Rugby Lesson 1 Escape the defenders

Years 3 and 4 | Ages 7 to 9 | 60 minutes | Non-contact rugby

Learning question: How can I carry the ball into space?

Success criteria: Carry in two hands; look up for space and people; change direction or speed; place the ball down under control to score.

Equipment: Soft size 3 rugby balls, coloured cones, bibs and tag belts. One ball per pupil or pair. Mark channels, return lanes, gates and try lines.

Time and activity	Organisation and instructions	Teaching points	Differentiation
0 to 5 min **L1.1 Ball explorers**	Use one large space marked with single-colour perimeter cones; **no cones inside**. Pairs move freely with one ball, alternating the carrier. **Green: travel forwards. Amber: travel backwards. Red: sprint to new space. Pass: pass to your partner.** Use a suitable pace; look behind before stepping backwards and keep clear of others.	• Two hands; eyes up. • Look behind before travelling backwards. • Find clear space; give others room.	**Support:** Walk and use a handover. **Challenge:** Change speed after changing direction.
5 to 10 min **L1.2 Treasure routes**	Scatter coloured cones as islands. Each pair chooses a starting point, travels together to three different islands, then returns. **Swap carrier** and choose a new route. Both pupils move throughout; the carrier holds the ball in **two hands**. Ask: “Can you find a route with fewer people?”	• Look before you move. • Find clear space.	**Support:** Visit two islands, shorten the route or walk. **Challenge:** Change the route when space becomes crowded.
10 to 20 min **L1.3 Sharks and spaces**	Mark a box with a **sideways-only defender channel across the middle**, side exits and an outside return lane. Use 4 to 5 carriers and 1 to 2 defenders. On “go”, carriers cross to the far side with tags intact. Defenders stay in the channel and move side to side only. If tagged, stop, receive and reattach the tag, **exit at the marked side point and return outside to start again**. Successful carriers also return outside. Rotate defenders every 60 to 90 seconds; partners sharing a ball swap carrier each crossing.	• Find the gap; change direction before reaching the defender. • Do not cover your tags.	**Support:** Widen the channel or use one walking defender. **Challenge:** Use two defenders or narrow the channel.
20 to 23 min **L1.4 Demonstration / coaching point**	Use widely spaced cones to leave a broad gap beside a shadow defender. Show a carrier looking up, holding the ball in two hands and **sidestepping into the open gap, then moving forward into clear space**. Ask: “Where is the gap?” Partners practise with a shadow defender and no contact. Keep the demonstration under one minute; use the remaining time to practise and allow a quick drink if needed.	• Step into space, then move away.	Demonstrate slowly; use a shadow defender.

Lesson 1 continued

Time and activity	Organisation and instructions	Teaching points	Differentiation
23 to 35 min **L1.5 Try line explorers**	Groups of three play 2 attackers versus 1 defender in separate mini-areas. Place two scoring gates on the try line, one towards each side. Attackers start opposite and have up to **20 seconds** to carry the ball through either gate and place it down. **A tag or touch ends the attempt** in this activity. **Return and reattach** tags, **rotate the defender** after each attempt and alternate the starting carrier. Initially allow passes in any direction.	• Look for the open gate. • Run into space or pass. • Bend knees and place the ball down; no diving.	**Support:** Use a shadow defender or wider gates. **Challenge:** Use an active defender or smaller gates.
35 to 55 min **L1.6 Escape rugby**	Play simultaneous 3 versus 3 or 4 versus 4 games. Score one point for a controlled try anywhere across the try line. After a tag/touch, stop; the defender hands back the tag. Defenders **step backwards five walking steps towards their own try line, facing the attackers**. The carrier **passes within about three seconds, then reattaches the tag**; defenders advance when the pass is released. Introduce sideways/backward passes with a supported retry. After a try, the other team restarts from the centre with defenders five steps back. Use short rounds; award a bonus point for each new scorer. **Show OS - Onside/offside guidance to teachers and pupils before play. Revisit mistakes; swap roles when possession changes.**	• Carry into a gap. • If stopped, find your teammate. • Support behind the ball; defenders in front, facing attackers.	**Support:** Widen the pitch, allow more passing time or provide a protected first receive: defenders wait until that pupil has received and controlled the ball. **Challenge:** Reduce pitch size or encourage pupils to pass before being tagged.
55 to 60 min **L1.7 Moving review and cool down**	Partners walk and exchange gentle two-handed passes or handovers. Discuss the questions below, then each pupil demonstrates a controlled change of direction around a cone. How did you find space? How should we carry the ball? How can our feet help us escape?	• Look for secure carrying, eyes up and purposeful footwork.	Accept demonstrations, pointing or spoken answers.

Safety and game rules

No tackling, pushing, blocking, diving, hand-offs or grabbing clothing. Remove one tag and return it directly; alternatively use a gentle two-hand hip touch. In Escape rugby, defenders step backwards five walking steps towards their own try line while facing the attackers. The carrier passes, then reattaches the returned tag. Defenders advance on the pass. After a try, the other team restarts. In Sharks and spaces and Try line explorers, return and reattach tags before restarting. **Small-sided games: attackers support behind the ball; defenders stay in front, facing attackers. Offside: pause, reposition and retry. See OS visual.**

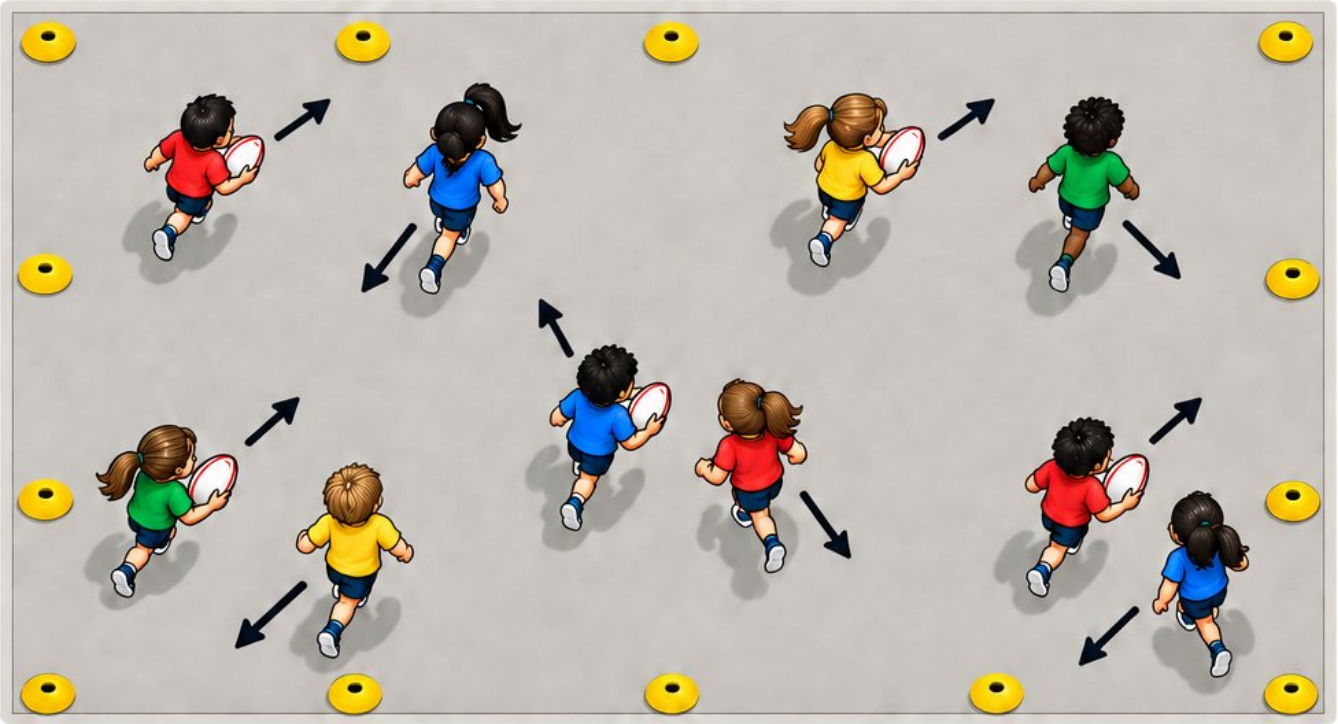
Inclusive delivery

Demonstrate alongside spoken instructions. Adapt movement speed, ball size and tagging method to individual needs. Pupils may walk, wheel or travel in another suitable way. Use accessible routes and gates, a shadow defender where needed, and allow rest and recovery. Adjust challenge as confidence develops.

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BALL EXPLORERS

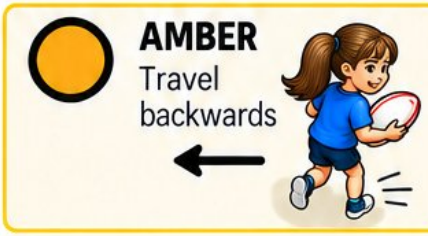
L1.1 • Lesson 1 • 0–5 minutes



GREEN
Travel forwards



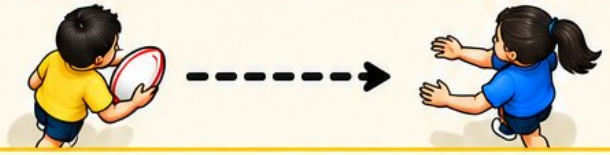
AMBER
Travel backwards



RED
Sprint to new space



PASS
Pass to your partner



1. Spread out inside the marked space.
2. **Green:** forwards. **Amber:** backwards. **Red:** sprint to new space.
3. On **PASS**, pass the ball to your partner.

Teaching cues: • Two hands • Eyes up • Look behind before backwards • Give others space

SUPPORT:
Walk or move at a suitable pace.
Use a handover if needed.

CHALLENGE:
Make controlled changes of pace.

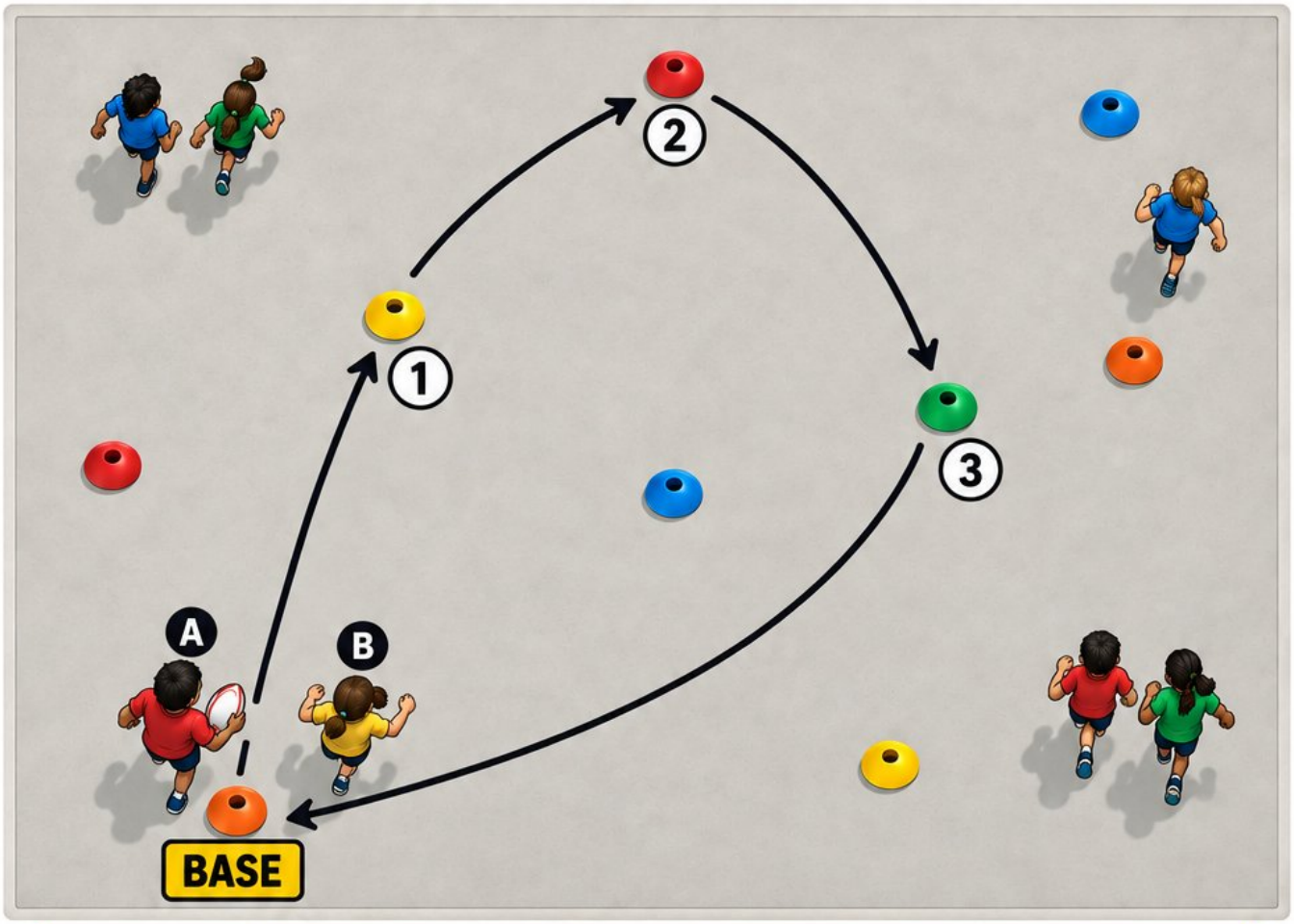
No contact • No diving • Give others space

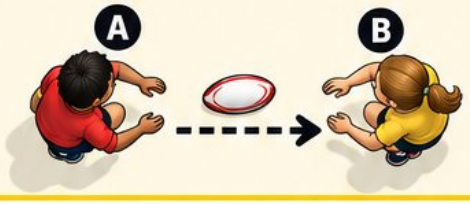
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TREASURE ROUTES

L1.2 • Lesson 1 • 5–10 minutes





Back at base:
swap the ball carrier.

1. Choose three different islands.
2. Travel together with the ball in two hands.
3. Return to your start, swap carrier and choose a new route.

Look before you move • Find clear space

SUPPORT:	CHALLENGE:
Visit two islands or walk.	Change route when space gets crowded.

No contact • No diving • Give others space

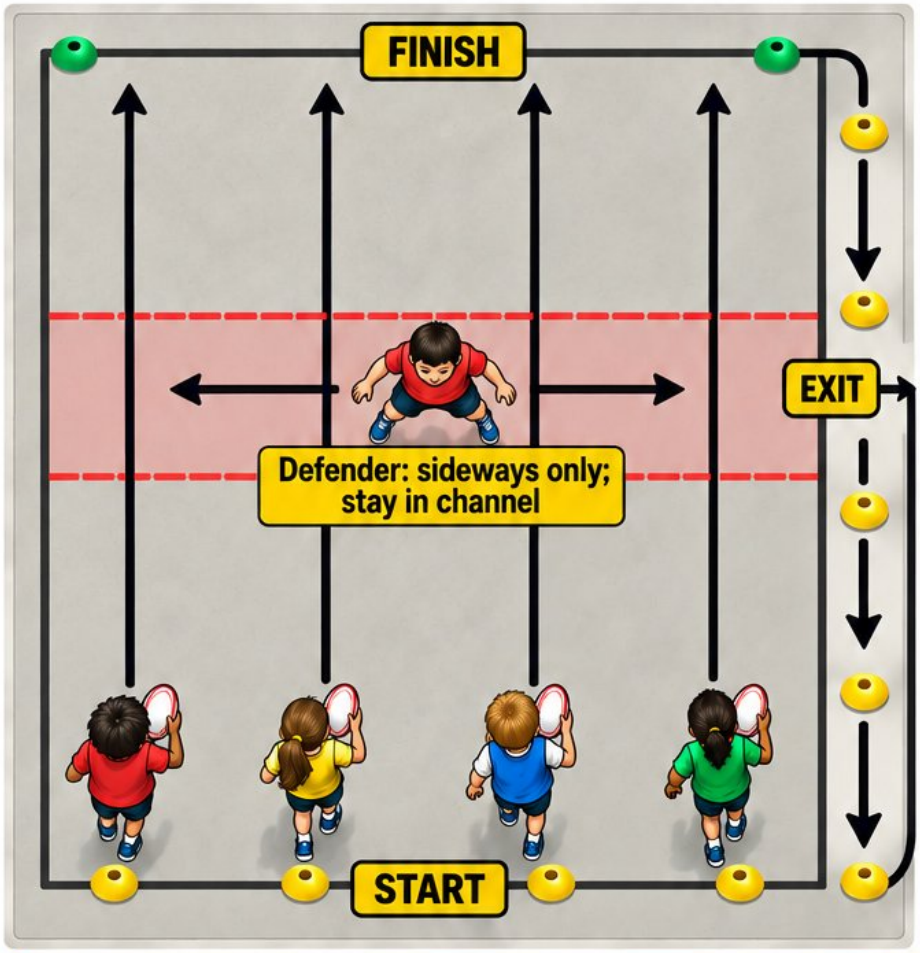
→ = travel route
- - - → = pass

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SHARKS AND SPACES

L1.3 • Lesson 1 • 10–20 minutes







1. On GO, cross the whole box to the far side with your tag intact.
2. Defender stays in the middle channel and moves sideways only.
3. If tagged: stop, receive and reattach tag, leave through the marked exit, return outside the box and try again.
   Successful carriers also return outside.
   Rotate defenders every 60–90 seconds.

TEACHING CUES: Find the gap • Change direction early • Keep tags visible

SUPPORT:
Widen the channel or use a walking defender.

CHALLENGE:
Use two defenders or narrow the channel.

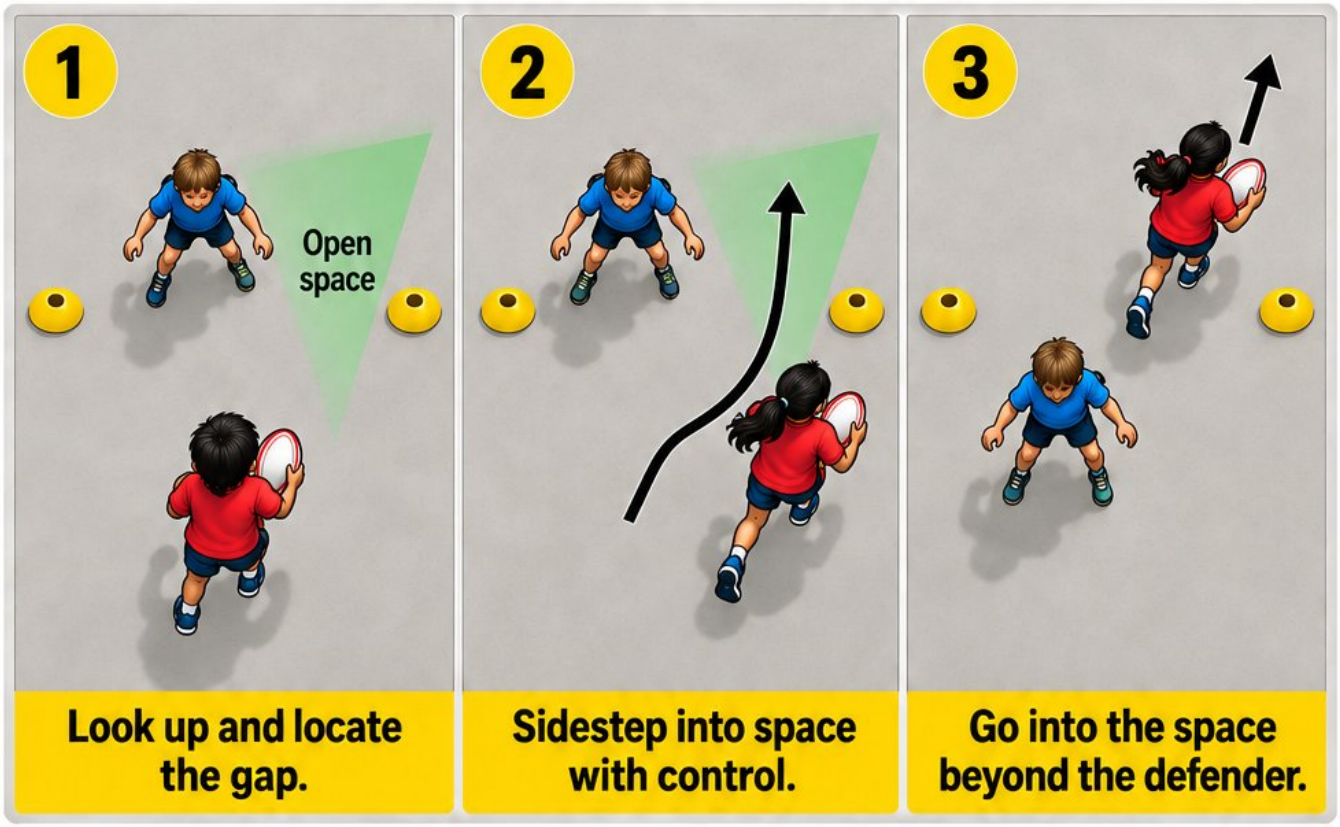
No contact • No diving • Give others space

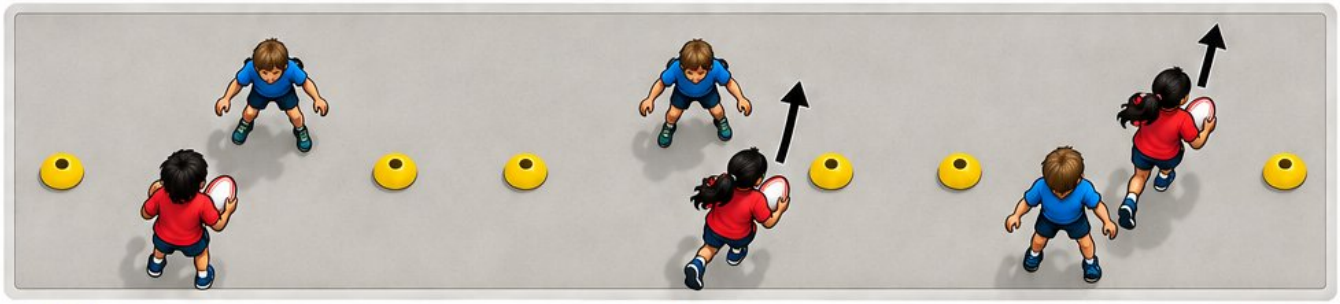
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DEMONSTRATION / COACHING POINT

L1.4 • Lesson 1 • 20–23 minutes





1. Watch a short demonstration.
2. Point to the gap: Where is the space?
3. Practise in pairs with a shadow defender.

TEACHING CUES: Eyes up • Two hands • Sidestep into space • Go forward

SUPPORT:
Demonstrate slowly.

CHALLENGE:
Combine a change of direction and pace.

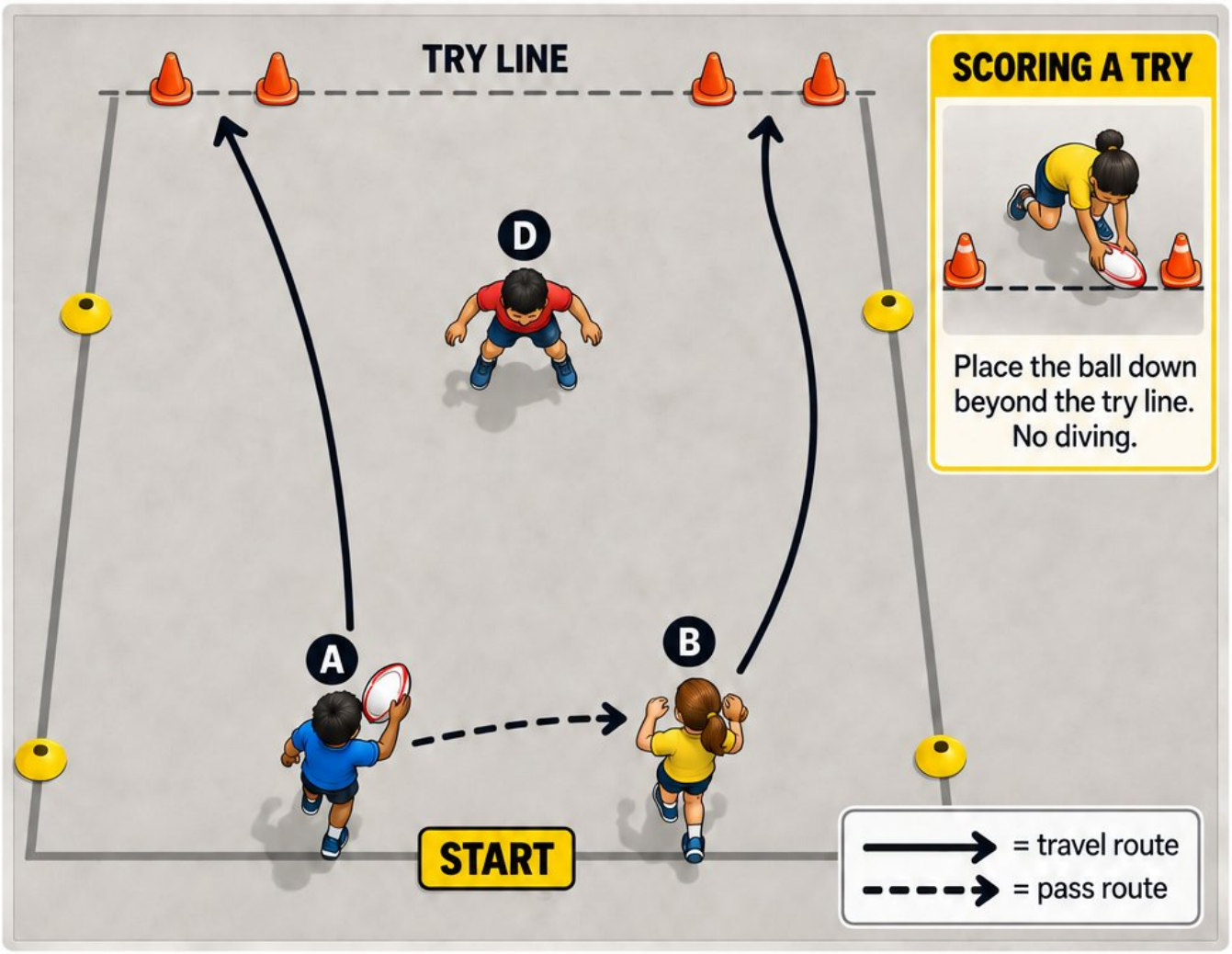
No contact • No diving • Give others space

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TRY LINE EXPLORERS

L1.5 • Lesson 1 • 23–35 minutes



SCORING A TRY

Place the ball down beyond the try line. No diving.

1. Two attackers try to beat one defender.
2. Score through either gate within 20 seconds.
3. A try or tag ends the attempt. Return tags and rotate defender.

Alternate the starting carrier. Pass in any direction to begin.

TEACHING CUES: Look for the open gate • Run or pass • Place ball down

SUPPORT:
Use a shadow defender or wider gates.

CHALLENGE:
Use an active defender or smaller gates.

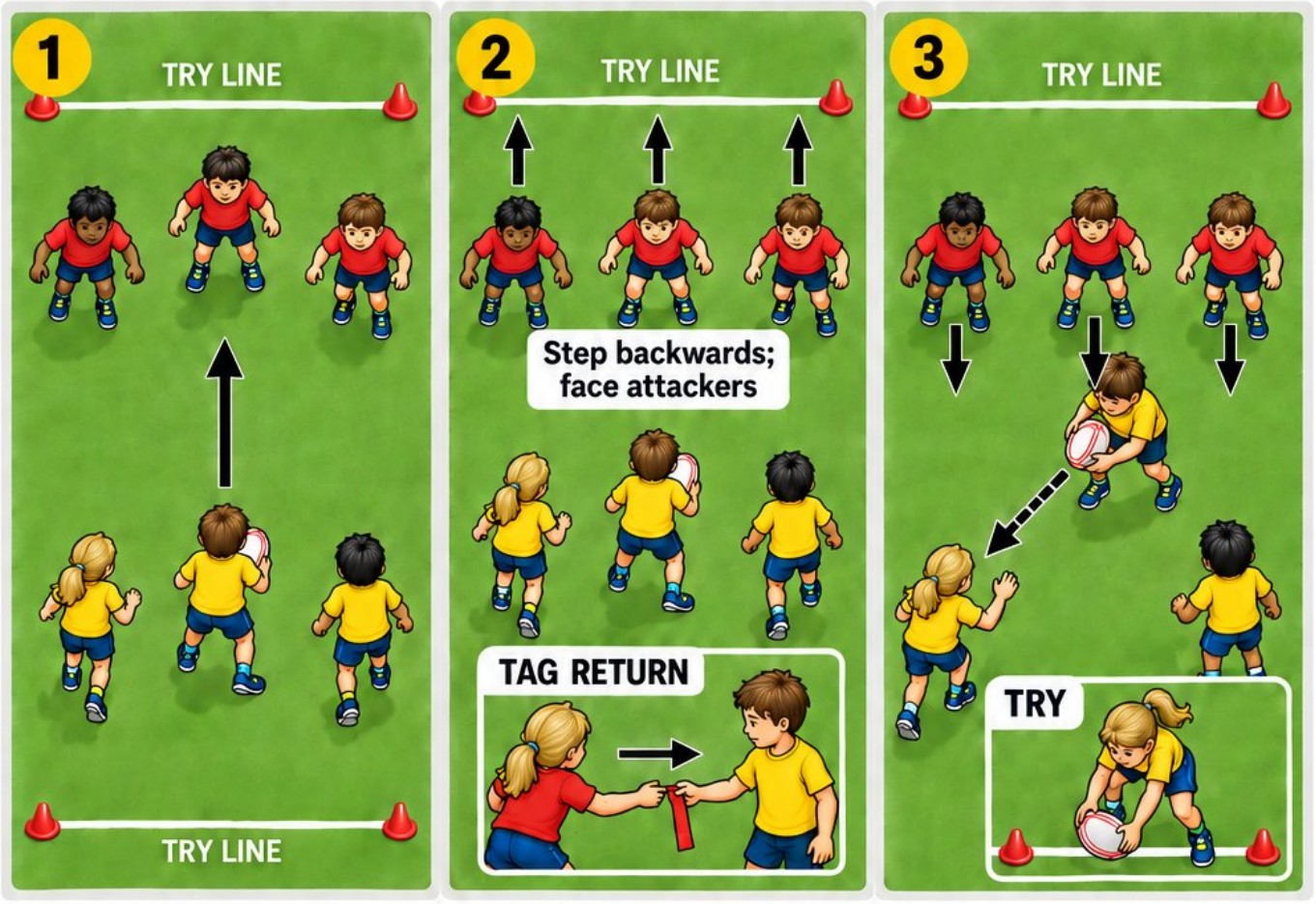
No contact • No diving • Give others space

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ESCAPE RUGBY

L1.6 • Lesson 1 • 35–55 minutes



1. Play 3 v 3 or 4 v 4. Score across the try line.
2. After a tag: stop; defender hands back tag; defenders step back five walking steps, facing attackers.
3. Carrier passes within about three seconds, THEN reattaches tag. Defenders advance when the pass is released.

Stay onside: defenders stay in front of attackers, towards their own try line.

After a try, the other team restarts from the centre.

TEACHING CUES:
Carry into a gap • If stopped find a teammate • Pass sideways or backwards • Stay onside

SUPPORT:
Widen the pitch or allow more passing time.

CHALLENGE:
Find a pass before being tagged.

No contact • No diving • Give others space

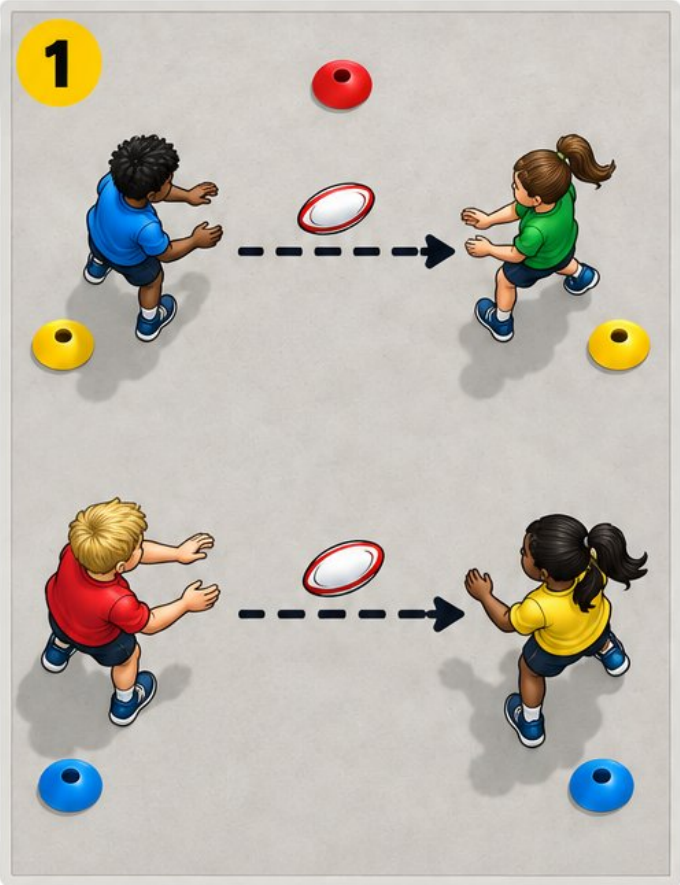
Arrow = travel route • Dashed arrow = pass

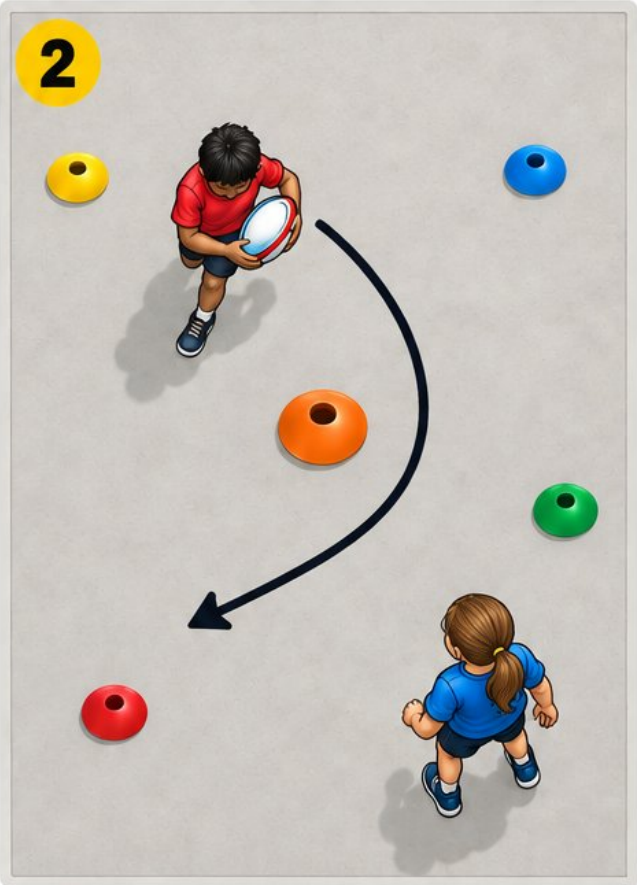
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MOVING REVIEW AND COOL-DOWN

L1.7 • Lesson 1 • 55–60 minutes





1. Walk with a partner and pass gently.
2. Discuss how you found space and carried the ball.
3. Show a controlled change of direction around a cone.

Teaching cues: | Secure carry • Eyes up • Purposeful footwork

SUPPORT:
Use a handover and demonstrate or point.

CHALLENGE:
Explain how changing direction created space.

No contact • No diving • Give others space

Arrow = travel route • Dashed arrow = pass

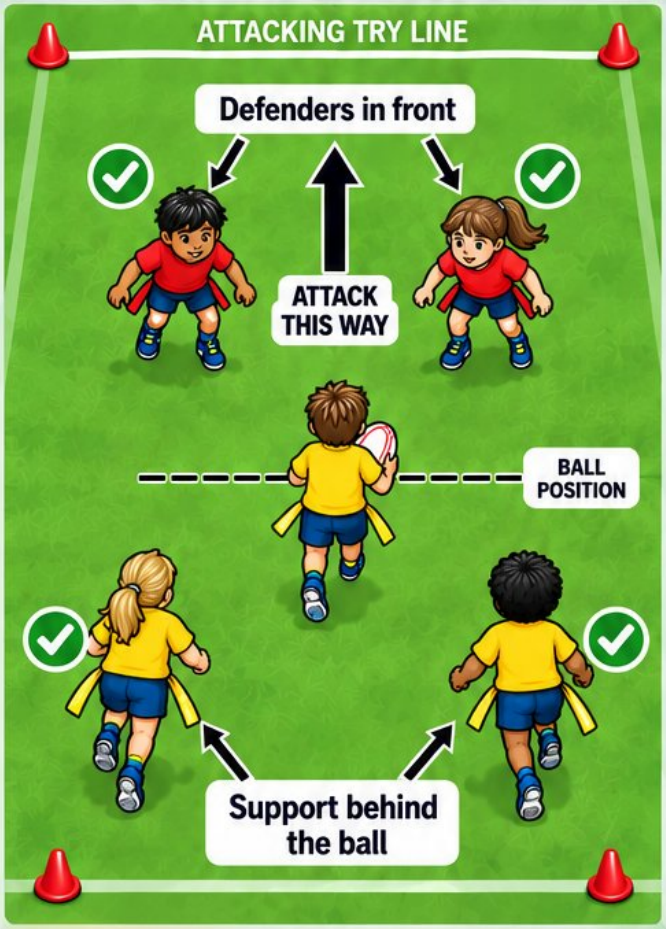
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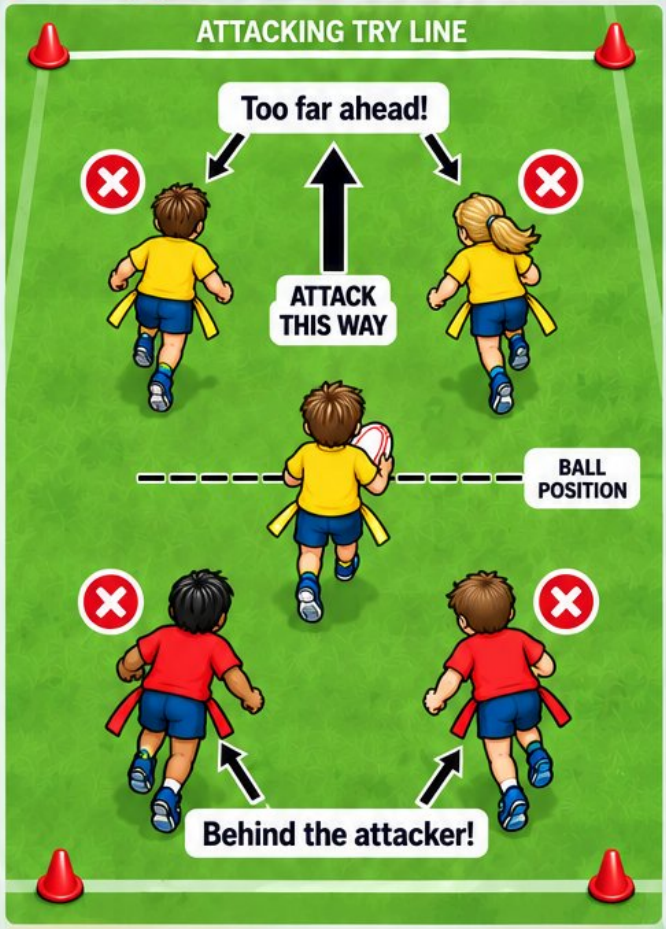
STAY ONSIDE

Our small-sided tag rugby games

✓ RIGHT



✗ WRONG



ATTACKERS

Stay behind the ball carrier.
Keep wide and ready to receive.

DEFENDERS

Stay in front of the ball carrier, towards your own try line.
Face the attackers.

WHEN POSSESSION CHANGES, SWAP ROLES.

The new attackers support behind the ball. The new defenders get in front.

After a tag: step backwards facing the attackers.

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