

48 Rugby Skills Games

Coaching precision, timing and trust



Dan Cottrell

**BetterRUGBY
COACHING** 

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Foreword

Coaching is about enabling players to learn and develop their performance.

The coaching model called "Teaching Games for Understanding" (TGfU), or "Games Sense" as it is also known around the world, is a recognised approach that enhances learning by providing realistic, decision making opportunities, as they might occur in the actual competition.

TGfU at its very heart requires that performers think / react to sport-based problems and, therefore, become more fully self-aware, and hence better players.

Congratulations to Dan Cottrell in developing a creative resource in rugby that encourages the use of a "games" approach to coaching. Using such an approach will help players young and old to understand the actual game of rugby, to practise skills in rugby contexts, to learn tactics and to become more informed decision makers.

Coaches will enjoy using these rugby games as much as the players. This book provides a great start to give coaches ideas for games that can be used as they are or which can be easily adapted to suit the needs of the players.

Just remember, one of the key arts to coaching is knowing when to stand back and let the learning happen and when to step in to facilitate the learning. That is, when to "let the game be the teacher".

Yours in coaching,



Lynn Kidman,
Author of Athlete-Centred Coaching
University of Worcester

Introduction

This manual uses games to develop match-like scenarios and pressures in practices. The emphasis is on putting the players' skills and techniques into the contexts they will be used on match day. The objective is to enhance the players' tactical choices, to make better decisions, and to take better options in open play, while practising the very skills that give them the options in the first place.

One outcome of training through games is to help the players see tactical situations in the same way, so that certain actions during the match will trigger a collective response.

The games apply both a "games sense" and a "games for understanding" approach to rugby. Games sense is a player's ability to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of the match. The awareness of the relative positions of team mates and opponents, the constraints of the pitch, and the game objectives all help to create better rugby decision makers.

Teaching through games develops a player's skills by using "play" rather than "drills". The competitive elements of the game increase the players' enjoyment of the activity, and so enhance their motivation to practise.

Underpinning these approaches is the coach's role. To allow the players to play, you need to step back and "let the game be the teacher".

This does not alleviate your responsibilities or input into practices. Your role is to identify a problem, establish ways to correct it, and then guide your players to find solutions. Of course, you will also still need to work on technical skills independent of games.

Advantages of training through games

Match-like: The games come as close as we can to replicating the changing scenarios and unpredictability of real matches.

Decision making: The players will seek ways to improve what they are doing, to meet each game's objectives. By focusing on particular skills within these competitive games, you ensure that techniques, as well as decision making, are developed.

Complementary: You practise defence and attack at the same time, and in a variety of situations.

Skills based: The games focus on applying core skills under realistic conditions. Footwork, whether to beat players, make the tackle or enter a ruck, as well as decision making, whether to pass or run, tackle or hold, enter a ruck or prepare for the next phase, are an inherent part of every training session.

Diversity: The games can be used to prepare the players for the session, embed a skill following a drill, or as a bit of fun to end a practice.

Problem solving: The games can help you identify problems with players or tactics outside of the match. The players themselves can then solve the problems under match-like conditions, whether such problems are skills oriented – pass left handed from a ruck, or tactically focused – overcoming a 5 v 3 overload in attack.

Fitness: The games work the players hard, so are a great way to introduce fitness training into sessions.

Motivation: All players want to play more games and do fewer drills. They train to play rugby matches after all. Since there are many answers to most of the problems within games, you can avoid negative feedback.

Repetition: By using different games, you can work on the same skill over and over again, but in a variety of scenarios.

Competition: The games are more competitive than drills. The players will strive to “win” the games and therefore will work harder to find solutions to the problems set.

Team building: The games are fun. They promote team work and foster team spirit.

Players first: There is less emphasis on you coaching and more emphasis on the players learning. This promotes deeper learning certainly, but also encourages the players to take more responsibility.

Full on activity: The games allow for a greater involvement by more of the players. There are no queues and less “waiting around” time, giving each player relatively more training time.

Playing the games

All the games in this manual are competitive, with clearly defined objectives. There are three different types of game included:

Small-sided games: These look at ways of applying rugby skills in different scenarios. There are minimal numbers of players on both sides, so play should be fast and furious. The two sides should change from attack to defence frequently, ensuring players get plenty of opportunities to be involved in both.

The games have rugby elements, but may not always look like rugby games.

Conditioned games: These focus on isolating skills in a rugby game with constrained rules. These games avoid obvious repetition, whilst enabling skills to be continually reworked. There is a more defined attack and defence, resulting in a more rugby-like game.

Game situations: These games look at ways of finding rugby solutions to rugby problems. The objective is to replicate match day conditions and scenarios, giving the players plenty of opportunities to test their skills under pressure. These games are as close to playing a “real” match as you can get in training.

When to play games

This depends on your approach. You can use games for a warm up, to work through an individual skill, to practise a unit skill through the phases, to replicate a particular match situation. You may follow a drill with a game to put the skill into context. Wayne Smith, the All Blacks assistant coach, says that he looks to create or use a game to practise every facet of training.

Alternatively a game can be used as a reward, an incentive to get training going, a way to break up a training session, or a method of winding down. Whatever the circumstances, the game can be just as hard as the toughest conditioning session.

Managing the games

Pictures: Each game is illustrated with three pictures, explaining how the game should be set up and developed, and to highlight key techniques where appropriate.

Numbers and area: The pitch sizes and the numbers of players involved are guidelines only. You can adjust the dimensions of the pitch to suit the skills of your players.

Some of the games require equal teams, but you might find yourself with unequal numbers at training. The two most obvious ways around this are to give the weaker team the extra player, or use rolling substitutes. In which case, number up one team so that one player is replaced in numerical order after every attempt.

Equipment: The games require minimal equipment. Most can be played anywhere, from the training pitch to the beach.

Scoring: The games are competitive and the players will want to know how they can “win” them. Scoring is an important element of the games, with points awarded not just for tries, but also for meeting the objectives of the game, such as the performance of the skill being tested.

You can enhance the scoring system by adding your own targets. For instance, you might add a point for a team that gets past a certain line on the pitch, maybe the gain line, or uses a specific skill to achieve an outcome, such as a good side on tackle.

Avoid deducting points. Turnovers and restarts with the other team in possession are more motivating ways of encouraging a team not to make the same mistake twice.

Let the players find their own solutions

It is sometimes too easy to jump in, telling the players your ideas about they can win the game. Don't forget the games are designed to replicate match scenarios, to teach the players how to adapt to different situations. Most of the decisions in a match are made on the spot by the players, not by you.

Instead allow the players the time and space to discover the best ways to score points. Short group discussions and good questioning can be used to draw out many of the answers.

Don't worry if the players take time to work out the rules. One measure of the success of the game is how the players react when they come back to it in a few weeks time.

At first the games may be chaotic, with lots of mistakes. That's simply what happens when you enable players to discover what they can influence and change in competitive, match-like conditions. The key is that, on match day, your players approach will become less chaotic, with better decision making and a better application of skills.

Game finder

		Main skill	Touch tackling	Full on tackling	Minimum numbers	Minimum area (m)	Quick game*	
Small-sided game	1	Jackler	Tackling	●	3 v 3	7 x 7	●	
	2	Intense defence	Tackling	●	5 v 4	20 x 20		
	6	Rule of 2s	Handling	●	5 v 5	30 x 30	●	
	7	Hot box feet	Handling	●	3 v 1	7 x 7	●	
	8	Gather and go	Handling	●	4 v 4	20 x 20	●	
	9	Triangle turnovers	Handling	●	3 v 3	20 x 10	●	
	10	Fast, slow, fast	Handling	●	4 v 4	10 x 10	●	
	17	Response rates	Support play		●	5 v 5	40 x 40	
	18	Mismatch vision	Support play	●	●	5 v 5	40 x 40	
	19	Super loopers	Support play	●	●	4 v 4	30 x 30	●
	21	Ruck stops here!	Rucking		●	5 v 5	10 x 30	
	26	Maul demons	Mauling		●	4 v 4	10 x 20	●
	30	Get your kicks	Kick & recover	●	●	4 v 4	30 x 30	
	31	Run backs	Kick & recover	●		5 v 5	30 x 30	
	32	Get back	Kick & recover		●	6 v 6	30 x 30	
	38	Stretchers	Attack		●	7 v 4	60 x 20	
	39	Manic attack	Attack	●	●	4 v 4	40 x 30	●
40	Discomfort zone	Attack		●	3 v 3	15 x 15	●	
41	360 attack	Attack	●		4 v 4	40 x 40		
46	Mission, control	Defence		●	6 v 12	40 x 30		
Conditioned game	3	Gang up	Tackling		●	5 v 7	30 x 20	
	11	Quicker, wider	Handling		●	8 v 6	60 x 30	
	12	Precision passing	Handling	●	●	4 v 3	20 x 20	●
	13	Squeezers	Handling		●	4 v 2	20 x 20	
	14	Ninety-nine	Handling		●	6 v 4	30 x 30	
	15	Boxed in	Handling	●	●	5 v 3	30 x 10	
	16	Neat and tidy	Handling		●	2 v 2	10 x 10	●
	20	Smash and go	Support play		●	8 v 8	40 x 20	
	22	3 seconds, 3 rucks	Rucking		●	8 v 6	20 x 20	
	23	Twist and turn	Rucking		●	5 v 5	20 x 20	
	24	3-away	Rucking		●	8 v 8	20 x 20	
	27	The rock	Mauling		●	4 v 5	10 x 10	
	28	The maul lives!	Mauling		●	4 v 4	10 x 10	●
	42	Recycle lanes	Attack		●	6 v 6	20 x 15	
	43	Bunch busters	Attack	●	●	5 v 5	40 x 20	
47	Wall of defence	Defence		●	7 v 5	20 x 20		
48	Wide boys	Defence	●	●	7 v 4	30 x 20		
Game situation	4	Goal line stoppers	Tackling		●	3 v 2	25 x 5	●
	5	Sidewinders	Tackling		●	7 v 7	30 x 30	
	25	8 balling	Rucking		●	7 v 7	30 x 20	
	29	Drive in	Mauling		●	5 v 4	10 x 10	●
	33	Grubber soul	Kick & recover		●	5 v 3	40 x 20	
	34	Chip-chop	Kick & recover		●	6 v 4	40 x 20	
	35	Catch and go	Kick & recover	●	●	6 v 4	70 x 50	
	36	Cross kicks	Kick & recover	●	●	2 v 1	20 x 30	●
	37	Airtime	Kick & recover		●	4 v 2	20 x 20	●
	44	Flashback	Attack		●	7 v 7	40 x 20	
45	Second front	Attack		●	7 v 4	30 x 30		

Note: *A "quick game" is where all the players will have had enough time in each position within 5 minutes to introduce the skills. The game can then be developed or continued.

1. Jacklers

Stealing the ball in the tackle

"Jackling" is when the tackling player regains his feet and wins the ball, or the next defender in wins the ball. This game is best played in small groups, and in a very competitive environment. It's not a game for the slow of thought and deed.

Set up

Players: 3 v 3, with 3 players waiting to come on.
 Area: 7m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- This is a 10 second game only. (Extend it if the players struggle.)
- The winning team stays on, and the losing team swaps with the waiting players.
- Only players on their feet can play the ball.
- There is no offside and knock ons are allowed.
- If the ball carrier or the ball goes out of the area, the team not in possession wins.
- If there is a maul at the end of the game, call it a draw.
- Be strict on the ball carrier releasing the ball when he is on the ground.

Score

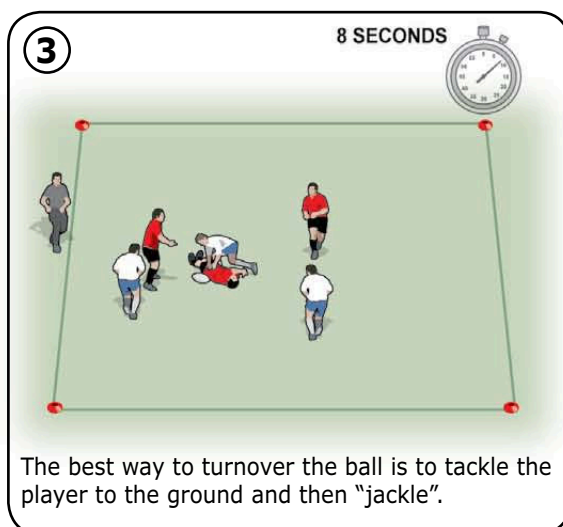
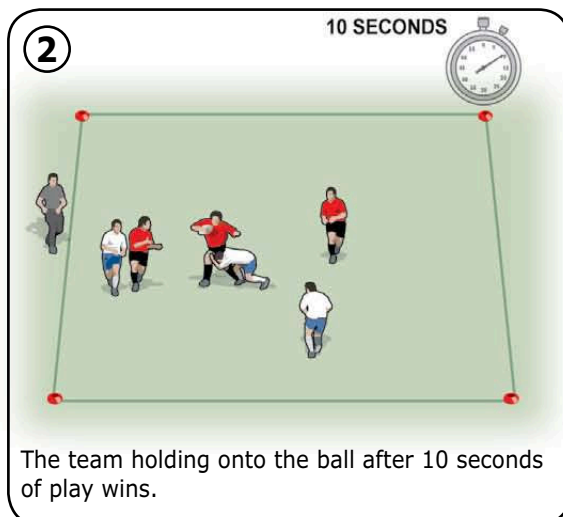
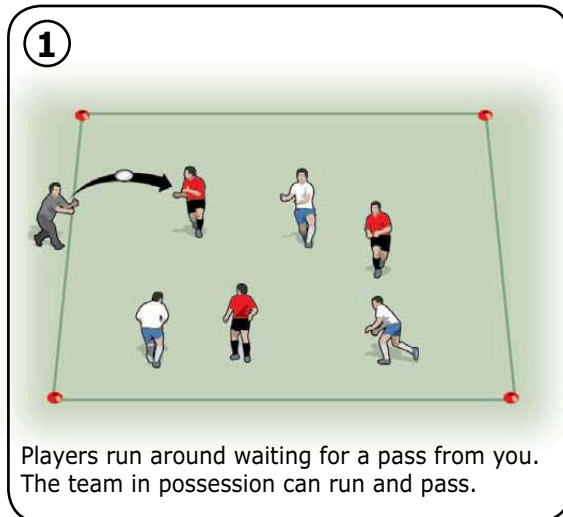
- 1 point for two consecutive wins.

What to call out

- "Get the ball carrier to the ground quickly"
- "Bounce off the ground to win the ball"
- "Only play the ball when on your feet"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Roll, throw or even bang the ball downwards into the area. Turn your back and throw it in as well.
- ✓ Feedback on technique after five or so attempts. A good tackle is the key.



2. Intense defence

Constant tackling for an intense workout

Defending is more tiring than attacking. It is physically and mentally draining. Yet players need to keep their standards high and quality good in the tackle. This is a great game to knock out the cobwebs.

Set up

Players: Two teams of 5 attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: 10m wide, 20m long box with a line across the middle.
 Equipment: Two balls.

Game notes

- Change the attacking teams once a tackle has been made, a try scored or an infringement has occurred.
- When changing the attacking teams, the defence recover to defend the middle line from the new attack.
- Play for 60-120 seconds, depending on fitness levels, then change the attacking teams.

Score

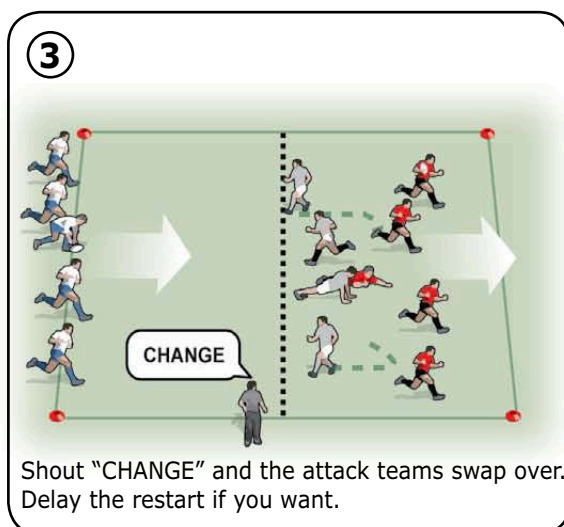
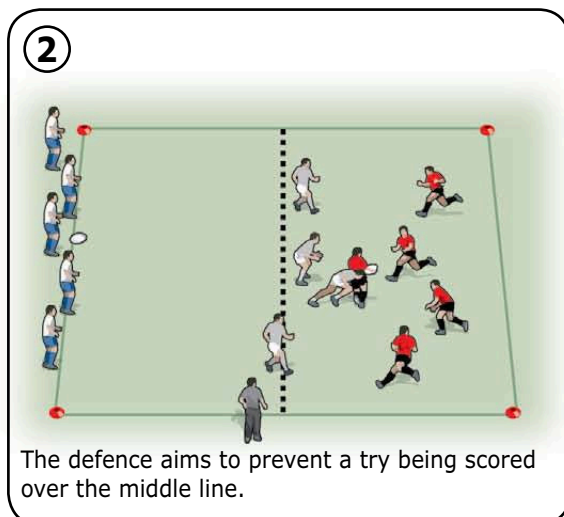
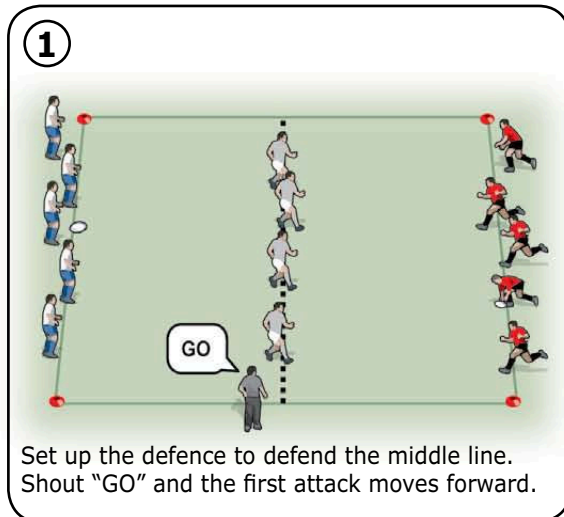
- 1 point for each attack stopped legally.

What to call out

- "Communicate, encourage and execute"
- "Keep your shape in the tackle. Head up, bent knees, driving in with the shoulder"
- "Move up together"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This is a very physical game so you need to think about modifying the size of the pitch, the time tackling and the "CHANGE" timings to match your team's needs.
- ✓ Emphasise the "team" effort in the tackle. Each defending group of four should target to win a set number of points.



3. Gang up

Encouraging "team tackling" of man and ball

A one-on-one tackle should be regarded as a failure in a good defensive system. This game works on good communication between defenders to ensure that the ball carrier meets two tacklers when he tries to break the line.

Set up

- Players: 5 attackers v 7 defenders.
- Area: 30m wide, 20m long, with a "gain line" through the middle.
- Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play until there is an infringement.
- Allow offloads, but not kicking.
- The gain line moves as tackles are made.

Score

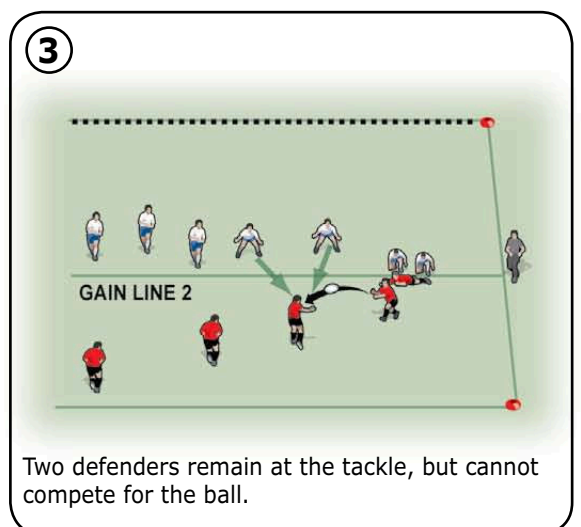
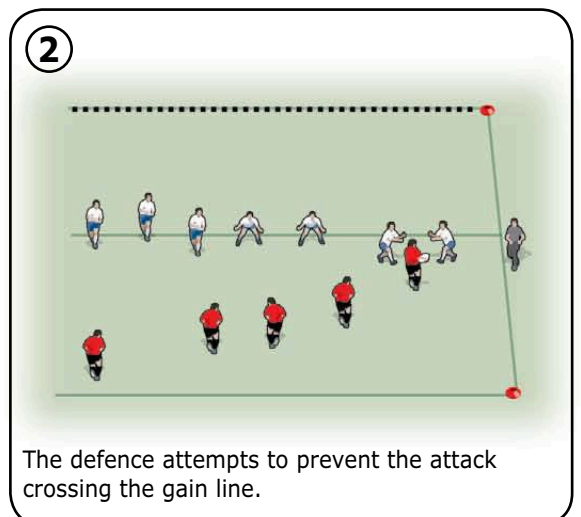
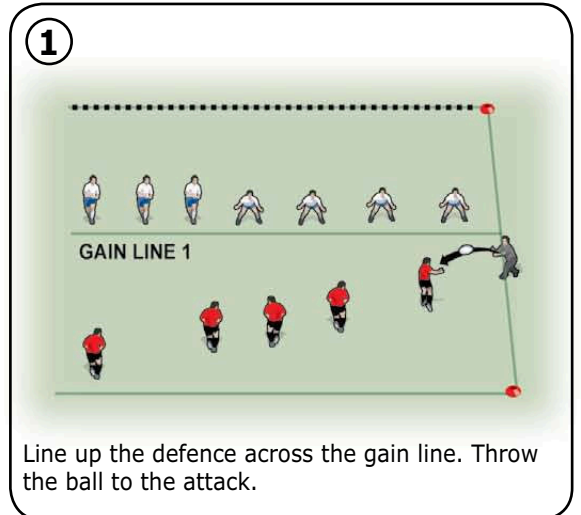
- 1 point for a try.
- 1 point for preventing the try.
- 2 points for the defence each time they prevent the attack from crossing the gain line.
- 2 points off the defence for committing a penalty offence.

What to call out

- "Squeeze together as the ball carrier approaches"
- "One high, one low"
- "Communicate who you are marking"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The two man tackle normally works with one slowing the progress of the ball carrier and the other then driving them back. The player who is marking the ball carrier should go low, and the next one high. This should prevent forward momentum and offloads.
- ✓ Change the balance of the teams to add more pressure on the defence.



4. Goal line stoppers

Making match saving tackles

A skill rarely practised is stopping a try on the goal line (or indeed scoring from there). Each player will have their own methods and this game gives them a chance to try those out.

Set up

- Players: 3 attackers v 2 defenders.
 Area: Five 5m boxes, set out side-by-side, with a try line 1m from the far end (the defence's end).
 Equipment: Three balls.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules.
- Give the attack three attempts before swapping the players over.
- The defence must enter from their end of the box.

Score

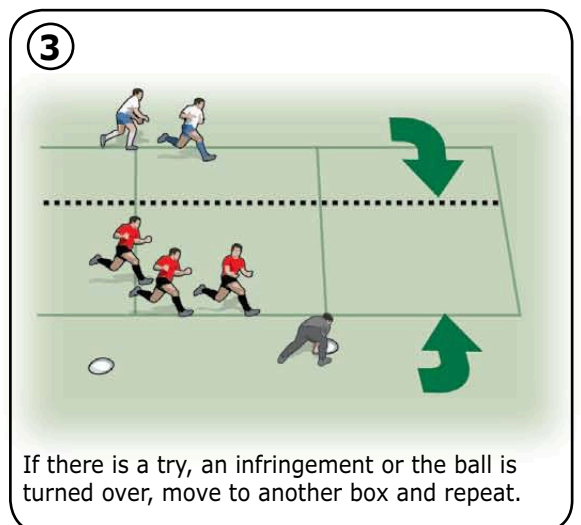
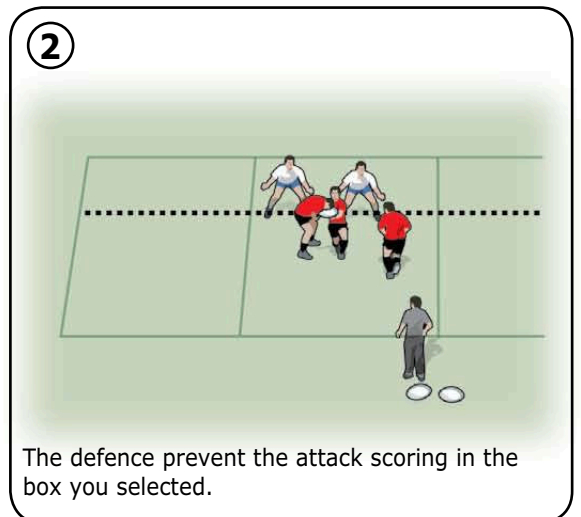
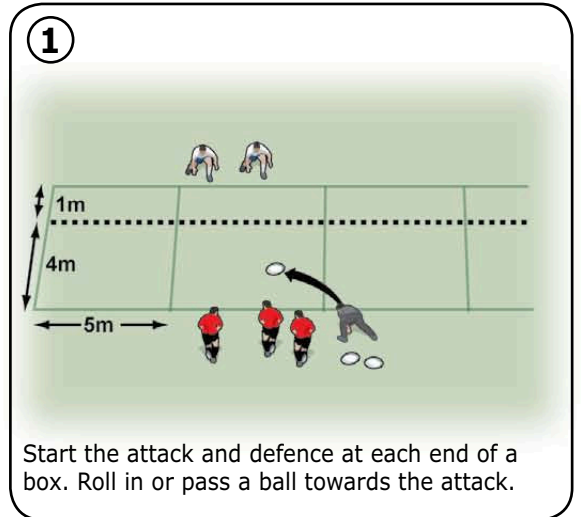
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Drive low into contact"
- "Twist with the shoulders and arms to keep the ball"
- "Tackler: pull the ball into the ball carrier"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The boxes keep the play in a confined space, just like in a real match. It is also quite fast, again replicating a match scenario. Any slower and the defence will have more numbers at the ball.
- ✓ This is a good game to discuss how to solve attack and defence problems.



5. Sidewinders

Creating realistic side on tackling opportunities

A disorganised defence will need to make more side on tackles. This game creates more opportunities for side on tackles, though it does not mean that all the tackles will have to be side on.

Set up

Players: Minimum 7 v 7.
 Area: 30m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- To start the game proper, the attack has to go through a defined "tackle area". Once through this area, play normal rugby rules.
- The first ruck is non-contested, but the ball must be released within two seconds.
- Any infringement leads to a restart.
- Do not allow kicking.

Score

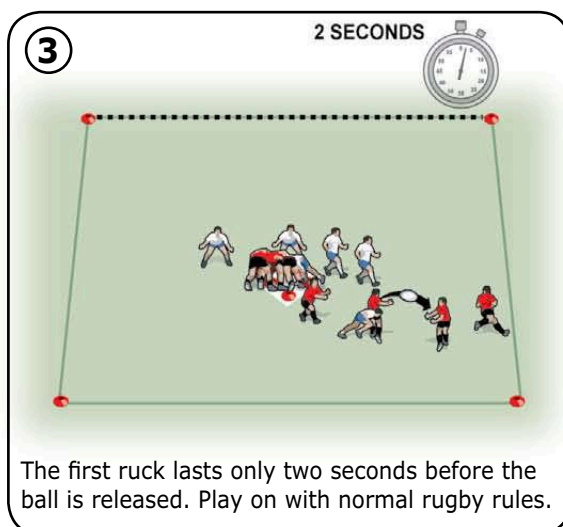
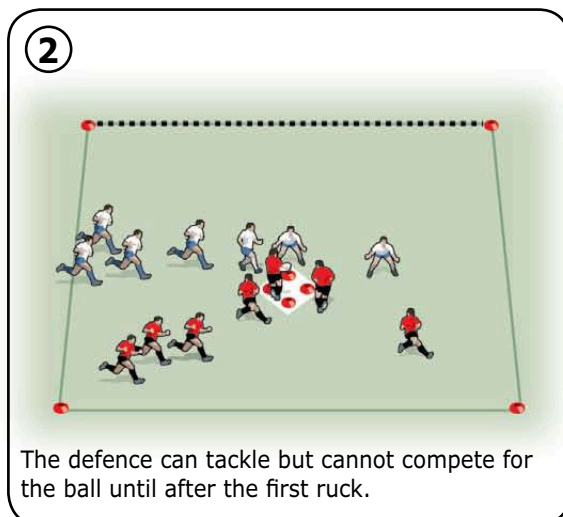
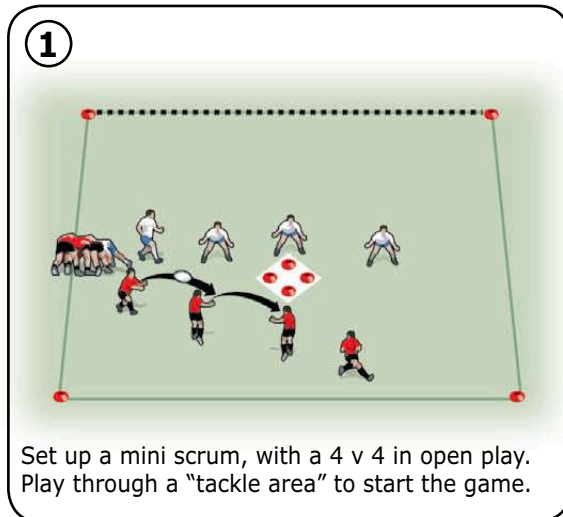
- 3 points for a try.
- 1 point for any tackle after the first ruck.

What to call out

- "Keep your eyes open in the tackle"
- "Tackler: get your feet close to the ball carrier and drive through"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Side on tackles happen when the defence is stretched, with defenders moving laterally to catch the ball carrier. The defined "tackle area" creates a definite ruck and the defence has to chase round to cover. Of course, the attack might break through first time, in which case, the scrum players will have to cover across to make side on tackles.
- ✓ Change the balance of the teams to create different defensive situations.
- ✓ Change the "tackle area".



6. Rule of 2s

Making the ball available out of contact

This offload touch game is a good way to get your players into the mindset of always looking for the offload in contact. It's a fast paced game to get your players breathing hard before the main session, or to finish off training with some fun.

Set up

Players: Equal teams, but no more than 8 a side.
 Area: Any size.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Tackles are two handed touches below the waist.
- Dropped passes, as well as all other infringements, mean a turnover to the other side.
- There is no offside line once the ball is in play.

Score

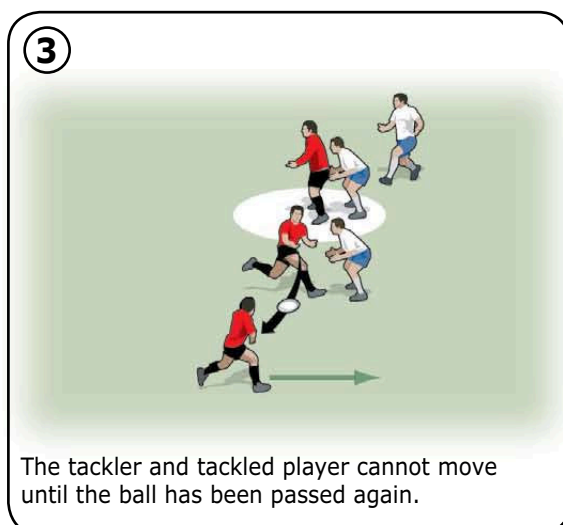
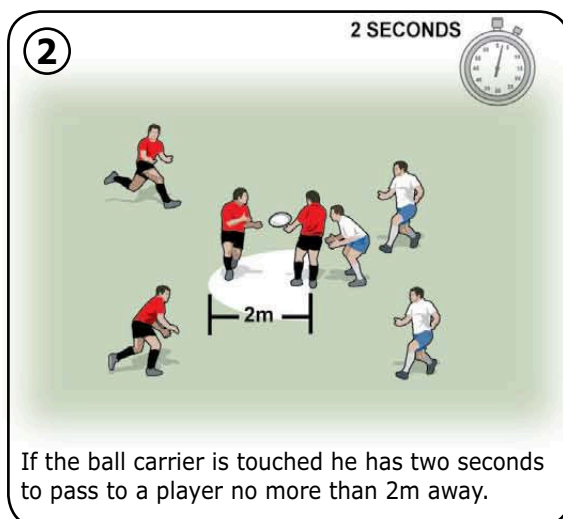
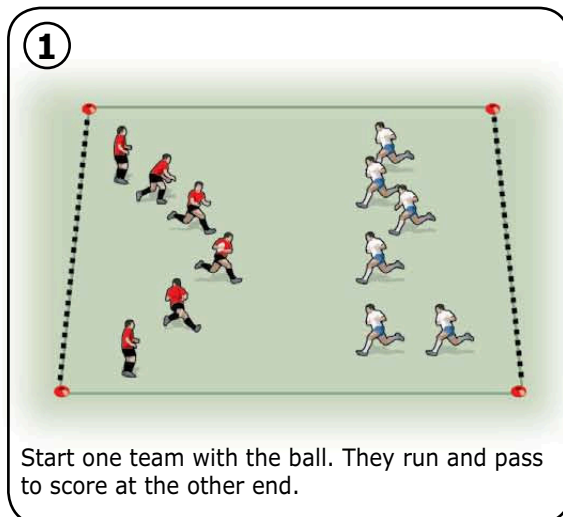
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Turn and pass quickly"
- "Go forward to create better targets for the support players"
- "Pass and support"

Coaching notes

- ✓ You can change the type of tackle to give different options. The tackler can try to rip the ball off the ball carrier, forcing a better body position from the ball carrier if he does not want to lose the ball.
- ✓ Good sides will go forward in a narrow space, sucking in the defence, before spreading the ball out.



7. Hot box feet

A fast moving game for the whole team

This is constantly moving warm up game, which can be replicated across lots of boxes. It works on passing anticipation, because no player is allowed to stand still or take a pass standing still.

Set up

Players: 3 attackers v 1 defender.
Area: 7m square.
Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The attack can move in any direction along the lines as long as they stay on the lines.
- Dropped balls, intercepted passes or being caught in possession means victory for the defender.
- The last player to touch the ball before the defender wins becomes the new defender.

Score

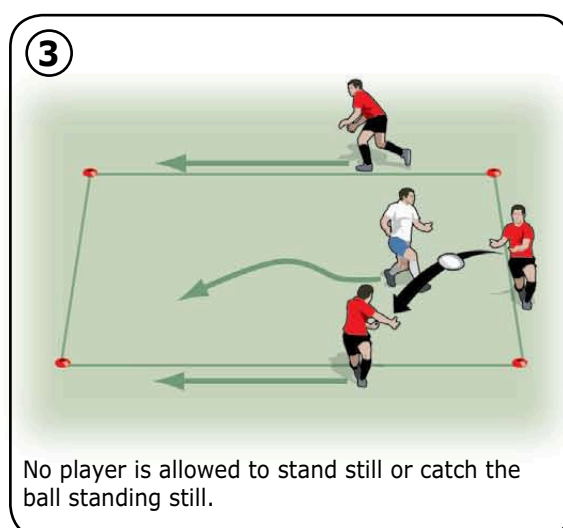
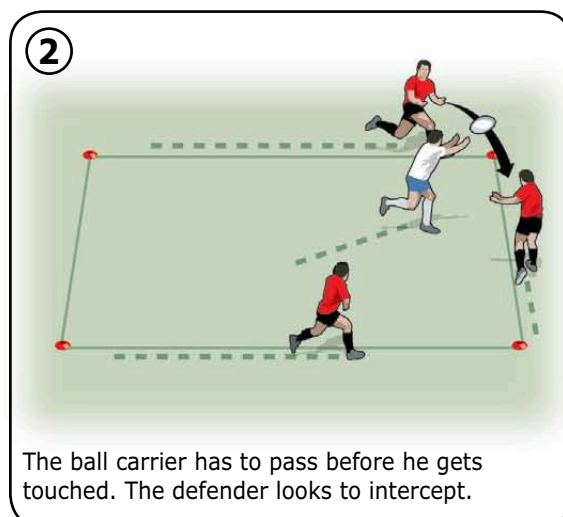
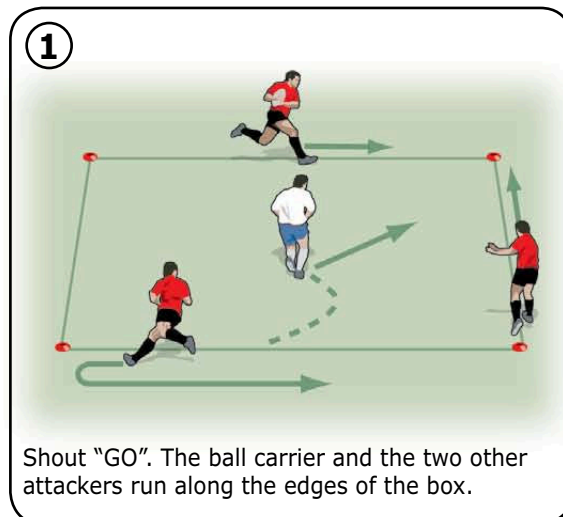
- The attackers aim to make five passes to win.

What to call out

- "Pass in front of the receiver"
- "Receiver: hands out"
- "Receiver: look ahead and call for the ball"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Think about adjusting the size of the box if your players find it too hard or too easy.
- ✓ Play the game a couple of times, then bring the players in to discuss tactics. The team on the ball should be highlighting early and firm passes. The defenders should anticipate and shadow, aiming not to get caught in the corners because they will then have to run further.



8. Gather and go

Picking up the ball under pressure

The ball is on the ground plenty of times in a match, but rarely is the pick up practised under extreme pressure. To be successful at this game players will need to change their body shapes, so as to gather the ball from the ground more effectively.

Set up

Players: 4 v 4.
Area: 20m square.
Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play with touch tackling below the waist. The tackler cannot then move until the ball is touched by another player from either team.
- The ball can be rolled in any direction.
- Any ball can be contested for on the ground. If two players wrestle for the ball, they have five seconds to win the contest or the ball is turned over to the team not originally in possession of the ball.
- Any infringement means a restart, with the ball rolled to the non-infringing side.

Score

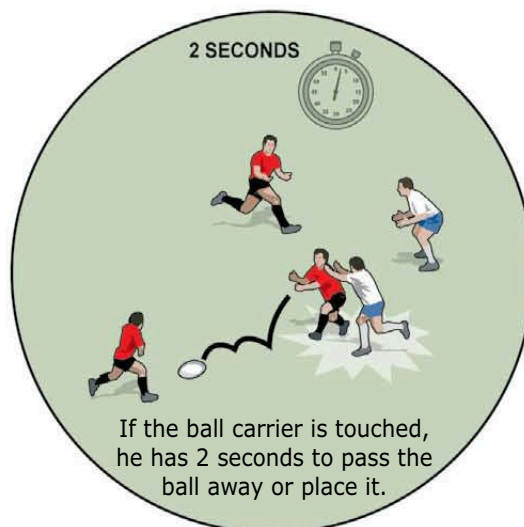
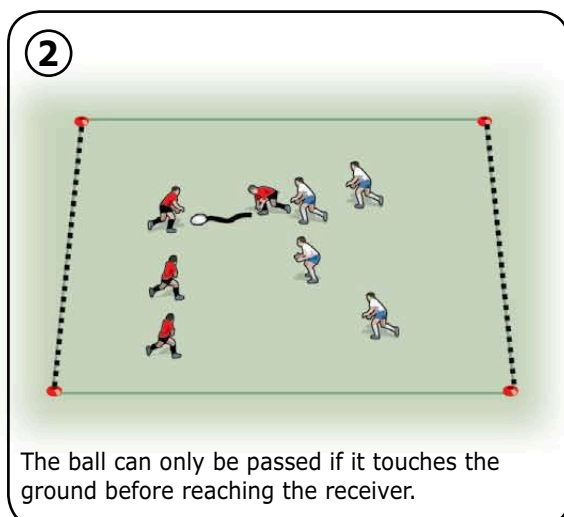
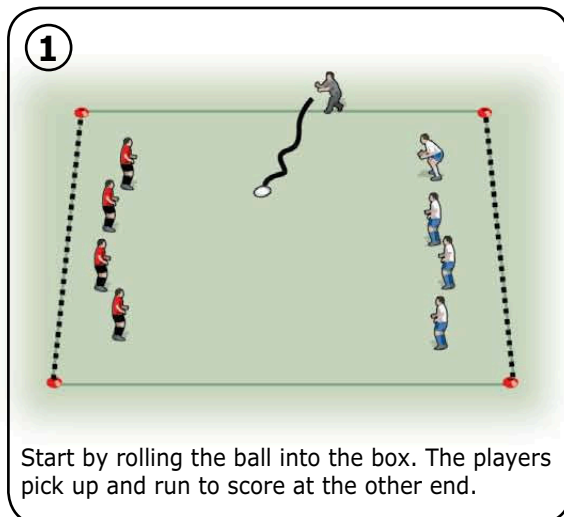
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Bend at the knees and hips, not the back"
- "Step over the ball"
- "Fingers pointing down and scoop"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Change the game so the ball can only be rolled backwards or sideways. This creates a more match like situation and leads to more turnovers.
- ✓ Better teams will find more ingenious ways to "roll" the ball, for instance by bouncing it or just using a "pick and go" technique.



9. Triangle turnovers

A passing and defence game that's great for fitness

Three-on-three touch rugby places the onus on the attack. Players have to work extra hard to make overlaps or get into space. With only one tackle and quick turnovers, there is a premium on fitness and accuracy in this game.

Set up

Players: 3 v 3.
Area: 20m wide, 10m long box.
Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Use only touch tackles, with a two handed touch below the waist. Don't allow kicking.
- Restart the game for infringements, with the non-infringing team starting with the ball on their own try line.
- Let the game run for one minute, and then rest. You can have more than one game going at once.

Score

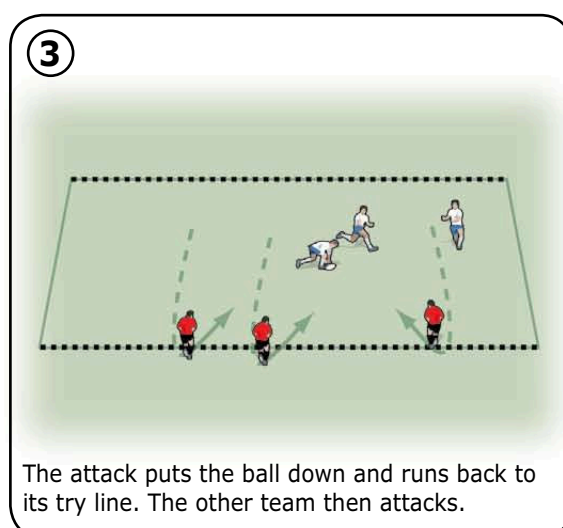
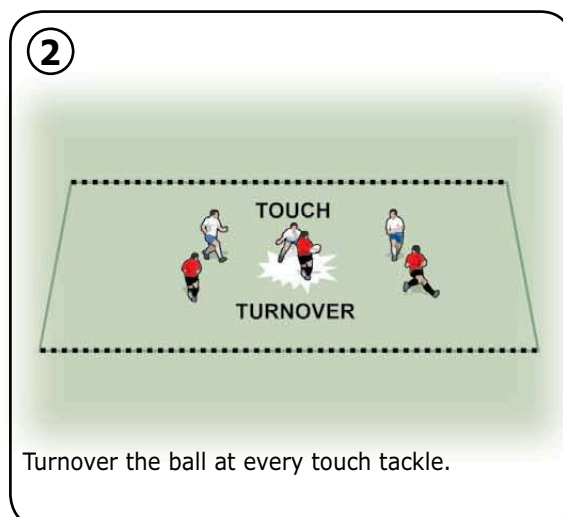
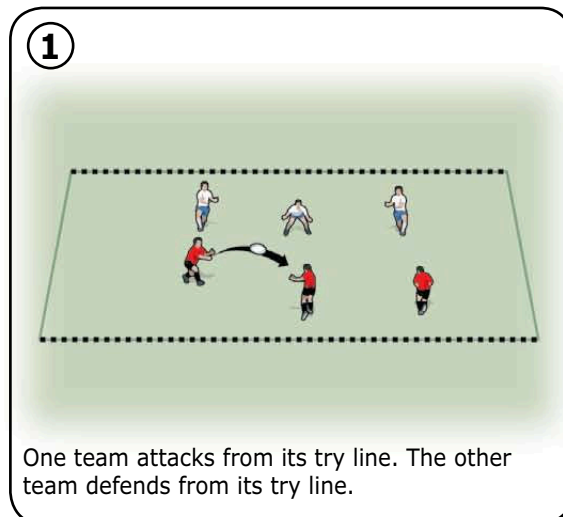
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Pass and move"
- "Keep running back to run forward in support"
- "Talk up in defence"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Players will discover clever ways of keeping the ball alive. It won't necessarily help their "go forward" skills, but it will improve their handling and fitness. The game will be more popular than a normal fitness workout.
- ✓ If you have more than one box going (which is likely), then you can swap teams around and play for a longer period of time.



10. Fast, slow, fast

Quick fire handling and movement

In confined spaces, a player who can release the ball quickly creates more chances for continuity without taking contact. This game creates an intensely competitive atmosphere, with players looking for unusual passing solutions.

Set up

Players: 4 v 4.
 Area: 10m square split into four equal boxes.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start in any box, with the first ball carrier getting two seconds to run and pass before his marker can move.
- Allow touch tackling only to begin with.
- Dropped or intercepted balls, failure to release the ball in three seconds if touched, or running out of the area leads to a restart for the other team.

Score

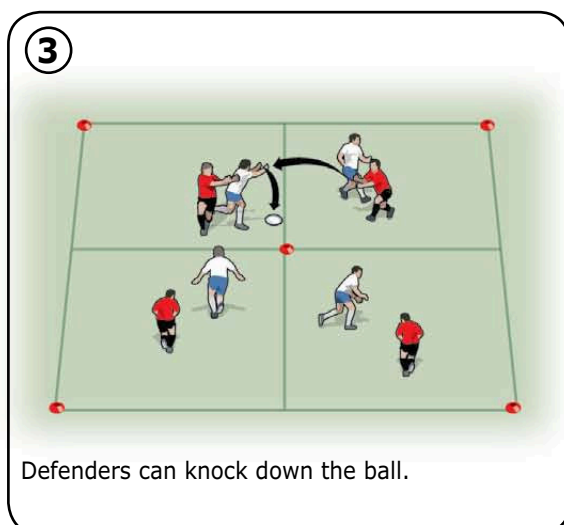
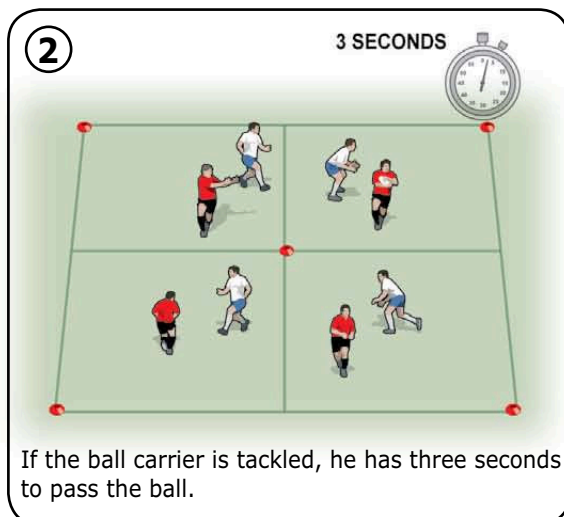
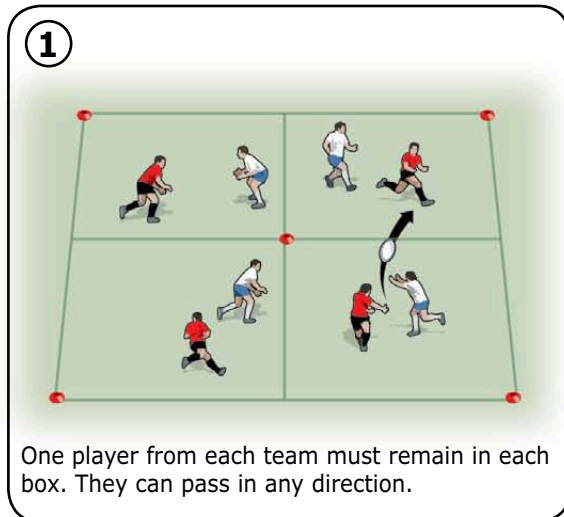
- 1 point for five consecutive passes.

What to call out

- "Use short sharp changes in direction"
- "Pass into spaces for the receiver to run on to"
- "Anticipate where you will pass the ball before you receive it"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Players will find that looped or lobbed passes will be easily intercepted. Firm passing is essential.
- ✓ The use of non-verbal communication helps. The players should consider using their hands to show which direction they are going to go.
- ✓ "Fast, slow, fast" should be the mantra for players looking to lose their markers.



11. Quicker, wider

Recognising when to play expansive rugby

This game helps players learn when they should pass the ball wide and when they should keep it close. The changing defensive alignment adds to the pressure and the players' decision making.

Set up

- Players: Minimum 8 attackers v 6 defenders.
 Area: 60m wide, 30m long, split into three 20m channels.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The defence can compete for the ball on the ground, or slow it down, but not steal it.
- The first attack cannot move outside the first channel.
- Do not allow miss passes.
- Allow no more than two rucks.

Score

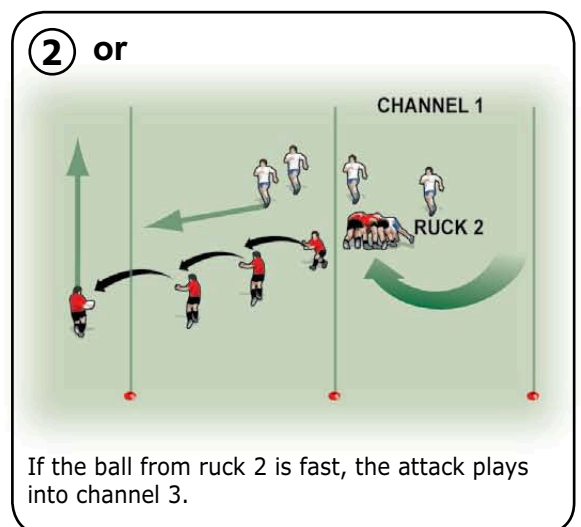
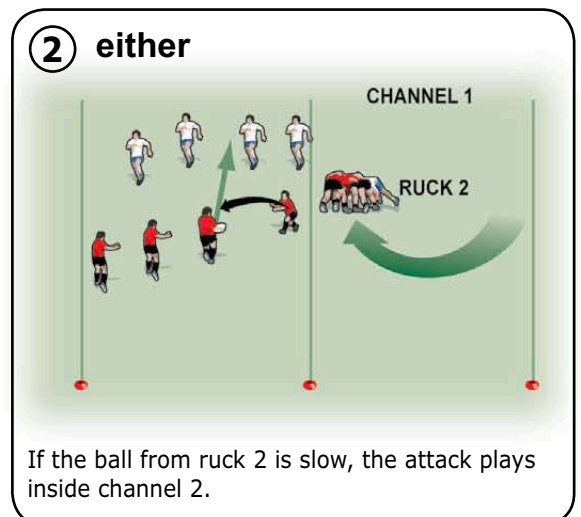
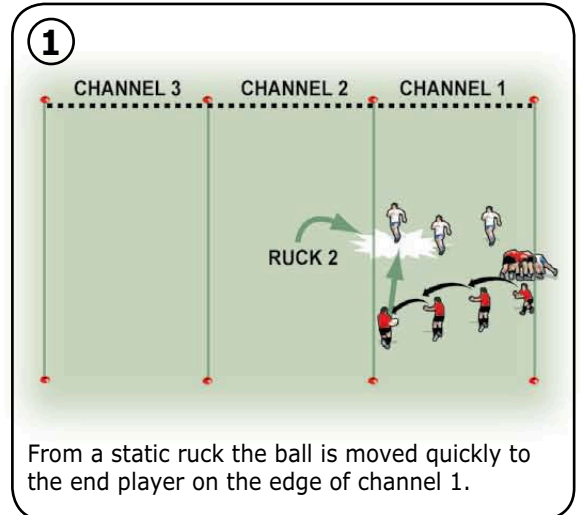
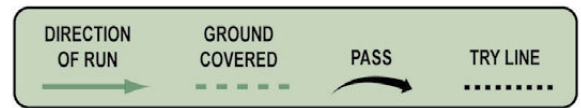
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Run straight to hold the defence"
- "Outside attackers: realign quickly, but with depth"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The channels keep the players focused on running straight and passing quickly. Make sure you are tough on keeping the first attack inside the first channel, but if the outside player breaks through, great!
- ✓ You might want the last passer to support the ball carrier into the ruck. In which case consider how you keep the other backs out of the ruck to make use of quick ball.



12. Precision passing

Making pinpoint passing the key to scoring tries

Fixing defenders is a fundamental method of exploiting overlaps. It is also tough. This game forces the attack to stretch and then fix defenders, but without the pressure of being closed down. It is a good game to play after a handling exercise.

Set up

- Players: 4 attackers v 3 defenders.
- Area: 20m square, with a line across the middle (use a pitch line).
- Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Use touch tackling or full on tackling.
- The attack doesn't have to engage the defence and can run back to run forwards.
- The attack can break through at the edges or through the middle.
- The attack ends if there is an infringement or the defence wins the ball.
- Allow five attempts.

Score

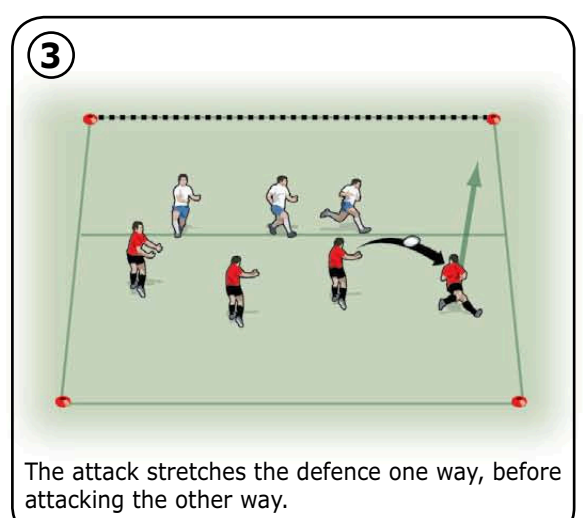
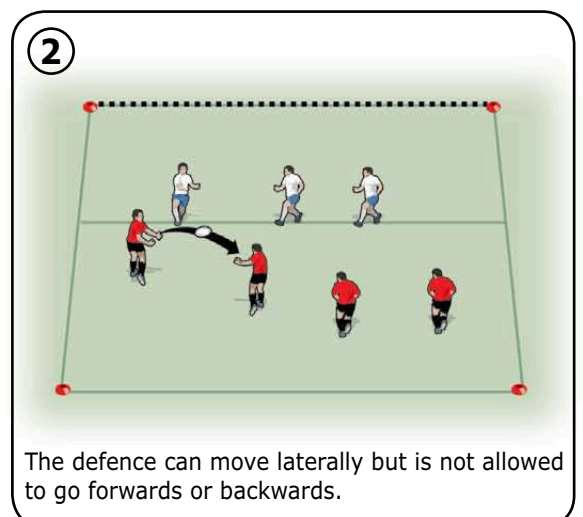
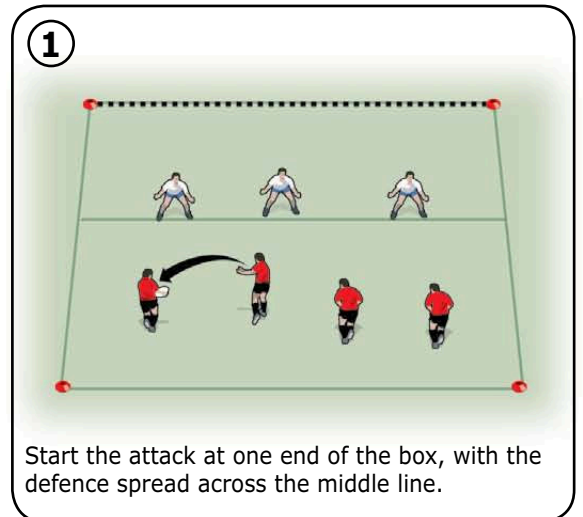
- 1 point for a try.
- 1 point to the defence if they prevent an attack succeeding.

What to call out

- "Attack the inside shoulder at pace"
- "Pull the ball back"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The attack will soon realise that they can only break the line if there is at least one player coming onto the ball at pace. This is best done from the start of the attack rather than from a sevens style run up, back, regroup and attack again. You could put a time limit on each attack.



13. Squeezers

Learning to play through a tight defence

As an attack moves forward, the lateral space reduces as the defence fills in behind. However, the space then opens up once the defensive line is breached. You can recreate this scenario by using funnels as the boundaries.

Set up

- Players: 4 attackers v 2 defenders.
 Area: 20m wide funnel, narrowing to 10m, then opening up again to 20m wide. Have an 8m "bonus point area" in the central section.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play with full on tackling.
- If the attack fails in its attempt (if there's an infringement, or a ruck or maul forms), the team restarts immediately from the other end.

Score

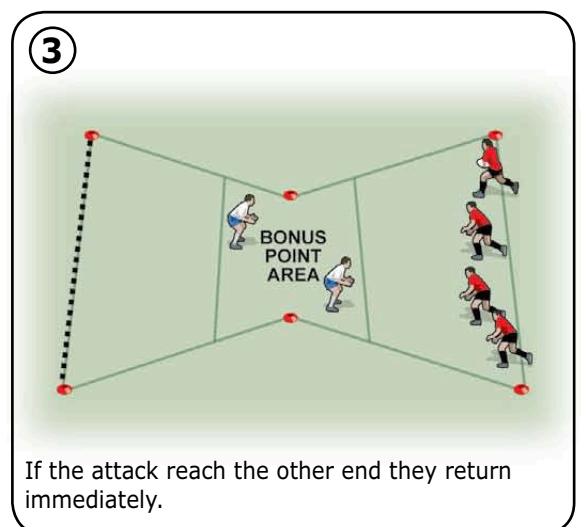
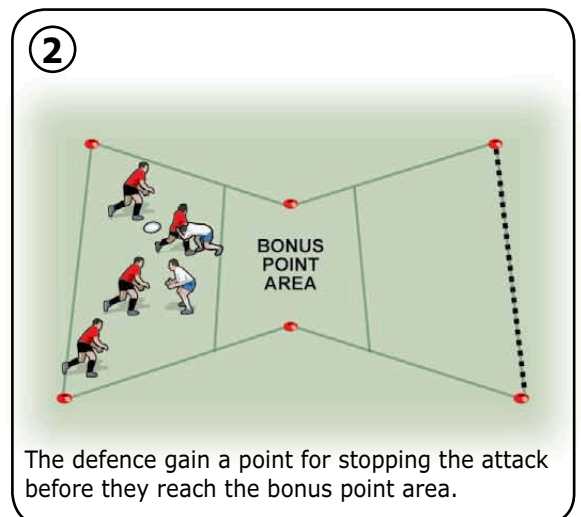
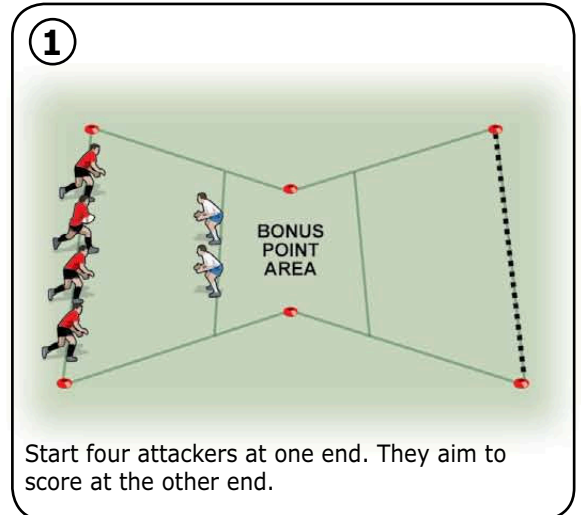
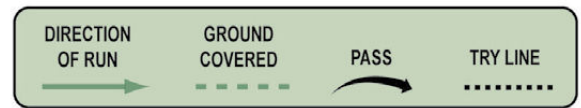
- 1 point for a try.
- 2 points to the defence for stopping the attack before the bonus point area.
- 1 point to the defence for stopping the attack inside the bonus point area.
- The winning team is the first to 5 points.

What to call out

- "Change angles"
- "Attack spaces. Pass before contact"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The narrowing area provides two potential constraints. First the lateral space reduces, meaning the attack has to use shorter passes and better angles to beat the defenders. Second, if they do break the first tackle, there is more chance of the other defender covering back. Therefore they need to finish quickly from any line break.



14. Ninety-nine

Having all players work on their clearing passes

At some stage during the game the scrum half (9) will not be in position to clear the ball from the back of a ruck or maul. This game helps develop all the players' awareness of what to do and how to execute the different passes needed.

Set up

- Players: At least two more attackers than defenders. Nominate two scrum halves, who are the only players allowed to pass or run from the back of rucks.
- Area: 30m square pitch.
- Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start the game from the middle of the pitch.
- Play normal rugby rules, but only the 9s can pass or run from a ruck. Playing with two 9s ensures that there should always be a 9 available.
- Any normal infringement or try leads to a restart.
- Play with new 9s every couple of attempts.

Score

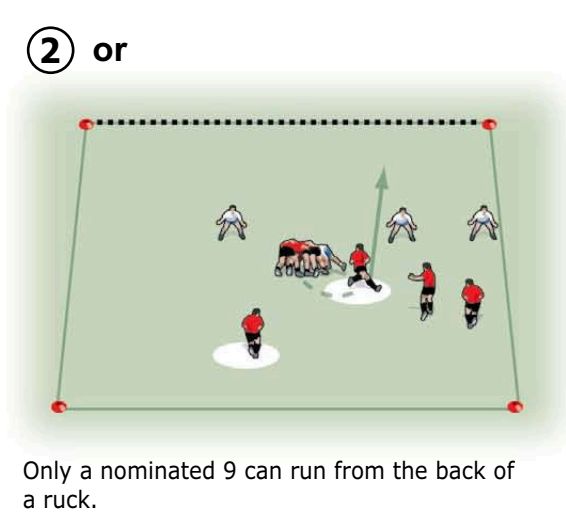
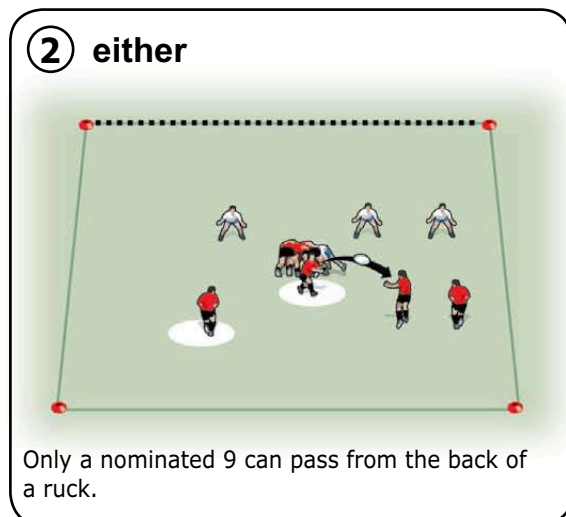
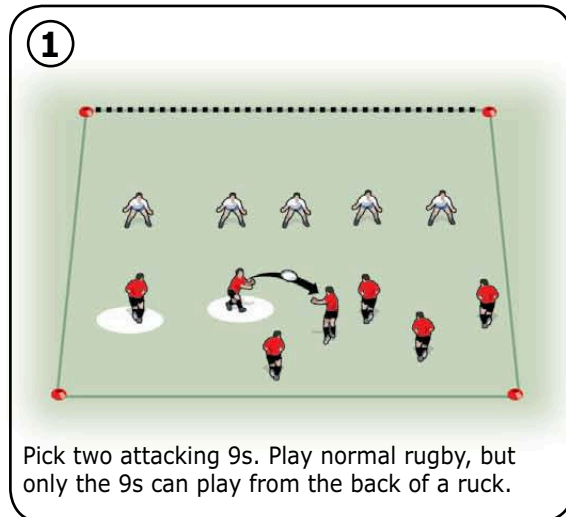
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Look, listen and execute"
- "Bend at the knees and sweep away the pass"
- "Don't force the long pass"

Coaching notes

- ✓ You should let all the players have a go at being one of the nominated 9s. The more forwards who can develop this skill, the more variety you will have.
- ✓ The clearing pass does not need to be a long spin pass.



15. Boxed in

Passing in a tight, flat, crowded situation

This game works on communication, handling skills and vision. Because the attack has no depth, the defenders can often be amongst them, meaning normally lateral passing becomes less effective. You should see some interesting solutions.

Set up

Players: 5 attackers v 3 defenders.
 Area: 30m wide, no more than 10m deep.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start with two handed touch tackling, but only allow the ball carrier two seconds to then pass the ball. In full contact allow offloads.
- Any infringement leads to a restart.
- There are no offside, so the defence can go anywhere once you have thrown the ball in.
- The attack has five attempts.

Score

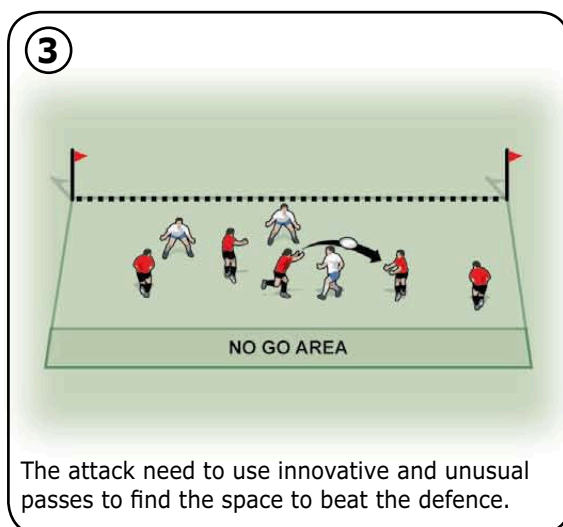
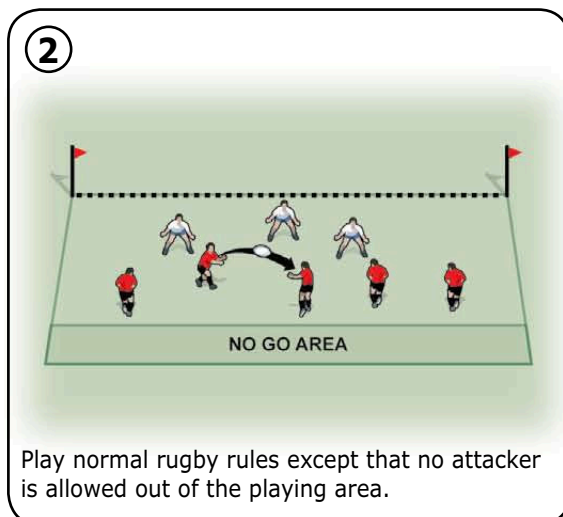
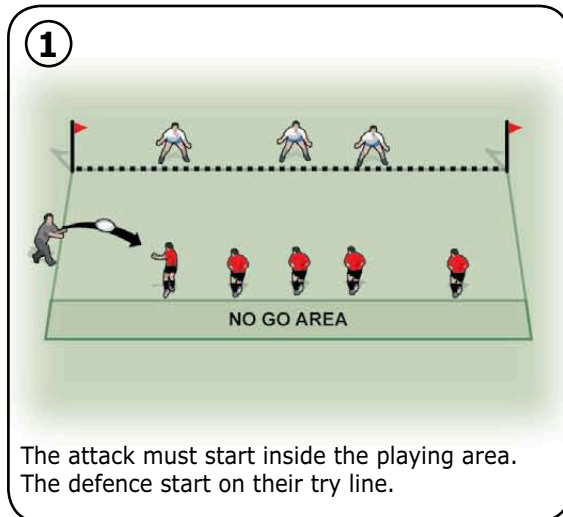
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Ball carrier: move the ball away quickly, keep the defence moving"
- "Defenders: get in between the attack"
- "Supporters: get into lateral space"

Coaching notes

- ✓ It might take some time for the attack to find solutions. Ball carriers may initially dither on the ball, rather than looking for options before they receive the pass.
- ✓ The ball carrier will need to go forward to draw defenders. However he might need to go sideways or even backwards if he wants to develop forward movement somewhere else.



16. Neat and tidy

Recovering dropped or missed passes

Not every pass is accurate. Players sometimes have to make the best of a dropped or missed pass. This game concentrates on players picking up the ball and going forward, despite attention coming from any direction.

Set up

Players: 2 v 2.
 Area: 10m square box.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play with full contact.
- Change over attackers and defenders after every attempt.
- Restart on any infringement.

Score

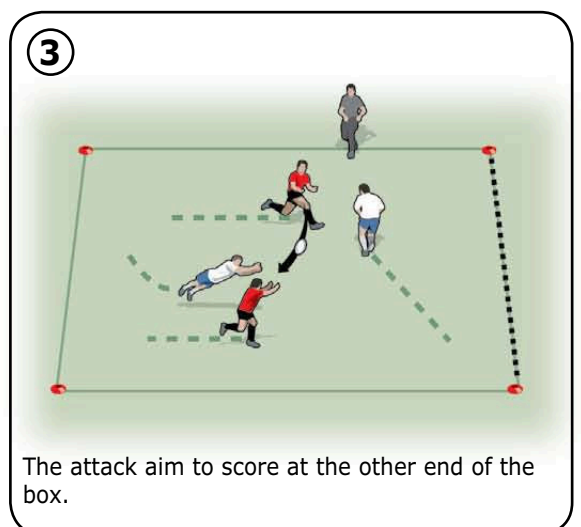
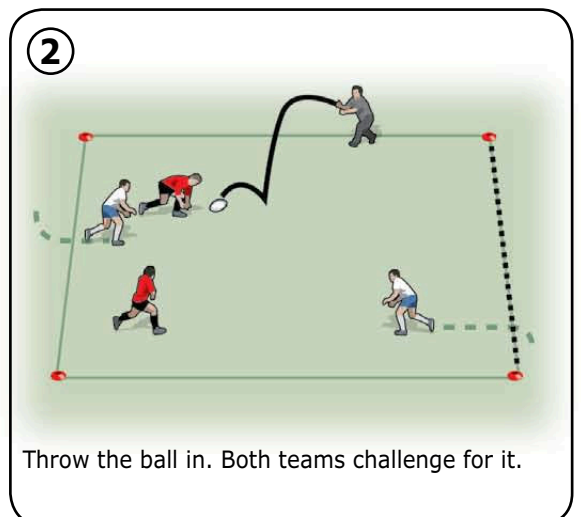
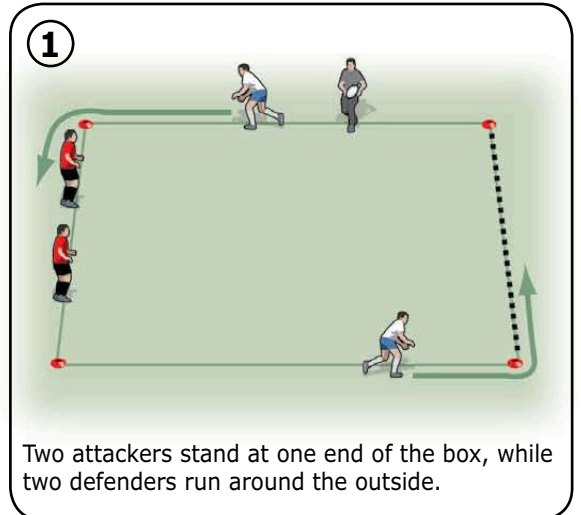
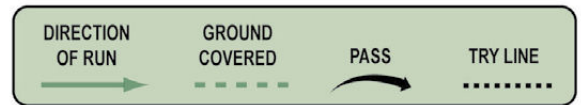
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Swoop for the ball"
- "Fall on a 50:50 ball and get to your feet quickly"
- "Move the ball away from the pick up immediately"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Change the size of the box to suit the skills and the level of pressure on the players. You can also add one more attacker and defender.
- ✓ Your throw into the box dictates the pressure, so consider how hard or to where you roll or throw the ball.



17. Response rates

Getting back into the game quickly

This game concentrates on moving players around different parts of the field and between different situations. Listen particularly for communication as players move from one area to another.

Set up

- Players: Equal numbers, minimum 5 v 5.
 Area: Three pitches, 10m square, 20m square, 30m square.
 Equipment: Three balls, one for each pitch.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules but without set pieces.
- Change playing areas when the game is dynamic, not when there is "slow ball".
- Return to the smallest box after an infringement or a try is scored.

Score

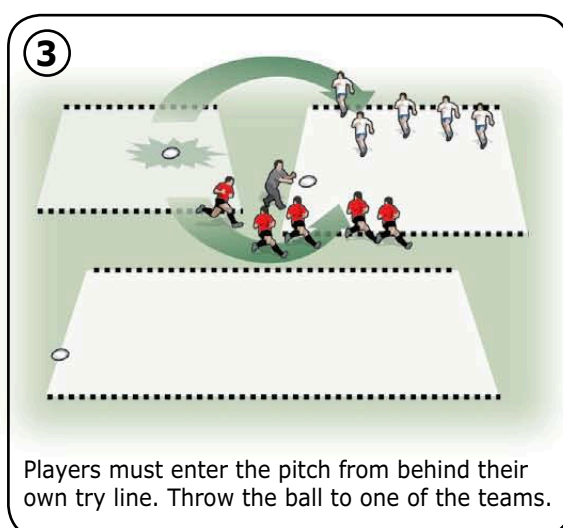
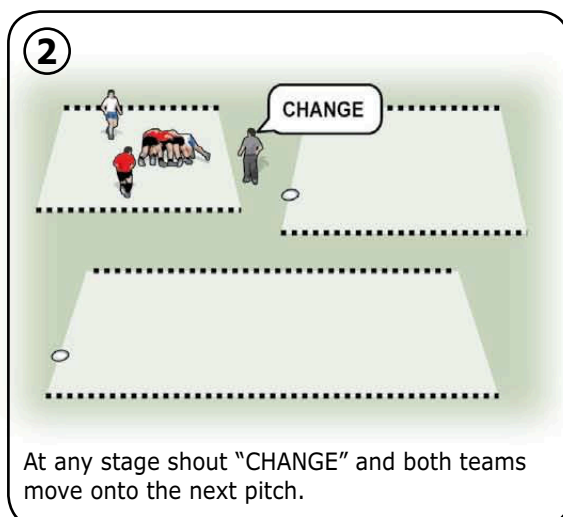
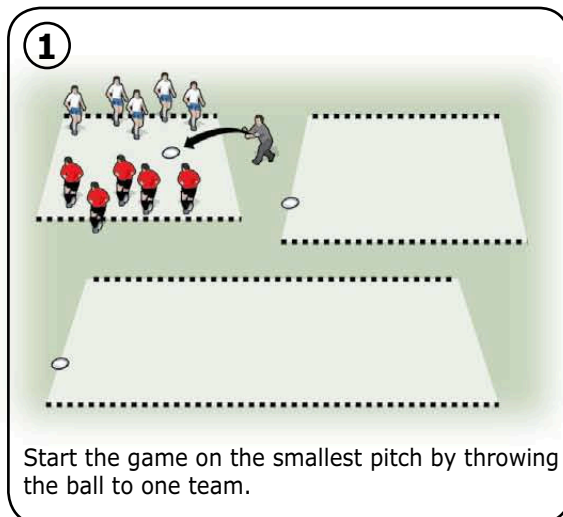
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Keep focused on doing the basics right"
- "Make a difference at the ruck and in the tackle"
- "Communicate where there are spaces to attack and defend"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This is a game without set pieces, so there is not much structure. Challenge the players to develop plays if there is a ruck or maul, but to attack spaces when there is no structured defence.
- ✓ The game may highlight that attacking players can get isolated. They need to keep on their feet until support arrives.



18. Mismatch vision

Exploiting your advantages in attack

"Game vision" means seeing spaces and moving the ball to those spaces. Players can also recognise mismatches in terms of speed and strength.

"Mismatch vision" aims to have forwards running at backs, and backs running at forwards.

Set up

- Players: No more than 8 aside. Equal number of forwards and backs on each team.
- Area: 40m square (depending on numbers).
- Equipment: One ball. (Optional bibs and shirts to distinguish forwards from backs.)

Game notes

- Touch tackled players restart by posting the ball through the legs.
- The tackler and tackled player cannot move until the ball is passed away.
- The defending side must retreat 2 metres behind the tackle.
- A persistently offside player has to leave the pitch for 30 seconds.
- Restart at the point of any infringement with a tap and pass. The ball is allowed to go along the ground.

Score

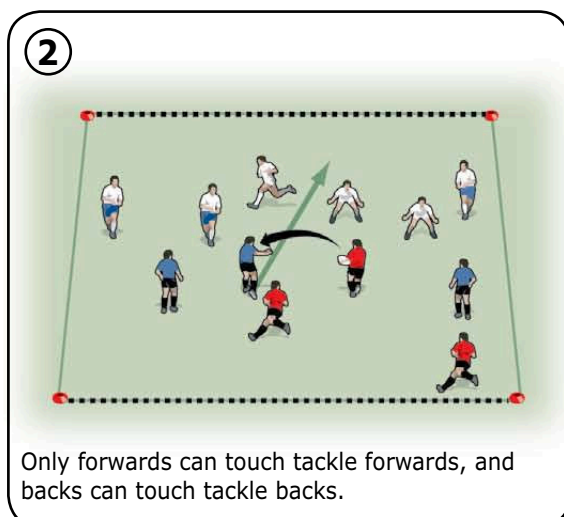
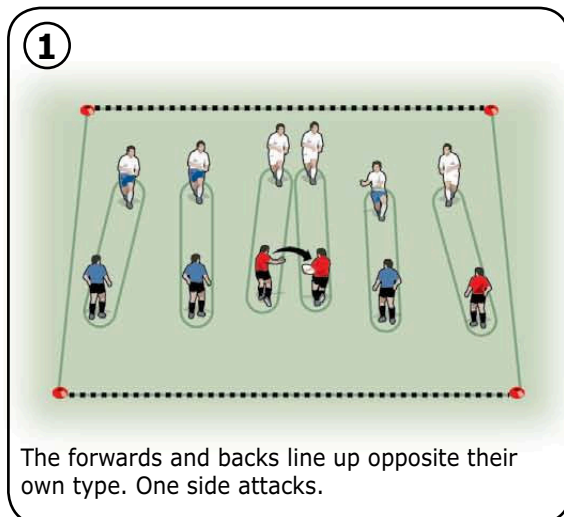
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Look for and communicate mismatches"
- "Attack from deep"
- "Play the ball quickly"

Coaching notes

- ✓ You can mix up the numbers so one side can have more of one type of player than the other side.
- ✓ Try progressing to full on tackling, with the same rugby league "play the ball" style of restart.



19. Super loopers

Getting passers to support automatically

Quite often the closest support player to the ball carrier is the player who has just passed him the ball. This game encourages players to provide support on the inside or outside of the receiver, by following their own pass.

Set up

Players: Maximum 7 v 7.
 Area: Half a pitch wide, up to 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start with two handed touch tackling, with a turnover after four touches.
- Turnover the ball if players do not follow their pass. They don't have to receive the next pass.
- Dropped balls and normal infringements lead to a turnover.
- You could make the pitch narrower and play full-on tackling.

Score

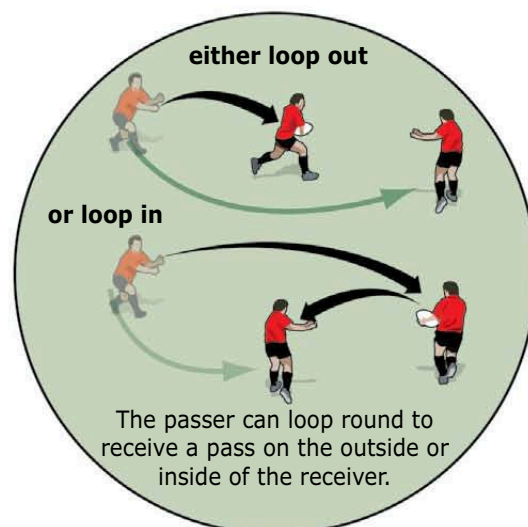
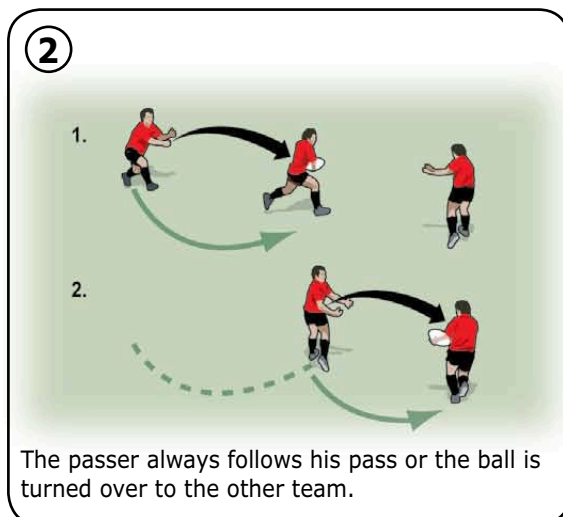
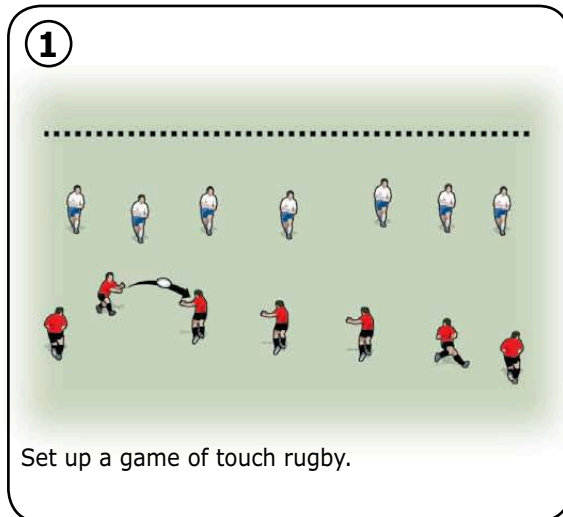
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Don't think your job is done once you have passed the ball"
- "Pass then follow"
- "Call out where you are going to support"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Players will soon learn to "follow" the pass, since their team will keep losing the ball if they don't. They can then work out what types of support work best. Some will follow in behind, others will aim to get outside the passer. For instance a winger might loop a prop, and a prop might work on the inside of a winger.



20. Smash and go

Playing a set pattern in a mixed up game

This game makes players stick to defined roles. They can then see how they can break down a defence by executing those roles successfully.

Set up

Players: Minimum 8 v 8 (attackers split into two groups each with a different shirt or bib).
 Area: 40m wide, 20m long pitch.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules.
- Restart the game if there is an infringement, turnover or a try is scored.
- An infringement also occurs if one player from a group performs a task that he is not assigned to do.
- Give the attack three attempts before swapping the teams. Mix up backs and forwards amongst the groups.

Score

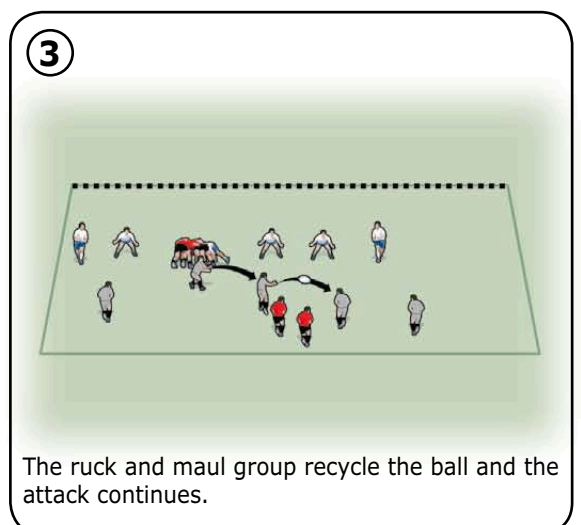
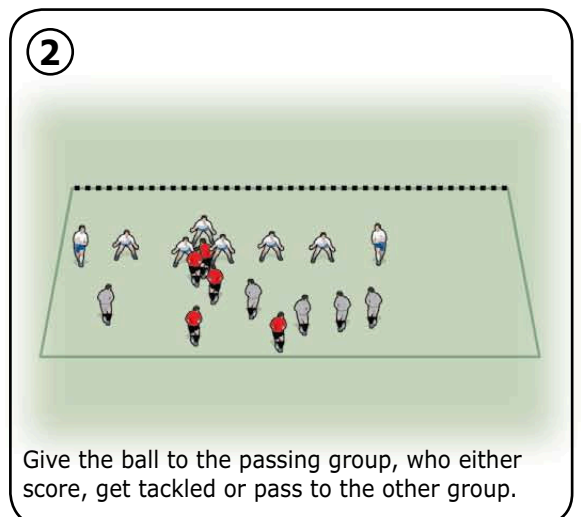
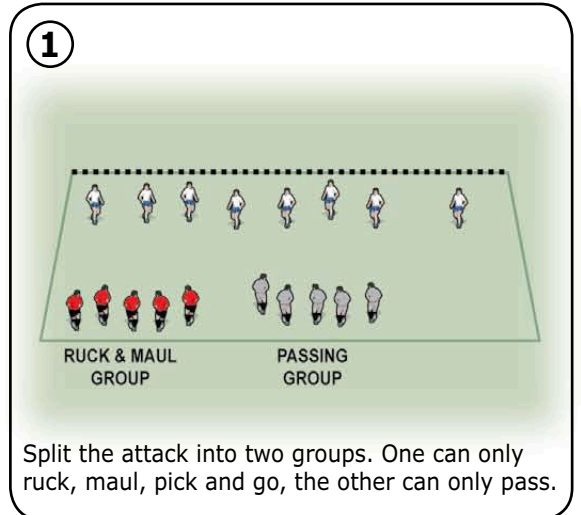
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Don't get sucked into the ruck. You might need to support from the next phase"
- "Vary the points of attack"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Utter confusion may reign for the first couple of attempts. However, the game will start to give the players a sense of their roles in a match.
- ✓ You should emphasise that these roles are the responsibilities for a certain plays and not for all plays in the game. For instance, you might need a centre to ruck and a prop to act as the passing pivot from a series of plays, but not in another phase.
- ✓ Use bibs to identify who is who.



21. Ruck stops here!

Ideal for improving defensive rucking

This game concentrates on the defensive positions of the players at the ruck. It allows a ruck to form anywhere in the playing area and forces each team to react and realign quickly.

Set up

Players: Equal numbers, minimum 5 v 5.
 Area: 10m wide, 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The attack always retains the ball.
- Restart after each try or infringement.

Score

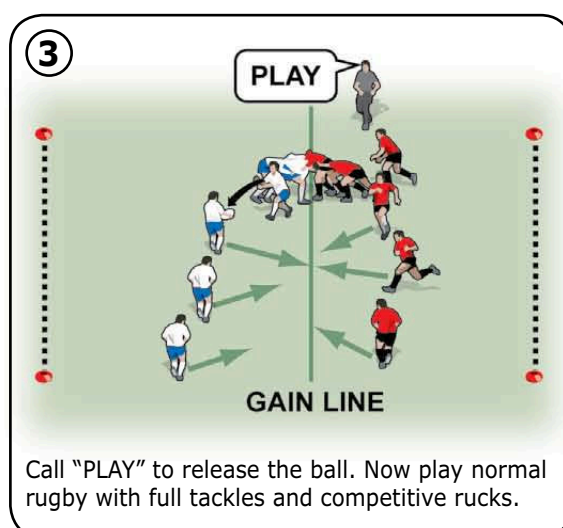
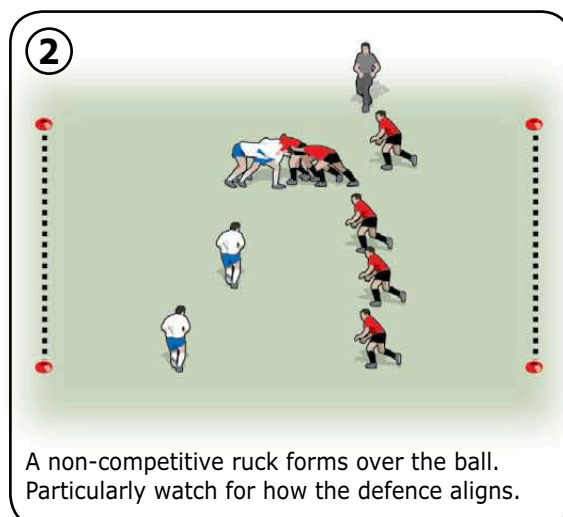
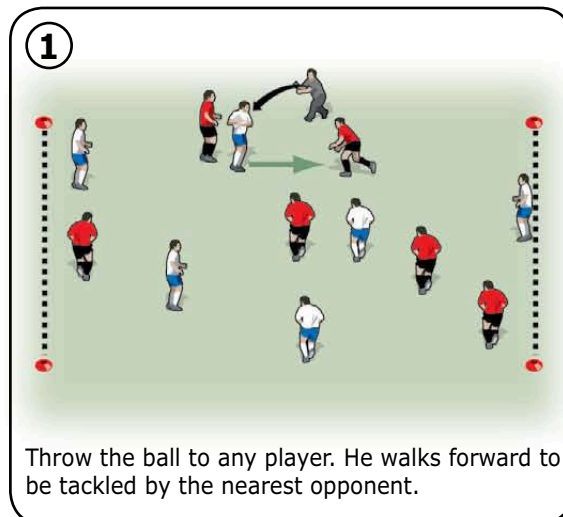
- 1 point for a try.
- 1 point for preventing the attack from getting over any of the gain lines during the game.

What to call out

- "Keep balanced, look ahead, stay onside"
- "Say who you have covered"
- "Cover the edge of the ruck first, then fill out"
- "Go forward and deny the space"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The emphasis is on the defence. Make sure you look at their body positions, organisation and communication.
- ✓ The walking start allows you to see that the players are getting into position at the first ruck. In the first few goes at the game, take your time before releasing the ball from the first ruck, so allowing the defence to align properly.
- ✓ You can introduce a system where the first two players on each side of the ruck identify themselves. Terms that are frequently used include "A and B", "pillars and posts", "guards and guard dogs".



22. 3 seconds, 3 rucks

Faster rucks for cleaner ball

Quick rucks allow more attacking opportunities because the defence has to adjust fast and might leave gaps. That doesn't mean loads of rucks, but high tempo play to create go forward ball.

Set up

Players: 8 attackers v 6 defenders.
 Area: 20m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules, but do not allow kicking.
- A ruck which lasts more than 3 seconds means the end of that attempt.
- Allow three attempts before changing the teams around.
- Be tough on the ruck laws for both sides. Restart the game if the defence infringes.

Score

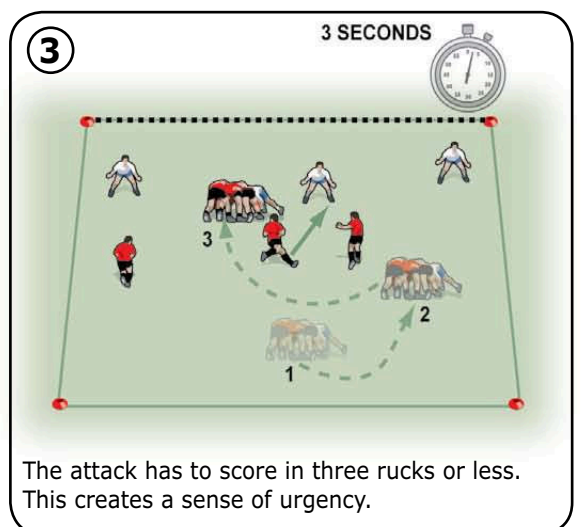
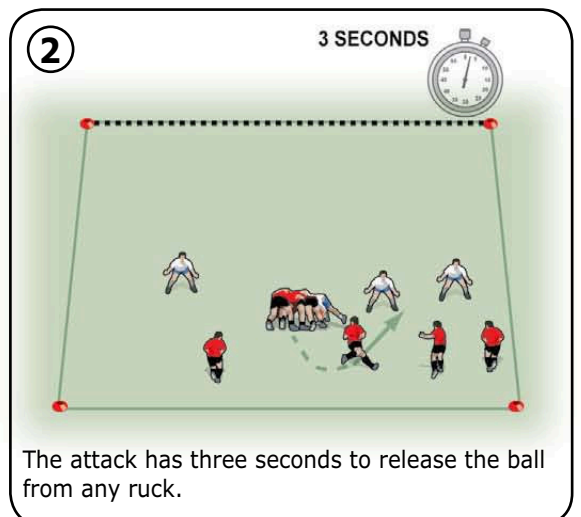
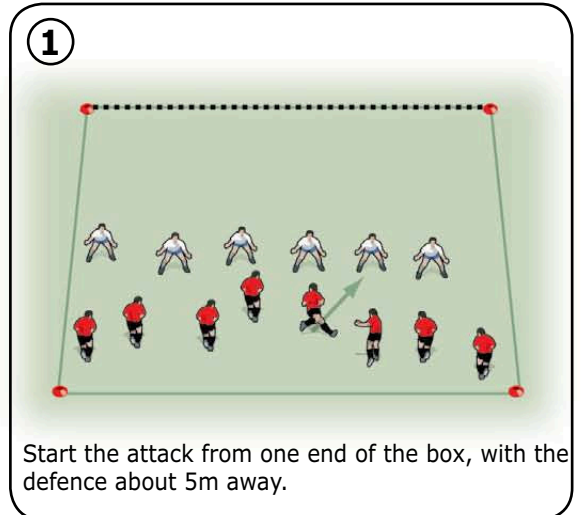
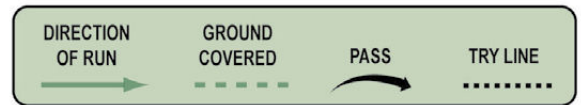
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Support the ball carrier into contact"
- "Drive in over the ball, taking out threats"
- "Good leg drive in the contact to provide a better target"

Coaching notes

- ✓ A ruck occurs when a player from each side is bound over the ball. This is when you should start your countdown.
- ✓ Encourage players to stay on their feet at the ruck and to ruck beyond the ball. Players that "seal off" tend to create slow ruck ball because they stop at the ball. It is not allowed by the laws either.



23. Twist and turn

Creating dynamic rucks and mauls

Many rugby matches are won and lost in the last 5 metres. Slow possession in this part of the field leads to rucks and mauls where there is no way through in front, but space at the edges. This game works on close quarter gains in this area.

Set up

- Players: Equal numbers, minimum 5 v 5.
 Area: 20m square box, divided into three equal channels, with a 7m "no try" zone at either end of the middle channel.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules, but do not allow kicking or passing.
- Any infringement leads to a restart in the middle of the pitch.

Score

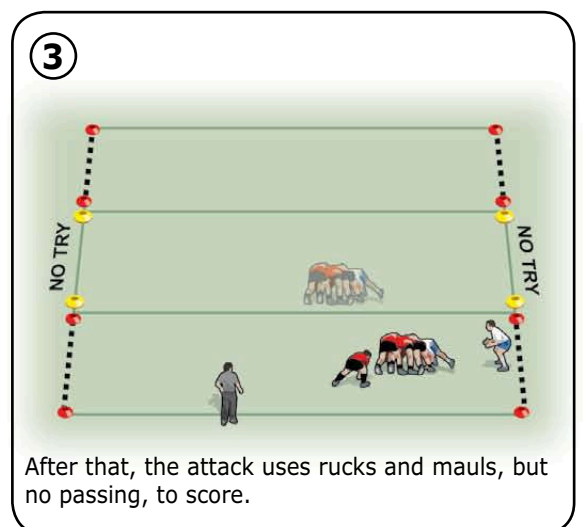
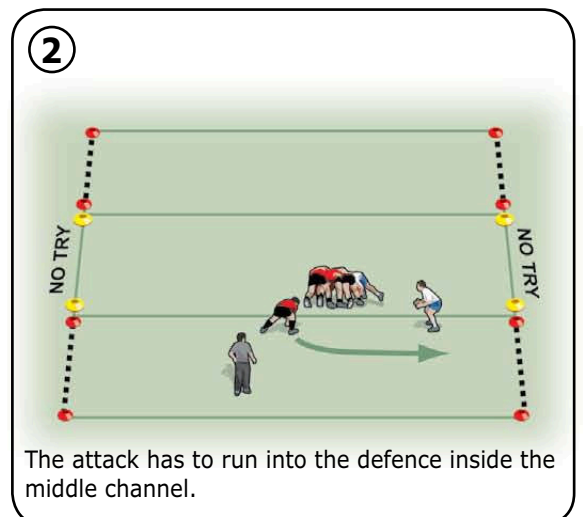
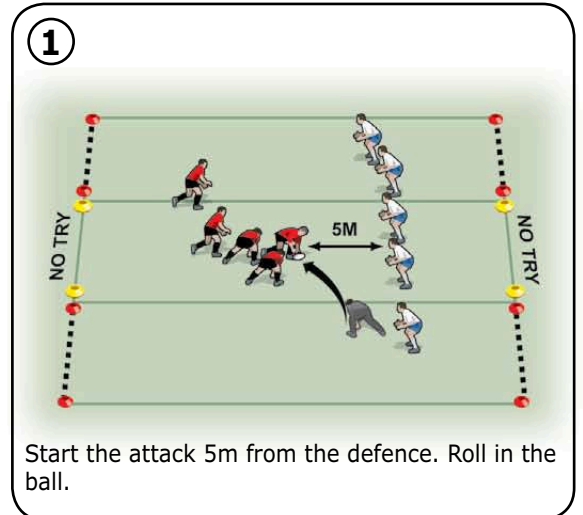
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Be patient in the build up"
- "Attack the edges of the breakdown with support"
- "Keep forward momentum"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This game will develop "mini mauls" of two or three players picking up the ball and twisting into a new space.
- ✓ With the try zones at the edges of the pitch, the attack will need to look up to see where they are going and communicate with their team mates.
- ✓ Isolated players will get turned over, so they will learn to retain possession by working together.



24. 3-away

An ideal game for quick rucks

A quick ruck is only worthwhile if you can make something of it. This ultra competitive game creates situations where a slow ruck needs to be followed by a quick ruck and fast hands.

Set up

Players: 8 v 8.
 Area: 20m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Use normal rugby laws, but do not allow offloads or kicking.
- Any infringement leads to a restart.
- The player who receives the ball outside the box must not be further than 5m away from the edge of the square and has to take the pass cleanly.
- Shout out "SLOW" if the ruck takes more than three seconds.

Score

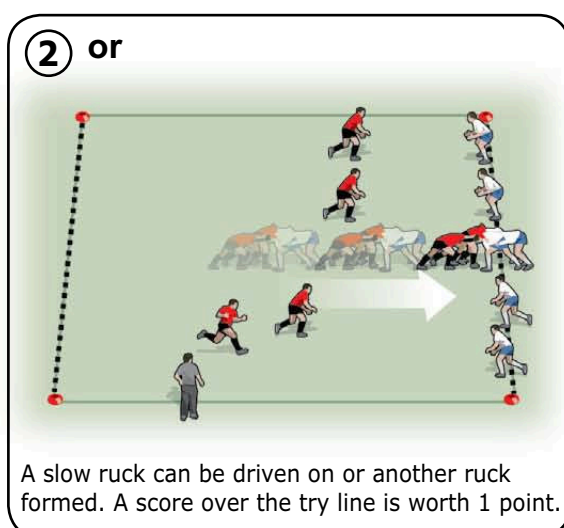
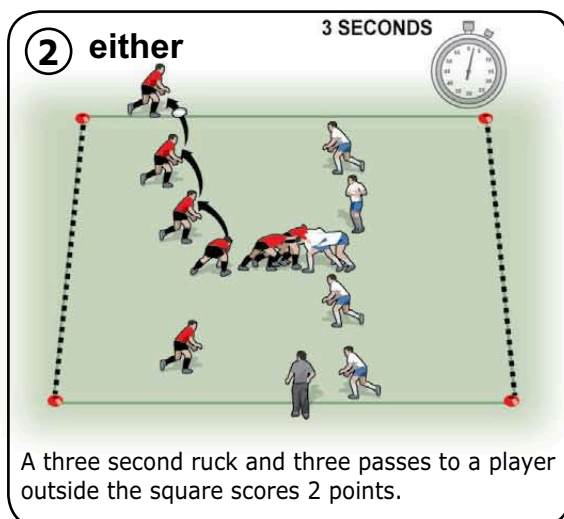
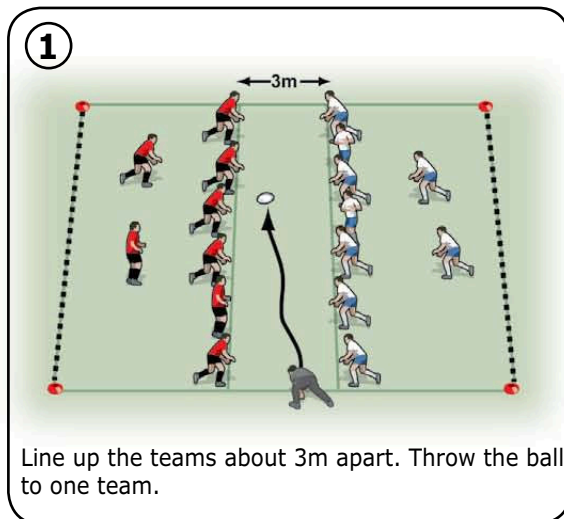
- 2 points for three passes from a "quick" ruck (that is, no more than three seconds after a player from each team has bound over the ball), to a player outside the square.
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Low body positions through the contact area"
- "Leg drive in the contact"
- "Lots of communication to set up a new ruck"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This game rewards quick rucks AND players getting into position to pass the ball wide.
- ✓ Make sure you nominate a scrum half for each team to organise the players.
- ✓ Trying overloading one team to see how each team finds solutions.



25. 8 balling

Setting up second phase attacks from scrums

From a scrum, your 8 can run into the opposition backline to create quick ball as the defence retreats. This full on game situation will test your players' timing and body angles, as well as their ability to move the ball quickly as space becomes available.

Set up

Players: 7 v 7.
 Area: 30m wide, up to 20m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The ball starts in the middle of a passive three man scrum. The number 8 binds at the back of the front two players.
- Mark out a gain line to check the progress from the first surge.
- Play normal rugby rules.
- The attack has four attempts to score. An attempt finishes if a try is scored, the first ruck takes more than 3 seconds, or an infringement occurs.

Score

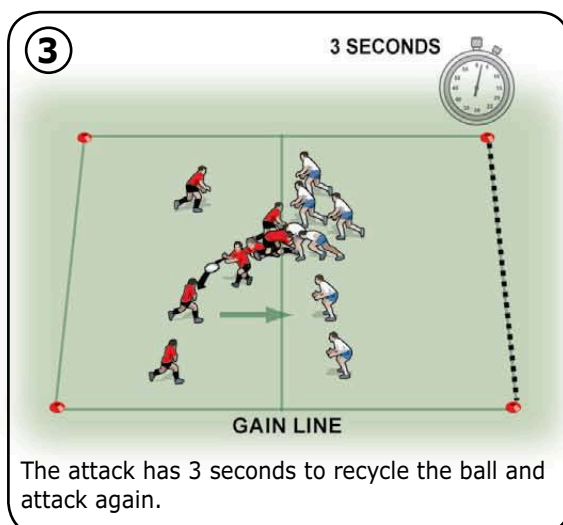
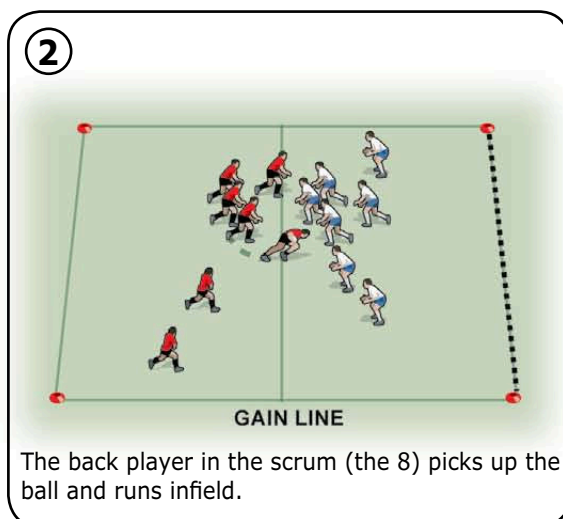
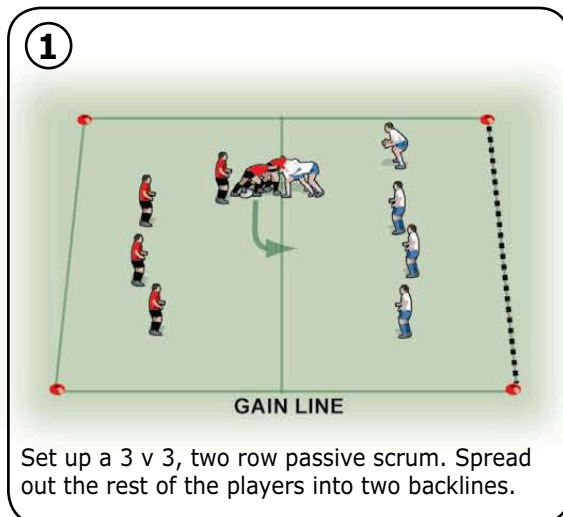
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Leg drive into contact to provide a target"
- "Take out threats"
- "Clear the danger and attack at pace"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Normally the 8 runs right, but he can go left for variety.
- ✓ You need to decide how many backs are committed to the first ruck. Keep your playmakers out of the ruck if possible.



26. Maul demons

A quick fire end-to-end mauling game

Working on better body positions and good leadership, this game tests the forwards' ability to adapt from attack to defence. The change over elements replicate many aspects of a catch and drive from a lineout.

Set up

Players: Equal numbers, minimum 4 v 4.
 Area: 10m wide, up to 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The defence must always start two metres back from the attack.
- The maul can be brought down legally.
- If the attack go into touch, restart with the ball going to the other team.
- Always allow time for both teams to reset before restarting.
- You can place the ball for the "CHANGE" or move to the point at which you want the other team to start and throw in the ball (like a lineout).

Score

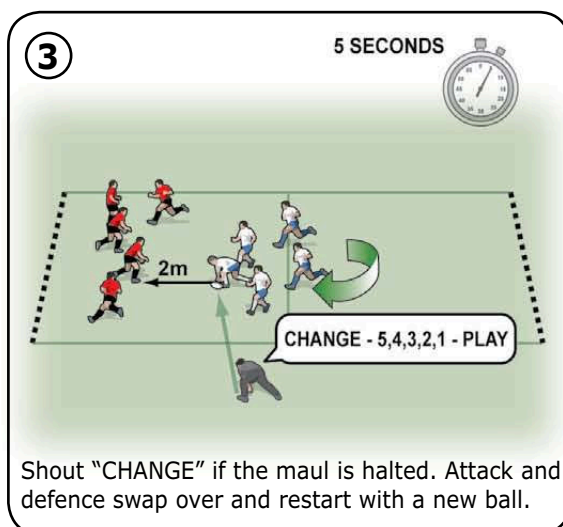
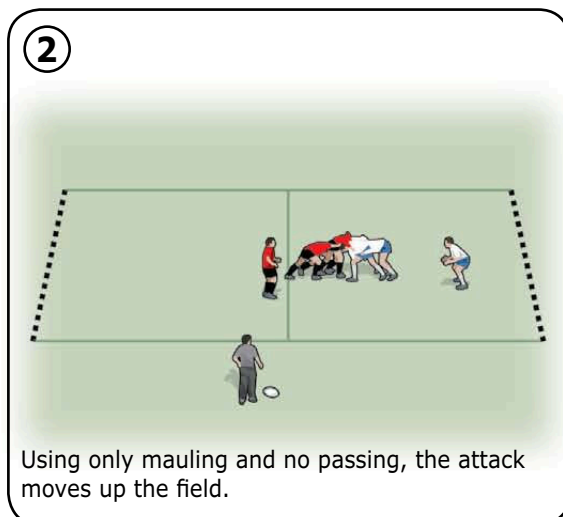
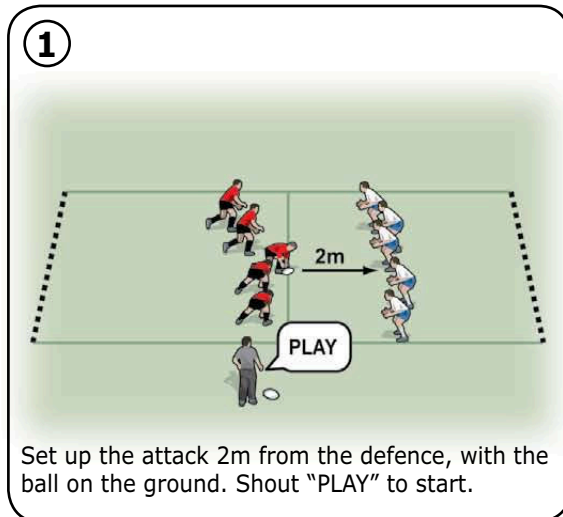
- 1 point for a try (or a maul that goes more than five metres).

What to call out

- "Create a seal around the ball"
- "Short steps in the contact area"
- "Drive straight and then change the point of attack"

Coaching notes

- ✓ A maul is a balance of patience and brute force. It works on good body positions and communication to keep moving. Use breaks in play to discuss better ways to maul.
- ✓ Focus on players getting the ball away from danger in the maul, and then driving.



27. The rock

Making players stronger in contact

Working on body positions in the close contact area, this session concentrates on creating go forward ball. Because of the static start and closeness of the overloaded defence, the premium is on good leg drive, communication and staying on the feet.

Set up

Players: 4 attackers v 5 defenders.
 Area: 10m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start with at one more defender than attackers, and add or subtract defenders depending on the success rate.
- The attack fails if the defence stops their forward momentum, creates a ruck or gets the ball carrier into touch.
- Give the attack five attempts to score points.

Score

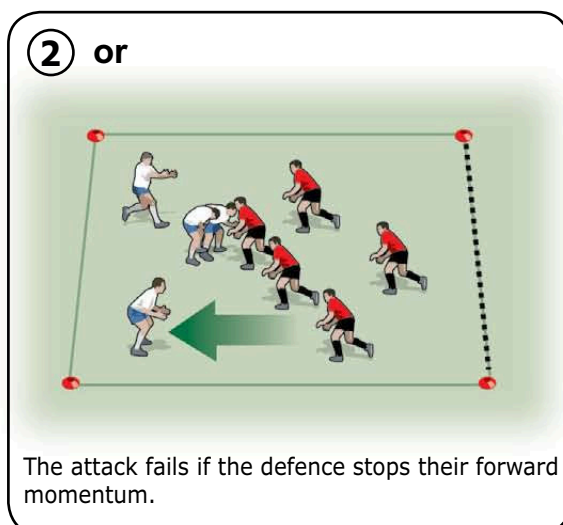
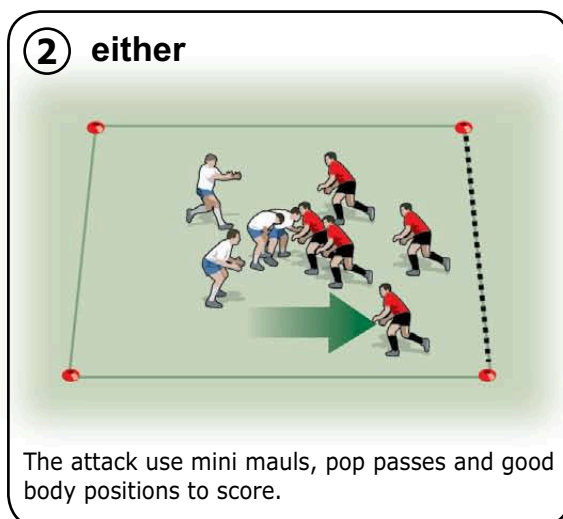
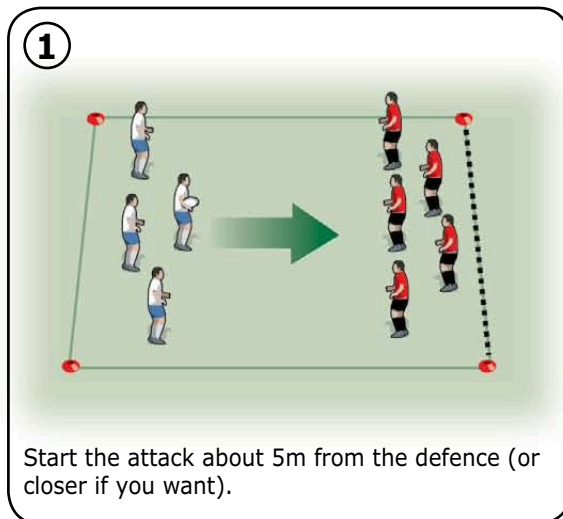
- 3 points for a try.
- 1 point for a ruck beyond the defenders' starting point.

What to call out

- "Leg drive in contact"
- "Support players: drive through the ball carrier not at the edges"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Use this as part of a forwards' coaching session. It could be in a lineout session where the team might use the drive from a back peel, or for a "wave" of forwards taking a pass from the back of a ruck.
- ✓ Condition the defenders to work on tackling players to ground, or competing for the maul ball.



28. The maul lives!

Keeping your maul dynamic

A good maul sucks in defenders and maintains go forward momentum. Your team can create a maul from the edge of ruck and this game simulates what happens next.

Set up

Players: 4 v 4.
 Area: 10m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- No passing is allowed.
- The defending team can pull down the maul legally. Rucks are allowed.
- Each attempt finishes on any infringement or with a try.
- Allow the attack five attempts to score.

Score

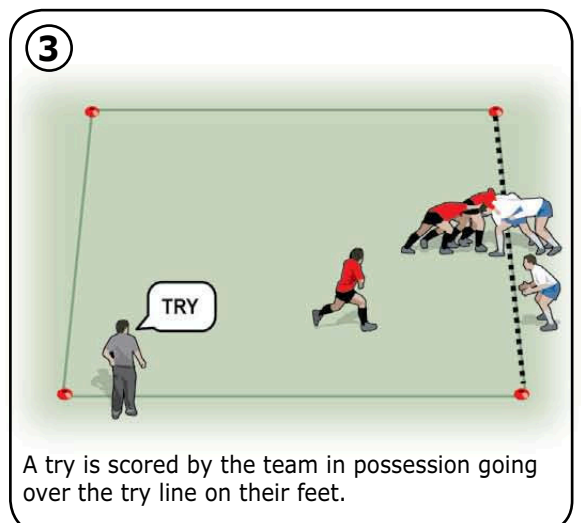
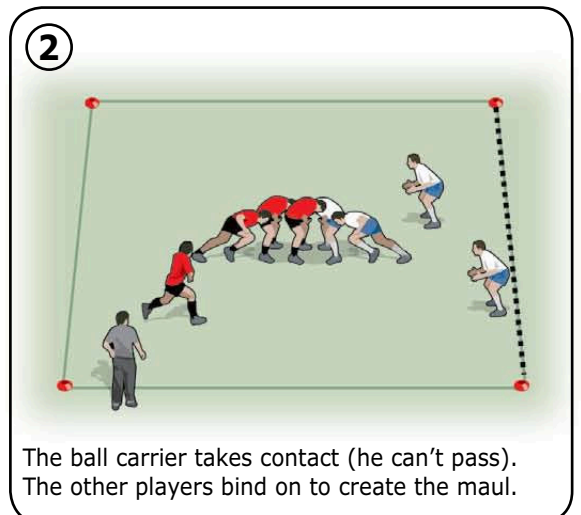
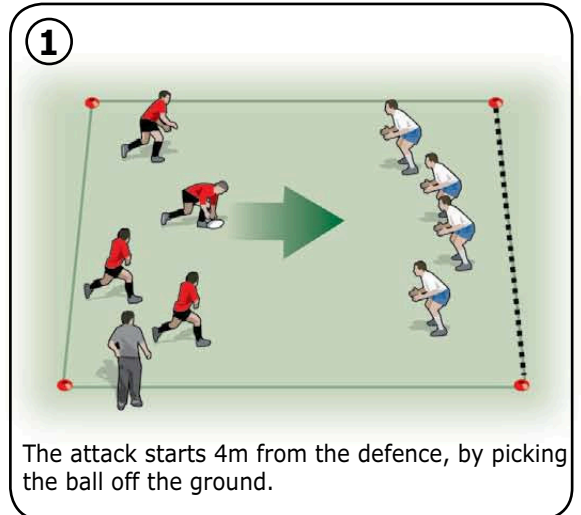
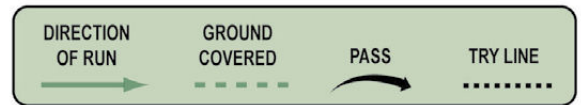
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Keep the ball away from the defenders"
- "Short steps for better leg drive"
- "Drive and roll away from centre of the defence"
- "Keep communicating"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The first player from a ruck or pick up must stay on his feet longer than normal in contact to provide a target for his team mates. He can drag in the players, and lead the initial drive.
- ✓ The side in possession should form a seal around the ball, but keep driving towards the try line. Only one attacker should be facing the wrong way at any one time.



29. Drive in

A cracking game for lineout forwards

Even with chances to pull down the maul, teams are still making great use of the catch and drive from the lineout. Use this game to practise plays from a set peel or just a regular catch and drive. You can play with just a normal pack and the scrum half.

Set up

Players: Minimum 5 attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: 10m out from the try line and at one side of the pitch.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules once the ball is caught by the attacking team.
- The thrower should still stand near to the 5m line (you are not practising the throw).
- Swap the defence and attack every two attempts.

Score

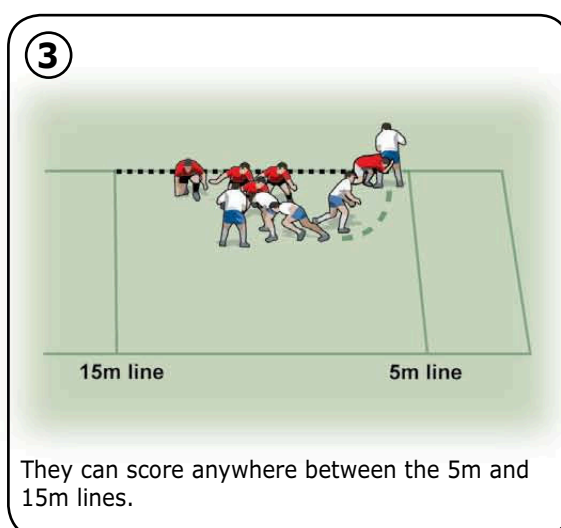
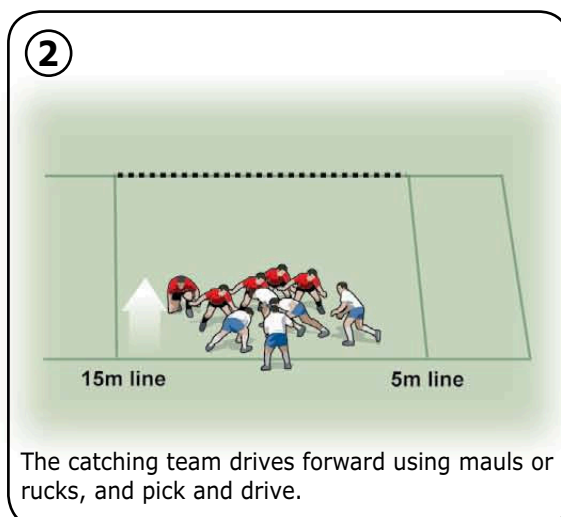
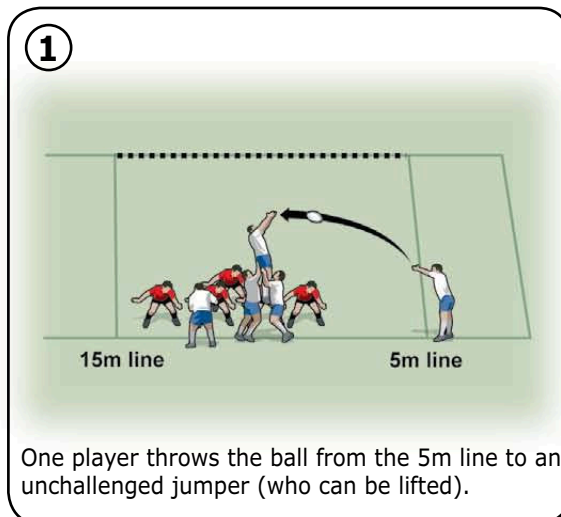
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Drive forward square"
- "Work the ball back and drive again"
- "Stop the maul by pulling down players between the shoulders and shorts"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Ideally the game is played between two sets of forwards, plus a scrum half. If you have more than six players on each team, then widen the scoring area by 5m each side.
- ✓ Develop the game so both teams can contest the throw, because a drive can be initiated against a defence with some players still in the air.



30. Get your kicks

Integrating kicking into small-sided games

Players need to know when to kick in game situations. Here are some rules you can use to reward good kicking in your small-sided games so players are incentivised to use the right kicks.

Set up

- Players: Maximum 7 v 7.
 Area: Up to half a pitch wide, and at least 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play any version of rugby, including touch.
- After three tackles the ball can be kicked. If it is not kicked before the fifth tackle, it is turned over.
- If the ball is kicked, it must be gathered cleanly first time, or the ball is turned over. Don't allow knock-ons or knock-backs.
- The ball is allowed to touch the ground. Don't allow the players to contest for it on the ground.
- Any kick can be contested, but the kicking side, if they recover the ball, don't get any extra tackles.

Score

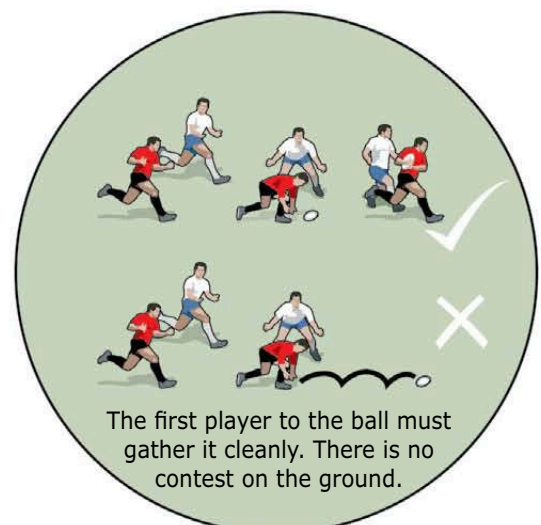
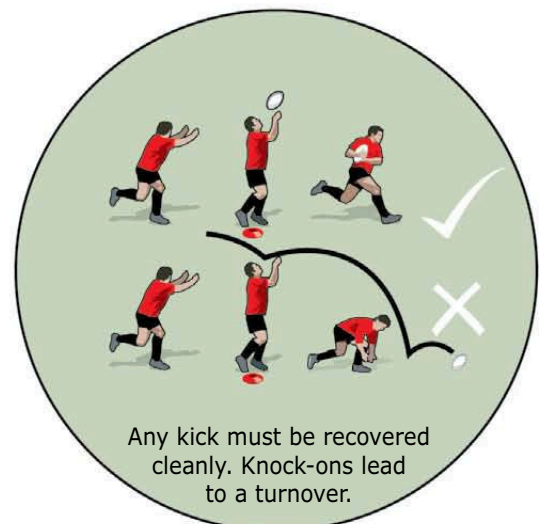
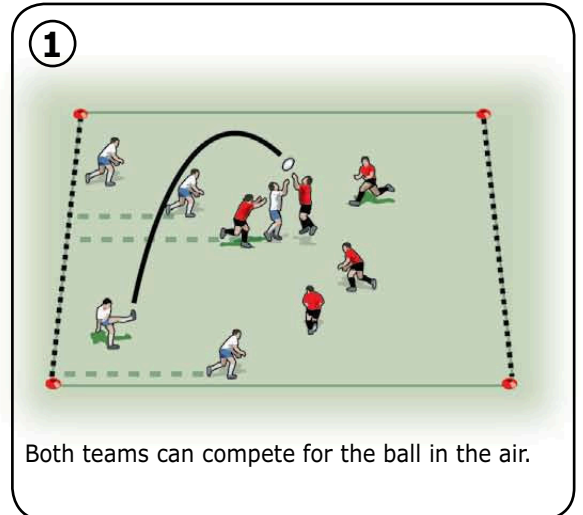
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Stay behind the kicker"
- "Jump into the space where the ball is going to land"
- "Line up deeper if you are going to kick so you don't get charged down"

Coaching notes

- ✓ You could start with one of the kicking rules only, and then add or amend as you go along. You could also nominate players who are allowed to kick and those who are not.
- ✓ Challenge the players to chase effectively, as well as defences to track back to support the recovering players.
- ✓ Make the players think about kicking for possession and for territory.



31. Run backs

Recovering from a kick behind your defence

This game develops quick thinking and ways to move the ball to space from unusual positions. Because most of the attack are running the wrong way to start with, they will face different problems than they'd normally expect, but also new opportunities to beat the defence.

Set up

Players: 5 v 5.
Area: 30m square pitch.
Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Each attempt finishes if there is an infringement or a try is scored.
- Your throw can be high or along the ground.
- Move on to full on tackling straight away.
- Allow offloads, but no rucks or mauls.

Score

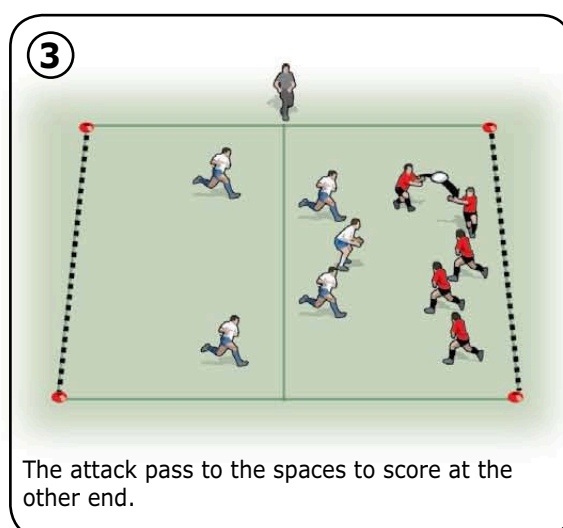
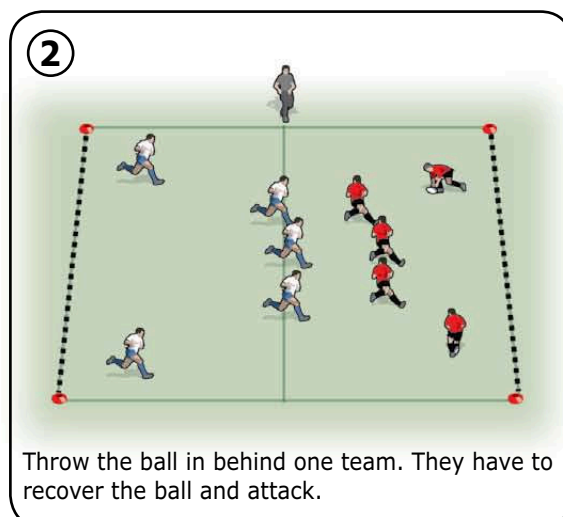
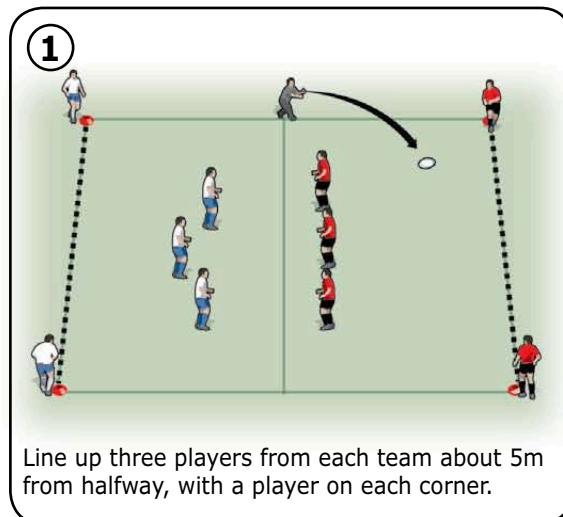
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Swoop onto the ball on the ground and pass off immediately"
- "Players from the back: communicate and create pace onto the ball"
- "Pass to a moving player"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The attacking players have to work hard to get into positions to take the ball at pace, otherwise the defence will have time to move up and cut down the space.
- ✓ You can release the corner defenders later than the others to create different scenarios.



32. Get back

A counter attacking game for defence and attack

This game replicates a 22m drop out or kick off. Both teams have lots of ways of gaining points, giving the defence added incentives to stop attacks.

Set up

Players: 6 v 6.
 Area: 30m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules with full on tackling. Use drop kicks.
- If the kick goes straight into touch or lands behind the try line, restart with the same kicker.
- Restart and swap the teams around after any infringement.
- Play on after a knock-on if there is an advantage to the non-infringing side.

Score

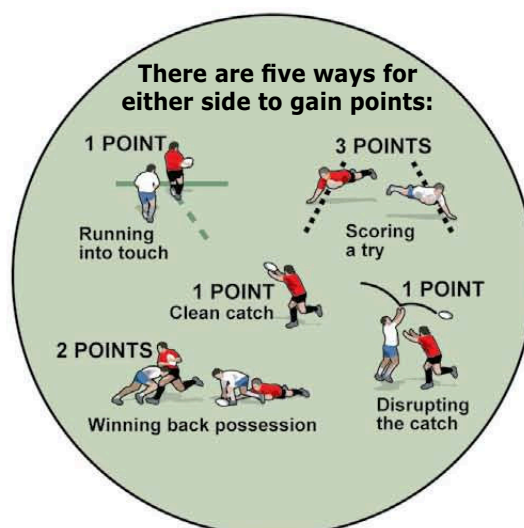
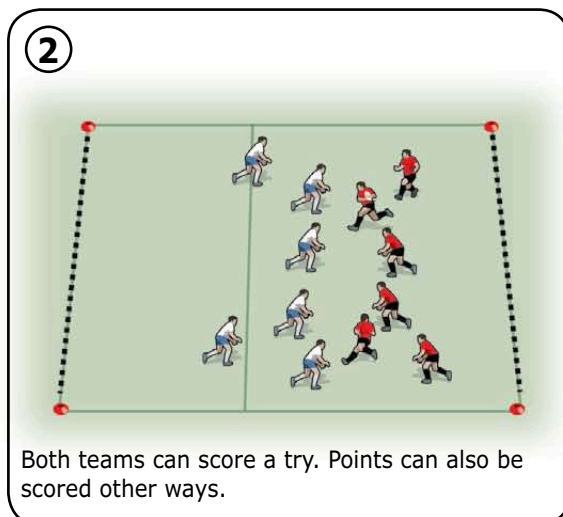
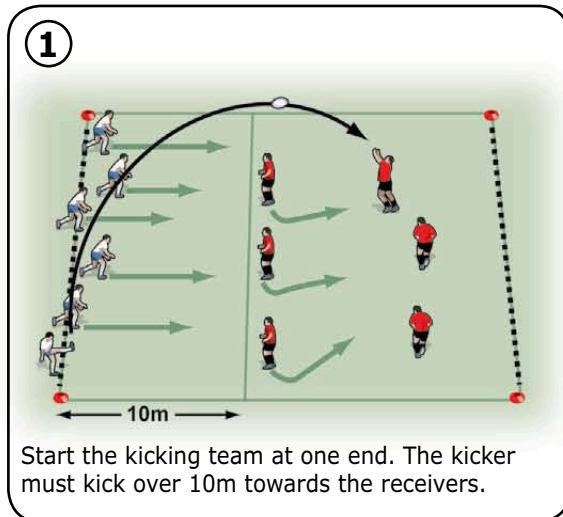
- 1 point for running the ball into touch.
- 1 point for the chasing team disrupting the catch.
- 2 points for winning back possession from the other team.
- 3 points for scoring a try.

What to call out

- "Leap into the space to catch the ball"
- "Anticipate where the ball is going to go from the catch"
- "Move the ball away from the danger area quickly"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Depending on the skills of the kicker, you may need to change the size of the pitch.
- ✓ If the attack frequently run into touch before the 10m line, condition the game so that they need to cross the 10m line first.



33. Grubber soul

Using the low kick to score tries

A grubber kick works because it gives the defence less time to adjust. Choosing when to use the grubber is as important as the execution of the kick. This game must use full on tackling.

Set up

- Players: At least 5 attackers and always two more attackers than the defence.
- Area: One side of the posts to the touchline, inside the 22m area.
- Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Use either real players or cones to represent a ruck. If you use players, they can cover across and be used in another phase.
- Each attempt finishes after a try, an infringement or the defence takes possession of the ball.
- Use the different sides of the pitch to vary the challenge.
- Allow the attack five attempts to score before swapping the teams over.

Score

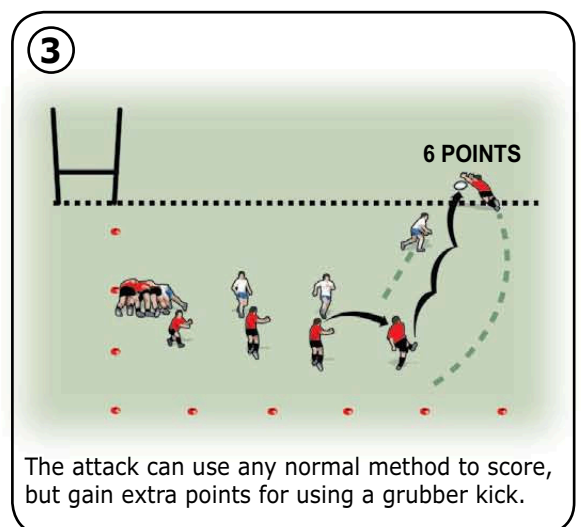
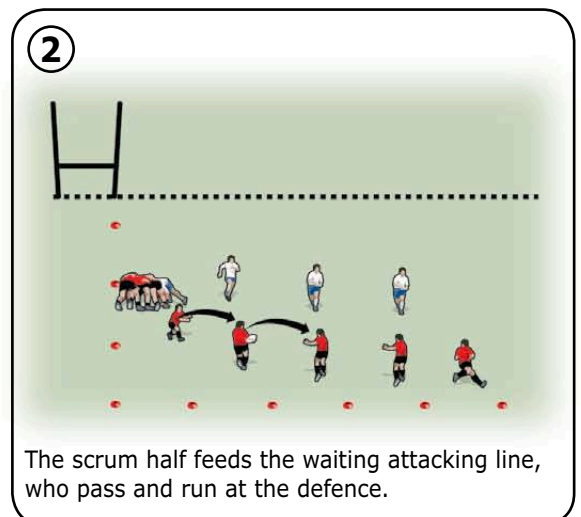
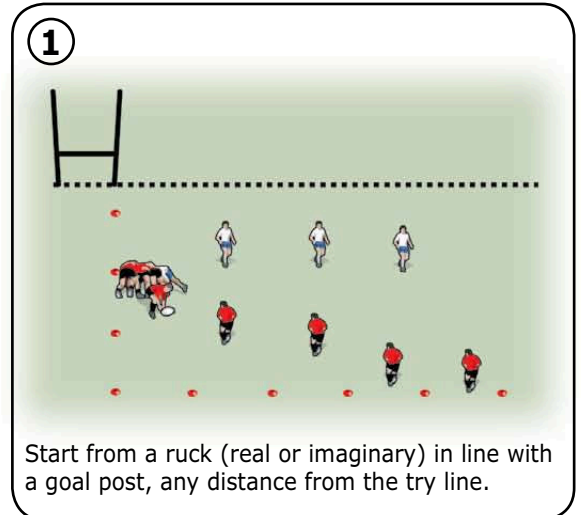
- 2 points for a try.
- 6 points for a try scored directly from a grubber kick.
- Halve the points if the attack score having had to ruck.

What to call out

- "Kick at an angle"
- "Try rolling the ball off the foot rather than kicking it end on end"
- "Chaser: swoop low and early to gather the ball"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The game promotes grubber kicks, but you should be asking the players what works and what doesn't and, importantly, when to use it. The players should be identifying the space behind the defence.
- ✓ Think about whether the ball rolling over the try line works better for your team.
- ✓ Can the chasers dribble the ball on if they cannot pick it up?



34. Chip-chop

Exploiting the space behind the defence to score tries

The chip kick exploits the space behind the defence. This game forces one team to defend in front of and behind the defensive line. The defined kicking areas call for accuracy.

Set up

- Players: At least 6 attackers and 4 defenders.
 Area: One side of the pitch inside the 22m area.
 Equipment: One ball, cones to mark out three 5m diameter landing circles.

Game notes

- This game must be full contact.
- Allow offloads but no rucks or mauls.
- Play ends after a try or an infringement.

Score

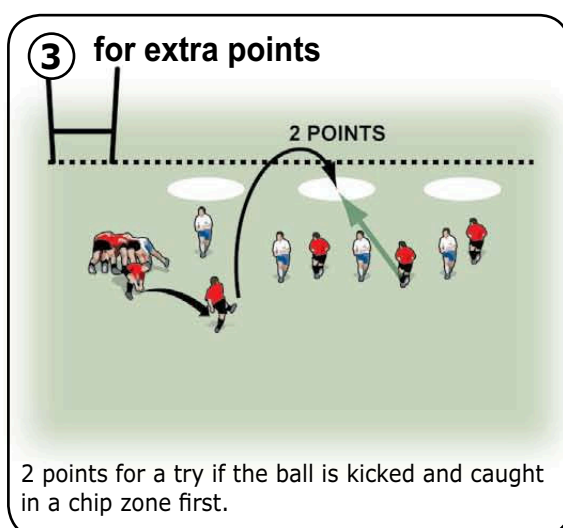
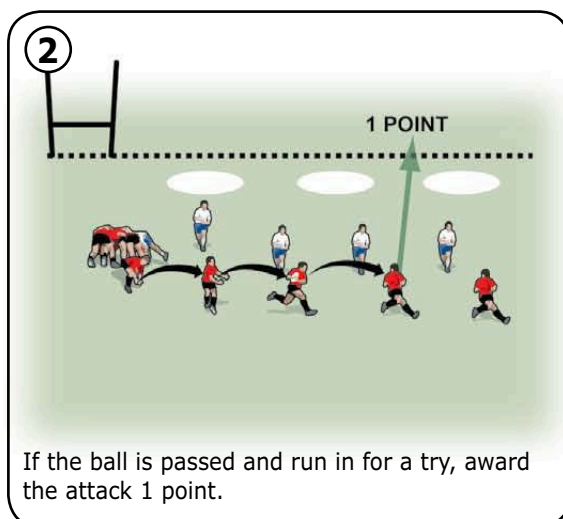
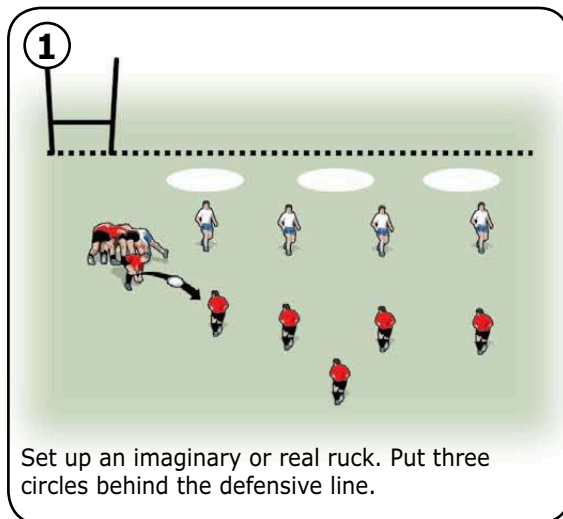
- 2 points for a try following a chip kick and clean catch in a zone.
- 1 point for a chip kick gathered in a zone, but no try is scored.
- 1 point for a chip kick not gathered in a zone, but a try is scored.
- 1 point for a try without a chip kick.

What to call out

- "Kick the ball on the point and on the run"
- "Angle in towards the chip kick when chasing"
- "Attack at pace to keep the defence guessing"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Does a chip kick need to be "preordained", or can it be "off the cuff"? This game might help your team answer this question.
- ✓ Anyone could be a chaser, but you might want to consider who should be chip kicking. You might not want your tight head prop chipping in every situation!



35. Catch and go

Receiving and returning long kicks

Long kicks are very much a part of any team's attacking strategy, so your wingers and full back need to know their positioning. Your midfield players also need to understand how to support the counter attack.

Set up

Players: 6 counter attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: One half of a normal pitch.
 Equipment: One ball. Some cones to mark out a ruck or scrum just inside halfway line.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules. Restart the game after any infringement or if a ruck forms.
- Make sure the wingers and full back start in their likely starting positions when defending a ruck or scrum.
- Move the starting point around.
- Kick the ball into a variety of places, high and low.
- The counter attacking group can kick.

Score

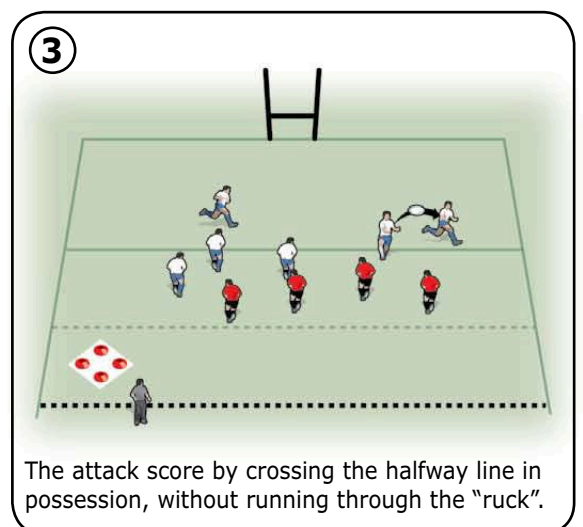
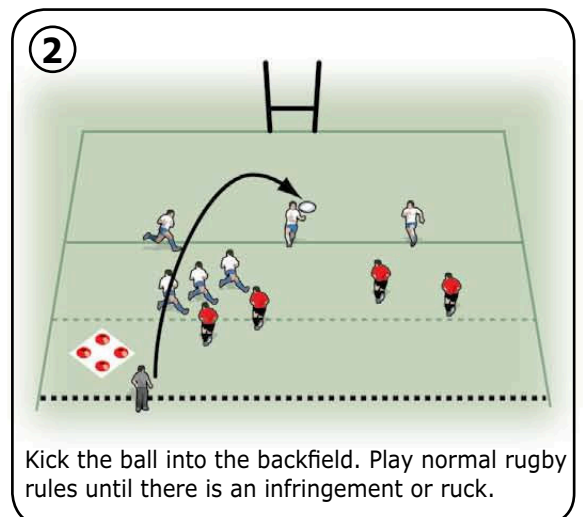
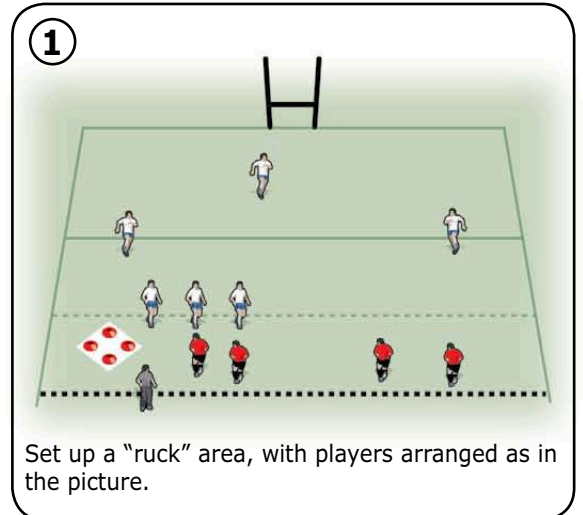
- 3 points for a try scored over the halfway line.
- 2 points for a legal kick into touch over the halfway line.
- 1 point for a legal kick into touch over the 10m line.

What to call out

- "Run to space"
- "Call early for the ball"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This is part of your counter attacking strategy and tactics. Work on different scenarios to challenge your players to come up the solutions.
- ✓ Think about your team's kicking options when counter attacking.



36. Cross kicks

Testing the accuracy of the cross kick

This game works on the players' skills to kick, recover and chase the ball, as well as on their footwork and tackling ability. It is more likely to be part of a backs session.

Set up

- Players: A kicker, chaser and receiver.
- Area: One half and to the side of the pitch.
- Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The kicker can use a variety of kicks to test the ability of the chaser and receiver.
- Start with touch tackling.
- Vary the position of the kicker. Don't just kick from right to left.

Score

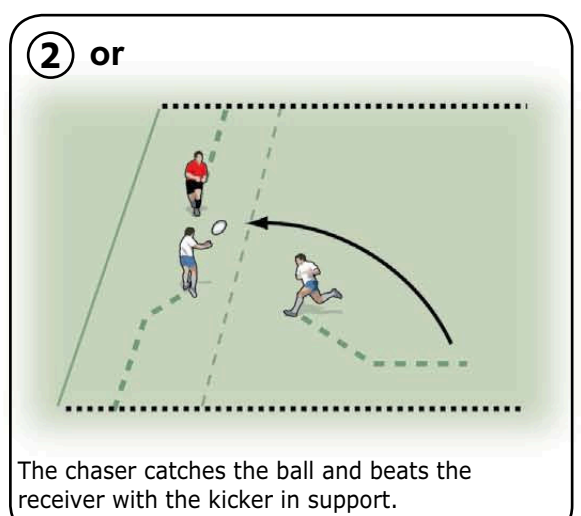
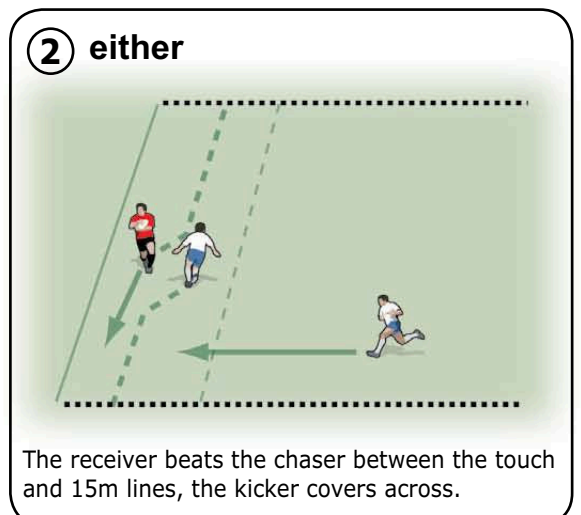
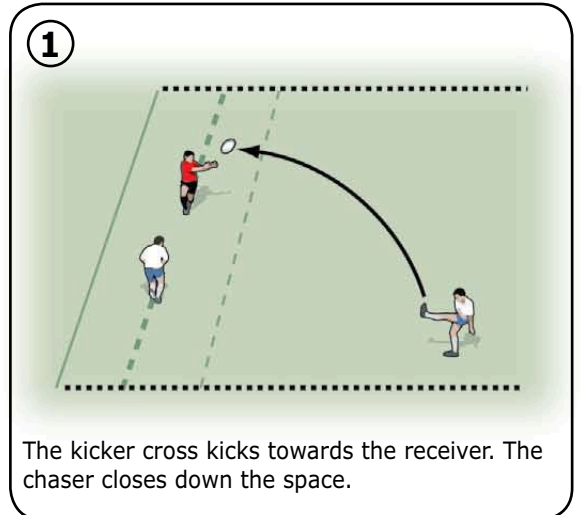
- 1 point for landing the ball in the right area.
- 1 point for a clean catch.
- 2 points for a try.

What to call out

- "Kicker: aim your hips at where you want the ball to go"
- "Receiver: leap forward to take the ball. Don't just jump up"
- "Receiver: turn your body as you take the ball to avoid knock ons"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Move the kicker's starting position to make him kick longer.
- ✓ Be vigilant on offsidess from the kick.
- ✓ Add a player to each team to provide support opportunities.



37. Airtime

How brave are your catchers?

There are loads of kick offs, drop outs and high balls in a normal game, so why not play a game which practises the techniques involved? It is definitely a mix of skill and bravery, because the catcher will be exposed at times.

Set up

Players: 4 attackers v 2 defenders.
 Area: 20m square box.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play normal rugby rules.
- The attack is allowed to lift the receiver.
- The attack aims to score at the other end.
- Give the attack four attempts to score before swapping the players around.

Score

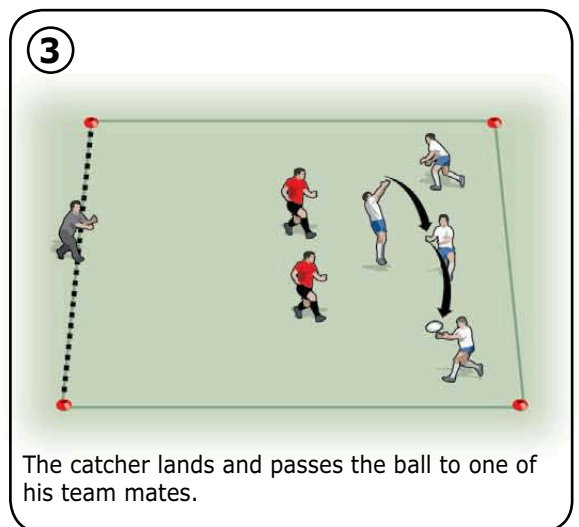
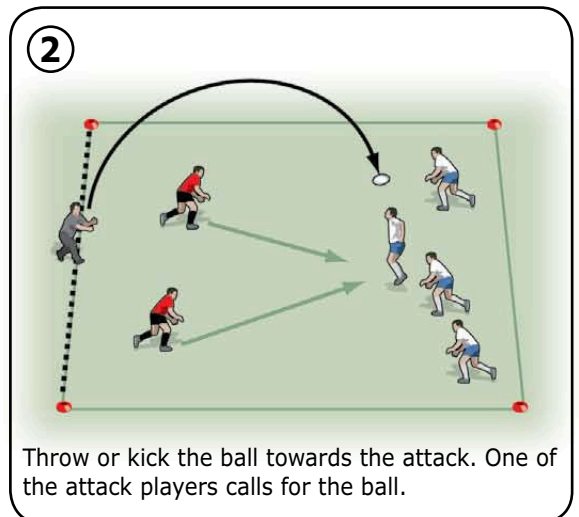
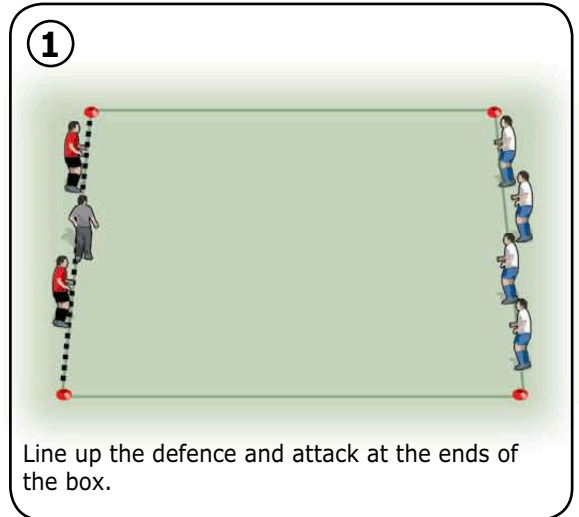
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Call early for the ball"
- "Leap forward into the space, turning as you leap"
- "Get your hands above your head to catch and deliver"
- "Support from behind the catcher"

Coaching notes

- ✓ A player cannot be tackled in the air. If the catcher gets off the ground, then he should have an advantage. Ensure the defence knows the law as well.
- ✓ Vary the lengths of the throw/kick to create different situations for the catchers to react to. Players should avoid jumping from a standing start, so encourage them to jump into the space where the ball is going to land.



38. Stretchers

A tiring game to test running lines and angles, and passing

This game will be one of the players' favourites. There is plenty of space to pass into, but the defence will slide across quickly, so there is less time on the ball than the players may expect. The pressure to succeed may lead to many mistakes.

Set up

Players: 7 attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: From the try line to 10m outside the 22m line, and between the 5m lines across the width of the pitch.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The attack has five attempts to score. Set them a scoring target, say 3 tries from every 5 attacks.
- Each attack finishes if there is an infringement, try, ruck or maul.
- Start with two handed touch tackling, before moving on to full tackling.
- Allow kicking and offloads (except in the two handed touch version), but not rucks and mauls.

Score

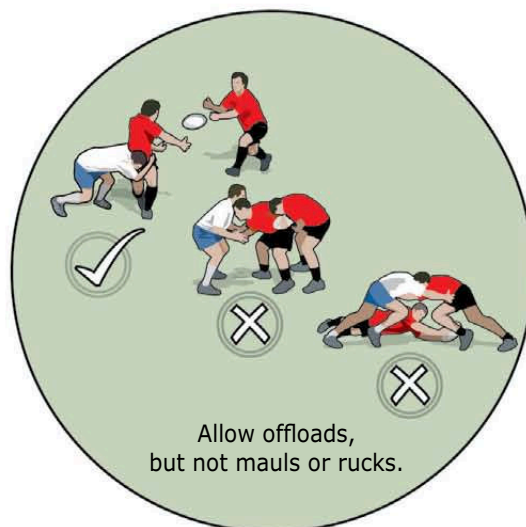
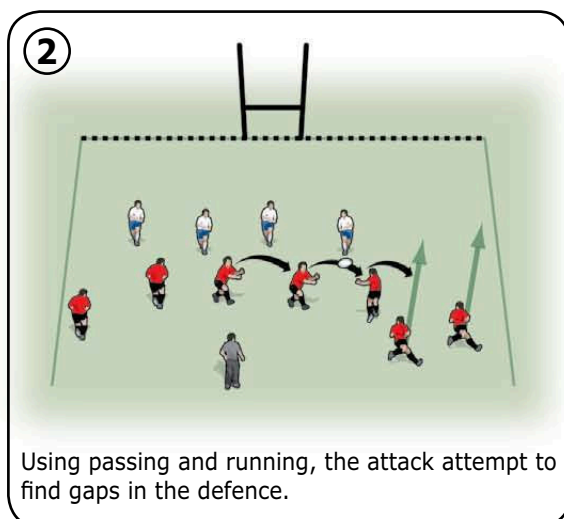
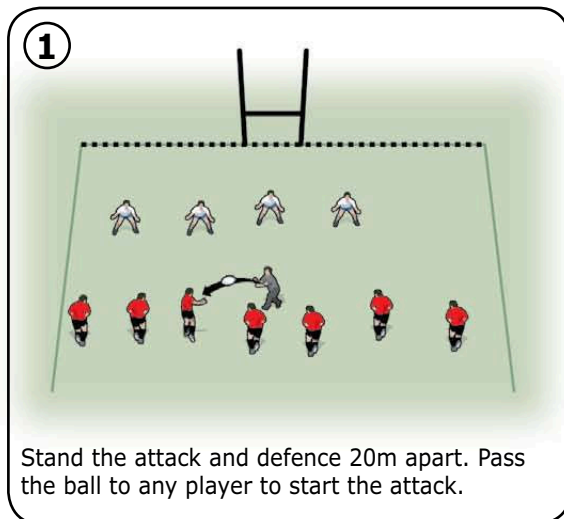
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Don't close down the space until you have moved the ball away from congestion"
- "Realign quickly to exploit overlaps"
- "Change angles, but don't run sideways"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Quick passing, running at pace and changing angles will leave gaps on the outside or spaces between the defenders.
- ✓ Running sideways is the main danger. Players will "eat up" the valuable space on the extremes unless they straighten up.
- ✓ Encourage slower players to become decoys or close supporters, or to get into good positions to offload.



39. Manic attack

A turnover game of touch rugby

The fast turnover of the ball means players need to think "attack" quickly. Players have to adjust their running lines to create pace onto the ball in attack, or come up into the line to defend quickly.

Set up

Players: Maximum 6 v 6.
 Area: 40m wide, 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start with touch tackling and move on to full contact. In full contact there are no rucks or mauls or offloads.
- The tackled player and tackler must wait until the ball is passed away before re-entering the game.
- Any infringement leads to a restart by the non-infringing side.
- Make sure the new defending team get back inside following the turnover.

Score

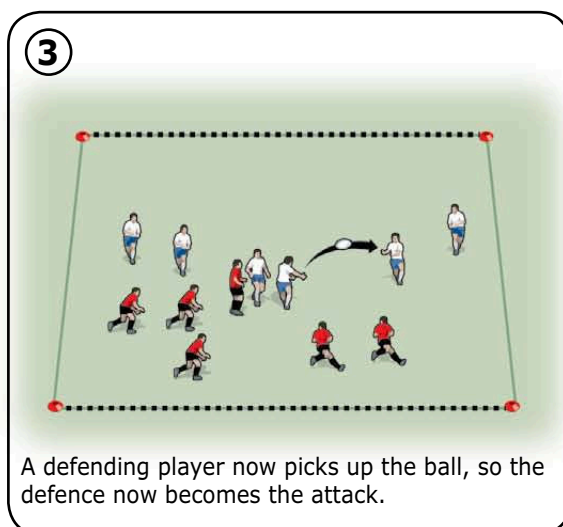
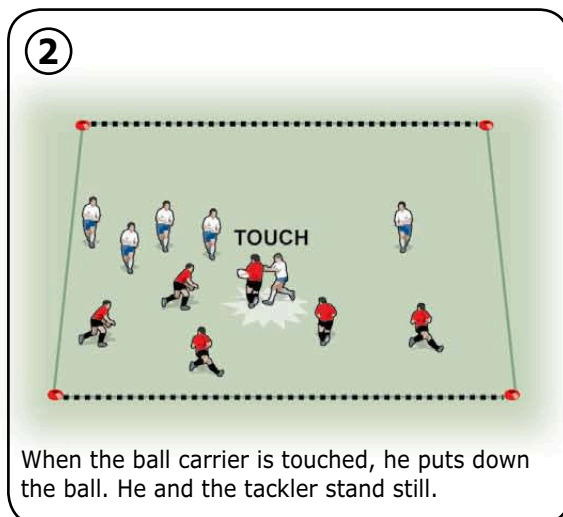
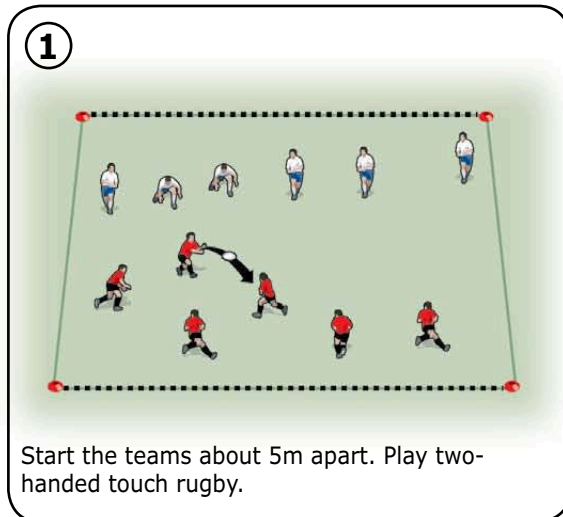
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Keep your depth in attack and defence"
- "Move the ball away from the tackle area quickly"

Coaching notes

- ✓ You can use "double touch" as the tackle mechanism. That means the ball carrier needs to be touched by two different players before he is deemed to be tackled.
- ✓ The game should encourage players to look up quickly, to see where the spaces are, and work hard to get themselves in position to exploit them.



40. Discomfort zone

Making forwards act like backs, and backs like forwards

Sometimes forwards have to find space and backs have to drive through rucks. This game works on those "sometimes" moments. After each go, your backs and forwards can compare notes. They may even listen to each other!

Set up

- Players: 3 forwards v 3 backs.
 Area: 15m square, with a 5m try line in the middle of one end, and two 5m try lines 5m apart at the other.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The forwards can only score over the two try lines at the edges, and the backs over the middle try line.
- Throw the ball to either team to start.
- Restart on any infringement. Only the backs are allowed to maul the ball.

Score

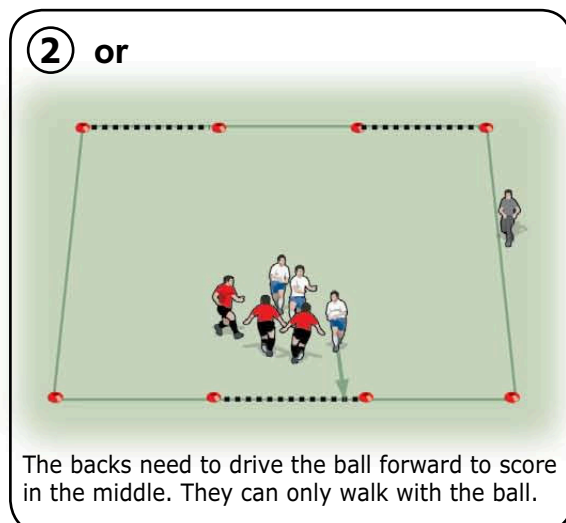
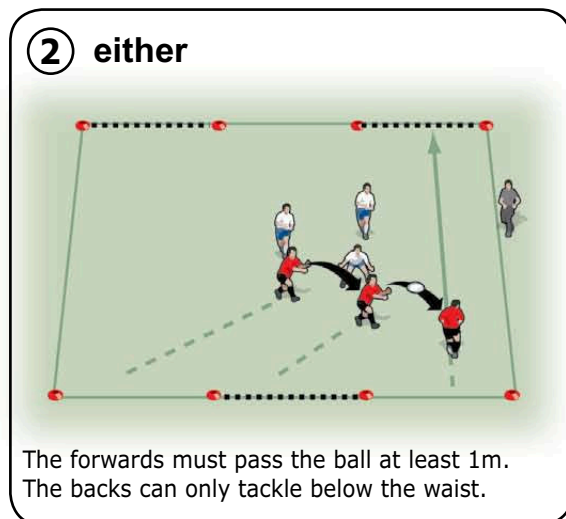
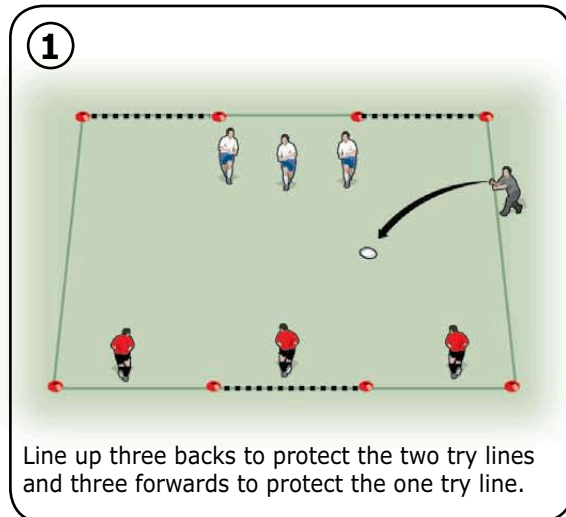
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Backs: leg drive through contact"
- "Forwards: attack spaces"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Backs versus forwards always creates plenty of competition. If you don't have equal numbers then make some "honorary" backs or forwards.
- ✓ Consider adding one more of each type of player in attack, so there is an overload.



41. 360 attack

Challenging the players to find space

Players need to think outside their comfort zone. This game creates a new scenario, attacking a circle, that most won't be familiar with. It requires many of the handling and movement skills used in rugby, and allows slower players to make a contribution with faster players. It's a tiring game.

Set up

Players: Maximum 7 v 7.
 Area: 14m diameter circle.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Start with touch tackling.
- Give the attack a time limit, say 30 seconds, to get the ball back into the circle.
- An attacker must be in possession of the ball when he enters the circle. The ball cannot be thrown in.
- The attack finishes if a try is scored, the ball is knocked down or dropped, or the ball carrier is touched.

Score

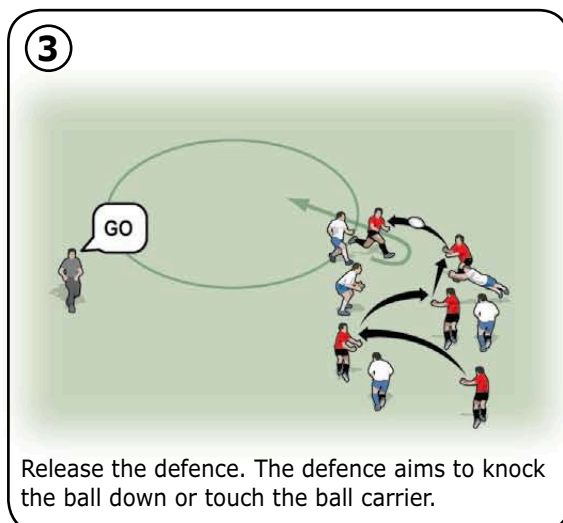
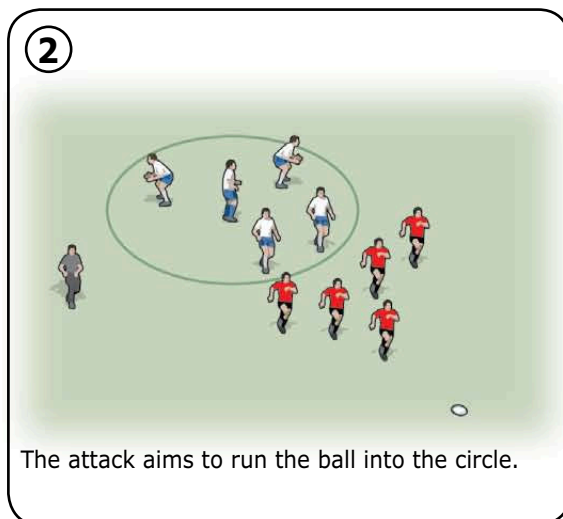
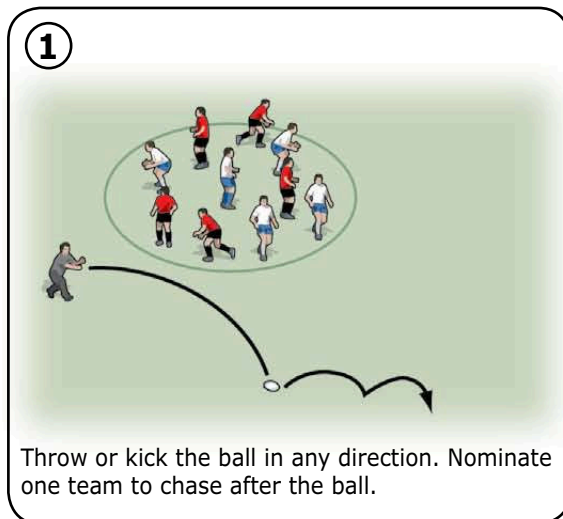
- 4 points for a try.
- 1 point to the defence for every 10m from the circle the ball was either knocked down, dropped or the ball carrier was touched in possession.

What to call out

- "Run to spaces in attack"
- "Pass away from danger"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The attack might need to go away from the circle to find space and to spread the defence.
- ✓ Sometimes let both teams out of the circle together, to contest for the ball. Make this variation full contact, with the attack finishing when the ball carrier is brought to his knees, rather than when he is touched.



42. Recycle lanes

Recycling the ball to change the point of attack

This is a great game for forwards. It concentrates on maintaining continuity, while making decisions about where the next drive should be.

Set up

- Players: 6 attackers v 6 defenders.
 Area: Two 10m wide, 15m long channels, set out side by side.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The ball can be moved between the channels any number of times, but only after a ruck or maul.
- The back foot of the ruck is the offside line.
- Any infringement, a turnover or a try leads to a restart.
- Depending on the success rates, add or subtract defenders.

Score

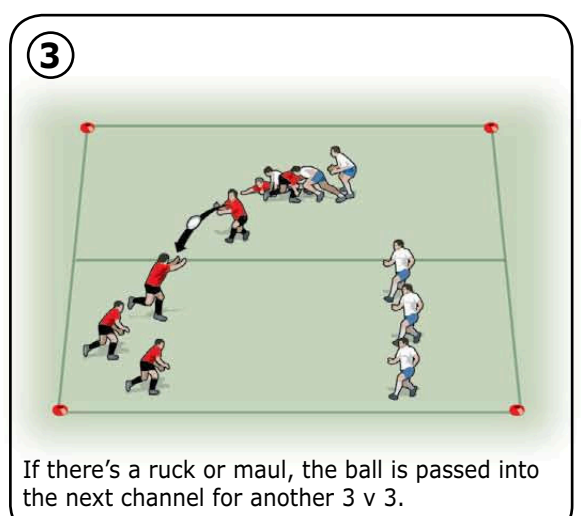
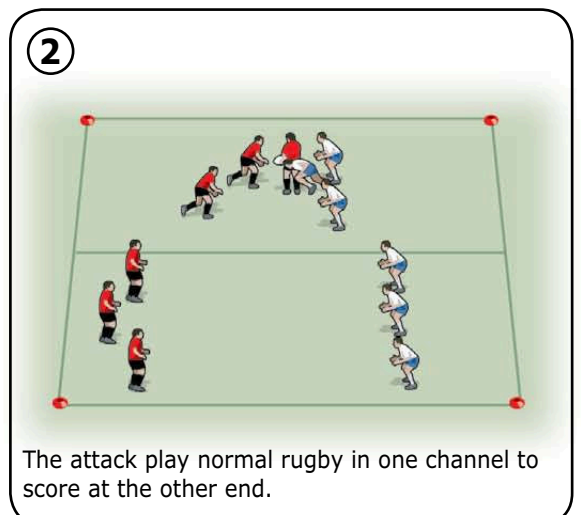
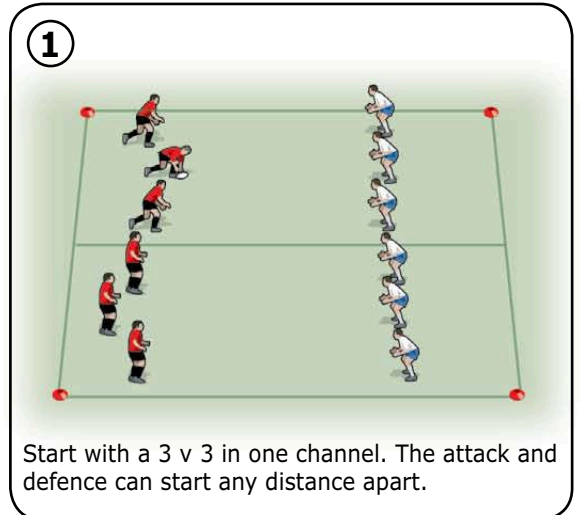
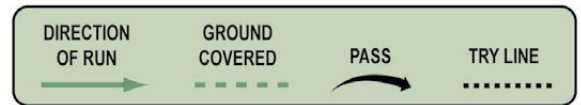
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Footwork before contact"
- "Drive low and straight"
- "Support players at the ruck: drive over the ball or clear the ball quickly"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Make sure the defence is as active as possible. This makes the attack work harder to get low in the drive.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to adjust the numbers if there is little success. Also consider having your scrum half acting as an extra player to clear the ball.



43. Bunch busters

Shifting the ball to space quickly

A momentary lapse in the defence needs to be exploited quickly, before it can be rectified.

Set up

- Players: Equal numbers, minimum 5 v 5.
 Area: 40m wide, 20m long pitch, split into four equal channels.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Play either touch tackle or full on contact.
- Do not allow rucks and mauls.
- Each attempt ends when there is an infringement, a tackle or a try.

Score

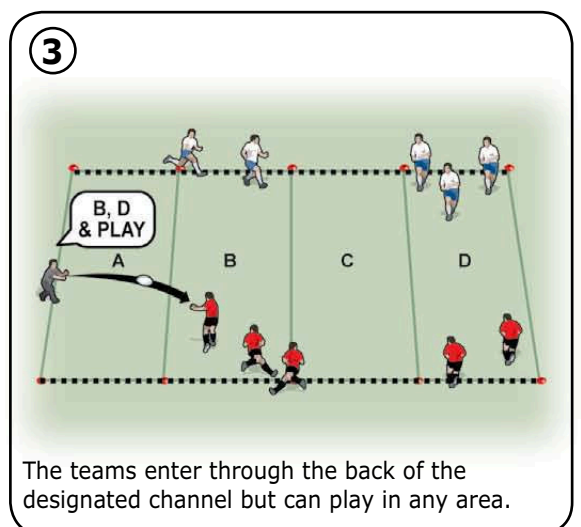
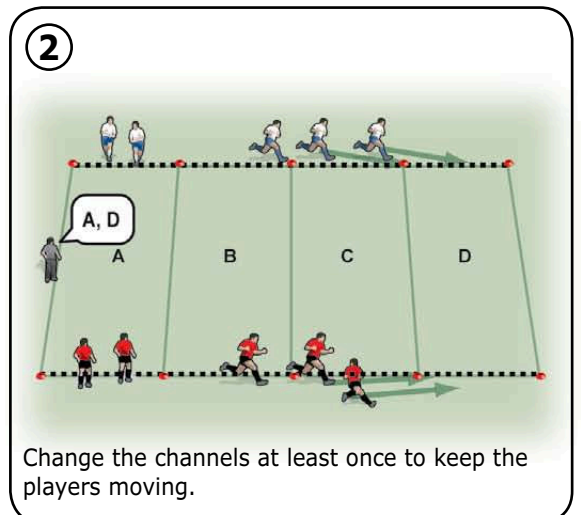
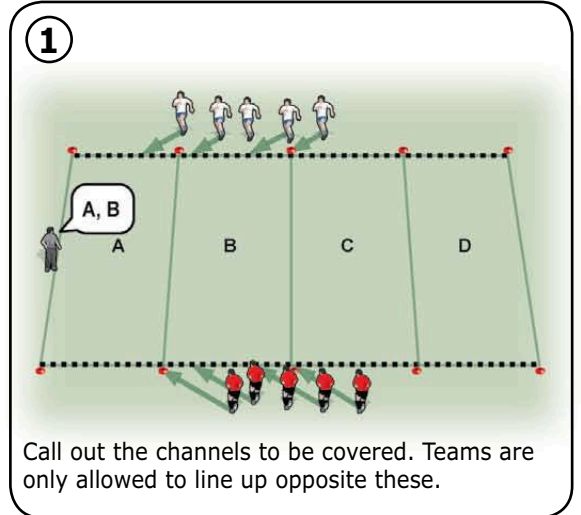
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Look up and shout where there is space"
- "Remember the ball moves faster than the man, so pass quickly"
- "Go forward fast before the defence reorganises"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This is a game for both attack and defence in terms of seeing the spaces and communicating what to cover. It should be noisy!
- ✓ Keep moving amongst the channels to change the angles of where the ball is coming in from.



44. Flashback

Developing a classic attack tactic

Attacking one way and then quickly back the other way can disorganise a defence. This game uses a skeleton set piece and one play to pull the defence out of position. Quick hands and straight running can then exploit any disorganisation.

Set up

Players: 7 v 7.
 Area: At the side of the pitch.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Use full on tackling. If the ball carrier goes to ground, the attack automatically "win" the ruck.
- The attack can start with a backs move to attack close to the defence's 10.
- Remove defenders to allow more success for the attack if necessary.
- The attack has one attempt, then swap the teams around.

Score

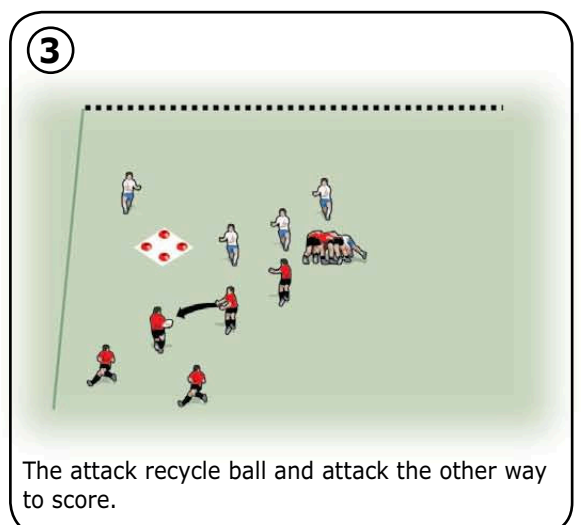
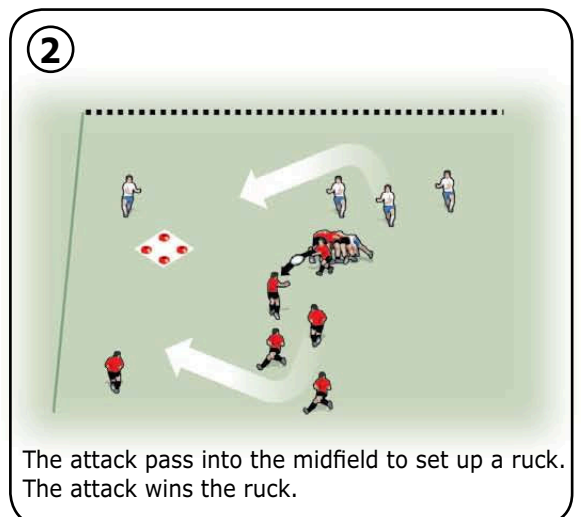
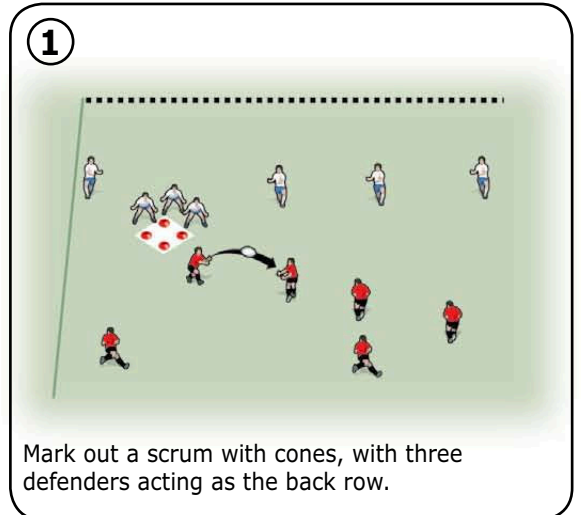
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Run straight"
- "Attack the line at pace to exploit an out of position defence"
- "Don't swing back until the ball carrier goes into the first tackle"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Though the set up is initially a little false, the players will quickly learn how to adjust their lines of running and passing. You may have to condition the defence a little.
- ✓ Miss passes can be effective to get beyond the first line of defenders covering across, but should be used sparingly.



45. Second front

Creating more depth with a second line of attackers

Attacking players who linger behind the front line are more difficult to see, and provide depth and pace onto the ball. This game gives your players opportunities to test out their speed and angles of running against a defensive line. It works on handling, offloads and communication.

Set up

Players: Minimum 7 attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: Half a pitch.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Use full on tackling and allow offloads. Some moves may work with a front line player offloading out of the tackle.
- Avoid the teams using too many set moves. Let them play what is in front of them.
- Each attempt finishes on an infringement or a try.

Score

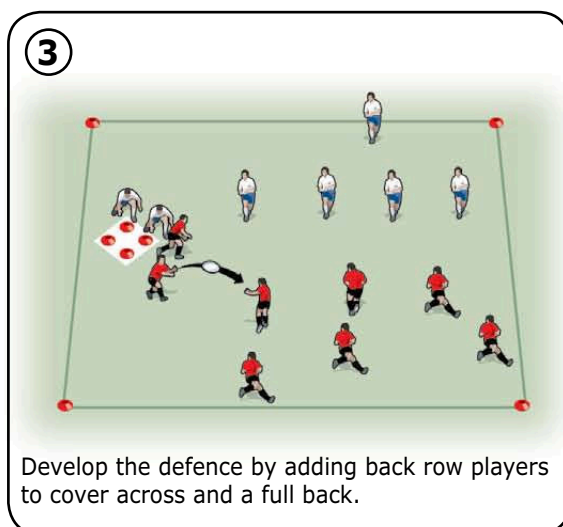
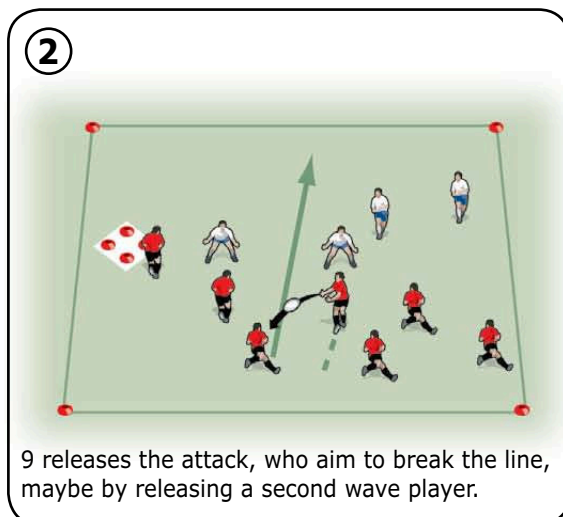
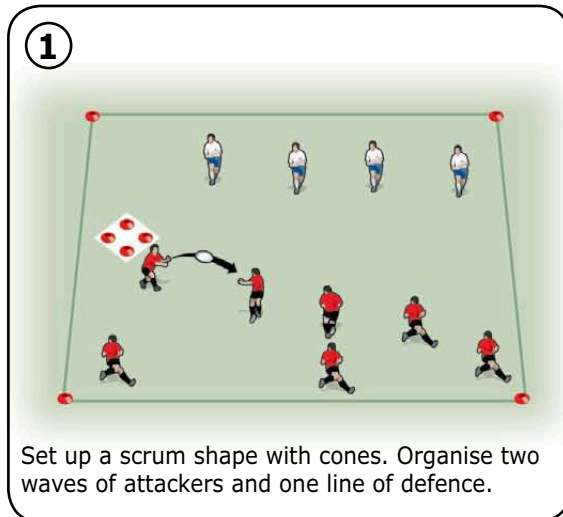
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Use changes of pace and angles to create spaces"
- "Attack a defender at pace to commit him to the tackle"
- "Second wave of players: call for the ball, even if you are not going to get it"

Coaching notes

- ✓ The entry of the second wave of attack requires timing. The defence knows they are there, but not when or where they are going to arrive. They can improve their timing by starting off at a jog before changing angle and accelerating for a gap.
- ✓ The front line players can use the second wave as decoy runners and go themselves.



46. Mission, control

Better reorganisation in defence

With different numbers at each breakdown situation, the defence needs to organise to cover both sides of the tackle or ruck. This is a high tempo game, so lots of communication and leadership are called for.

Set up

Players: 6 to 8 attackers v at least 12 defenders.
 Area: 40m wide, 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- Make sure the defence stays onside.
- Stop the game for all infringements.
- The defence "scrag" tackle the attack by holding their shirts or shorts.
- Allow the attack up to four "tackles" to score. Repeat the exercise four times.
- Don't allow any kicking.

Score

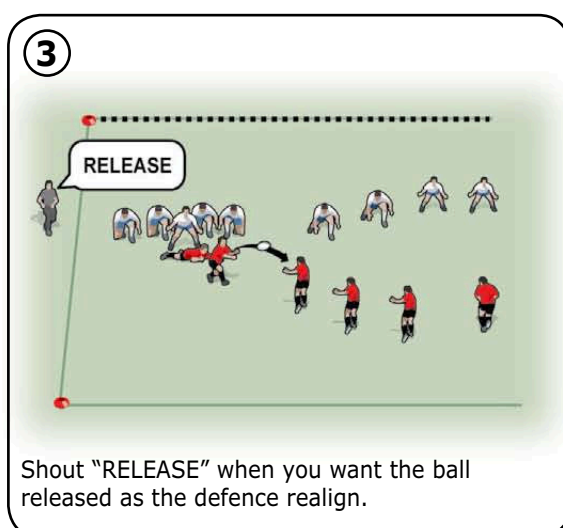
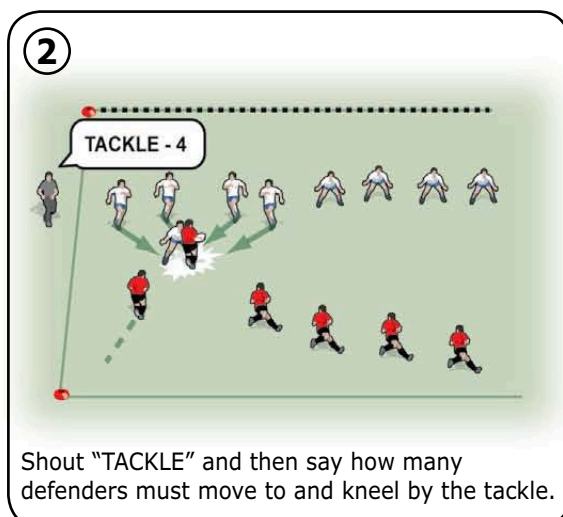
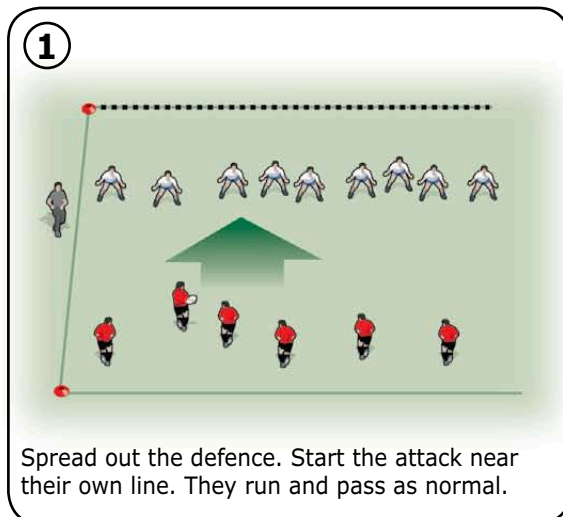
- 1 point for a try.

What to call out

- "Cover the field in defence"
- "Quickly up when the ball is released"
- "Which player are you marking?"

Coaching notes

- ✓ Think about where you need to stand to see a good picture of the defence. If you have a spare coach or injured player, they can shout "TACKLE" and the number, whilst you operate behind the defence, checking for gaps.
- ✓ The game can also be used to work on your defensive systems from the edge of rucks.



47. Wall of defence

Maintaining a defensive alignment under pressure

Defensive systems will have a "wall" of defenders moving forward to deal with different attacking scenarios. This game concentrates on the attacking team always attacking the openside of the pitch, with runners and decoys. The "wall" will need to hold its integrity.

Set up

Players: 7 attackers v 5 defenders.
 Area: 20m square.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The game has one tackle and then one further phase only.
- Once the first tackle is made the tackler and ball carrier remain on the ground and the other players realign. If two players tackle the ball carrier, then one has to remain on the ground.
- Only allow offloads after the first tackle has been made and the ball cleared.

Score

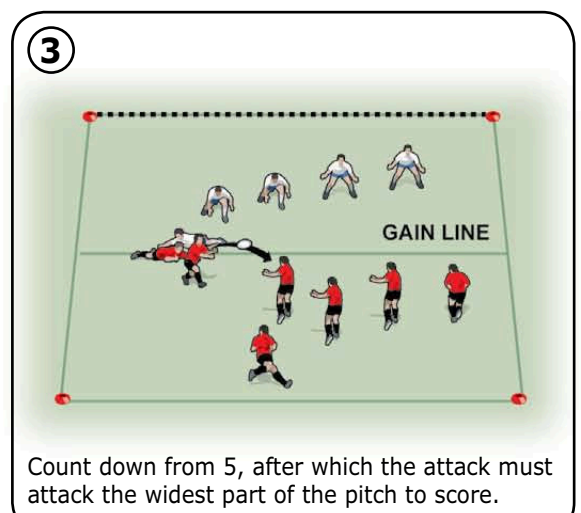
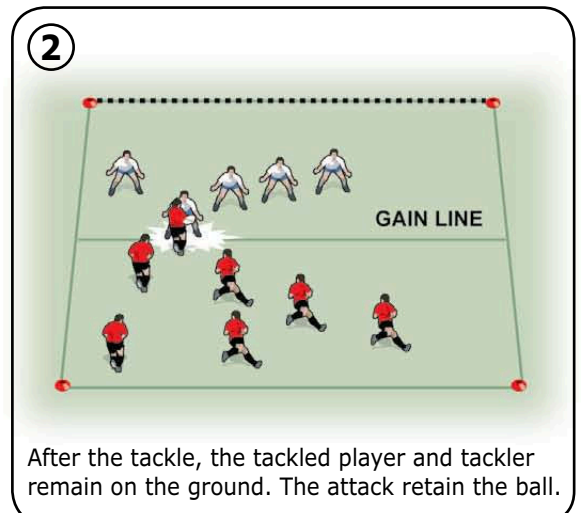
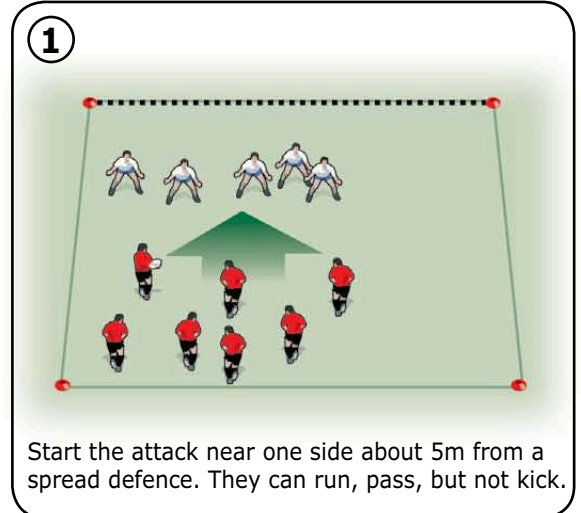
- 1 point for a try.
- 1 point to the defence for preventing the attack going over the gain line after the first tackle.

What to call out

- "Keep your line and move up together"
- "Aim for double tackles on the second phase"
- "Talk!"

Coaching notes

- ✓ You can add players to the attack to create more decoys.
- ✓ Sometimes the attack may be close to the tackle.



48. Wide boys

Working on drift defence

A well organised group of four defenders can stifle an attack. By drifting together in a line, they can force the attack out towards the touchline. The key is to prevent gaps appearing in the defensive line.

Set up

Players: At least 7 attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: 30m wide, up to 30m long.
 Equipment: One ball.

Game notes

- The attack has four attempts to beat the defence. Each attempt stops when there is an infringement, a try is scored or a tackle made.
- Though you should start with two handed touch tackling, it is good to move on to full tackling quickly. Allow offloads with the full tackling game.

Score

- 1 point for a try resulting from a break on the outside of the defence.
- 2 points for a try resulting from a break on the inside of the defence.

What to call out

- "Push up as a defence as well as across"
- "Keep checking the distances apart so you don't get out of line"
- "Tell your team mates where you are going"

Coaching notes

- ✓ This game works well for sevens training.
- ✓ A good defence will cover the inside. Then if an attack looks to break on the outside, they will run back and across to intercept.

