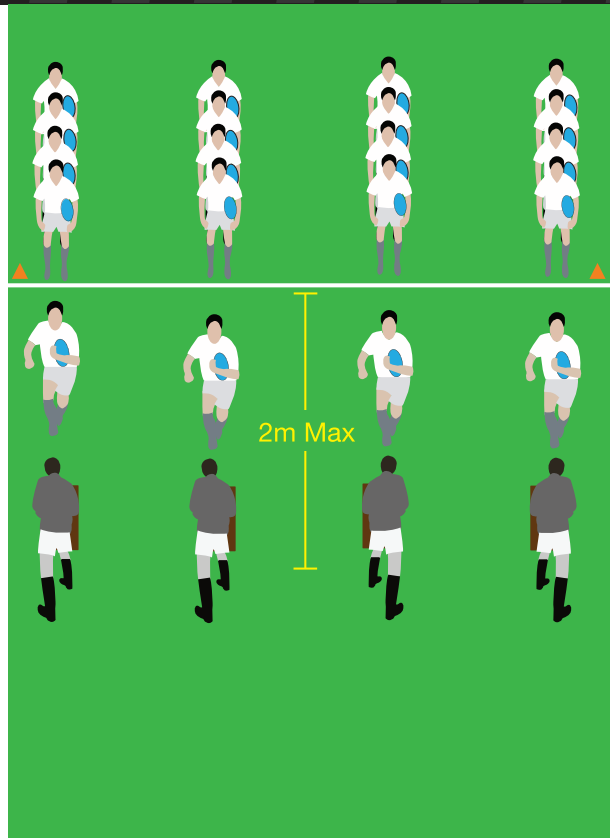
STEP 3



Power through the gauntlet and sprint out to a pre-determined marker



## Skill Drill 3: Perfect Ball Presentation



### Notes

Body position set up safe and strong.

Target edge of Defender (hit shield) with inside shoulder, hold ball in 3-point grip in outside arm.

Stay square through contact and generate go forward power with front foot leg drive. Hit Shield Holder should give with the hit and encourage Ball Carrier to drive forward.

Ball Carrier to land forward with ball secured tightly.

On ground contact, dynamically explode upper body back and punch arms out from body for a long controlled ball placement.

Keep a firm grip and control of the ball with two hands.

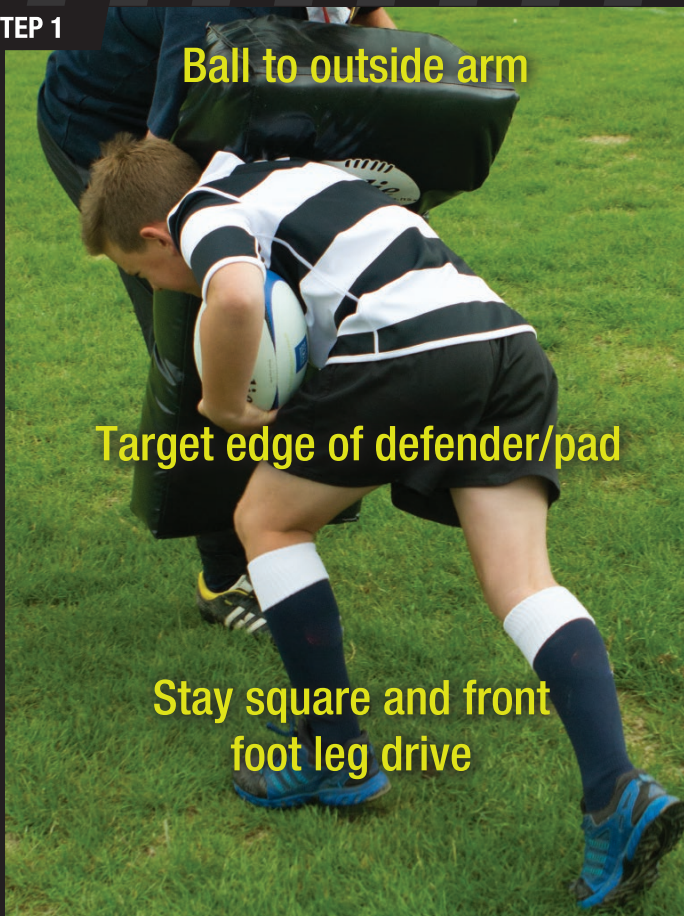
### General Coaching Tip

PARENT AND ASSISTANT COACH HELP IS ESSENTIAL!!! The more, the better for you and your players. Have parents holding hit shields, setting kids off, encouraging players and offering skill feedback. Get a core group of parents (assistant coaches!) early in the season to commit to helping you.



# Skill Drill 3: Perfect Ball Presentation

STEP 1



Ball to outside arm

Target edge of defender/pad

Stay square and front foot leg drive

STEP 2



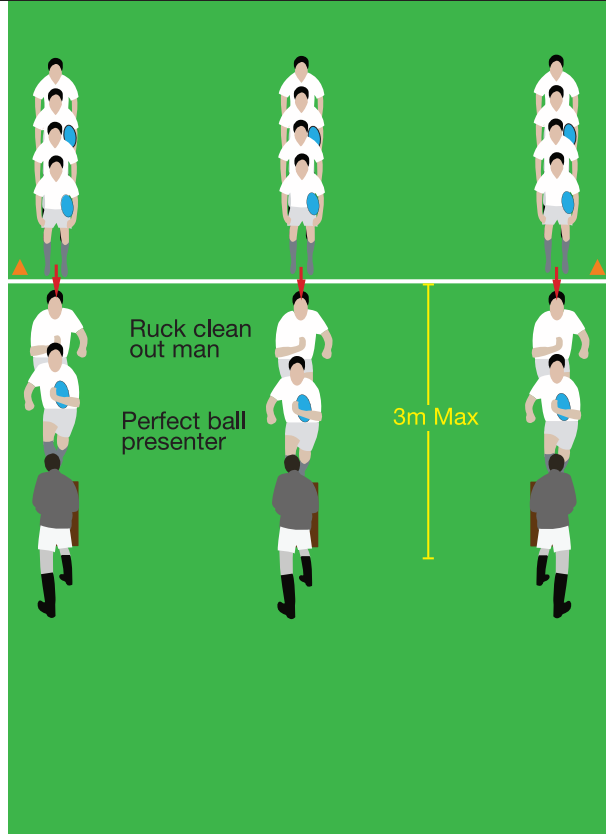
When forward momentum slows, fall forward like scoring a try with tight grip on the ball

STEP 3



Explode upper body back for dynamic ball placement

## Skill Drill 4: Ruck Clean Out



### Notes

Work in pairs: 1. Perfect Ball Presenter 2. Ruck Clean Out Man

- Ruck Clean Out Man sets up and approaches ruck safe and strong.
- At contact, head safe and to the side of shield, shoulder on, wrap arms, drive forward and low to high (like a plane taking off) over and past the ball and team mate.
- Coaches / parents holding hit shields – give the Ruck Clean Out Man a clear target. And coach him to drive you back a metre or so - don't be a brick wall!

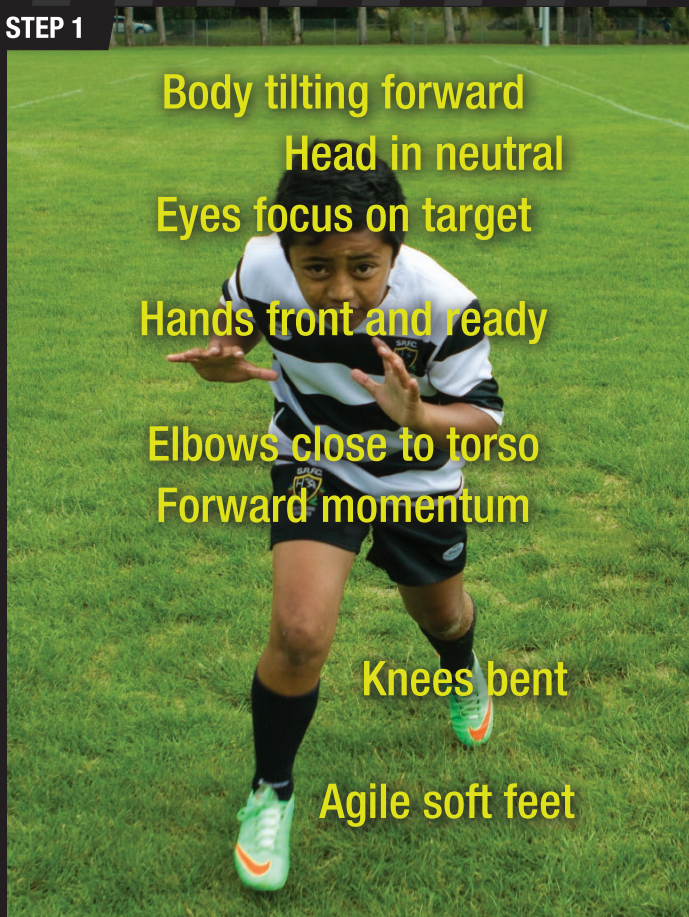
### General Coaching Tip

Don't over-train your junior team. Keep the kids and yourself fresh for a full season of rugby. Set a start time and a finish time and stick to it. Once you start training, go full blast with skill drills until trainings end. Use your training time for players in action.



# Skill Drill 4: Ruck Clean Out

STEP 1



Body tilting forward  
Head in neutral  
Eyes focus on target  
Hands front and ready  
Elbows close to torso  
Forward momentum

Knees bent  
Agile soft feet

STEP 2



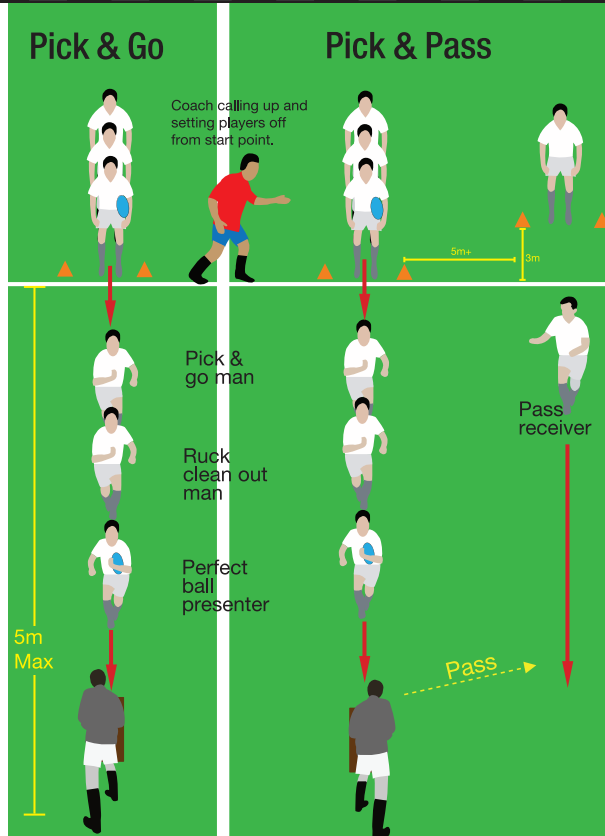
Head safe and strong to side of pad  
Shoulder on/wrap arms  
Step over team mate

STEP 3



Squeeze arms tight,  
drive opposition with strong body position,  
and leg drive

## Skill Drill 5: Pick & Go and Pick & Pass



### Notes

- For **Pick & Go** work in threes: **1.** Perfect Ball Presenter **2.** Ruck Clean Out Man **3.** Pick & Go Player.
- When picking ball, snap ball close to body and sprint forward around edge of ruck area to a pre-determined marker cone.
- For **Pick & Pass** work in fours: **1.** Perfect Ball Presenter **2.** Ruck Clean Out Man **3.** Pick & Pass Player **4.** Pass Receiver, Ball Runner.
- Pick ball and give a pass to 1st receiver who catches the ball and runs forward to a pre-determined marker.

### General Coaching Tip

To be a great rugby player you must become skill competent on both left and right sides of your body. Junior players will usually favour their dominant side during skill drills. Set up drills so your players practice skills an equal amount both left and right sides of their body.



# Skill Drill 5: Pick & Go and Pick & Pass

STEP 1



Approach ball with soft agile feet

Drop the hips for balance and strength

Pick with two hands

STEP 1



Approach ball with soft agile feet

Plant foot close to the ball

STEP 2



Sprint forward to a pre-determined marker

STEP 2

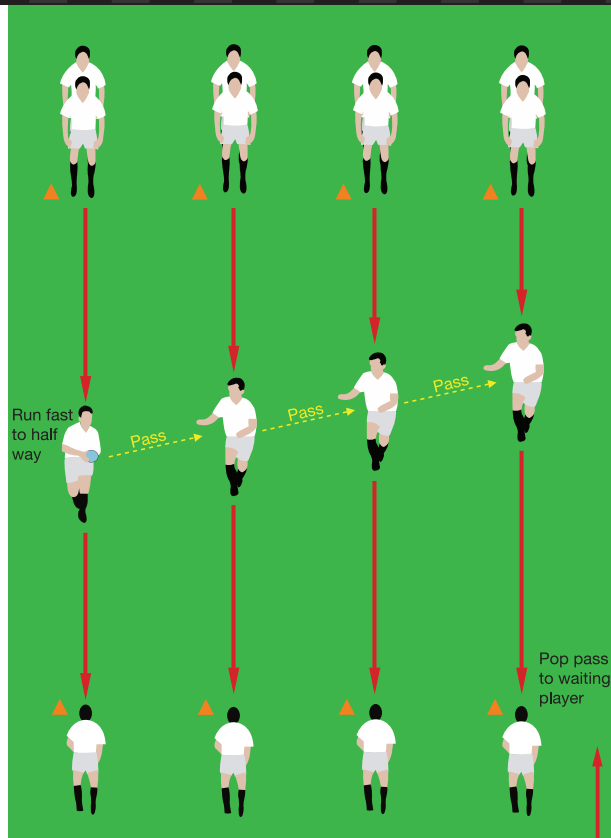


Leading foot angled towards team mate

Scoop and pass from ground to team mate running onto ball



## Skill Drill 6: Passing Waves



### Notes

Ball Passer to point to target where ball is to go.

Encourage confident passing and calling for the ball.

Evenly swap middle players with outside players. Evenly train left and right hand passing.

Encourage players to catch ball and to move across chest without dipping the ball.

Catching player sets hands in W formation and towards incoming pass so he can receive ball before his trunk. This gives a target for Passer and prepares Receiver for catch success.

### General Coaching Tip

Soft, agile, quick FEET for skill success. Correct and effective Tackling, Passing, Catching, Jumping, Evasive Running, Ruck Clean Out, Kicking and all other rugby skills start with soft, agile, quick feet. Slow, heavy feet leading into a skill gives little chance of success. Your feet are your launch pad for takeoff for each skill. If a player is struggling with any skill, look to their feet first and encourage “soft” feet leading into and throughout the skill. This will often be the magic to set them off for success.



# Skill Drill 6: **Passing Waves**

STEP 1



**Ready to catch**

STEP 2



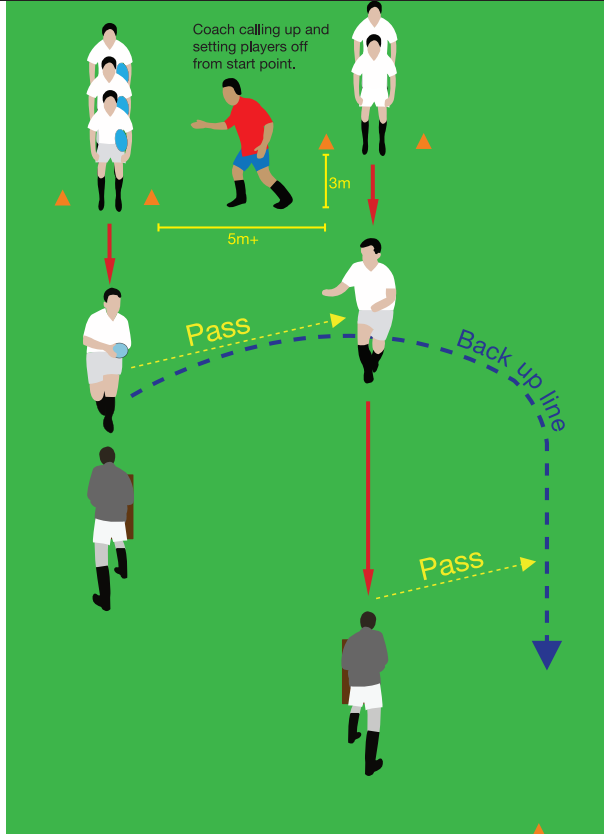
**Receive ball early before trunk  
Outside hand forward as a target**

STEP 3



**Fire from shoulder  
Arm punch  
Point to target after release  
Hips square to try line**

## Skill Drill 7: Draw, Pass, Back up



### Notes

Coach to set players off in staggered pairs. 2nd player must start 4 or 5 metres behind the 1st. This creates depth and run onto the ball at pace opportunity.

1st Ball Carrier to run straight at Defender.

Just before contact with Defender, Ball Carrier passes to team mate who is calling for and running onto the ball.

Once they've completed the pass, 1st Ball Carrier is to backup teammate and call for the ball and receive the 2nd pass.

2nd Ball Carrier to repeat 1st Ball Carrier's draw and pass skill.

### General Coaching Tip

Excessive coach talk while kids are not in action is a poor use of team training time; kids will stop listening to you in this situation after about 20 seconds. This is human nature – don't try to fight it.

Don't get in the habit of stopping the team training flow for the sake of one kid or mistake. Keep the rapid fire skill attempt rate high and kids streaming through. You know mistakes WILL happen. Choose not to get frustrated or annoyed by what you know will happen.

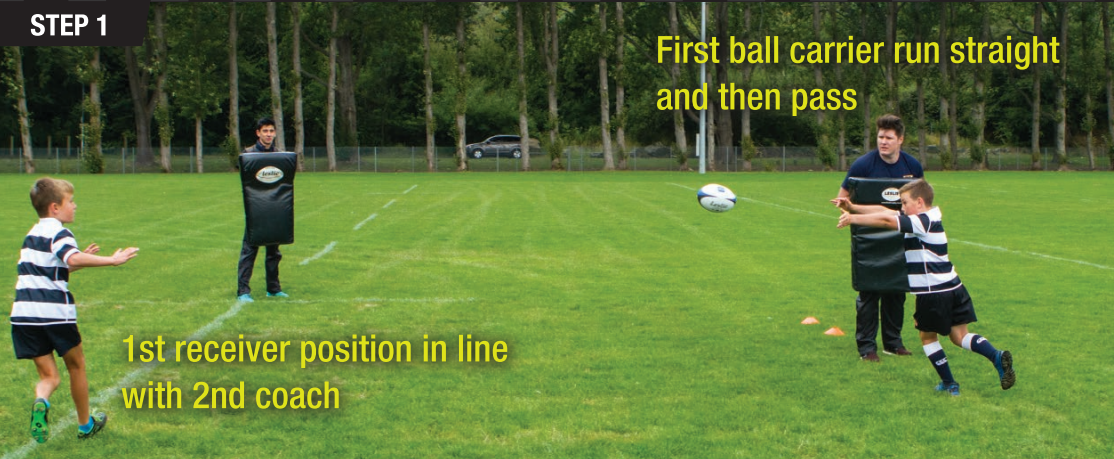
Give immediate feedback to individuals while drills are in action or have just finished. Keep feedback simple, non personalised and to the point.

Congratulate excellent skill drill execution and improvement at every opportunity.



# Skill Drill 7: Draw, Pass, Back up

## STEP 1



First ball carrier run straight and then pass

1st receiver position in line with 2nd coach

## STEP 2



2nd ball carrier to run straight and fast at 2nd coach

1st ball carrier to back up 2nd ball carrier

## STEP 3



Pass and run on for completion

## Skill Drill 8: Tackle Set Up



### Notes

This drill is to train kids so they can automatically position themselves for safe and effective tackling.

On coach’s command:

“Feet” = soft agile feet moving forward, visualise approaching for a tackle.

“Set” = set stationary in a strong safe body position to make a tackle.

“Tackle” = power step forward and with strong body position visualising tackling Ball Carrier. Same shoulder as same power step leg.

### General Coaching Tip

Defence is 50% of rugby, and tackling is, for some, the hardest skill to master. Tackling requires anticipation, agility, strength, complex technique and courage. Be patient and supportive of your junior players - some will get it faster than others. As with offensive rugby skills, lots of stimulating skill-orientated practice is the answer to becoming competent and confident.



# Skill Drill 8: Tackle Set Up

## STEP 1

Set up for tackle  
safe & strong

- Head in neutral
- Eyes on target
- Straight back
- Elbows close to torso
- Hands front & ready
- Bent knees
- Weight on balls of feet
- Weight forward
- Toes point forward

## STEP 2

Power step forward  
into tackle,  
same shoulder  
same leg

Head in neutral  
Straight back

Thrust out arms

Strong legs,  
knees bent

## Skill Drill 9: Safe Strong Tackling Progression



### Notes

Kids in pairs on knees with Tackler set up for a side on tackle. Ball Carrier providing tackle target.

Tackler to “set” for a safe tackle.

Knee step forward close to Ball Carrier – this creates tackle power. The closer the Tackler’s knee to the Ball Carrier, the more power. Head safe (cheek on cheek), shoulder on, wrap arm, drive forward to complete tackle.

Tackler to use same shoulder as power step knee, e.g right knee = right shoulder.

Coach kids not to timber like a falling tree into the tackle – power cannot be generated like this.

Ball Carrier is not to fight the tackle; Ball Carrier is to place ball perfectly when tackled.

Swap roles, practice both shoulders.

Have assistant coaches / parents amongst team correcting and commending safe strong technique.

### General Coaching Tip

Remove disruptive kids from the group. Don’t let them spoil the session for all the other players. Sit them out at a distance from the action. Give them the choice to join the team training again when they are ready to participate and engage to the level of expectation.

Suggested expectations of your players:

1. Try your hardest.
2. Don’t be scared of making a mistake.
3. Follow coach’s instruction.
4. Don’t talk or mess about when coach is talking or while training is on.



# Skill Drill 9: Safe Strong Tackling Progression

## STEP 1

Ball carrier  
to be tackled

Strong, safe  
set-up



## STEP 2

Head safe (cheek to cheek)

Same leg/same shoulder

Knee close (power step)



## STEP 3

Wrap arms tight

Head safe, on top of  
ball carrier

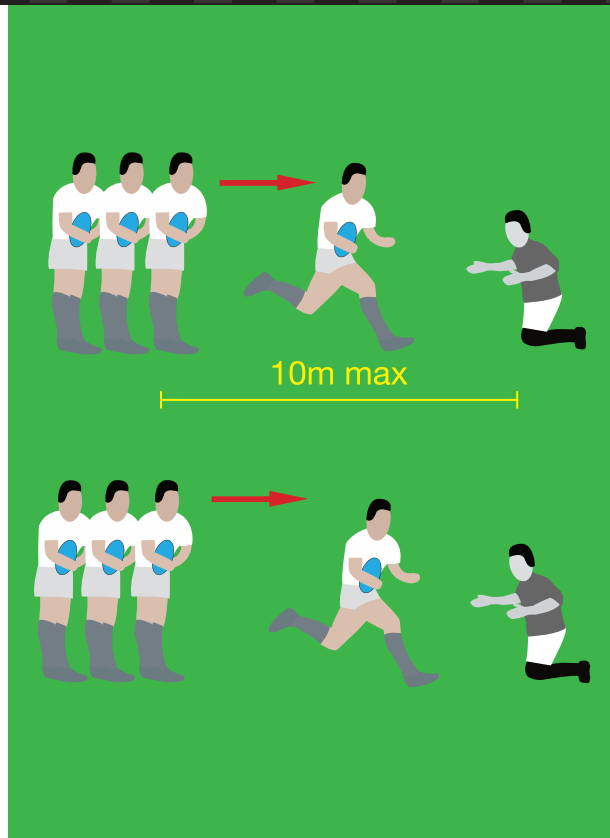
Drive ball carrier over complete tackle

Ball carrier to present  
ball perfectly once tackled





## Skill Drill 10: Incoming Tackle Repetitions



### Notes

Tackler on knees set to tackle. Team mates run towards and close to Tackler offering to be tackled.

Safe, strong body “set” before tackle and on contact, head positioned safe (cheek on cheek), shoulder on and wrap arms tight to complete tackle.

Groups of 4 or 5 kids, and drill for approximately 30 seconds or 10 tackles, then change Tackler. Have Ball Runners approach from no more than 10 metres at  $\frac{1}{2}$  pace. They are to get up immediately and reposition again for next run. Ball Carriers to run both left and right sides of Tackler for left and right shoulder tackle practice.

### General Coaching Tip

Mouthguards are to be worn at all times at training and in match play. No mouthguard, no play is the NZ Rugby rule.

Have lots of extra mouthguards in your kit bag for when required.



# Skill Drill 10: Incoming Tackle Repetitions

STEP 1



Incoming ball runner



Set safe & strong

STEP 2

Head safe,  
cheek to cheek

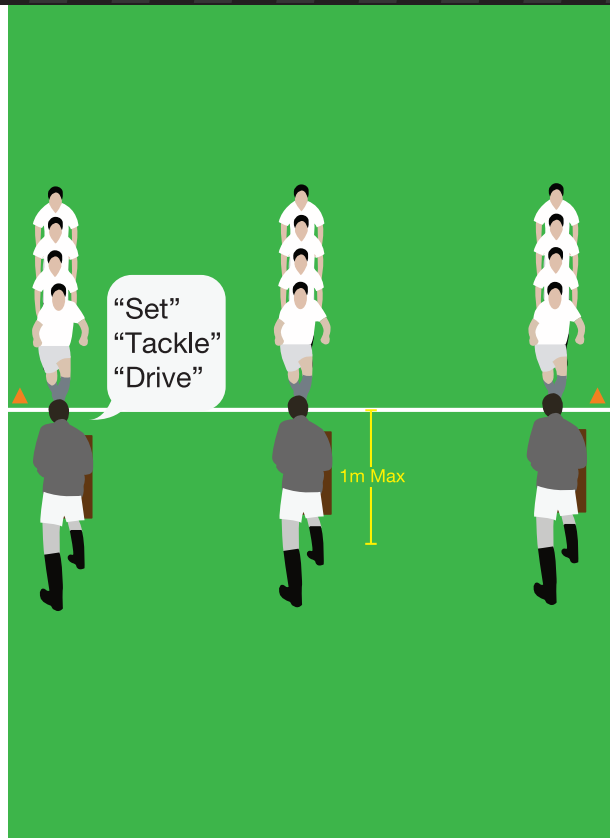


Shoulder on

Wrap arms tight

Complete tackle

## Skill Drill 11: Power Tackling vs Stationary Target



### Notes

Successful power tackling requires Tackler positioning his front foot (power step) as close to the Ball Carrier as possible, followed by a crisp body dip and clean shoulder contact on the target. Then wrap arms tight and drive Ball Carrier back using fast feet and strong body position.

On coach's "TACKLE" command, player's 1st move is to step forward and land front power foot as close to the target as possible. Then shoulder contact, same shoulder / same lead foot, wrap arms and drive back with strong body position and fast leg drive.

Most junior players will not at first be able to make their first move a go forward power step. You will see them shuffle on the spot or step backwards before forward. Train this 1st front foot power step. It is the key ingredient to power tackling.

### General Coaching Tip

Don't get bogged down with tactics or positional play for your junior team. Use your time to rugby skill drill your kids.



# Skill Drill 11: Power Tackling vs Stationary Target

## STEP 1



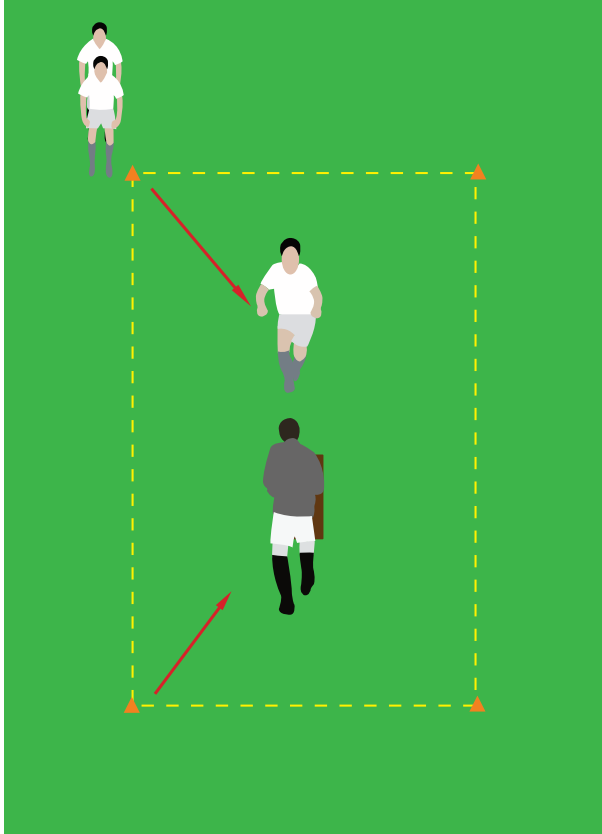
## STEP 2



## STEP 3



## Skill Drill 12: Safe Strong Tackling vs Moving Target



### Notes

The Coach or team mate holding hit shield runs a predictable angled line keeping hit shield close to body to make it easy for Tackler to make a successful tackle on them.

Tackler to run forward fast, then chop steps for agility, then power step close to the target. Then dip body, position head safely (cheek / cheek), contact with shoulder, wrap arms, drive back a couple of steps.

Do this drill only at  $\frac{1}{2}$  pace and not at full intensity. Keep it about:

- Getting forward and closing Ball Carrier's space down
- Tackle technique – safe, strong and powerful

### General Coaching Tip

To mobilise kids to drill start points, give clear instruction of where to go and what drill we are doing next, then count them down.

Eg: "On the line for Down & Ups in 5.., 4.., 3.., 2.., 1.. " Counting down gives the kids a time frame and makes it easy for you to mobilise your team.



# Skill Drill 12: Safe Strong Tackling vs Moving Target

## STEP 1

Coach offers tackler a moving target

Keep hit shield close to body

Tackler to approach accurately not too fast or reckless. This is a tackle technique drill.

## STEP 2

Coach to give when tackled, don't be a brick wall

Wrap arms, drive back

Front foot close (power step)

Same foot, same shoulder





# Skill Drill 13: Ball Runner vs Tackler

STEP 1

Coach: "Go"

Ball carrier runs forward



Tackler runs forward then chops steps for agility before tackle

STEP 2



Ball runner wins with a side step and sprint

STEP 3



Tackler wins with a safe, strong tackle