Rugby Kit Guide 2.0

When it comes to getting your kit (rugby speak for gear), pretty much everything you may know about getting athletic gear is irrelevant. The pulling and grabbing and knocking and thrashing of the rugby makes it essential that you have clothing and protective equipment that is up to the challenge.

We’re often asked what do rugby players NEED to get and what would be NICE to get.

Keep this in mind though: the needs of every player are unique. Maximizing your comfort and optimizing your performance while practicing and playing SAFELY is the goal here.

This guide is divided into three sections. First we’ll talk about what gear we consider essential for your kit. Second, we look at optional gear, gear that’s nice to have, but you don’t have to own it. Third, we’ll tell where you can buy your kit.

Essential Gear

The following is gear we consider essential for every rugger to invest in within the first few months of playing.

1. Mouth Guard

   Price range: $1 - $20
   Typical amount spent: $5 for a good one.

   This is the most essential piece of equipment you will own. Let’s be frank here: you will be popped in the mouth by balls, fists, elbows, knees, cleats and the ground. Do you like to keep your teeth from chipping, or would you prefer to look like a hockey player? We thought so.

   Mouth guards serve two purposes: (1) to protect your teeth from impact, and (2) to give you protection against a concussion. We’d say both of those are pretty good reasons to get a mouth guard.

   You can find your basic mouth guard at any sports store. We recommend that you invest in the best mouth guard you can buy, the Shock Doctor v. 3.0 (about $20). Next best mouth guard is the Shock Doctor v. 1.5 (about $5). Here is a link to their website: Shock Doctor.

2. Shorts

   Price range: $20-$40
   Typical amount spent: $23-$29

   Rugby players often overlook having a good pair of shorts. But if you want to play well (as well as protect your modesty), a good pair of shorts is a must. Ordinary gym or running shorts rip too easily and give opponents something to hold on to. Rugby shorts are specifically constructed to stand up the demands of the game.

   Rugby shorts typically come with pockets. We don’t understand the logic behind making rugby shorts with pockets. What do you need to carry in your pockets while you’re on the pitch? Canterbury and KooGa both make a pocket-less short we think are equally as excellent. (You can get it from Red Rhino or Ruggers. See the “Where Can I Get Gear?” section below.) The lack of pockets makes the shorts extremely strong, and keeps the cost around $20.

   Shorts come in two styles: New Zealand and British. New Zealand-style shorts are a one-piece short that has a shorter, athletic cut, and purport to improve mobility. New Zealand-style shorts also fit tight. They are the most popular style short on the pitch. British-style shorts are usually longer and fit more loosely. They also have a fly with plastic buttons and a drawstring. If you are a forward lifted in lineouts, you may want

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1 This document is a modified version of "Fog Rugby Kit Guide 1.0" created by the San Francisco Fog RFC. Thanks Fog!!!
to invest in a pair of lineout shorts. Lineout shorts have reinforced stitching and stripes on the inside that improve lifting.

Sometimes the manufacturers will indicate small, medium, large, etc. instead of waist sizes. Here’s a general guide to help you translate into waist sizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you wear:</th>
<th>SMALL</th>
<th>MEDIUM</th>
<th>LARGE</th>
<th>X-LARGE</th>
<th>XXL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order size:</td>
<td>28”, 30”</td>
<td>32”, 34” *</td>
<td>34” *, 36”</td>
<td>38”, 40”</td>
<td>42”, 44”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*34” shorts is a tight fit for someone who normally wears a medium, and a loose fit for someone who wears a large

3. Boots

Rugby boots (cleats) are the most important element of your kit. An ill-fitting pair of boots will cripple you more effectively than any hit you’d take on the pitch. Your boots are not the place to penny pinch.

The fitting process can be frustrating, considering that you will most likely order your cleats through the Internet (see “Where Can I Get Gear?” section below). This is why we suggest you go to a local vendor who sells soccer cleats and try on (but don’t buy) soccer cleats on there to form some idea of your preferences.

Cleats should be light and flexible, and always fit properly. Uppers should be supple, and there should be, and at least a finger's widths should separate the tip of the big toe and the end of the shoe. Laces should be tight. When shopping for boots, it’s helpful to wear the same style of socks you intend to wear in on the pitch. Shop in the afternoon, when the feet are naturally slightly swollen.

Boots come in three different cuts: high, mids and low. The following matrix explains the differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ankle Coverage</th>
<th>High-Cut</th>
<th>Mid-Cut</th>
<th>Low-Cut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ankle Support</td>
<td>Completely cover ankle</td>
<td>Covers half the ankle</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually best for these position</td>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>Hooker, Flanker, Scrumhalf, Flyhalf, Centers, Fullback</td>
<td>Hooker, Flanker, Flyhalf, Center, Fullback, Wing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Brands</td>
<td>Prop, Lock, No. 8</td>
<td>Scrumhalf, Flyhalf, Centers, Fullback</td>
<td>Reeboks, Patrick, Mizuno</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You may have guessed that choosing a boot is somewhat dictated by what you will be doing on the field. For this reason, it may be best to postpone getting your boots until you have a better idea of what position you will play.

You may run into dealers who differentiate between soft-ground and hard-ground boots. Soft-ground boots are made for playing on pitches that are wet, mushy or muddy (often all three). They have long metal studs. These are the kinds of boots that are most ruggers wear during the 15s season (fall, winter, spring), with most wearing them year-round. Hard-ground boots are made for playing on short grass or Astroturf play. They are very similar to soccer shoes.. Some guys play in the hard-ground boots year-round because they fit best. We recommend that you go with the soft-ground boots as we currently focus on 15s rugby play.

REMEMBER THESE GENERAL GUIDELINES:
1. Study the offerings. There are many types and styles of cleats. Get clear about your preferences.
2. Understand fit. Cleats should fit snugly, with no more than a thumb's width of space between the toes and the front of the shoes.
3. Choose close-fitting shoes to facilitate the best touch (the feel for the ball) if you are a back, or choose a shoe that gives the best traction if you are a forward.
4. Remember, leather stretches and then molds to the foot.
5. Try on cleats with rugby socks to ensure proper fit.

Tips:
- Buy from a sports specialty store with knowledgeable salespeople. Red Rhino and Ruggers are particularly helpful.
- Buy cleats specifically made for rugby. You can get away with soccer cleats, but in the end, you’ll find rugby boots will serve you better.
- Bring in old cleats for comparison, if you have them.
- Take care of cleats to keep them soft and long lasting. Stuff wet or muddy cleats with newspaper to help them maintain their shape. Dry shoes naturally or by using a dehumidifier. Do not use artificial heat.

Optional Gear
The following are items you may want to invest in down the road.

1. Jersey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price range</th>
<th>Typical amount spent</th>
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<tr>
<td>$30 - $60</td>
<td>$36-$42</td>
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</table>

Some will question whether or not you need a rugby jersey for practice, particularly in the warmer weather when a t-shirt seems like a better alternative to a heavy jersey. That is until they’ve experienced their t-shirts ripped off their backs.

Jerseys are constructed to withstand the constant ripping, pulling and tugging during practice and matches to remain intact. T-shirts are not.

However, two or three practice jerseys can run you over $100. Also, some ruggers don’t care if an old t-shirt gets ripped up, and are willing to take the chance. While we strongly suggest you get at least one practice jersey, it is not absolutely necessary that you have one.

There are three considerations to take into account when ordering a jersey. The first consideration is the material. Most jerseys are made of cotton, but you’ll find quite a few out there made of synthetic materials. Synthetic materials, like Temex, tend to breathe better and are lighter. Blends (usually cotton and polyester) and pure cotton jerseys are good, all-purpose jerseys.

The second consideration is style. There’s the classic style and there is sevens style. The classic style has a full collar and tends to be made of cotton. Sevens jerseys have a banded collar and are usually made of synthetic materials. Most the guys stick with the classic, non-sevens style for practice purposes, but it really does not matter.

The third consideration is fit. The best fit for a rugby jersey is going to depend on (1) actually measuring your chest, and (2) you own preferences for a tight vs. loose fit.

Jersey sizes are in CHEST sizes. Jerseys are usually made of 100% cotton. If you are getting a cotton shirt, the rule of thumb, it is “your suit jacket size plus 2” 100% cotton garments may shrink based on how carefully you launder them. It is best to allow for about 8% shrinkage when sizing. So if your chest size is 42, order a size 44 or 45. This upsizing does not apply when buying jerseys made of blended or synthetic materials.

You can also use your t-shirt size as a gauge. If you wear a large t-shirt, then your rugby jersey size is roughly between 44 and 46. However, this is not always a reliable way to size your jersey.

Here is how most manufacturers size rugby jerseys:

| Chest sizes | M (40-42) | L (44 - 46) | XL (48) | XXL (50) | XXXL (52) |

Ruggers divide right down the middle on how tight the jersey should be. Some subscribe to “The tighter the
fit, the better the performance!” philosophy. Others like their jerseys a little loose. For casual wear (jersey worn exclusively off the pitch), you may want to order one size larger. The most popular brands are Canterbury (of New Zealand) and Barbarian (Canadian). The best vendor from whom to buy jerseys, hands down, is Ruggers. You can often get a great deal on a jersey from a vendor with overruns (too many jerseys made for a team) and “uglies” (jerseys made from random fabric scraps, but as well-constructed as any other jersey).

2. Kit Bag

Price Range: $20 - $70
Typical amount spent: $30

A duffle bag works, but a kit bag has compartments specifically for your cleats, balls, clothes and loose things.

3. Scrum Cap

Price Range: $50 - $90
Typical amount spent: $60

If you’re a forward in the scrum, and taping your ears doesn’t quite cut it, consider getting a scum cap. Many guys swear by them.

Where Can I Get Gear?

There are no local stores that carry rugby apparel and equipment. You can try Dick’s Sporting Goods or Sports Authority but they primarily carry soccer equipment with very little rugby gear. The internet is the place to go to shop for rugby gear. Here’s a list of recommended sites:

- **Ruggers** (www.ruggers.com) - If you needed it yesterday, this is the place to go. Rarely has anything out-of-stock. You can track your shipments on-line (via an interface with UPS) as an added bonus.

- **Rugby Imports** (www.rugbyimports.com) - Another reliable source for your kit. Has a great selection of books and videos.

- **American Rugby Outfitters** (www.americangolf.com) - limited selection, but a good place to get the Eagle's (US national team) jersey at a reasonable price.

- **Matt Godek Rugby Store** (www.rugbystore.com) - A solid store with a good selection and reasonable prices. Look here for weekly specials (that usually last well more than a week). Also, be sure to call in if you're shopping for rugby boots (cleats), as the site sometimes shows only boots on sale.