

Grassroots Fun Programme

Ages 6 to 10 · Tag Rugby & Modified Contact · NRL & RFL Standards

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This programme is built on research from the NRL League Stars initiative, the RFL Primary RL programme, Wests Tigers Community, Super League Academy pathways and Rugby Coach Weekly. Built on the international gold standard: **fun first, skills second, competition third.**

The 5 Golden Rules — What Every Grassroots Session Must Include

1

Fun First

Every session must feel like play. Children come to enjoy themselves — the NRL League Stars programme is built entirely on this principle.

2

Ball in Hand Always

Every child should have a ball at all times. No standing in lines. Small-sided games keep all kids moving.

3

Tag Before Tackle

U6, U7 and U8 play TAG only — no contact. This protects young bodies and builds confidence before tackle is introduced.

4

Praise, Don't Criticise

Use the 5:1 rule — five positive comments for every correction. Encouragement builds confidence for life.

5

Finish with a Game

Always end with a small-sided game. This is where children apply everything and have the most fun.

Age Group Breakdown — NRL, RFL & Super League Standards

Age Group	Format	Field / Team	Key Focus
U6 & U7 (Ages 5–7)	TAG ONLY — No contact	40x20m · 6 players	Ball carrying, running in space, basic passing
U8 (Age 8)	TAG ONLY — Festival format	40x20m · 6 players	Catching, passing left/right, team co-operation
U9 (Age 9)	Modified contact intro	50x30m · 9 players	Safe falling, dummy half, play the ball
U10 (Age 10)	Full modified tackle	60x35m · 11 players	Tackle technique, backline passing, defensive line

Example 60-Minute Session Plan — All Age Groups

Time	Activity	Purpose	Coach Focus
0–10 mins	Fun warm-up (Pac-Man Tag / Bulldogs)	Get hearts pumping, laughing, moving	High energy, lots of praise

10–20 mins	Skill 1 — Ball carrying or passing drill	Introduce session skill	Demonstrate first, then let them try
20–30 mins	Skill 2 — Progression drill	Build on skill 1 with added challenge	Positive corrections only
30–40 mins	Small-sided game (3v3 or 4v4 tag)	Apply skills in a fun game	Let them play — intervene sparingly
40–50 mins	Main game — full team small-sided match	Game sense, teamwork, enjoyment	Rotate positions, include everyone
50–55 mins	Cool down — light jog and stretches	Physical recovery	Calm, quiet, relaxed atmosphere
55–60 mins	Team huddle and star player award	Celebrate effort, build confidence	Pick a different star every week

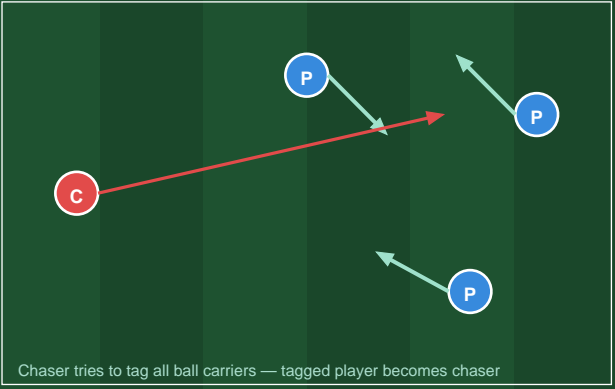
● Attacker
 ■ Defender
 ▲ Cone
 → Run
 ■ Pass

Top Fun Drills — With Pitch Diagrams

1 Pac-Man Tag

All ages

Tag game Ball in hand Whole group



Chaser tries to tag all ball carriers — tagged player becomes chaser

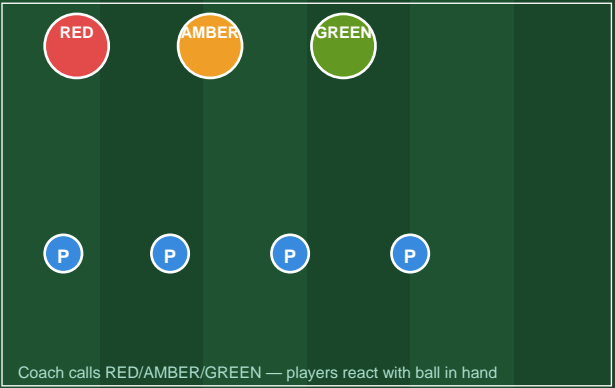
- **SKILL FOCUS**
Ball carrying while evading chasers
- **GAME TRANSFER**
Evasion and awareness under pressure in open play
- **COACHING CUE**
"Keep your eyes up — see the space!"

★ *NRL League Stars use this as their go-to warm-up for ages 5–10*

2 Traffic Lights

U6–U8

Reaction drill Ball in hand All players active



Coach calls RED/AMBER/GREEN — players react with ball in hand

- **SKILL FOCUS**
Listening, reaction speed, ball control
- **GAME TRANSFER**
Following referee signals and reacting to play stoppages in a game
- **COACHING CUE**
"React fast — ball stays in your hands!"

3

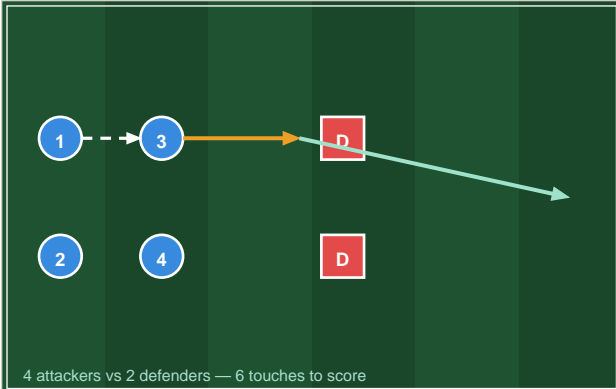
4v2 Touch

U8–U10

4 attackers

2 defenders

6 touches to score



● SKILL FOCUS

Attacking decision-making, spreading the ball

● GAME TRANSFER

Creating overlap and finding space against an organised defence

● COACHING CUE

"Look for the space — not the player!"

4

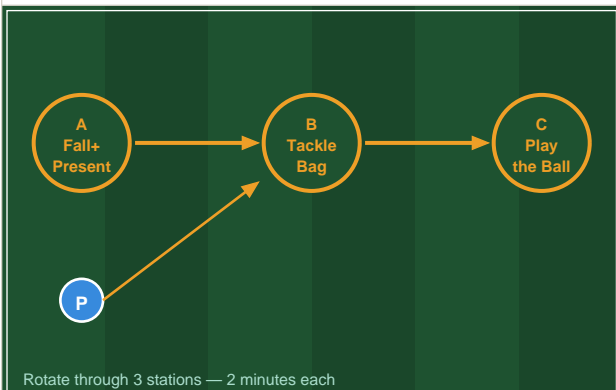
Tackle Safe Circuit

U9–U10

3 stations

2 mins each

Rotate through



● SKILL FOCUS

Safe falling, ball presentation, play the ball

● GAME TRANSFER

The complete tackle sequence used in every rugby league game

● COACHING CUE

"Hit, wrap, guide — cheek to cheek!"

★ Use this before any contact session — builds safe habits for life

Ken's Pro Tips — From 40 Years in Rugby League

- 1 Every child needs to touch the ball at every session. If a child goes home without handling the ball, you have failed as a coach.
- 2 Never shout at a child for making a mistake. At age 6–10 mistakes are how they learn. Celebrate the attempt, correct the technique.
- 3 Keep your explanations under 30 seconds. Children this age have short attention spans. Show them, don't tell them.
- 4 Use their names constantly. 'Great pass Sarah!' builds more confidence than any drill ever will.
- 5 Let them make decisions in games. Don't over-coach during game time. Rugby intelligence develops through play.
- 6 Always end on a high. If a session is going badly, switch to their favourite game. They should leave smiling every single time.