

## LAW 20 – SCRUM

### DEFINITIONS

The purpose of the scrum is to restart play quickly, safely and fairly, after a minor infringement or a stoppage.

A scrum is formed in the field of play when eight players from each team, bound together in three rows for each team, close up with their opponents so that the heads of the front rows are interlocked. This creates a tunnel into which a scrum-half throws in the ball so that front row players can compete for possession by hooking the ball with either of their feet.

The middle line of a scrum must not be within 5 metres of the goal-line. A scrum cannot take place within 5 metres of a touch-line.

The tunnel is the space between the two front rows.

The player of either team who throws the ball into the scrum is the scrum-half.

The middle line is an imaginary line on the ground in the tunnel beneath the line where the shoulders of the two front rows meet.

The middle player in each front row is the hooker.

The players on either side of the hooker are the props. The left side props are the loose-head props. The right side props are the tight-head props.

The two players in the second row who push on the props and the hooker are the locks.

The outside players who bind onto the second or third row are the flankers.

The player in the third row who usually pushes on both locks is the No.8. Alternatively, the No. 8 may push on a lock and a flanker.

### 20.1 FORMING A SCRUM

- (a) Where the scrum takes place. The place for a scrum is where the infringement or stoppage happened, or as near to it as is practicable in the field of play, unless otherwise stated in Law.
- (b) If this is less than 5 metres from a touch-line, the place for the scrum is 5 metres from that touch-line. A scrum can take place only in the field of play. The middle line of a scrum must not be within 5 metres of the goal-line when it is formed.

- (c) If there is an infringement or stoppage in in-goal, the place for the scrum is 5 metres from the goal-line.
- (d) The scrum is formed in line with the place of the infringement or stoppage.
- (e) **No delay.** A team must not intentionally delay forming a scrum.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (f) **Number of players: eight.** A scrum must have eight players from each team. All eight players must stay bound to the scrum until it ends. Each front row must have three players in it, no more and no less. Two locks must form the second row.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- Exception :** When a team is reduced to fewer than fifteen for any reason, then the number of players of each team in the scrum may be similarly reduced. Where a permitted reduction is made by one team, there is no requirement for the other team to make a similar reduction. However, a team must not have fewer than five players in the scrum.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (g) **Front rows coming together.** First, the referee marks with a foot the place where the scrum is to be formed. Before the two front rows come together they must be standing not more than an arm's length apart. The ball is in the scrum-half's hands, ready to be thrown in. The front rows must crouch so that when they meet, each player's head and shoulders are no lower than the hips. The front rows must interlock so that no player's head is next to the head of a team-mate.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (h) The front rows crouch and pause, and then come together only when the referee calls 'engage'. This call is not a command but an indication that the front rows may come together when ready.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (i) A crouched position is the extension of the normal stance by bending the knees sufficiently to move into the engagement without a charge.
- (j) **Charging.** A front row must not form at a distance from its opponents and rush against them. This is dangerous play.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**

- (k) **Stationary and parallel.** Until the ball leaves the scrum-half's hands, the scrum must be stationary and the middle line must be parallel to the goal-lines. A team must not shove the scrum away from the mark before the ball is thrown in.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

## 20.2 FRONT-ROW PLAYERS' POSITIONS

- (a) **All players in a position to shove.** When a scrum has formed, the body and feet of each front row player must be in a normal position to make a forward shove.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (b) This means that the front row players must have both feet on the ground, with their weight firmly on at least one foot. Players must not cross their feet, although the foot of one player may cross a team-mate's foot. Each player's shoulders must be no lower than the hips.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (c) **Hooker in a position to hook.** Until the ball is thrown in, the hooker must be in a position to hook the ball. The hookers must have both feet on the ground, with their weight firmly on at least one foot. A hooker's foremost foot must not be in front of the foremost foot of that team's props.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

## 20.3 BINDING IN THE SCRUM

### DEFINITION

When a player binds on a team-mate that player must use the whole arm from hand to shoulder to grasp the team-mate's body at or below the level of the armpit. Placing only a hand on another player is not satisfactory binding.

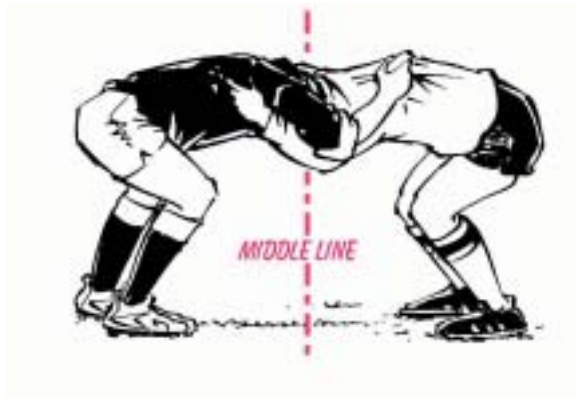
- (a) **Binding by all front row players.** All front row players must bind firmly and continuously from the start to the finish of the scrum.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick

- (b) **Binding by hookers.** The hooker may bind either over or under the arms of the props. The props must not support the hooker so that the hooker has no weight on either foot.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick

- (c) **Binding by loose-head props.** A loose-head prop must bind on the opposing tight-head prop by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the tight-head and gripping the tight-head prop's jersey on the back or side. The loose-head prop must not grip the chest, arm, sleeve or collar of the opposition tight-head prop. The loose-head prop must not exert any downward pressure.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick



### BINDING BY PROPS

- (d) **Binding by tight-head props.** A tight-head prop must bind on the opposing loose-head prop by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the opposing loose-head prop. The tight-head prop must grip the loose-head prop's jersey with the right hand only on the back or side. The tight-head prop must not grip the chest, arm, sleeve or collar of the opposition loose-head prop. The tight-head prop must not exert any downward pressure.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick
- (e) Both the loose-head and tight-head props may alter their bind providing they do so in accordance with this Law.
- (f) **Binding by all other players.** All players in a scrum, other than front-row players, must bind on a lock's body with at least one arm. The locks must bind with the props in front of them. No player other than a prop may hold an opponent.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick

- (g) **Flanker obstructing opposing scrum-half.** A flanker may bind onto the scrum at any angle, provided the flanker is properly bound. The flanker must not widen that angle and so obstruct the opposing scrum-half moving forward.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (h) **Scrum collapse.** If a scrum collapses, the referee must blow the whistle immediately so that players stop pushing.
- (i) **Player forced upwards.** If a player in a scrum is lifted in the air, or is forced upwards out of the scrum, the referee must blow the whistle immediately so that players stop pushing.

## 20.4 THE TEAM THROWING THE BALL INTO THE SCRUM

- (a) After an infringement, the team that did not cause the infringement throws in the ball.
- (b) **Scrum after ruck.** Refer to Law 16.7.
- (c) **Scrum after maul.** Refer to Law 17.6.
- (d) **Scrum after any other stoppage.** After any other stoppage or irregularity not covered by Law, the team that was moving forward before the stoppage throws in the ball. If neither team was moving forward, the attacking team throws in the ball.
- (e) When a scrum remains stationary and the ball does not emerge immediately a further scrum is ordered at the place of the stoppage. The ball is thrown in by the team not in possession at the time of the stoppage.
- (f) When a scrum becomes stationary and does not start moving immediately, the ball must emerge immediately. If it does not a further scrum will be ordered. The ball is thrown in by the team not in possession at the time of the stoppage.
- (g) If a scrum collapses or lifts up into the air without penalty a further scrum will be ordered and the team who originally threw in the ball will throw the ball in again.

If a scrum has to be reformed for any other reason not covered in this Law the team who originally threw in the ball will throw the ball in again.

## 20.5 THROWING THE BALL INTO THE SCRUM

- (a) **No Delay.** As soon as the front rows have come together, the scrum-half must throw-in the ball without delay. The scrum-half must throw-in the ball when told to do so by the referee. The scrum-half must throw-in the ball from the side of the scrum first chosen.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (b) Intentional delay in throwing in the ball must be penalised.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

## 20.6 HOW THE SCRUM-HALF THROWS IN THE BALL

- (a) The scrum-half must stand one metre from the mark on the middle line so that player's head does not touch the scrum or go beyond the nearest front row player.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (b) The scrum-half must hold the ball with both hands, with its major axis parallel to the ground and to the touch-line over the middle line between the front rows, mid-way between knee and ankle.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (c) The scrum-half must throw-in the ball at a quick speed. The ball must be released from the scrum-half's hands from outside the tunnel.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (d) The scrum-half must throw-in the ball straight along the middle line, so that it first touches the ground immediately beyond the width of the nearer prop's shoulders.

**Penalty:** Free Kick

- (e) The scrum-half must throw-in the ball with a single forward movement. This means that there must be no backward movement with the ball. The scrum-half must not pretend to throw the ball.

**Penalty:** Free Kick



*Throw-in at the scrum*

## 20.7 WHEN THE SCRUM BEGINS

- (a) Play in the scrum begins when the ball leaves the hands of the scrum-half.
- (b) If the scrum-half throws in the ball and it comes out at either end of the tunnel, the ball must be thrown in again unless a free kick or penalty has been awarded.
- (c) If the ball is not played by a front row player, and it goes straight through the tunnel and comes out behind the foot of a far prop without being touched, the scrum-half must throw it in again.
- (d) If the ball is played by a front row player and comes out of the tunnel, advantage may apply.

## 20.8 FRONT-ROW PLAYERS

- (a) **Striking before the throw-in (“foot up”).** All front row players must place their feet to leave a clear tunnel. Until the ball has left the scrum-half’s hands, they must not raise or advance a foot. They must not do anything to stop the ball being thrown in to the scrum correctly or touching the ground at the correct place.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (b) **Striking after the throw-in.** Once the ball touches the ground in the tunnel, any front row player may use either foot to try to win possession of the ball.

- (c) **Kicking-out.** A front row player must not intentionally kick the ball out of the tunnel in the direction from which it was thrown in.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (d) If the ball is kicked out unintentionally, the same team must throw it in again.
- (e) If the ball is repeatedly kicked out, the referee must treat this as intentional and penalise the offender.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (f) **Swinging.** A front row player must not strike for the ball with both feet. No player may intentionally raise both feet from the ground, either when the ball is being thrown in or afterwards.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (g) **Twisting, dipping or collapsing.** Front row players must not twist or lower their bodies, or pull opponents, or do anything that is likely to collapse the scrum, either when the ball is being thrown in or afterwards.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (h) Referees must penalise strictly any intentional collapsing of the scrum. This is dangerous play.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (i) **Lifting or forcing an opponent up.** A front row player must not lift an opponent in the air, or force an opponent upwards out of the scrum, either when the ball is being thrown in or afterwards. This is dangerous play.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**

## 20.9 SCRUM - GENERAL RESTRICTIONS

- (a) **All players: Collapsing.** A player must not intentionally collapse a scrum. A player must not intentionally fall or kneel in a scrum. This is dangerous play.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (b) **All players: Handling in the scrum.** Players must not handle the ball in the scrum or pick it up with their legs.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**

- (c) **All players: Other restrictions on winning the ball.** Players must not try to win the ball in the scrum by using any part of their body except their foot or lower leg.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (d) **All players: When the ball comes out, leave it out.** When the ball has left the scrum, a player must not bring it back in to the scrum.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (e) **All players: No falling on the ball.** A player must not fall on or over the ball as it is coming out of the scrum.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (f) **Locks and flankers: Staying out of the tunnel.** A player who is not a front row player must not play the ball in the tunnel.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (g) **Scrum-half: Kicking in the scrum.** A scrum-half must not kick the ball while it is in the scrum.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**
- (h) **Scrum-half: Dummying.** A scrum-half must not take any action to make the opponents think that the ball is out of the scrum while it is still in the scrum.  
**Penalty: Free Kick**
- (i) **Scrum-half: Holding opposing flanker.** A scrum-half must not grasp an opposing flanker in order to gain leverage, or for any other reason.  
**Penalty: Penalty Kick**

## 20.10 ENDING THE SCRUM

- (a) **The ball comes out.** When the ball comes out of the scrum in any direction except the tunnel, the scrum ends.
- (b) **Scrum in the in-goal.** A scrum cannot take place in the in-goal. When the ball in a scrum is on or over the goal-line, the scrum ends and an attacker or a defender may legally ground the ball for a try or a touch down.
- (c) **Hindmost player unbinds.** The hindmost player in a scrum is the player whose feet are nearest the team's own goal-line. If the hindmost player unbinds from the scrum with the ball at that player's feet and picks up the ball, the scrum ends.

## 20.11 SCRUM WHEELED

- (a) If a scrum is wheeled through more than 90 degrees, so that the middle line has passed beyond a position parallel to the touch-line, the referee must stop play and order another scrum.

### EXPERIMENTAL LAW VARIATION

- (b) This new scrum is formed at the place where the previous scrum ended. The ball is thrown in by the team not in possession at the time of the stoppage. If neither team win possession, it is thrown in by the team that previously threw it in.

## 20.12 OFF-SIDE AT THE SCRUM

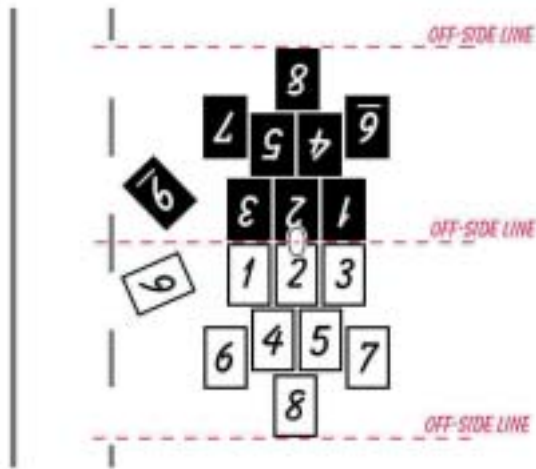
### DEFINITION

At a scrum, the off-side line for the scrum-halves runs through the line of the ball in the scrum. For every other player the off-side line runs through the hindmost foot of that player's team in the scrum. If the hindmost foot of a team is on or behind that team's goal-line, the off-side line is the goal-line. The off-side lines are parallel to the goal-lines.

The purpose of the scrum off-side Law is to ensure that, until the scrum ends, the team winning the ball has a clear space in which to make use of it.

- (a) When the scrum is set, the scrum-half not throwing the ball into the scrum must take up a position either at the same side of the scrum as the scrum-half throwing the ball or behind the off-side line defined for other players.
- (b) **Off-side for scrum-halves.** When a team has won the ball in a scrum, the scrum-half of that team is off-side if both feet are in front of the ball while it is still in the scrum. If the scrum-half has only one foot in front of the ball, the scrum-half is not off-side.

**Penalty:** Penalty Kick



### SCRUM OFF-SIDE

- (c) When a team has won the ball in a scrum, the scrum-half of the opposing team is off-side if that scrum-half steps in front of the ball with either foot while the ball is still in the scrum.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick
- (d) The scrum-half whose team does not win possession of the ball must not move to the opposite side of the scrum and overstep the off-side line running through the hindmost foot of that player's team in the scrum.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick
- (e) The scrum-half whose team does not win possession of the ball must not move away from the scrum and then remain in front of the off-side line running through the hindmost foot of that player's team in the scrum.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick
- (f) Any player may be scrum-half, but a team can have only one scrum-half at each scrum.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick on the off-side line
- (g) **Off-side for players not in the scrum.** Players who are not in the scrum, and who are not the team's scrum-half, are off-side if they remain in front of their off-side line or overstep the off-side line.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick on the off-side line
- (h) **Loitering.** When a scrum is forming, players not taking part in it must retire to their off-side line without delay. If they do not, they are loitering. Loiterers must be penalised.  
**Penalty:** Penalty Kick on the off-side line.