



What is Higher Rugby?

Higher Rugby is a Christian-based programme of eight sessions, each lasting 90 minutes, aimed primarily at children aged 8 to 11, though with a little tweaking the age range can be extended at both the lower and higher end. Each session has a rugby focus with the children being actively involved in playing the games. There are warm-up activities and exercises designed to increase the participants' understanding, skill and enjoyment of the game – but this not a specialist sports course, rather it is taking children's love of sport and integrating this into a church's outreach programme. Please note that the whole programme is based on tag rugby, a hugely popular non-contact version of the game. Also note that the format for Session 8 is a little different, taking the form of a mini tournament to which friends and family can be invited. Tag rugby works very well as an inter-generational game and so you could easily integrate family members into teams for this tournament.

When can I run Higher Rugby?

Higher Rugby is ideally an outdoor programme so clearly will work better in the warmer months, though an indoor sports hall makes a year-round option possible. It could run as a series of weekly programmes throughout a half term (either after school on a weekday or perhaps on a Saturday morning), or it could run as a holiday programme over eight days or over four days if two sessions are run each day. It may work well to run it around a major sports event such as the Olympics/Paralympics or Commonwealth Games/Rugby World Cup.

Where can I run Higher Rugby?

It is designed to be run at a park, sports pitch, school playing field, a sports hall or even a MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area.) All you need is a good space, but access to toilets is obviously important.

What do I need to run Higher Rugby?

Energy, enthusiasm and a passion for sports ministry with children and young people. A team of willing volunteers (at least one for every eight children), a suitable venue, a variety of sports equipment* and a group of children who want to take part. It is helpful for the team to have similar coloured T-shirts for ID purposes.

Why run Higher Rugby?

This is the KEY question. If you know why you are running it and what you hope to achieve, then you will be able to judge if the programme is a success. We passionately believe that this programme is a great way of connecting the church with a group of children (and their families) who might not otherwise be a part of the faith community. Each session of Higher Rugby includes a team talk based around the life of Daniel.

For that reason it is vital BEFORE you start to run Higher Rugby to think through how you follow up this programme with the children and families. Will you run a similar programme again? Is there a holiday club? A special family service? A church BBQ or other event? It is important to build small steps to strengthen relationships with those involved which will lead to greater church engagement.

* Scripture Union has a stock of Higher Games bags for sale which contain all the key equipment you will need to run this programme. More information at www.scriptureunion.org.uk/sport



A typical programme outline for sessions 1–7 (assuming the session runs from 10–11:30am)

9:15am	Team arrives, check venue, set up activities
9:30am	Team briefing; programme outline, key responsibilities, safety, questions
9:40am	Team prayer
9:50am	Registration opens; opening activity underway
10:05am	Welcome and introductions; safety instructions; overview of programme and theme
10:10am	Warm-up activities
10:30am	Exercises
10:50am	Drinks break/refreshments (suggest children bring their own bottles/snacks)
11:00am	Team talk
11:05am	Star skills/Game(s)
11:25am	Close – final briefing; notices
11:30am	Children depart; team clear-up, debrief and prayer

The programme in detail/How to use this guide

Each session (except the last one) runs along similar lines and so the best way to use this guide is to print off the relevant sessions, the appropriate team talk and the star skills session in the appendix.

Each session is clearly divided between warm-up activities and drills, called exercises. The star skills are introduced in Session 1 but can be built on in each session. The last exercise of each session (except the first and last) is a game of tag rugby. It is suggested that this last exercise and possibly the star skills are best done towards the end of the session, after the drinks break and team talk. If you have a younger or less able group, there is a list of additional rugby themed games in the appendix which would be suitable for them.

The team talks are sequential and so you should progress from Session 1 to Session 7 in order. Session 8 is a little different – a talk which will also make sense to any friends and family who are watching the tournament.

Each Team Talk is based on the life of Daniel and draws out a particular theme which relates to the world of sport:

Session themes

Session	Theme	Bible base	Story
1	Transfer to the premiership	Daniel 1	Daniel's training in Babylon
2	It's not fair	Daniel 2:1–12	Nebuchadnezzar's dream
3	Coping with pressure	Daniel 2:13–49	Daniel interprets the dream
4	Dropped from the team	Daniel 3	The fiery furnace
5	Changes in the boardroom	Daniel 4	More dreams
6	Respecting past glories	Daniel 5	The writing on the wall
7	Loyalty counts	Daniel 6	In the lions' den
8	Powerball presentation	Gospel overview	

Welcome and introduction

On the first day, welcome the children to Higher Rugby. Introduce yourself and the other team members. Explain any safety notices such as boundaries and that children will need to be signed out at the end of the session. Show where the toilets are and any routine for the children going to them. Explain that the sessions are being run by [CHURCH/ORGANISATION] and that there will be warm-ups, exercises and games but also a refreshments break, a time to reflect on what they are learning through their play and a chance to connect that with a man called Daniel. On subsequent sessions welcome any new children and recap the salient points of the above.

Warm-up activities

The aim of the warm-up is just that: to get the children warmed up, active and engaging with the programme. The section includes a range of activities which will work with a small and large number of children and familiarise them with the basic skills of rugby.

Exercises

These are a range of drills/skill-based exercises which will work with a small and large number of children. Depending on the age, ability and number of children you will need to decide which ones are most suitable and whether to run one large version or several smaller ones. Remember to keep the last exercise and the star skills for after the drinks and team talk.

Drinks break/refreshments

We suggest that children are encouraged to bring their own drinks and snacks but do have a supply of water available in case any of them have come without. If the children need a toilet break, then this the time to take it. Have a rubbish bag available too.

Team talk

While the children are seated – either over their snack break or once it is over, gather them together for the team talk. Use the relevant day's talk – it may be good to have a Bible in your hand to reinforce this is a Bible story, but do not read the story directly from the Bible. The aim is to keep the talk short and light and to draw parallels with the children's experience so that they can reflect and respond to it meaningfully. Use the outlines given simply as a guide, be creative and innovative and personalise the material with examples from your own or well-known lives.

Star skills/tag rugby game

If you have not worked through the star skills then you can do this now and then finish with a short game of tag rugby.

Close

Draw the children together to say a big 'well done' for their participation. Remind them to collect any drinks bottles, clothing and mention the timings or any special notices for the next session. Ensure children are collected by parents/carers unless they have specific permission to leave unaccompanied.

Final session

The final session is quite different. After doing a warm-up, put the children into teams (countries) and arrange a tournament. Tag rugby is a great inter-generational game and so you may want to invite family members to be a part of a team and participate. The prize-giving time at the end gives you a window to do the Powerball presentation and you will certainly want to have thought through the next step for the children/families. A family service? A church BBQ? A holiday club? A weekly games club? Do make sure that this programme is part of a wider approach to the children and families in the community.

Session 2

Aim: To introduce the players to non-contact rugby and the Higher Rugby programme through ball handling exercises and small games.
To develop catching, passing and spatial awareness.

Warm-up (10 mins)

Set up:

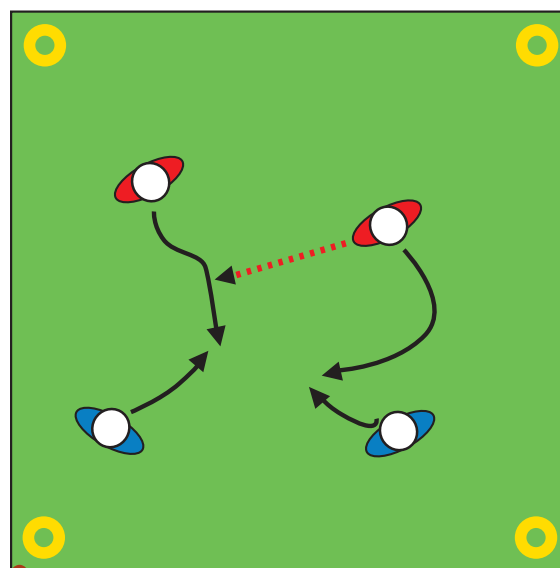
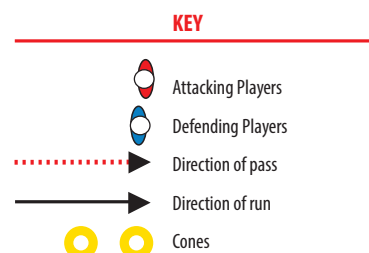
- 2 v 2
- 15 x 15 metre grid

How to play:

One of the pairs starts off with the ball. They must pass it between themselves without the opposition getting it. If the ball touches the ground through either a bad pass or a drop then it is turned over to the other pair. A turnover can also occur if the ball is intercepted. The ball can be passed in any direction and the players can run with the ball.

Progress:

If your ability range is broad and the group is struggling with 2 v 2, switch to 3 v 2 giving the attackers an advantage. The attackers have three attempts to continue their passing without any turnovers. After this the players switch positions.





Exercise 1 (piggy in the middle)

Aim: To develop spatial awareness, passing, catching and evasive running.

Set up:

- 3 v 1
- 15 x 15 metre grid

How to play:

Three players are in retention of the ball. They have to keep moving around the grid and pass amongst themselves as many times as possible. The single player not in retention of the ball has to intercept the ball. If they intercept, they become one of the three. Changes in personnel happen as follows:

Interception: The player who threw the ball last becomes the single player in the middle.

Dropped ball: The player who drops the ball becomes the single player in the middle.

Pass to ground: The player who passed the ball to ground becomes the player in the middle.

Two-handed touch: If the single player touches the ball carrier on the waist with two hands before they pass the ball then they change roles.

This rule can be added as a progression as and when you feel the young people have mastered the other skills.

Coaching points:

- Carry the ball in two hands
- Keep on the move
- Run into space
- Use evasive running to dodge the player in the middle

Progressions (to encourage two-handed passing)

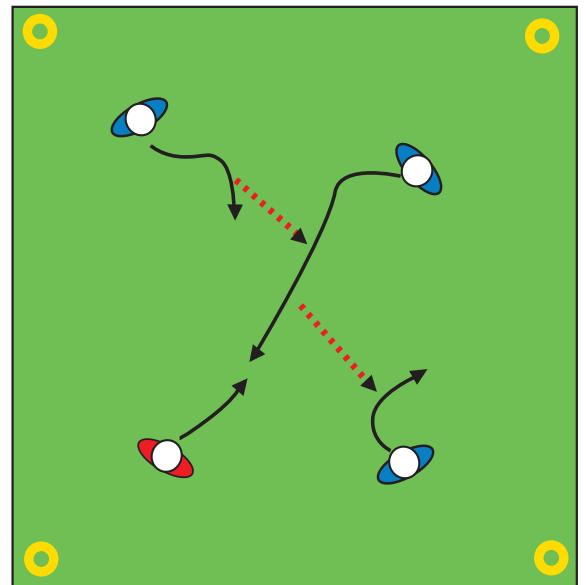
- Overhead passes = become player in the middle
- Pass the ball with one hand = become player in the middle

Easier

- Increase the size of the grid

Harder

- Decrease the size of the grid



Exercise 2

Aim: Develop technique of catching and passing.

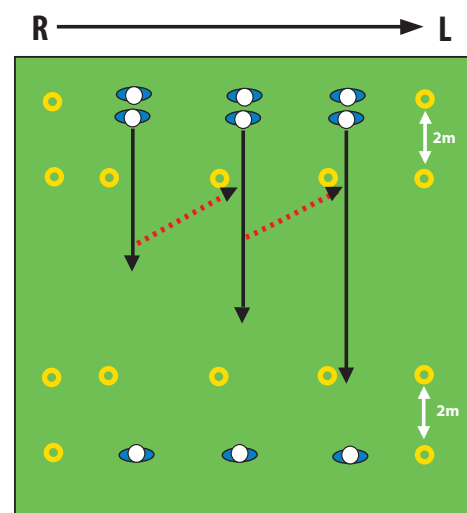
Set up:

- groups of three
- 6 x 6 metre grid
- one ball per grid

How to play:

This exercise is designed to help the players develop their catching and passing, which is a fundamental skill in order to play Higher Rugby effectively.

Within the 6 metre square grid there are three cones placed 2 metres in front of each of the players. The player on the right starts with the ball. This player then runs forward. As they pass the 2 metre cone the next player is allowed to set off. As they pass the cone, the third player can set off. The ball must then be passed once down the line (passing backwards only) till it reaches the player on the left. The ball is then passed to the group of three in front of them who then do the same drill back across the grid.



Coaching points:

Ball carrier

- Push the ball across using the outside arm to give the ball power as you pass.
- Keep your elbow on the outside arm high which will stop the ball dropping below the waist.
- Keeping the ball above the waist, pass it flat across the body with enough power so that it does not drop mid-flight.

Receiver

- Hands pointing towards the ball carrier with 'W' shape.
- Turn the chest slightly so it is facing the ball carrier. This gets the receiver moving towards the pass which means they get their hands on the ball sooner.

Progress

- Do the same starting from the left.