

Get Touched

Scour any park near an antipodean area and you'll probably see a game of touch rugby going on - it's rugby without the crunchy bits

Many of you will already know how to play touch, but for those who don't, here's a quick guide. People who in the past have been put off by the all the groping and cauliflower ears might find this a rewarding sport for the spring.

To start it all off, the coin is tossed and one team (we'll call them 'Blue') starts play. The six Blue players spread out, with one player at the centre of the field. Their opposite numbers, the 'Red' team, face at 10 metres (any open space such as a park will do for a good game of touch). The ball starts off on the ground and the Blue player taps the ball with his/her foot; there's a quick pick up and the action begins.

The basic objective of the game is to score a try by passing along a line of players and then placing the ball over the opposite team's try line. However instead of tackling, player needs to touch his opposite number to stop him. Once Blue is touched he immediately places the ball on the ground. A roll ball is used to restart play (stepping over the ball or rolling it back under the control of your hand or foot). Once Red is in possession, Blue team must all back up by five metres.

The Red player can either run with it, or pass it to one of their supporting players. Red have five touches with which to advance the play upfield. At the sixth touch the ball must be handed over. The person picking up is called the 'dummy half.' If the dummy-half is touched before they are able to pass, or if a player crosses the outer limits, or drops the ball - play changes hands immediately.

This is a basic summary of the game. For a detailed version, including penalties, go to www.touchrugby.com

Using touch for rugby training

There is some debate as to whether touch improves your rugby game, but here are a few ways you can modify the game to make sure it does technically:

- Players have to touch the opposition with two hands below the waist. This will encourage players to go in low and might mean that they are less likely to get penalised for high-tackling in a rugby game.
- Touch can only be called after two successive touches from different players in a short space of time; this will encourage support from your other players when chasing the ball-holder.
- After a touch has been called, players from the same team have 3 seconds to pull the ball out of the touched player's hands and continue play. Once again, this encourages team support.
- Allow a chip over the opposition's head. If the ball is not picked up after one bounce or less, restart play with a rollball.
- Please note that the above will not be allowed by Touched Associations and would only be suitable for social games.



Fitness for touch

Touch is all short bursts of energy and anaerobic fitness, so for those dedicated players, I would recommend short, high-intensity workouts (remember to warm up).

Sprint Sets:

- 100m sprint, 20 secs rest x 4 sets
- 50m sprints, 10secs rest x 6 sets
- 15m (off the mark training) x 8 non-stop sets

Lactic acid is the power-decreasing waste product of anaerobic training; these sets improve your body's ability to remove it.

Plyometric Knee Tucks & Length Hops: great for improving off-the-mark training (accelerating quickly from a stationary position).

Knee Tucks: knees slightly bent, explode up into the air off your toes, grab both knees and pull them towards your chest, then land as lightly as possible.

Length Hops: Measure off a 12m strip & try cover it in the least amount of hops possible (6 hops good, 4 excellent!)

10 Tucks + 12m Hop x 4 sets


Bench Press: great upper body power movement.

- 1 x 25 reps (warm up with about 50% body weight)
- 1 x 12 reps (70% of BW)
- 4 x 6 reps (90-120% BW)

Seek professional advice before benching if inexperienced.

Touch info

With touch played nearly all year round, it's a great way to get fit, stay fit and socialise. For those still scared of the spring nip and after the touch of a rugby ball, there's a Winter Astro League currently played at Wandel Recreation Centre in Wandsworth.

For more information regarding season leagues, venues & touch rugby calendars, check out www.touchrugby.com & www.in2touch.com/uk 



Luke Taylor trains his clients at the Imperial Rowing College in Putney, in parks, homes and even in their offices. For more info contact Luke at:

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