

# Women's Rugby League

Full Coaching Programme — Grassroots to Performance · 2026 RFL Standards

This programme is built on research from the RFL Women's and Girls' Coaching Conference 2026, the England Women's national programme under head coach Stuart Barrow, the 2026 Women's Super League, and the RFL's bespoke female game coaching workshops. **Women's rugby league is the fastest growing sport in the UK.**

## Why Coaching Women's Rugby League Requires a Specific Approach

<b>Hormonal Health</b>	Coaches must understand how hormonal cycles affect energy, recovery, injury risk and mood — and adjust training loads accordingly (RFL 2026 Conference, Dr Sam Moss).
<b>Injury Profile</b>	Women are statistically more susceptible to ACL injuries. Strength training, landing mechanics and change-of-direction technique must be prioritised from the first session.
<b>Entry Point</b>	Many women entering rugby league are new to contact sport. Building contact confidence requires more time and a supportive environment.
<b>Communication Style</b>	Female players respond significantly better to relationship-based coaching — where the coach knows the player's goals and builds trust (RFL 2026 research).
<b>Squad Size</b>	Women's clubs often have smaller squads. Session plans must be adaptable for 12–20 players within 75–90 minute windows.

## Women's & Girls' Pathway — RFL 2026

Age Group	Format	Key Focus	Competition
Girls U12	Tag only — no contact	Fun, ball handling, running lines	Regional festivals
Girls U14	Modified contact	Tackle technique, passing, team play	Regional leagues
Girls U16	Full 13-a-side modified	Positional development, set pieces	National competition
Girls U19 / DiSE	Full game — performance pathway	Advanced tactics, strength, leadership	National pathway
Women Open Age	Full 13-a-side	All skills, fitness, game intelligence	Super League / Championship / Community

## 90-Minute Session Plan Template

Time	Activity	Purpose	Coach Note
0–10 mins	Dynamic warm-up — jog, high knees, hip openers, lateral shuffles	Prepare body, raise heart rate	Energetic, positive, set the tone
10–20 mins	Speed and agility — ladder, T-drill, reaction starts	Neural activation, footwork	Praise effort not just outcome
20–35 mins	Skill block 1 — tackle technique with pads	Build tackle confidence safely	Partner up by size where possible


<b>35–50 mins</b>	Skill block 2 — passing patterns and support play	Ball in hand, running lines	Keep it moving, no standing still
<b>50–65 mins</b>	Patterns of play — 4-man backline, dummy half options	Game application of skills	Short explanation, long practice
<b>65–80 mins</b>	Conditioned game — 7v7 or 9v9	Apply everything under pressure	Rotate positions, include everyone
<b>80–85 mins</b>	Cool down + stretch — quads, hamstrings, hip flexors	Recovery, injury prevention	Calm, quiet environment
<b>85–90 mins</b>	Team huddle — two positives, one to work on	Confidence building, reflection	Celebrate bravery, not just tries

● Attacker     
 ■ Defender     
 ▲ Cone     
 → Run     
 ■ Pass

## Top Drills for Women's Rugby League — With Pitch Diagrams

### 1 Safe Tackle Progression

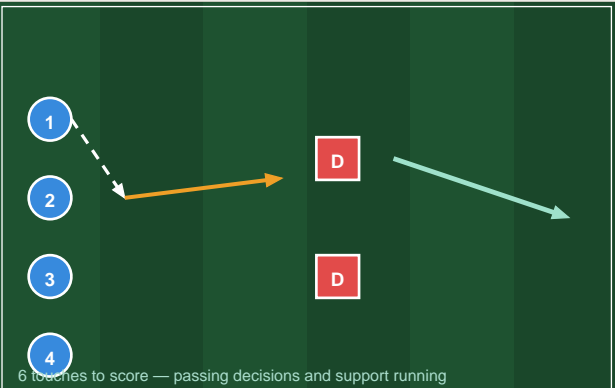
All levels

Stationary → walk → jog	Body position	Pads used
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> <b>SKILL FOCUS</b> Safe tackle body position, cheek-to-cheek contact, drive</li> <li><span style="color: blue;">●</span> <b>GAME TRANSFER</b> The foundation of every defensive set in the game</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">●</span> <b>COACHING CUE</b> "Body low, cheek to cheek — drive through!"</li> </ul>	

★ RFL England Women coaching team — tackle is the #1 priority for 2026

### 2 4v2 Support Play

All levels

20x10m grid	4 attackers	2 defenders	6 touches
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> <b>SKILL FOCUS</b> Attacking decision-making, support running, passing under pressure</li> <li><span style="color: blue;">●</span> <b>GAME TRANSFER</b> Creating and exploiting overlap against an organised defence</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">●</span> <b>COACHING CUE</b> "Look for the space — not the defender!"</li> </ul>		

### 3

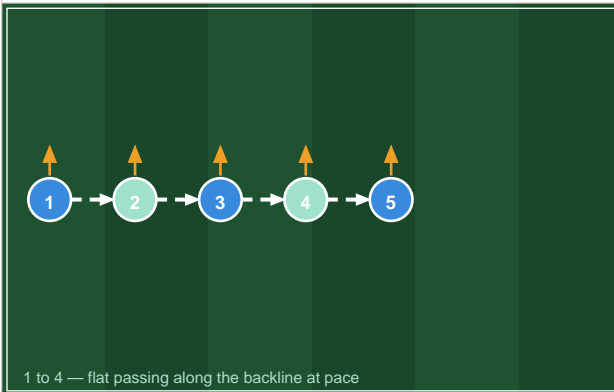
## Backline Move — Inside Ball

Intermediate+

Halfback to centre

Timed

10 reps each side



#### ● SKILL FOCUS

Flat passing, timing, running lines across the backline

#### ● GAME TRANSFER

Moving the ball quickly to create a wide scoring opportunity

#### ● COACHING CUE

"Flat and fast — hit the target every time!"

### 4

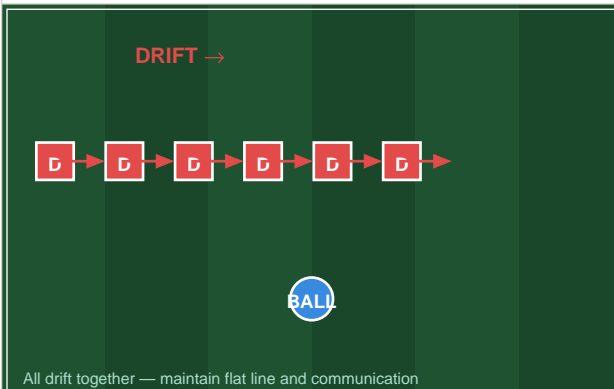
## Defensive Drift Drill

Intermediate+

7 defenders

Flat line

Drift together



#### ● SKILL FOCUS

Defensive structure, flat line, communication

#### ● GAME TRANSFER

Organised drift defence used in every level of women's rugby league

#### ● COACHING CUE

"Up together — talk to each other!"

### 5

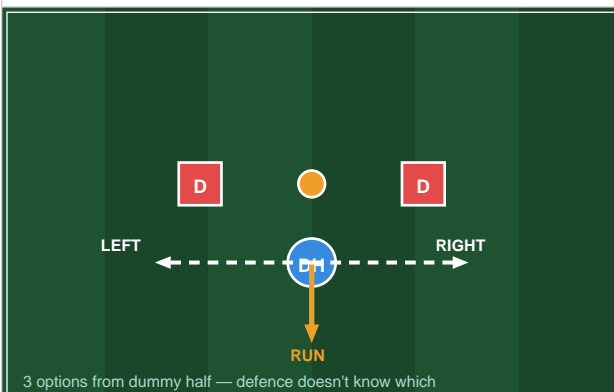
## Dummy Half Fast Hands

All levels

Dummy half at ruck

3 options

Under 2 secs



#### ● SKILL FOCUS

Play-the-ball speed, dummy half decision-making

#### ● GAME TRANSFER

Quick dummy half options win field position in every set

#### ● COACHING CUE

"See it fast — commit fast!"

## 6

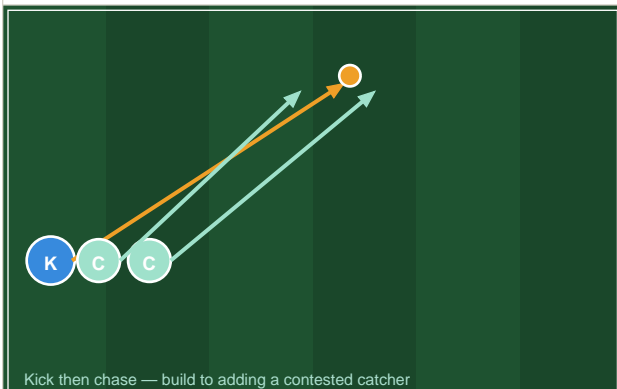
## Kick and Chase Pairs

Intermediate+

Pairs

3 sec head start

Contest the catch



## ● SKILL FOCUS

Kicking technique, chase co-ordination, aerial contest

## ● GAME TRANSFER

Kick and chase is a major weapon in women's rugby league

## ● COACHING CUE

"Chase hard — contest everything!"

## Strength &amp; Conditioning — Women's Rugby League

Exercise	Sets x Reps	Why It Matters
Barbell / goblet squat	3 x 10–12	Leg strength, tackle power, sprint drive
Romanian deadlift	3 x 10	Hamstring and glute strength — ACL prevention
Hip thrust	3 x 12	Glute activation — sprint acceleration
Press-ups (various grips)	3 x 10–15	Upper body push for hand-offs and contact
Dumbbell row	3 x 10 each	Upper body pull for tackle completion
Nordic curl	3 x 5–8 (slow)	Hamstring eccentric strength — critical for women
Lateral band walks	3 x 15 each	Hip abductor strength — knee stability
Jump squats	3 x 8	Explosive leg power for acceleration
Single leg deadlift	3 x 10 each	Balance, proprioception, knee stability

■ Iron intake is especially important for female players. Include iron-rich foods: red meat, spinach, lentils, fortified cereals. Pair with Vitamin C to improve absorption. Calcium and Vitamin D are also essential for bone health.