 Activate training programmes
Four different exercise programmes for specific age groups:

**World Rugby™ Injury Prevention Exercise Programme**

- **Adult programmes**
  - 1: A programme
- **Youth programmes**
  - 2: U15 programme
  - 3: U16 programme
  - 4: U18 programme
What is Activate?

Activate is a structured, progressive exercise programme that is designed to be used as part of training sessions and pre-match warm-up routines.

There are four versions of Activate:
- Under-15 (Age 13-15 years)
- Under-16 (Age 15-16 years)
- Under-18 (Age 16-18 years)
- Adult (Age 18+ years)

What are the benefits of using Activate?

Using Activate with players will help to develop and improve their:

- General movement control and skill – Many of the exercises in Activate can help to develop the stability and mobility that underpin the safe and effective performance of various movements when playing rugby.
- Conditioning and athletic performance – The progressive nature of Activate can help to improve parts of players’ athletic performance; such as: strength, power, running speed, and ability change of direction efficiently.
- Physical robustness – Using Activate can help to develop the ability of muscles, tendons, and ligaments to handle the forces they experience when playing rugby, leading to a lower risk of these structures being damaged when playing rugby and other sports.
The “Key Activate 8” coaching cues

The “Key Activate 8”:

- Head neutral / lifted
  (Think “Look over your sunglasses”)
- Chest up
- Pinch the shoulders together
- Shoulders level with hips
- Brace through the trunk
- Soft knees
- Hip, knee, ankle in line
- Knee over toes

While each individual exercise has some unique points that coaches should use to instruct their players, there are also some generic cues that coaches can also use that are common across many exercises and will help to coach players in performing the exercises with good posture and control.
Running activities to warm-up and develop control and technique when changing direction.

**PART A**

**Snake Run**

- **S:** 1  
- **R:** 2  
- **D:** 15 m
  
  • Using the full width of the channel, alternate swerving from left to right while running  
  • Drive the outside leg across the body to swerve

**Walking Crunch**

- **S:** 1  
- **R:** 2  
- **D:** 15 m
  
  • Shuffle forward two steps and then raise one leg up straight in front of the body  
  • Bring the opposite elbow to the knee of the raised leg by bending at the waist

**Plant and Cut**

- **S:** 2  
- **R:** 2  
- **D:** 15 m
  
  • Begin running diagonally to the left or right  
  • Plant the outside foot and cut to run diagonally in the other direction  
  • Alternate between cutting left and right

**Walking Crunch**

**Key cues:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

**Plant and Cut**

**Key cues:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Hip knee, ankle in line.

**Single leg balance with eyes closed**

- **S:** 1  
- **R:** 12 (6 each leg)
  
  • Stand on one leg with a slight bend in the knee  
  • Close both eyes and try to maintain balance for 10 seconds  
  • Repeat with the other leg

**Forward hop and stick**

- **S:** 1  
- **R:** 12 (6 each leg)
  
  • Hop forwards by taking off and landing on the same leg  
  • The hopping distance should be far enough to challenge control and balance

**Key cues:** Brace through the trunk. Soft knees. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

Balance exercises to develop movement control and stability in the lower body and trunk

**PART B**

**Walking Crunch**

**Key cues:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

**Plant and Cut**

**Key cues:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Hip knee, ankle in line.

**Single leg balance with eyes closed**

**Key cues:** Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Knee over toes.
Zombie Squat
S: 1  R: 8
• Stand with feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart and arms raised in front at shoulder-height
• Squat down until thighs are parallel with the ground before returning to starting position
Key cues: Head Lift. Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

Single Leg Glute Bridge
S: 1  R: 8 (4 each leg)
• Lie face-up with the hip and knee of one leg flexed and the other leg lying straight
• Pushing through the planted foot, raise the hips and back from the ground to make a straight line from the shoulder to the knee

Front Bridge with Leg Raise
S: 1  R: 1  D: 30 seconds
• Start facing down and resting on the forearms and balls of feet
• Alternate slowly raising one leg to hip-height from the ground
Key cues: Head neutral. Shoulder level with hips. Brace through the trunk.

Press Up to Bridge
S: 1  R: 4
• From a press-up position, lower down to a front bridge position one arm at a time by moving from the hands to the forearms
• Once in a bridge position, reverse the movements back up to a press-up position
Key cues: Head neutral. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.

Part C
Bodyweight or partner resistance activities to develop strength and control through the lower body, upper body, and neck area

Part D
Landing, change of direction, and plyometric training to develop power and control

Side step & sway
S: 1  R: 6 (3 each side)
• Start with feet shoulder-width apart and in a partial squat stance
• Alternate stepping to the left or right, transferring weight over the left and right legs while reaching out to the side with the hands
Key cues: Chest up. Hip, knee, and ankle in line. Knees over toes.

Pogo Jumps
S: 1  R: 16
• Maintaining a slight bend in the knees, bound up and down on the balls of the feet
• Try to minimise the time that feet spend in contact with the ground
Key cues: Hips, knees, and ankles in line. Soft Knees.

Static Neck Contractions
S: 1  R: 1 each direction
D: 10 s each direction
• Use hands to apply force to the head in a number of directions while keeping the head still
• Direction of forces: (chin to chest, eyes to sky, ear to shoulder, looking over shoulder)
Key cues: Head neutral. Chest up. Brace through the trunk.
PART A

2 min.

Running activities to warm-up and develop control and technique when changing direction

**Diagonal Side Shuffle**
- S: 1  R: 2  D: 15 m
- Perform 2-3 shuffles diagonally to the left or right
- Pivot 90° on the lead leg to change direction and repeat diagonally in the opposite direction
- Alternate between shuffling diagonally to the left and right

**Side Shuffle**
- S: 1  R: 2  D: 15 m
- Facing side-on, continuously push off from the trailing leg to shuffle sideways

**Planned Plant and Cut**
- S: 2  R: 2  D: 15 m
- In pairs, first player (defender) runs out diagonally and turns to face second player
- Second player (attacker) runs towards and evades first player
- Repeat, alternating roles between defender and attacker and changing direction between left and right

**Key cues:** Chest up. Knee over toes.

**Key cues:** Chest up. Knee over toes.

**Key cues:** Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Knee over toes.

PART B

4 min.

Balance exercises to develop movement control and stability in the lower body and trunk

**Single Leg Balance with Shallow Squat**
- S: 1  R: 12 (6 each side)
- Stand on one leg with a slight bend in the knee
- Once stable, perform a half squat by flexing at both the knee and hip of the standing leg

**Key cues:** Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Knee over toes.

**Sideway Hop and Stick**
- S: 1  R: 12 (6 each leg)
- Hop sideways to the left or right by taking off and landing on the same leg
- Hopping distance should be far enough to challenge control and balance
- Alternate between hopping left and right on both legs

**Key cues:** Brace through the trunk. Soft knees. Hip, knee, ankle in line.
### PART C

**Bodyweight or partner resistance activities to develop strength and control through the lower body, upper body, and neck area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Sets</th>
<th>Reps</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Side Lunge</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 8</td>
<td>6 min.</td>
<td>From standing on one leg, hop sideways to the left or right and land on the other leg. Alternate between hopping left and right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Hamstring Curl</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 3</td>
<td>6 min.</td>
<td>Both players kneel on the ground, with player two holding player one's ankles. Player two places one hand between player one's shoulder blades and the other hand on the lower back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side Bridge with Leg Raise</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 1</td>
<td>D: 30 seconds</td>
<td>From kneeling position, slowly fall forward with arms reaching forwards. Use arms to catch the body with elbows slightly bent and return to start.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisted Press Up</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 4</td>
<td>6 min.</td>
<td>In pairs, player one adopts a press-up position on the ground with player two stood beside.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear Crawl Static Neck Contractions</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 1</td>
<td>D: 40 seconds</td>
<td>In pairs, player one adopts a bear crawl position with player two stood beside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key cues:**
- Chest up.
- Brace through the trunk.
- Hip, knee, and ankle in line. Knees over toes.
- Head neutral.
- Shoulders level with hips.

### PART D

**Landing, change of direction, and plyometric training to develop power and control**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Side Hop and Hold</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 8</td>
<td>3 min.</td>
<td>From standing on one leg, hop sideways to the left or right and land on the other leg. Alternate between hopping left and right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kneeling Drop Catch</td>
<td>S: 1</td>
<td>R: 6</td>
<td>3 min.</td>
<td>From kneeling position, slowly fall forward with arms reaching forwards. Use arms to catch the body with elbows slightly bent and return to start.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key cues:**
- Chest up.
- Hip, knee, and ankle in line. Knees over toes.
ACTIVATE U16 PROGRAMME

**Phase 3**

**Part A**

2 min.

**Intensity 50%**

Running activities to warm-up and develop control and technique when changing direction.

**Exaggerated Skip**

- **S**: 1
- **R**: 2
- **D**: 15 m

- Shuffle forwards 2-3 steps before swinging one leg up
- Clap hands underneath the raised leg
- Alternate with raising left and right legs

*Key cues: Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line.*

**A Skip**

- **S**: 1
- **R**: 2
- **D**: 15 m

- Forcefully drive the knee and curl the toes up on the swinging leg
- Drive foot to ground as quickly as possible
- Co-ordinate knee and elbow drive

*Key cues: Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line.*

**Unplanned Plant and Cut**

- **S**: 1
- **R**: 2
- **D**: 15 m

- In pairs, first player (defender) runs out forwards and turns to face second player
- Second player (attacker) runs towards first player, who indicates the direction that the second player should run towards
- Repeat, alternating roles between defender and attacker

*Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.*

**Part B**

4 min.

Balance exercises to develop movement control and stability in the lower body and trunk

**Single Leg Arabesque**

- **S**: 1
- **R**: 12 (6 each leg)

- Stand on one leg, with the standing knee slightly bent
- Slowly lean forward from the hip until trunk is parallel to the ground
- Return to upright while trying to maintain balance

*Key cues: Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.*

**Backward Hop and Stick**

- **S**: 1
- **R**: 12 (6 each leg)

- Hop backwards by taking off and landing on the same leg
- Hopping distance should be far enough to challenge control and balance

*Key cues: Brace through the trunk. Soft knees. Hip, knee, ankle in line.*
**Part C**

**Phase 3**

Bodyweight or partner resistance activities to develop strength and control through the lower body, upper body, and neck area

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toe-Toe Squat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordic Hamstring Curl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge Full Clock</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prone Lawnmower</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing Neck Lift and Rotation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Cues:**
- **Toe-Toe Squat:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Knees over toes.
- **Nordic Hamstring Curl:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk.
- **Bridge Full Clock:** Pinch the shoulders together. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.
- **Prone Lawnmower:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk.
- **Standing Neck Lift and Rotation:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

**Part D**

Landing, change of direction, and plyometric training to develop power and control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Reps</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shuttle to Edge of Square</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4 (2 each direction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward Bounding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Cues:**
- **Shuttle to Edge of Square:** Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.
- **Forward Bounding:** Brace through the trunk. Soft knees. Hip, knee, ankle in line.
Running activities to warm-up and develop control and technique when changing direction

**Retreating Diagonal Side Shuffle**

- S: 1  R: 2  D: 15 m
- Shuffle backwards 2-3 steps diagonally to the left or right
- Pivot 90° on the rear leg to change direction and repeat diagonally in the opposite direction
- Alternate between shuffling diagonally to the left and right

**Key cues:** Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

**Side Skip**

- S: 1  R: 2  D: 15 m
- Facing side-on, push off and drive the knee of the rear leg up to skip sideways
- Co-ordinate knee and elbow drive when pushing off with the rear leg

**Key cues:** Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

**Partner Mirroring**

- S: 2  R: 2  D: 15 m
- Players start by facing each other 1-metre apart
- Player one runs forwards while cutting from side-to-side
- Player two retreats away while trying to mirror the direction that player one runs toward

**Key cues:** Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

Balance exercises to develop movement control and stability in the lower body and trunk

**Single Leg Balance with Push to Unbalance**

- S: 1  R: 2 (1 each leg)  D: 30 seconds (15 seconds each leg)
- Player one stands on one leg with standing knee slightly bent. Player two stands beside player one
- Using both hands, player two tries to push player one off balance while player one maintains their balance

**Key cues:** Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

**Single Leg Box Hops**

- S: 1  R: 12 (6 each leg)
- Beginning by balancing on one leg
- Perform four continuous hops on the same leg to draw a box shape

**Key cues:** Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Soft knees.
**Phase 4**

**Part C**

Bodyweight or partner resistance activities to develop strength and control through the lower body, upper body, and neck area.

- **Reverse Lunge**
  - S: 1  R: 8 (4 each leg)
  - Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Knees over toes.

- **Nordic Hamstring Curl**
  - S: 1  R: 7
  - Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

- **Front–Side–Front Bridge**
  - S: 1  R: 1
  - D: 25 seconds (5 seconds per hold)
  - Key cues: Head neutral. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.

- **Standing Plyo Press Up**
  - S: 1  R: 4
  - Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

- **Run, Step, Stick**
  - S: 1  R: 4 (2 each side)
  - Key cues: Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Soft knees.

**Part D**

Landing, change of direction, and plyometric training to develop power and control.

- **Resisted Shoulder Tap**
  - S: 1  R: 2 (1 each side)
  - D: 30 seconds (15 seconds each side)
  - Key cues: Head neutral. Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

- **Partner Resisted Neck Movements**
  - S: 1  R: 1 each direction
  - D: 60 seconds (10 seconds each direction)
  - Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.