



Physical Contact

There are specific circumstances with the sport of rugby which will require coaches/volunteers to come into physical contact with the young people within their age group from time to time in the course of teaching them the skills for their age group. Examples of activities where safe practice is critical e.g. the introduction/development of tackling. Coaches should be aware of the limits within which contact should properly take place. As a general principle all coaches should not make gratuitous or unnecessary physical actions

It should be recognised that physical contact between an adult and a young person which may occur during legitimate coaching may be misconstrued or misunderstood by other young people, parents/guardians or other adults. Touching young participants, including well intentional informal and formal gestures can if repeated regularly, lead to questions being raised.

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's. Appropriate physical contact may be required to assist in the development of a skill or activity or for safety reasons e.g. to prevent or treat an injury. This should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant.

When is physical contact appropriate?

Rugby requires a 'hands on approach', especially in a teaching or coaching situation, e.g., it may be necessary to assist a young person when learning how to tackle for the first time but the following should be taken into consideration:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact
- Any necessary contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult
- It should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant
- It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant - Don't do something that a child can do for themselves
- Never engage in inappropriate touching

For more information on Physical Contact see pages 59-60 of Sport Ireland's Code of Ethics [here](#)

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