



Rules of Rugby Fives (approved by the Rugby Fives Association)

DEFINITIONS

The game is played in a court enclosed by four walls such as a Rugby Fives or Squash court. The 'front' wall has a board or 'tin' running across it at an even height from the floor. The Rugby Fives ball has been specifically developed for use on the concrete floors of Rugby Fives courts. A Squash Court Fives ball is available which allows Rugby Fives to be played on a Squash court - it adjusts the bounce to account for the larger court, the cushioned wooden floor and the lower tin.

The game may be played between two or four players, i.e. as Singles or Doubles.

SERVER and **RECEIVER**. The player first hitting the ball is the 'server' the opponent being known as the 'receiver'.

'UP'. The ball is said to be 'up' when it is hit before the second bounce on the floor, strikes the front wall above the board, and does not leave the confines of the playing surface. Painted lines marking the upper limit of any wall are not part of the playing surface.

RULES OF THE SINGLES GAME

1. PRELIMINARY RALLY.

Before the start of a game, a preliminary rally shall be played. The 'winner' of this becomes the receiver.

2. SERVICE.

- (a) At the start of a rally the server throws the ball up so that it first strikes the front wall above the board and then one of the side walls, before bouncing. There is no penalty for doing this incorrectly, but the service cannot be completed unless the ball has been thrown up in this way.
- (b) After throwing the ball up correctly and allowing it to bounce, the server shall hit it before the second bounce on the floor, so that it strikes first the side wall against which it has been thrown and then the front wall above the board.
- (c) The serve may take place on either side of the court. The server must notify the receiver before changing side.

3. BLACKGUARD. A service which, after striking the ball, hits the front wall above the board without having first touched the side wall is called a 'blackguard'. The receiver may return a blackguard but must indicate an intention to do so by calling 'Yes' before striking the ball. This call shall be irrevocable as shall any call indicating intention not to take a blackguard. When the receiver requires one point to win the game, a blackguard may not be taken.

On a squash court, the server has an obligation to serve such that the ball would land on its second bounce either beyond the half court line or beyond the short line (see illustration). In the event that the serve is 'short', then it is deemed to be a blackguard. Clearly, the half court line does not extend into the front of the court and so a judgement must be made and if there is disagreement as to whether it crossed the line then the serve shall be retaken with no penalty.

4. RALLIES. After the service, the opponents shall alternately hit the ball before the second bounce on the floor onto the front wall above the board or tin, either directly or after it has hit the side and/or back walls. No second attempt may be made to hit a ball after it has once been touched. A rally is won by a player, unless a 'let' is allowed under Rule 6:

- (a) if the opponent fails to hit the ball 'up', as defined.
- (b) if the opponent, being server, serves three consecutive untaken blackguards, or stops a blackguard before it has bounced, or intentionally stops a blackguard after it has bounced on the floor.
- (c) if the opponent causes the ball, after it has hit the front wall, to strike himself/herself before it has bounced.
- (d) if the opponent hits the ball otherwise than with the hand or forearm.

5. SCORING. Only the receiver can score points. When the receiver wins a rally he/she scores a point. When the server wins a rally he/she becomes receiver for the next rally. The player who first scores 15 points (except as provided when the score reaches 14-14) wins the game. Should each player score 14 points, the first player to reach 16 wins the game.

Games in a championship, tournament or match may by agreement be played up to 11 points. In this case, if the score reaches 10 all, the first player to reach 12 wins the game. When the receiver requires one point to win the game, the server is allowed two consecutive incorrect serves (including blackguards) without penalty. The third service must be valid or the server loses the point and game.

6. LETS.

Players have a duty to avoid obstructing opponents in making their shots, and not to obstruct the flight of the ball. A let is allowed and the rally shall not count:

- (a) if a player strikes an opponent with a ball which would have gone up.
- (b) if a player causes the ball, after it has hit the front wall, to strike himself/herself after it has bounced.
- (c) if a player is prevented by an opponent from correctly returning the ball (e.g. through physical or visual obstruction). Should a player, though impeded, hit the ball so that it goes up, the player may claim a let at once; otherwise the rally shall continue.
- (d) if the server, when about to serve, fails to hit the ball, or decides not to continue serving and calls out 'no' before hitting the ball, even if it accidentally goes up.
- (e) if the ball is hit 'up' in such a way that it bounces and then goes out of the playing area.
- (f) if it is determined that an occurrence on or off the court distracts either player.
- (g) if a player fails to call a warning before turning and striking the ball.

7. REFEREES.

By tradition, Rugby Fives is self-refereed, however, in the case of an unresolved or unresolvable dispute then an appropriate responsible adult outside the court, such as the tournament organiser or coach, shall be the final arbiter.

RULES OF THE DOUBLES GAME

The Rules of the Singles Game shall apply to the Doubles Game, and wherever the words 'server', 'receiver', 'opponent' or 'player' are used in the Rules of the Singles Game, such words shall, whenever possible, be taken to include their partners in the Doubles Game. Thus, if the duration of the rally requires their participation, all four players shall take part.

1. The receiver (normally called 'first hand') remains as the receiver until the receiver and his/her partner lose a rally, whereupon the partner (normally called 'second hand') receives. When they lose another rally, 'change' is declared and the partner (second hand) will serve to the opponent who has just been the server.
2. At the beginning of a game, the side winning the preliminary rally may choose whether to serve or receive, and the side receiving starts at 'second hand'.
3. The side that is serving must alternate server after every point scored by their opponents.
4. If the wrong player serves or receives, the rally counts unless the mistake is pointed out before the start of the next rally.
5. Only the receiver may return the service; the receiver or receiver's partner may elect to take a blackguard. If either of them says 'yes' to a blackguard, the rally commences.

RULES OF MATCH PLAY

- (a) For the preliminary rally (see Rule 1 of the Rules of the Singles Game) the receiver and server shall be decided by a short contest of chance or skill, most usually by hiding the ball behind the back and having the other side guess which hand it is in - the winner chooses to receive or serve.
- (b) A preliminary rally shall not be played at the beginning of any subsequent game of a match, and the winner of the previous game shall continue to receive. In Doubles the winners shall start on second hand.
- (c) A true and consistent ball (new or used), agreed by all players, should be taken to start a match. A defective ball may be replaced at any time if, in the opinion of the players, a change is desirable.
- (d) A receiver shall not unreasonably delay the server between rallies. The server may instigate a 30 second break for both players to towel down or take on fluid. Each player will be permitted two such breaks per game.
- (e) If, by reason of injury or ill-health, a player is, in the opinion of the Tournament Organiser or Coach, unfit to continue playing then the match shall be stopped and awarded to the player's opponent or opponents.
- (f) In a match consisting of more than one game, not more than five minutes interval shall be allowed between games.

Rules drawn up Nov 1930; revised Oct 1949; May 1951; June 1955, Oct 1959; May 1972; Dec 1995; Dec 2010, July 2022.

For more information, please contact the General Secretary through therfa.uk website.



Playing Rugby Fives on a Squash Court

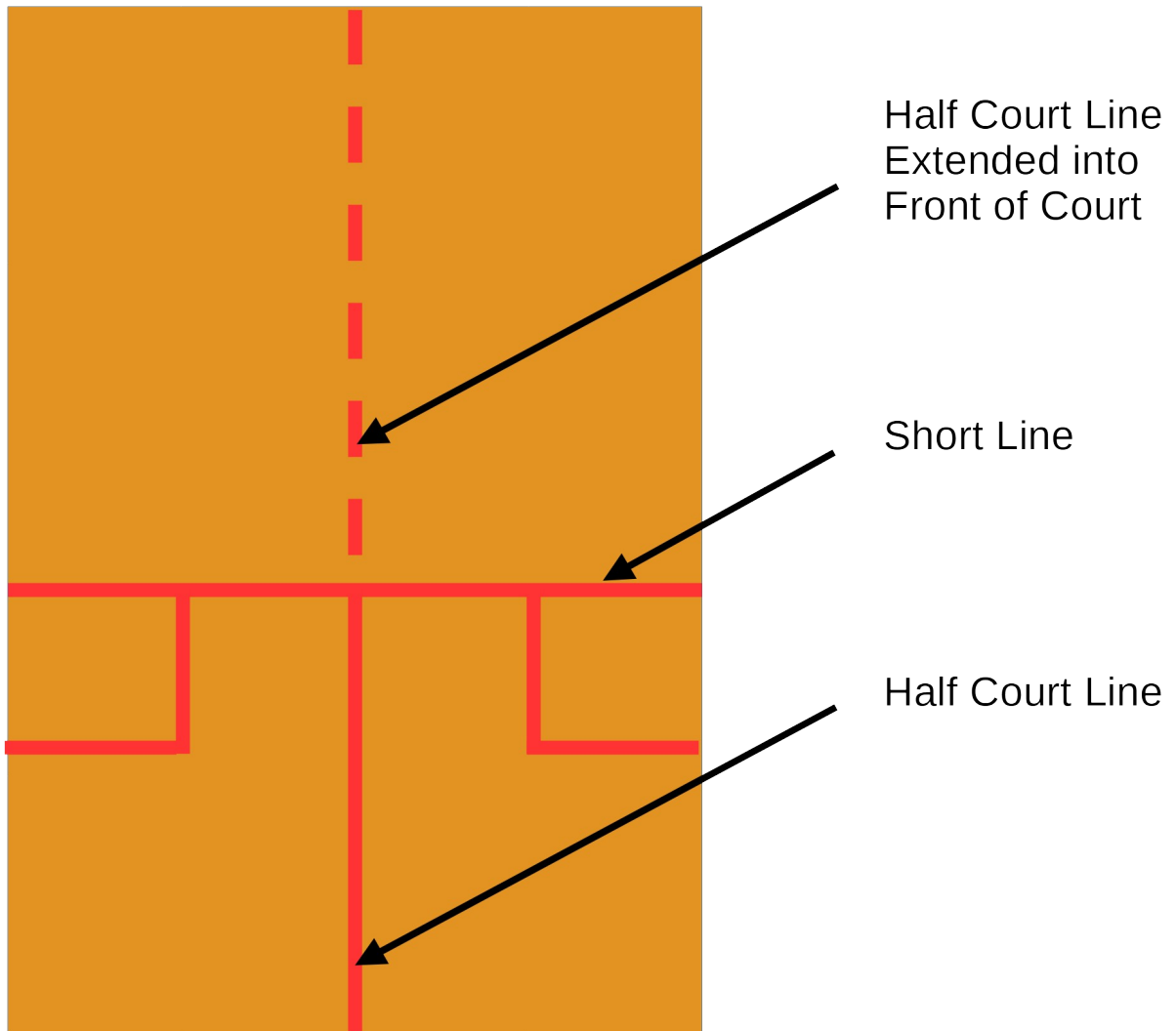


Illustration of Squash Court Lines