

ACTIVATE

World Rugby™ Injury Prevention Exercise Programme

Activate training programmes

Four different exercise programmes for specific age groups:

Adult programmes



Youth programmes

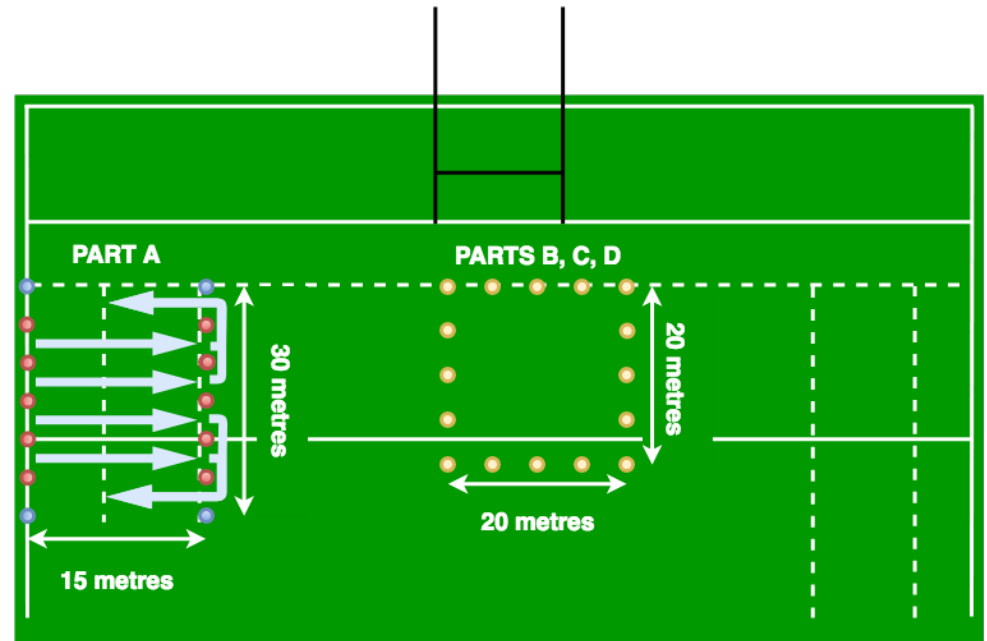


What is Activate?

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

Each exercise in the Activate programme typically includes two or three associated Key Activate 8 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: 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

S: 1 R: 12 (6 each leg)

- Stand on one leg with a slight bend in the knee
- Hold for 10 seconds before switching to the other leg

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



Single Leg Hop Forwards into Double Leg Landing

S: 1 R: 12 (6 each leg)

- Stand on one leg with a slight bend in the knee
- Hop forwards to land squarely on both feet in a partial squat position

Key cues: Chest up. Hips, knees, ankles in line. Soft knees.

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

PART
C
6 min.



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
- Keep heels in contact with the ground throughout the exercise

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



Double Leg Glute Bridge

S:1 R:8

- Lie face-up with hips and knees flexed
- Plant feet close to buttocks
- Raise hips and back from the ground to make a straight line from the shoulders to the knees

Key cues: Brace through the trunk.



Front Bridge

S:1 R:1 D: 30 s

- Start facing down and resting on the forearms and balls of feet
- Brace through the trunk to keep shoulders and hips aligned and away from the ground

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



Press Up with Push to Unbalance

S:1 R:1 D: 30 s

- Player one adopts a press-up position, with player two stood beside
- Player two applies force to various body parts to push player one off balance, while player one tries to maintain a rigid posture

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

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



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.



Ski Jumps S: 1 R: 5 each side

- Start with feet together and hands resting on opposite shoulders
- Alternate jumping to the left and right, keeping feet together and knees bent

Key cues: Hips, knees, and ankles in line. Soft Knees.



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.

PART
D
3 min.

2

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

PART A

2 min.

INTENSITY 50%



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: 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 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 5 seconds
- Repeat with other leg

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

Single Leg Hop Sideways into Double Leg Landing

S: 1 R: 12 (6 each leg)

- Stand on one leg with a slight bend in the knee
- Hop sideways to the left or right to land squarely on both feet in a partial squat position
- Repeat by taking off from alternate single leg stances to the left and right

Key cues: Chest up. Hips, knees, ankles in line. Soft knees.



2

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

PART

C

6 min.



Forward Lunge

S:1 R: 4 each side

- Stride forward, 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 leading leg with each step

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
- Do Not Complete Before Matches

Key cues: Chest up. Brace through the trunk.



Side Bridge

S:1 R:1 each side

D: 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

Key cues: Pinch the shoulders together. Brace through the trunk



Side Bridge with Push to Unbalance

S:1 R:1 each side

D: 15 seconds each side

- In pairs, player one adopts a side bridge position with player two stood beside
- Player two applies force to various body parts to push player one off balance, while player one tries to maintain a rigid posture

Key cues: Pinch the shoulders together. Brace through the trunk



Bear Crawl Static Neck Contractions

S:1 R:1 each partner 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 trunk.

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

PART

D

3 min.



Side Step and Sway

S: 1 R: 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.

Bouncers S: 1 R: 6

- Start in a press-up position
- Spring the knees towards the hands by bending at the hips and knees to adopt a crouched position
- Spring forwards to move into a press-up position, landing with the elbows slightly bent



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

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:2 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 (left or right)
- 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 Balance with Shallow Squat

S: 1 R: 6 each leg

- 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: Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Knee over toes.

Forward Hop and Stick

S: 1 R: 6 each leg

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

Key cues: Chest up. Hips, knees, ankles in line. Soft knees



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. Hips, knee, ankles in line



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.



Front Bridge with Leg Raise S:1 R:1 D:30

- Start facing down and resting on the forearms and balls of feet
- Brace through the trunk to keep shoulders and hips aligned and away from the ground
- Alternate slowly raising one leg to hip-height from the ground

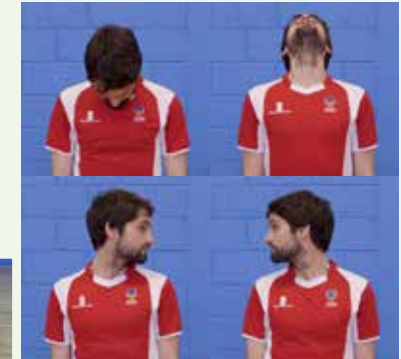
Key cues: Pinch the shoulders together. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.



Press Up to Bridge S:1 R:1

- 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 a press-up position

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



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

- 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



Run, Set, Cut S: 1 R: 2 each direction

- From standing start, accelerate up to 75% pace
- On coach's cue, decelerate by chopping stride length and flexing at the hips and knees
- Once at 25% pace, perform a plant and cut to the left or right and accelerate forwards again

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



Tuck Jumps S: 1 R: 8

- Jump as high as possible while keeping feet together
- Tuck the knees into the chest
- Try to minimise the time feet spend in contact with the ground between each jump

Key cues: Chest up. Hips, knee, ankles in line. Soft knees.

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. 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: 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

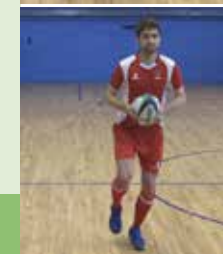
Key cues: Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Knee over toes.

Sideway Hop and Stick

S: 1 R: 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: Chest up. Hips, knees, ankles in line. Soft knees.



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

PART C
6 min.



Reverse Lunge
S:1 R:4 each side

- 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.



Side Bridge with Leg Raise
S:1 R:1 each side D: 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: Pinch the shoulders together. Brace through the trunk



Walkout Press Up S:1 R:4

- From a standing position, crouch down and walk the hands forwards until in a press-up position
- Perform one press-up and slowly walk the hands back to the crouched position.
- Hips should not be higher than shoulder-height during the exercise

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

PART D
3 min.

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



Shuttle To Edge of Square
S: 1 R: 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: Chest up. Hip, knee, ankle in line. Knee over toes.



Resisted Neck Movements
S:1 R:1 each direction
D: 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.

INTENSITY
75%

Broncos S: 1 R: 6

- Beginning in crouched position, spring the feet backwards to adopt a press-up position
- Using the arms, explosively press the torso back towards the feet to finish in a crouched position

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





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