Contact during training must be carefully managed. Doing enough contact at the right intensity to prepare players for performance should be balanced against avoiding excessive contact, which leads to a greater risk of injuries. Training injuries caused by contact and the accumulation of too much contact can both be minimized through good planning and monitoring of contact. The Contact Load Guidelines are based on a survey of elite players, include input from an expert panel and can be applied at the elite and non-elite levels of the game.
CONTACT LOAD

THE PROCESS

International Rugby Players & World Rugby undertook a global survey of elite rugby to understand contact training practices.

A group of expert coaches, players and medical experts was then consulted to develop contact load guidelines.

WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS?

Unpredictability
Is the contact uncontrolled & unpredictable?

Density
What is the frequency of contacts within a session?

Intensity
How hard and fast is the contact?

Volume
How many minutes of contact are performed?
INTRODUCING CONTACT INDEX

How to calculate the Contact Index?

Contact load should be managed primarily using contact intensity and contact volume, to calculate a Contact Index.

Contact intensity is measured using a 10 point scale.

- Match intensity
- High intensity
- Moderate
- Low intensity
- No contact

Contact volume is measured using time (time/minutes).

Volume (time/minutes):
- Monday: 15 min
- Tuesday: 10 min
- Wednesday: 20 min
- Thursday: 10 min
- Friday: 15 min

Contact Index = Contact Intensity × Contact Volume
HOW SHOULD CONTACT TRAINING BE SPREAD OUT IN A WEEK?

The expert group has identified three patterns of contact load which satisfy best-practice principles for load management.

Contact load must be spread out during a training week to ensure adequate recovery from matches and training sessions.

Pattern 1
- Contact is primarily on two days per week only

Pattern 2
- In a standard match week Mondays and Fridays are always low in contact

Pattern 3

HOW MUCH CONTACT TRAINING SHOULD BE PERFORMED EACH WEEK?

Some upper limits for guidance are detailed below, but the contact load may often be less.

**Full contact training**
- Body on body, no shields or pads, intensity 8 or higher, all involved players unrestrained at high speed
- 15 mins × 8 per week or higher intensity

**Controlled contact training**
- Uses shields & pads to avoid body-on-body, intensity 7 or lower, players show restraint & reduced speed
- 40 mins × 7 per week or lower intensity

**Live set piece contact training**
- Set piece training (scrum, maul, lineout) that is contested, intensity 8 or higher
- 30 mins × 8 per week or higher intensity

These guidelines are for the professional game but the principles & upper limits are applicable to levels below the elite game.
THE COACH’S CHECKLIST

1. Are players recovered from matches or training prior to the upcoming session?

2. What is the specific goal or purpose of the contact in the session?

3. Identify and plan the four contact elements: Volume, Intensity, Density and Unpredictability

4. What is the progression of activities to ensure players are well prepared for the contact session?

5. What is the expected Contact Index of the session?

6. Are all players ‘fit for contact’? If not, what are the modifications?

SPECIAL GROUPS: PLAYERS WHO MAY NEED SPECIFIC CONTACT LOAD MANAGEMENT

- Younger, inexperienced players & older players
- Current or previous injury of any kind
- The load on players in the previous week’s match
- Chronic training & match load
- Women players

Further details on these concepts and principles can be read in the full Contact Load Guidance document.