

ACTIVATE

World Rugby™ Injury Prevention Exercise Programme

Activate training programmes

Four different exercise programmes for specific age groups:

Adult programmes

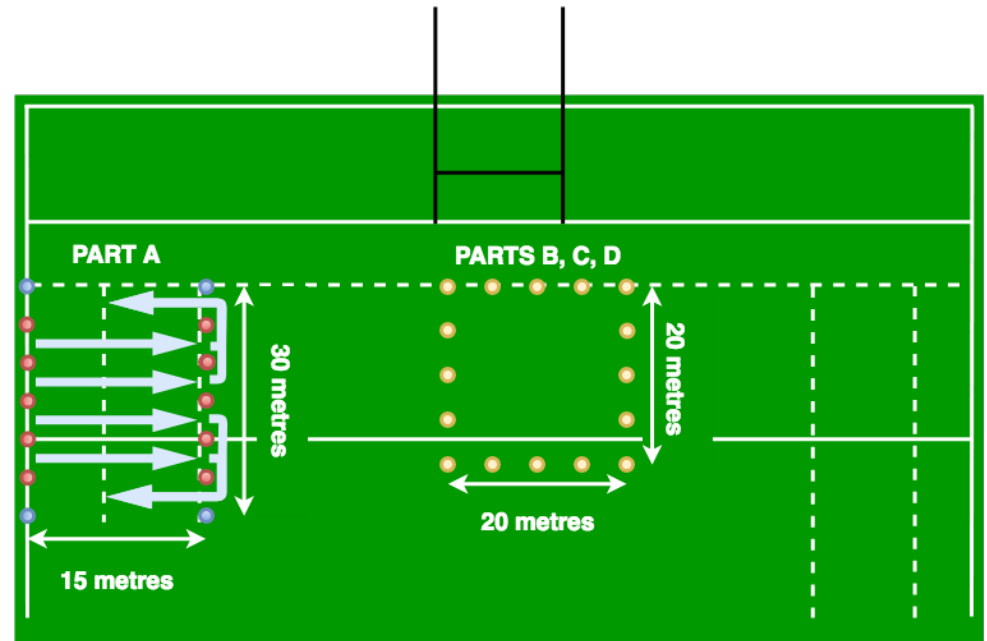


What is Activate?

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)



Suggested pitch layout for Activate

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



Head neutral



Head lifted



Chest up



*Pinch
shoulders*



*Shoulders level
with hips*



*Brace through
trunk*



*Hip, knee, ankle
in line*



*Knee over
toes*

Soft knees

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.

1

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

PART
A

2 min.

INTENSITY
50%



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

Key cues: Chest up.

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

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



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

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

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

PART
B

4 min.



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

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



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.

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



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



Key cues: Brace through the trunk.



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.



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

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.



2

PART
A

2 min.

INTENSITY
50%

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

Key cues: Chest up. Knee over toes.



Side Shuffle

S: 1 R: 2 D: 15 m

- Facing side-on, continuously push off from the trailing leg to shuffle sideways

Key cues: Chest up. Knee over toes.



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

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

PART
B

4 min.



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.



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



Side Lunge

S: 1 R: 8 (4 each side)

- Starting with feet shoulder-width apart, stride out sideways with the left or right leg
- Keep the hips level with a 90° bend in the planted hip and knee of the outside leg
- Alternate outside leg with each repetition

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Knee over toes.



Nordic Hamstring Curl

S: 1 R: 3

- Both players kneel on the ground, with player two holding player one's ankles
- Player one slowly lowers their torso forwards while resisting falling
- Player one uses their arms to land when the controlled lower cannot be held

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



Side Bridge with Leg Raise

S: 1 R: 1 D: 30 seconds (15 seconds each side)

- Begin by laying on side, then raise trunk from the ground to form a straight line from the shoulders and ankles
- Rest on forearm and lowermost foot
- Slowly raise uppermost leg to shoulder-height and return to rest on bottom leg

Key cues: Head neutral. Brace through the trunk.



Resisted Press Up S: 1 R: 4

- In pairs, player one adopts a press-up position on the ground with player two stood beside
- Player two places one hand between player one's shoulder blades and the other hand on the lower back
- Player one attempts to press their body up from the ground, with player two offering some resistance against this

Key cues: Head neutral. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.



Bear Crawl Static Neck Contractions

S: 1 R: 1 D: 40 seconds

- In pairs, player one adopts a bear crawl position with player two stood beside
- Player two applies force to the head of player one, while player one tries to keep their head still
- Direction of forces to be applied: chin-to-chest (flexion), eyes-to-sky (extension), ear to shoulder (left and right lateral flexion)

Key cues: Head neutral. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.

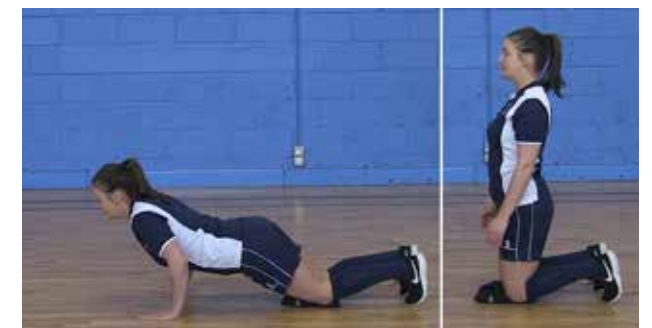
Landing, change of direction, and plyometric training to develop power and control

Side Hop and Hold

S: 1 R: 8 (4 each side)

- From standing on one leg, hop sideways to the left or right and land on the other leg in a one leg stance
- For example: when standing on the left leg, hop to the right and land on the right leg.
- Alternate between hopping left and right

Key cues: Chest up. Hip, knee, and ankle in line. Knees over toes.



Kneeling Drop Catch S: 1 R: 6

- From kneeling position, slowly fall forward with arms reaching forwards
- Use arms to catch the body with elbows slightly bent and return to start

Key cues: Chest up. Pinch the shoulders together.

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.

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

PART
B

4 min.



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

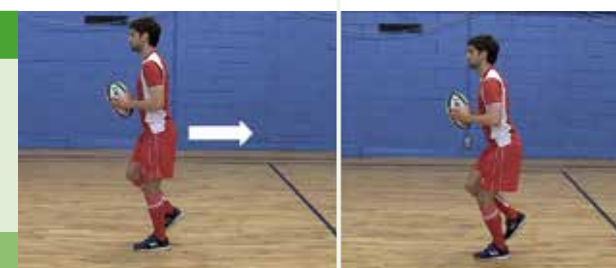
Key cues: Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

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.



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



Toe-Toe Squat S: 1 R: 8

- In pairs of similar height and weight, stand facing each other
- Interlink hands and walk the feet forward until the toes of each player are touching
- Lean back and extend the elbows to counter-balance
- Flexing at the hips and knees, both players perform a squat

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Knees over toes.



Nordic Hamstring Curl
S: 1 R: 5

- Both players kneel on the ground, with player two holding player one's ankles
- Player one slowly lowers their torso forwards while resisting falling
- Player one uses their arms to land when the controlled lower cannot be held

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



Bridge Full Clock S: 1 R: 1

- Start in a front bridge position
- Keeping the feet in the same position, slowly walk around in a circular motion with the forearms
- One full circle = one repetition
- If players are unable to complete one full circle, regress to a half-circle and focus on maintaining control

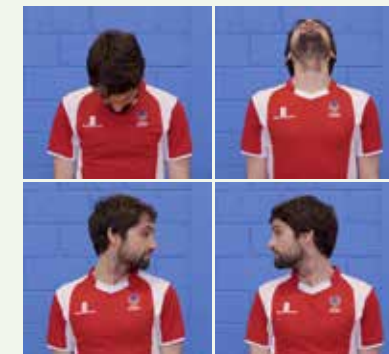
Key cues: Pinch the shoulders together. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.



Prone Lawnmower
S: 1 R: 8 (4 each side)

- Start in press-up position
- Perform one press-up, then lift one hand and raise above the head by rotating the trunk
- Return hand to the ground and repeat, alternating between raising the left and right hands

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



Standing Neck Lift and Rotation
S: 1 R: 1 each direction

- Start by resting the chin on the chest for 10 seconds
- Raise the head to look up as far as possible and hold for 10 seconds
- Return head to neutral position, before looking as far as possible over the left and right shoulders, holding each for 10 seconds

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

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



Shuttle to Edge of Square S: 1 R: 4 (2 each direction)

- Begin standing with feet shoulder-width apart
- On coach's cue, turn and run to the edge of the square
- When 2-3 strides from the edge, plant the outside foot and cut back to the start position

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



Forward Bounding S: 1 R: 2

- Jump forwards as far as possible in three continuous bounds
- Use the arms to drive forwards when jumping
- Time to minimise time feet are in contact with the ground between jumps

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

4

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

PART
A

2 min.

INTENSITY
50%



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

PART
B

4 min.

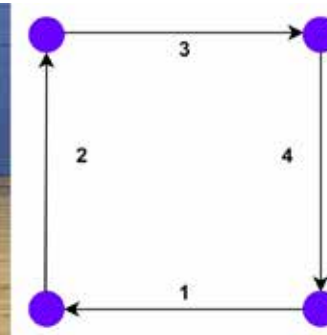


Single Leg Balance with Push to Unbalance

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.

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)

- Stride backward, the lead foot should be squarely in contact with the ground and the rear foot on the toes
- Keep the hips level with a 90° bend in the lead leg
- Alternate rear leg with each step

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk. Knees over toes.



Nordic Hamstring Curl S: 1 R: 7

- Both players kneel on the ground, with player two holding player one's ankles
- Player one slowly lowers their torso forwards while resisting falling
- Player one uses their arms to land when the controlled lower cannot be held

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



Front-Side-Front Bridge S: 1 R: 1
D: 25 seconds (5 seconds per hold)

- Begin in a front bridge position
- Perform the following sequence and hold each bridge for 5 seconds: front, side (left), front, side (right), front

Key cues: Head neutral. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.

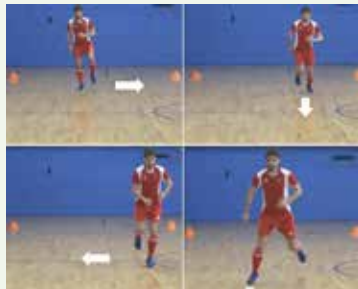


Resisted Shoulder Tap
S: 1 R: 2 (1 each side) D: 30 seconds (15 seconds each side)

- In pairs, grasp the wrist of each other's right arm
- The aim is to tap partner's shoulder with the right hand, while stopping the partners from doing the same

Key cues: Head neutral. Chest up. Brace through the trunk.

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



Run, Step, Stick S: 1 R: 4 (2 each side)

- From standing start, accelerate up to 50% pace
- Take-off from one foot and jump to side to land on the other foot
- Continue to run forward and alternate between jumping from the left and right legs



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

Standing Plyo Press Up S: 1 R: 4

- In pairs, stand facing each other. Player two adopts a braced position while player one leans against player two using their arms
- Player one slowly leans forward towards player two, taking the weight through their arms
- Player one explosively pushes away from player two before catching themselves through their arms

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



Partner Resisted Neck Movements
S: 1 R: 1 each direction D: 60 seconds (10 seconds each direction)

- In pairs, player one tries to move their head in various directions while player two offers some light resistance against this
- Direction of forces to be applied: chin-to-chest (flexion), eyes-to-sky (extension), ear to shoulder (left and right lateral flexion), look over the shoulder (left and right rotation)

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



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