



U.S.R.F.R

Becoming a referee Q&A

Who should I contact if I am interested in becoming a rugby referee?

Richard Kerr is the dedicated Referee Development Manager in Ulster. He would be happy to hear from you and can answer your questions:

Tel: 07493 868388

Email: richard.kerr@irfu.ie

What do I need to become a rugby referee?

The following are pre-requisites:

- Be over 18 years of age
- Have a sound knowledge of the game
- Have a reasonable level of fitness
- Commitment – be available at least three weekends per month
- Access to transport will help

What is the USRFR?

The USRFR is the Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees. More details can be found at the following link:

<https://ulster.rugby/referees-and-officials-landing-page/referees-and-officials-resources>

What training will I get?

We have an excellent training system that aims to graduate you as quickly as possible:

- A full day induction with classroom and on pitch work;
- A watched game with an experienced member looking at the referee's perspective;
- A shared match with a referee mentor;
- A cycle of refereeing and touch judging at various levels;
- A series of workshops & discussions with the other trial members;
- Two assessed matches to help you graduate.

How long will it take to graduate?

It all depends on your ability and commitment level.

Some new referees graduate within 6 – 8 weeks but others could take over a season – but you will do plenty of refereeing in that time.



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When?

Two new referee induction courses are held each year - one in August/September and one in November/December.

For the next course date you can acquire from Richard Kerr as above.

Why?

Why not? The following are just some of the benefits:

- Stay involved in the game
- A focus for keeping fit
- Be in the best seat in the house
- Free tickets to a number of Ulster matches or a reduced rate season ticket
- 'Right to buy' Ireland tickets
- Regular meetings – both local and general
- Make new friends
- Travel

Most of us say that we wish we had started sooner!

What is involved in the initial course?

The initial course is a one day course – approximately 6 hours with lunch and refreshments provided. It is mainly classroom based but there are some practical elements.

There is some paperwork to fill out and a registration fee of to pay if you decide to join the induction programme.

What kit will I receive?

You will receive the following at the new referee course:

- Kit to get you started – referee uniform
- An Acme Thunderer whistle
- Law book

Most importantly of all, you will receive excellent training and support as you begin your journey as a rugby referee.



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Do I have to attend meetings?

There is a requirement to undertake annual training and continuous development:

- **Annual Conference.** This takes place in August, at the start of the season. All referees come together for the day to learn about any new laws, interpretations or focus areas.
- **Area meetings.** The province is roughly divided into three areas (North West, Mid Ulster and Belfast). Each area holds one meeting per month in season. These are informal gatherings/discussions usually with a monthly theme.
- **General meetings.** There are also three or four general Society meetings each season.

Whilst attendance at these meetings is seldom compulsory, they are very worthwhile and contribute to ongoing development.

Who will assess me?

The USRFR have a group of dedicated assessors who are all former referees. These people give up their time to help develop your game and to ensure that refereeing standards are maintained.

What is the cost?

The Society has an annual membership fee – currently (2026-27) £45. This usually covers the cost of the annual shirt or some kit, which you get free as part of the package.

Do I need to belong to a rugby club?

No. The USRFR is a club within itself but there are benefits to your own rugby club if you are a member of one. Most clubs help their referees with club membership and most referees stay associated with their local club and/or school.

Am I insured?

USRFR Referees are appointed to their matches by IRFU (Ulster Branch) and consequently come under the IRFU insurance scheme like any player. This policy is available to review.



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