Front row play and general scrummage technique.
By, former England prop Keith Richardson and RFU coach development manager Mark Harrington.

Basic concept:
- Individual player position going into the engage must be worked on first before getting the 8 together.
- Balance is important, have players in a strong position so that the coach cannot push them over.
- Weight lifting technique should be referred to as often as possible. The basics of weight lifting apply very much to effective forward scrummaging. Get the body in the right starting position and there is a good chance of success. Players should imagine they are performing a squat with a heavy weight. This is an excellent starting position for the scrummage.

The body position:
The start is most important ask all forwards to show the position before going on the machine.
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Hips square to proposed contact.
- Head up and chin off chest
- Back straight
- Bend at knees, do not bend over
- Weight on balls of feet
- Shoulders above hips
- Look towards target, not at floor

Contact:
Have players hit the scrum machine individually and ask them to show all the above points. The only difference is the ninety degrees from upright. Initially they finish up with straight legs when the finish position should have the legs with some power left in them i.e. half squat. Get them closer than they want to be so that after the initial movement of the hit, there is still an angled leg position. They should always be looking forwards. Players should be looking through eyebrows with the head as close as possible to just up from the line of the spine.

Hit and stick:
The next stage is crucial in attitude, as I want them all to HIT AND STICK. This gets them thinking about not coming backwards from the first contact. To aid this, the players call out “1, 2, 3, 4”. This is used to chase the hit, minimizing hit and recoil as players maintain focus through the set of numbers. When the scrum is complete, all players should call out “1, 2, 3, 4” to maintain focus and prepare for the drive on both offence and defence.
**Bad Habits:**
Many players have already developed bad habits and get themselves into weak pushing positions with strange shoulder and feet positions. Stress feet square to where going, feet pointing forwards (look out for 10 to 2!), shoulders square to the target and any downwards movement to be by dropping the hips.

**Building the scrum:**
Form a front row with a **HIT AND STICK** attitude with all elements of technique maintained in the unit engagement. The loose head has a slightly wider stance than the tight head (for the ball to come through). There should be no gap for the second row – they have to work to get in. If they can’t, a simple remedy is for the loose head to turn his inside foot slightly clockwise, leaving the front studs on the ground; the tight head turns his inside foot slightly anti-clockwise. The action opens up the gap and once the second row is in, the foot can be turned back to lock up.

Allow the second row to start with a knee on the ground but take that luxury away and make them start with nothing on the ground so that they are almost toppling forwards and have to brake with the quads, which should be burning before contact. All eight should feel like a swimmer just before the gun at the start of a race, which means getting the heels off the ground and taking the body weight into the big leg muscles.

It is vital for all 8 to be pushing parallel to the touchline. Players will try to twist, dip etc but that simply takes the power out of the scrum. Stress this.

**Link:**