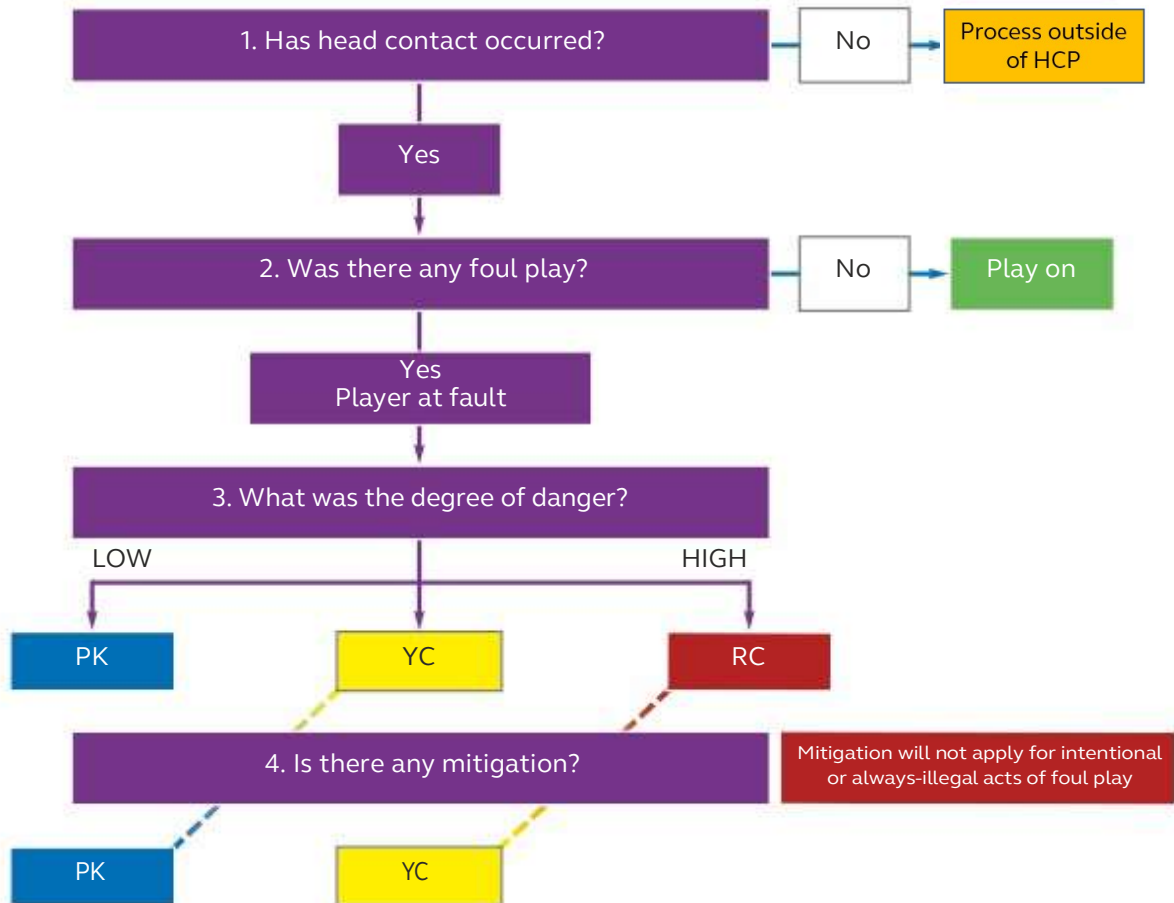


## Head Contact Process

In effect: 9 March 2023



### Context

Player welfare drives World Rugby’s decision making for zero tolerance of foul play, especially where head contact occurs.

The focus must be on the actions of those involved, not the injury - the need for an HIA does not necessarily mean that there has been illegal head contact.

The ‘power of choice’ for tacklers is crucial, especially as 72% of head injuries occur in the tackle.

There needs to be an understanding that tacklers stay up to allow them to ‘adjust and react’ - dropping quickly into the low tackle entry position - using their ‘eyes and feet’ to get their timing right.

It is important that coaches and players continually develop safe tackling techniques in training.

## Aims of the Head Contact Process

The process is designed to protect the head, neck and throat area of players.

The process can be applied to:

- High tackles
- Shoulder charges
- Dangerous cleanouts
- Head-to-head collisions
- Leading elbow / forearm

The Head Contact Process is a Law Application Guideline. Under 9.11, the referee is always entitled to issue a red or yellow card for anything deemed to be reckless or dangerous. However, this process is intended to aid consistency in the application of sanctions by providing guidance on how contact with the head should be approached by match officials and disciplinary personnel.



**LAW 9 Foul play**

**DANGEROUS PLAY**

11. Players must not do anything that is reckless or dangerous to others including leading with the elbow or forearm, or jumping into, or over, a tackler.
13. A player must not tackle an opponent early, late or dangerously. Dangerous tackling includes, but is not limited to, tackling or attempting to tackle an opponent above the line of the shoulders even if the tackle starts below the line of the shoulders.
20. Dangerous play in a ruck or maul.
  - a. A player must not charge into a ruck or maul. Charging includes any contact made without binding onto another player in the ruck or maul.
  - b. A player must not make contact with an opponent above the line of the shoulders.

**This includes head-on-head**

## Process questions and considerations

### 1. Has head contact occurred?

Head contact includes neck and throat area

### 2. Was there foul play?

Considerations:

- Intentional
- Reckless
- Avoidable – e.g. the defender is always upright

### 3. What was the degree of danger?

Considerations include:

- Direct vs indirect contact
- High force vs low force
- Dynamic

### 4. Is there any mitigation?

Considerations include:

- Line of sight
- Sudden and significant drop or movement
- Clear attempt to reduce height
- Level of control
- Passive tackler

Mitigation will not apply for intentional or always-illegal acts of foul play

## Trigger words for match officials

Match officials may wish to use the non-exhaustive list of trigger words below to help them identify whether a player is at fault, the degree of danger involved and whether any mitigation should be applied.

### PLAY ON

#### No fault

- Sudden and significant drop in height by the ball carrier
- Player had no time to readjust
- Involuntary collision
- No leading arm when close to the body

**PK****YC**

#### Low danger

- Indirect contact
- Low force
- Low speed
- No leading head / shoulder / forearm / swinging arm

**RC**

#### High danger

- Direct contact
- Lack of control
- High speed
- Dynamic
- Leading head / shoulder / elbow / forearm
- Swinging arm
- Reckless
- Intentional or an always-illegal act of foul play

#### Mitigation

- Sudden/significant drop in height or change in direction from ball carrier
- A late change in dynamics due to another player in the contact area
- An effort to wrap/bind and having
- No time to adjust
- Passive tackler (see below)

#### Passive

- Tackler feet planted and body absorbs/falls backwards
- Zero forward movement into the ball carrier

#### Dynamic

- Feet can be stationary or moving
- Body moves forwards or upwards with force through the hips/legs/shoulder