

THE objective of Stage 1 is to introduce girls to rugby in a fun, safe and enjoyable environment. Players are children, age 6–10 years of age approx. and are introduced to the values and skills of rugby through fun activities, modified games and drills. They learn how to share and play with their team-mates, follow basic rules and improve their fundamental physical literacy skills. Players are encouraged to play, not just rugby, but as many sports as possible in order to increase their likelihood of staying active.

The coaching emphasis in this stage is to ‘Guide’ the players. More instruction is required in order to facilitate player participation and learning. Feedback from the coach is essential for players to develop understanding and learning. The coach also has responsibility to ensure that training is always fun and enjoyable.

The game in Stage 1 is designed in order to provide a fun, free flowing game for players with little stop-start or standing around. Children should be encouraged to run and pass as much as possible, thus receiving maximum time on the ball and developing their game sense. As players get older the game progresses with the introduction of set piece. While providing added structure to the game, it does not take away from the enjoyment or free flowing nature.





# STAGE 1

**The Player** - Plays  
**The Coach** - Guides  
**The Game** - Fun

# FUNdamentals

## Essence of the Player

Players are children aged 6-10 years approx. They are focused on “Fun and Enjoyment” and if this does not occur in training and/or games then they may stop attending. They will experience fun and enjoyment through meeting and playing with their friends, learning new skills and receiving positive feedback at training.

## Essence of the Coach

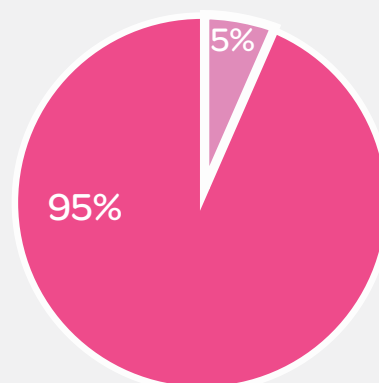
The coaching focus in this stage is to ‘Guide’ the players. He/she should aim to cover the various strategic, tactical, technical and physical points below in order to ensure all players are developing. More instruction is required at this stage in order to facilitate player participation and learning. Feedback from the coach is essential for players to develop understanding and learning. The coach also has responsibility to ensure that training is always fun and enjoyable. The game at this stage is roughly proportioned to 95% General Movement and 5% 1st Phase and so training activities and games should reflect this ratio.

## Game Development

- **Reduced numbers:** The game at this stage is either Leprechaun Rugby or Girls Mini Rugby 1 and 2. Teams play small sided games up to 8-a-side. This ensures players get more touches on the ball and are active regularly in the game which in turn lead to skill development and enjoyment.
- **Varying contact appropriate to competence:** Leprechaun Rugby is modified contact rugby where players must make a ‘Touch’ on the opposition instead of a tackle. Players are introduced to tackling in Girls Mini Rugby 1.
- **Development of game understanding:** Through Strategic and Tactical Development players are beginning to understand the game of rugby.
- **Players play:** General movement makes up 95% of play (1st phase 5%) therefore when looking at a game of rugby for this age group you should notice that all players are playing most of the time. The game/matches should be active with minimal stoppages.

## Stage 1 - Technical Emphasis

- General Movement
- 1st Phase



## Personal Characteristics

- Players are children aged 6-10 approximately and by nature should be very active.
- All children play because they desire fun and so training should reflect this desire.

- Children should be allowed the freedom of self-expression in order to help their development as they grow older.
- Children require order to ensure that the training session/game can take place and to assist learning.
- Combining the fact that children are active and desire fun means that they are naturally very energetic. Training should consist of multiple, short, intense activities that require bursts of energy from the players.
- Children can act quite individual and be very self-focused. Players should be introduced to the values of fair play and respect.
- Children have a shorter attention span and so reduced activities should be varied and last for no longer than 4-5 minutes.

## Strategic Development

- Players are developing an understanding of basic General Movement Principles:
  - **Players can be identified into Two Groups:**
    - 1.** Players 'on and near' the ball. **2.** Players 'in the space'.
  - **Emphasise Go Forward:** This is the way in which the team can move the ball towards the opponents' try-line. Players begin to understand that it is important to 'Go Forward' in rugby in order to make ground and get nearer the try line. Players start to understand that if they 'Go Forward' in defence they close down the attacking team's space and make it harder for them to score.
  - **Provide Support:** Players begin to understand the need for support for the ball carrier so that she may pass the ball or assist in the contact area when this is introduced. Players are beginning to understand that rugby is played by passing backwards and/or sideways, therefore they are introduced to lateral support.
  - **Know the Laws of the game:** Players begin to understand what they can and can't do in a game. Rules and Regulations for Leprechaun Rugby, Girls Mini Rugby 1 and 2 are gradually introduced.

## Tactical Development

- Players are developing basic decision making around the ball. They must start to make decisions based on what they see. For example, a player must decide if she should pass the ball or run to the space.
- Go Forward Skills: running, running and passing, mini maul and ruck.
- Support Skills: Appropriate depth and width (supporting beside and behind the player), communication, mini maul and ruck.
- Developing the Principle of Usefulness: This involves players understanding where they are in relation to the ball and how they can be useful/effective. For example, "Where am I on the pitch?", "Am I in space? Can I support my team-mates?" "What am I doing?"

## Technical Development

(Coaching courses will introduce coaches to the key points of all skills)

- Learning basic techniques of relevant individual skills (e.g. evasion and handling skills).
- Development of skills for General Movement Principles (Go Forward and Support) and individual technique required to execute principles.
- Confidence in contact should be developed at Girls Mini Rugby 1. This is mainly in the form of 1 v 1 defence/tackling.
- Introduction of 1st Phase unit skills in Girls Mini Rugby 2 (all players experience scrum, lineout and backline).



## Physical Fitness

- Training should consist of multiple, short, intense activities that require bursts of energy from the players.
- Development of Physical Literacy through fun games and activities.
  - ABC'S (Agility, Balance, Co-Ordination and Speed)
  - RJT (Running, Jumping and Throwing)
  - KGB's (Kinaesthesia, Gliding, Buoyancy, Striking with object)
  - CK's (Catching, Kicking, Striking with body)
- The first Window of Trainability for developing Speed is aged 6-8 approx. Coaches should ensure they provide games and activities that require maximum speed effort from players, e.g., races.
- Window of Trainability for Suppleness/flexibility (aged 6-10 approx.). Coaches should include in warm up and cool down activities.
- Window of Trainability for Skill (aged 8-11 approx.). Skills developed and practiced during this period lay the foundations for their future skill development. It can be harder to teach someone a new skill after this age.
- Develop fitness endurance through fun activities and games (e.g. tag, relay races).

## Mental Development

- **Promote freedom of self-expression:** Children should be allowed to freely express themselves and their opinion without judgement or criticism.
- **Confidence:** Positive training and/or matches and reinforcement should lead to players growing in confidence
- **Mutual support and fair play:** Players should show support to their team-mates and the opposition. Fair play refers to players' ability to respect the rules or equal treatment of all, including their team-mates and the opposition.
- **Enjoyment:** The enjoyment they experience through playing and training will assist with development of a positive outlook to rugby and exercise in general.

