

# ACTIVATE

World Rugby™ Injury Prevention Exercise Programme

## Activate training programmes

Four different exercise programmes for specific age groups:

Adult programmes

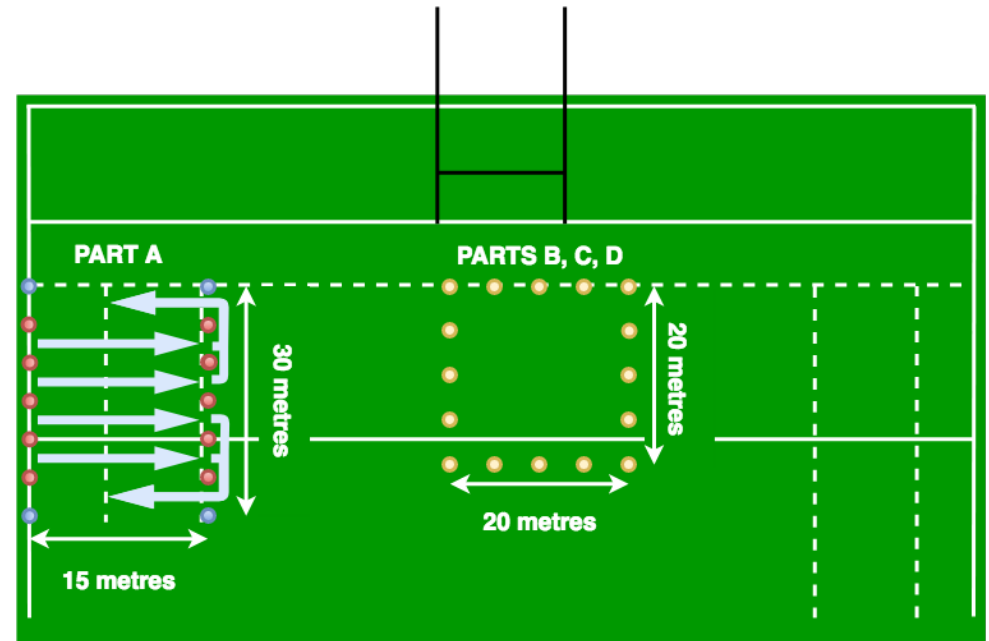


# What is Activate?

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

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

PART  
A

2 min.

INTENSITY  
50%

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



**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 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: 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: 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

PART  
C  
6 min.



**Prisoner Squat**

S:1 R:8

- Stand with feet a little wider than shoulder-width apart and hands resting behind the head
- 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. Pinch the shoulders together. Knees over toes.

**Front Bridge with Arm and Leg Raise**

S:1 R:1 D: 30 s

- Start by facing down on the ground, 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 opposite arms and legs to hip-height from the ground



**Key cues:** Pinch the shoulders together. 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.



**Raised Double Leg Glute Bridge**

S:1 R:8

- In pairs, player one lies face-up on the ground with hips and knees bent at 90° angle
- Player two holds heels of player one
- Player one slowly raises hips and trunk from the ground to form a straight line from shoulders to knees

**Key cues:** 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.



**Crossover Side Step and Sway**

S: 1 R: 3 each side

- Begin by standing with feet shoulder-width apart
- On coach's cue, perform a crossover step to the left or right
- Plant the outside foot and perform a crossover step back to the start position
- Alternate between moving to the left and right with each repetition

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

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

**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:** Hip, knee, ankle in line. Soft knees.



PART  
D  
3 min.

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: 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 side

- 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

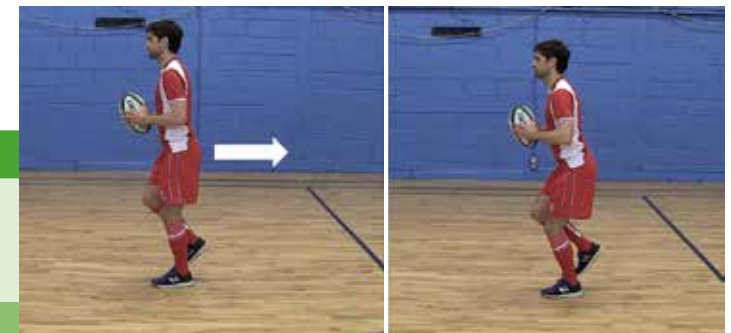
Key cues: Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk. Hip, knee, ankle in line.

**Backward Hop and Stick**

S: 1 R: 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



**Reverse Lunge**

S:1 R: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: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.



**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: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.



**Bear Crawl Static Neck Contractions**

S:1 R:1

- 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

**Partner Jump and Bump**

S: 1 R: 4

- In pairs, stand side-by-side 1-metre apart
- At the same time, jump towards each other so that the should contact each other
- Land squarely on both feet in a partial squat position

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



**Plyo Press Up**

S: 1 R: 8

- Start in press-up position
- Slightly bend and then explosively extend the elbows to push the body away from the ground
- Clap hands in the air before catching with the elbows slightly bent

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



3

PART  
A

2 min.

INTENSITY  
50%

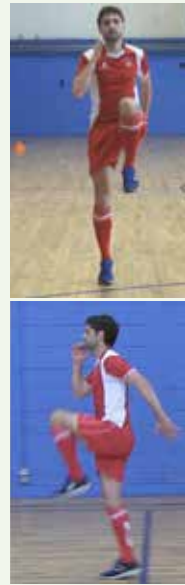
Running activities to warm-up and develop control and technique when changing direction



**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
- 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 Push to Unbalance**

S: 1 R: 1 each leg D: 15 s each leg

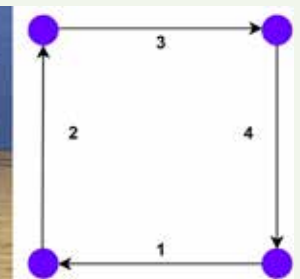
- Player one stands on one leg with standing knees slightly bent. Player two stands beside player one
- Using both hands, player two tries to push player one off balance while player one maintains their balance

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

**Single Leg Box Hops** S: 1 R: 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



**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.



**Front-Side-Front Bridge** S:1 R:1 D: 5 seconds each position (total 25 seconds)

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

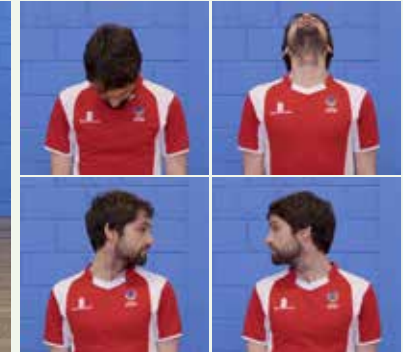
**Key cues:** Head neutral. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.



**Resisted Shoulder Tap** S:1 R: 2 (1 each side) D: 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.



**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:** Chest up. Hip, knee, and ankle in line.

INTENSITY 70%



**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:** Chest up. Hips, knees, and ankles in line. Soft knees.

INTENSITY 100%

4

PART  
A

2 min.

INTENSITY  
50%

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. 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 with Reach**

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 and arms are spread out to the sides
- Return to upright while trying to maintain balance

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

**Hop with 90° turn**

S: 1 R: 6 each leg

- Begin by standing on one leg with the knee slightly bent
- Hop up, turning 90° in the air to land squarely on the same foot facing side-on from original position
- Alternate between turning left and right with both feet

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



**Multi-directional Lunge**

S: 2 R: 1

- 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.



**Prone Shoulder Tap**

S: 1 R: 4 each side

- 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:** Pinch the shoulders together. Shoulders level with hips. Brace through the trunk.



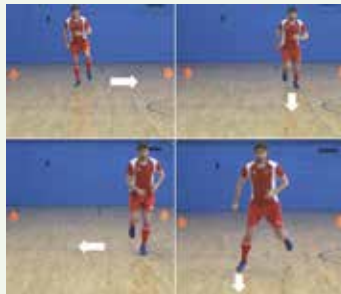
**Single Arm Row**

S: 1 R: 2 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:** Pinch the shoulders together. Brace through the trunk.

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



**Run, Step, and 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

INTENSITY  
50%

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

**Catch and Fend**

S: 1 R: 3 each side

- In pairs, stand facing each other so that right shoulders are lined up
- Rest right hand on partner's right shoulder and lean against partner's hand
- Forcefully push away from partner, as if performing a hand-off
- Catch body against partner with the opposite arm and a slightly bent elbow

**Key cues:** Chest up. Pinch the shoulders together. Brace through the trunk.



**Resisted Neck Movements**

S: 1 R: 1 each direction D: 10 seconds each direction (total 60 seconds)

- 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)



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