



2025-26 NFHS

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES BOOK

Dr. KARISSA L. NIEHOFF, Publisher
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NFHS Publications

To maintain the sound traditions of this sport, encourage sportsmanship and minimize the inherent risk of injury, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) writes playing rules for varsity competition among student-athletes of high school age. High school coaches, officials and administrators who have knowledge and experience regarding this particular sport and age group volunteer their time to serve on the rules committee. Member associations of the NFHS independently make decisions regarding compliance with or modification of these playing rules for the student-athletes in their respective states.

NFHS rules are used by education-based and non-education-based organizations serving children of varying skill levels who are of high school age and younger. In order to make NFHS rules skill-level and age-level appropriate, the rules may be modified by any organization that chooses to use them. Except as may be specifically noted in this rules book, the NFHS makes no recommendation about the nature or extent of the modifications that may be appropriate for children who are younger or less skilled than high school varsity athletes.

Every individual using these rules is responsible for prudent judgment with respect to each contest, athlete and facility, and each athlete is responsible for exercising caution and good sportsmanship. These rules should be interpreted and applied so as to make reasonable accommodations for athletes, coaches and officials with disabilities.

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FACILITIES

Because facilities used for high school athletics come in many shapes, sizes and conditions, on-site event management may on occasion conclude that compliance with NFHS directives about event configuration is not feasible. Under all circumstances, on-site event management should utilize set-ups that minimize risk. If a given facility cannot be made reasonably hazard-free, the event should be relocated.

NOTE: Except as specifically stated within the rules of a given sport, any dimensions or other information in diagrams of courts, fields, pools, rinks and mats is suggestive only; it is not required by NFHS rules. The construction and layout of all facilities used for high school competition are subject to any applicable laws and building codes, and to the sound judgment of the persons in charge of the facilities.

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RULES

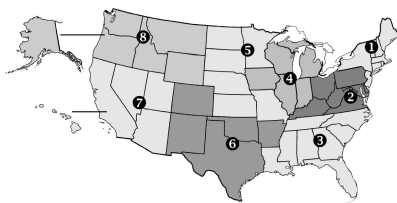
Each state high school association adopting these rules is the sole and exclusive source of binding rules interpretations for contests involving its member schools. Any person having questions about the interpretation of NFHS rules should contact the rules interpreter designated by the respective state high school association.

The NFHS is the sole and exclusive source of model interpretations of NFHS rules. State rules interpreters may contact the NFHS for model rules interpretations. No other model rules interpretations should be considered.

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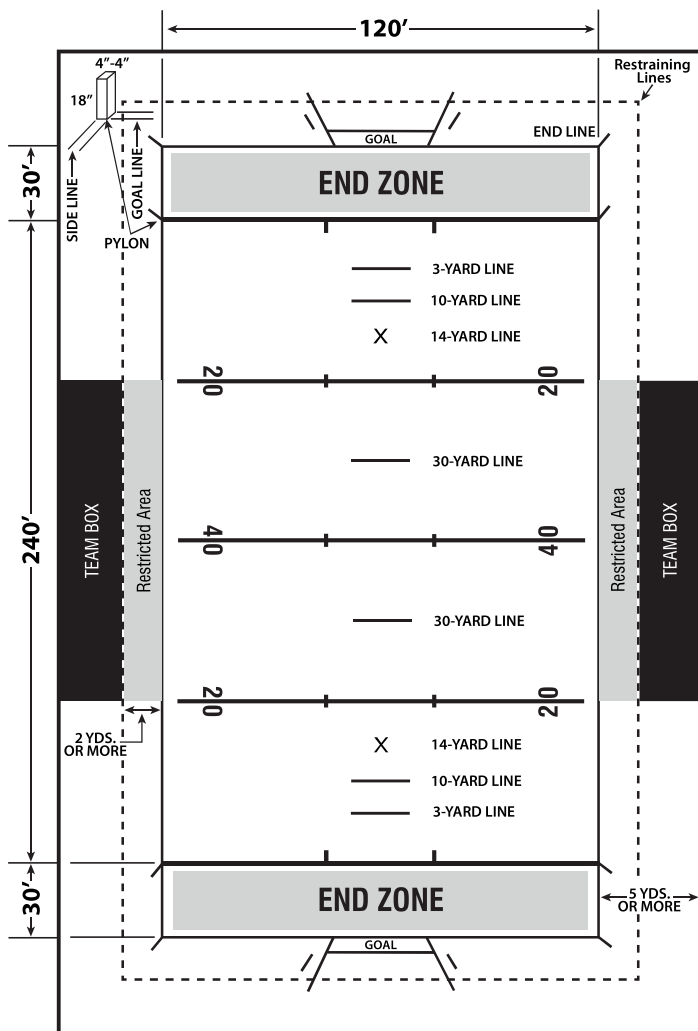
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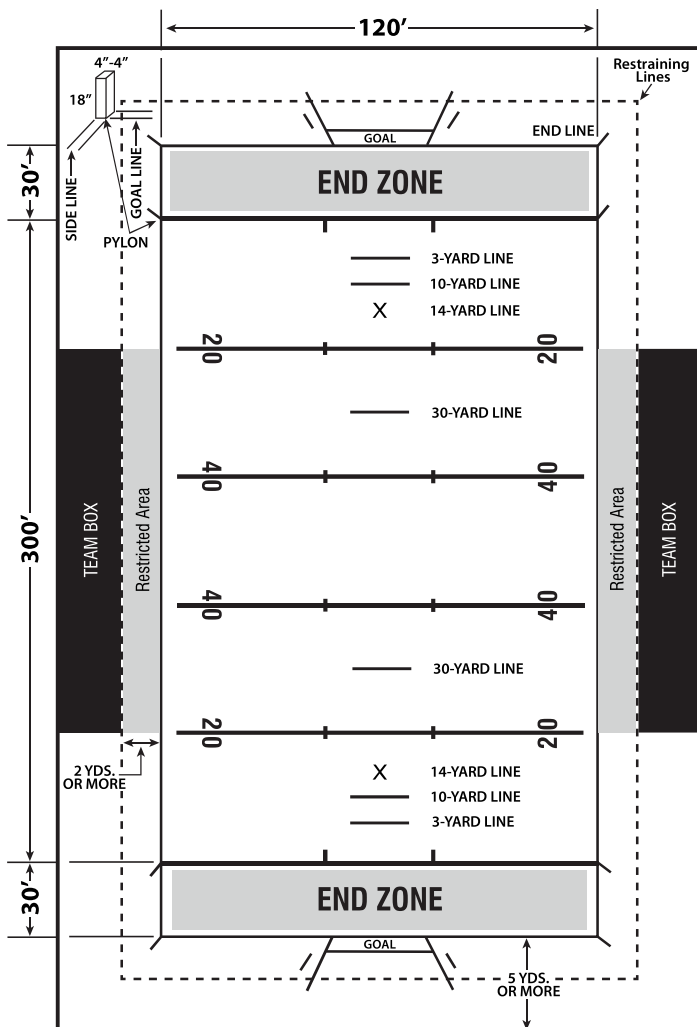


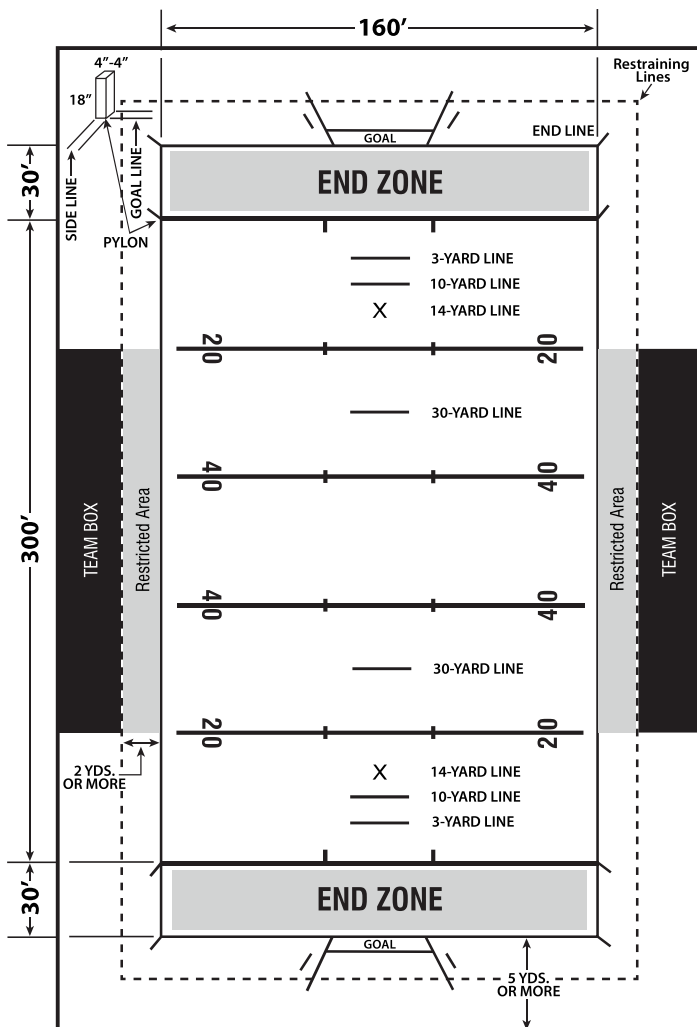
Flag Football Field Diagram #1





Flag Football Field Diagram #2





Rule The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

SECTION 1 THE GAME

ART. 1 . . . It is the object of the game for one team to carry or pass the ball across the opponent's goal line. The game is won by the team which accumulates the most points.

ART. 2 . . . The game of flag football is played with an inflated ball by two teams on a rectangular field that is either (by state association adoption): 300 by 120 feet (Diagram #1), 360 by 120 feet (Diagram #2) or 360 by 160 feet (Diagram #3). While the ball is live, an interval called a down is in progress and the team in possession attempts to advance the ball by carrying, kicking or passing it. If a foul occurs, the penalty loss, if not declined, is enforced during the interval between downs. The team in possession has a series of four downs numbered 1, 2, 3 and 4 to advance the ball to the zone to gain, which is usually the next 20- or 40-yard line in advance of the spot where the series begins. Points are scored by touchdown, successful try or safety.

ART. 3 . . . The game is played with seven players on each team, but if a team has no substitutes to replace injured or disqualified players, it may play with no fewer than five.

ART. 4 . . . The game is administered by game officials.

NOTE: Each state association may determine the number of game officials to be used.

ART. 5 . . . Prior to the game, the referee shall meet with the head coach(es) and captain(s) and explain that everyone is expected to exhibit good sportsmanship throughout the game.

ART. 6 . . . The referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.

ART. 7 . . . The game officials shall assume authority for the game, including penalizing unsportsmanlike acts, 30 minutes prior to the scheduled game time – an earlier time if required by the state association – or as soon thereafter as they are able to be present.

ART. 8 . . . The game officials' authority extends through the referee's declaration of the end of the fourth period or overtime. The game officials retain clerical authority over the game through the completion of any reports, including those imposing disqualifications, that are responsive to actions occurring while the game officials had jurisdiction. State Associations may intercede in the event of unusual incidents that occur before, during or after the game officials' jurisdiction has ended or in the event that a game is terminated prior to the conclusion of regulation play.

ART. 9 . . . The game officials shall have the authority to make decisions for infractions of the rules. The use of any replay or video monitoring equipment by the game officials in making any decision relating to the game is prohibited.

ART. 10 . . . The referee's decision to forfeit a game is final.

ART. 11 . . . Protests of NFHS rules are not recognized.

SECTION 2 THE FIELD AND MARKINGS

ART. 1 . . . The field shall be a rectangular area with dimensions, lines, zones, goals and markers as shown on the accompanying Flag Football Field Diagrams (#1-3). There shall be two sidelines running the length of the field along each side that serve as boundary lines for play. It is recommended there be a slope of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch per foot from the center of the field to each sideline on a natural grass field. There shall be two goal lines, running parallel to each other and perpendicular to the sidelines. The field of play is the area within the boundary lines, and the goal lines. There shall be two end lines, running parallel to each other, parallel to the goal lines that serve as a boundary line for play.

NOTE: The rise from each sideline to the center of a natural grass field is 20 inches when the recommended slope is used.

ART. 2 . . . Yard-line markers, constructed of soft, pliable materials, if placed on the ground, should be no closer than 5 yards to the sideline.

ART. 3 . . . Lines and other markings:

- a. Lines shall be marked with a noncaustic, nontoxic material designed for marking fields such as powdered gypsum, calcium carbonate and liquid aerosol paint. It is recommended that these lines be white. Neither lime, hydrated lime or other chemical derivatives of lime, nor caustic material of any kind may be used for marking football fields.
- b. Yard lines shall be marked with a continuous line every 20 yards beginning and ending 4 inches from each sideline.

NOTES:

1. Game administration may place on the field of play, 4 inches from each sideline, yard-line extensions that should be 24 inches in length and 4 inches in width.
2. If the field of play has a logo in the center or at any other part of the field of play, that logo shall not obstruct the visibility of the required marks every 20 yards. A solid or shadow-bordered 4-inch-wide line is permissible. A shadow line is a line that designates the required 4-inch width by use of a border or outline lines, at least $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch wide which shall lie within the 4-inch width. Shadow lines that are the natural color of the field of play are permissible. The area within these lines need not be one color, but the continuous 4-inch-wide outline must be clearly visible to the game officials.
- c. End lines and sidelines shall be continuous lines at least 4 inches wide. All other field dimension lines should be marked 4 inches in width. Flat or disc-style cones may be utilized in place of painted end lines and/or sidelines.
- d. A 4-inch-wide restraining line is recommended be placed around the outside of the field, at least 2 yards from the sidelines and end lines, as an extension of the line limiting the team box area, except in stadiums where the total playing enclosure does not permit the restraining line. It is recom-

mended that the restraining line be marked by placing 12-inch-long lines, separated at 24-inch intervals.

NOTE: Game administration may place 4-inch wide and 12-inch long bisecting marks along the restraining line at each 20-yard line between the goal lines.

- e. Team boxes shall be marked on each side of the field outside the coaches' area between the 20-yard lines for use of coaches, substitutes, athletic trainers, etc., affiliated with the team. The coaches' area is a minimum of a 2-yard belt between the front of the team box and the sideline, and becomes a restricted area when the ball is live.

NOTES:

1. It is permissible for both team boxes to be on the same side of the field, provided each team box is marked between respective 20- and 20-yard lines.
 2. It is recommended goal lines and the team box boundaries be marked in a color which contrasts with other field markings and the area between the sidelines and the team box boundaries be solid white or marked with diagonal lines.
 3. It is permissible for state associations to approve an adjustment of the team box and to determine the individuals who may be in the area, provided such area is the same for both teams.
- f. Decorative markings in the end zones shall be no closer than 2 feet from the boundary and the goal lines.
 - g. Measurements shall be from the inside edges of the boundary marks, such marks being out of bounds.
 - h. Each goal-line mark shall be entirely in its end zone so the edge toward the field of play and its vertical plane is the actual goal line. The goal line shall extend from sideline to sideline.
 - i. Advertising and/or commercial markings shall not obstruct the yard lines.

ART. 4 . . . A soft, flexible pylon, which is 4 inches square, 18 inches high, either orange, red or yellow in color, and does not create risk, shall be placed at the inside corner of each of the intersections of the sidelines with the goal lines and the end lines. When properly placed, the goal line pylon is out of bounds at the intersection of the sideline and the goal line extended.

ART. 5 . . . It is permissible for state associations to approve the use of goals.

- a. The goal is the vertical plane midway between the sidelines extending indefinitely above the inside of the uprights and the front edge of the crossbar and in the same vertical plane as the inside edge of the end line.
- b. The top of the crossbar shall be 10 feet above the ground, measured from the base of each upright to the top of the crossbar at the intersection, or at each end of the crossbar perpendicular to the ground when a single pedestal is used.
- c. The crossbar shall be 23 feet, 4 inches long.
- d. The uprights shall be 23 feet, 4 inches apart inside to inside and each upright may not exceed 4 inches in width.

NOTE: It is permissible to use college or professional fields with goal post uprights set at the width specified by their respective codes.

- e. The uprights shall extend a minimum of 10 feet above the crossbar.

- f. The goal posts shall be padded with resilient, shock-absorbing material to a height of at least 6 feet above the ground.
- g. The horizontal crossbar and the uprights above it shall be free from any decorative material except paint which is recommended to be either silver, white or yellow in color. One wind directional streamer may be attached to the top of each upright. Wind directional streamers shall be 4 inches in width, 42 inches in length and either red, orange or yellow in color.

SECTION 3 GAME EQUIPMENT

The NFHS does not perform scientific tests on any specific items of equipment to determine if the equipment poses undue risks to student-athletes, coaches, game officials or spectators. Such determinations are the responsibility of equipment manufacturers. For additional information on Equipment Guidelines, see Appendix C.

ART. 1 . . . The ball shall meet the following specifications for girls and boys flag football competitions:

TABLE 1-3-1 – BALL SPECIFICATIONS FOR FLAG FOOTBALL

	GIRLS	BOYS
Weight	12 to 14 ounces	14 to 15 ounces
Long Circumference	26 to 27 inches	27 ³ / ₄ to 28 ¹ / ₂ inches
Long Axis	10 to 11 inches	10 ⁷ / ₈ to 11 ⁷ / ₁₆ inches
Short Circumference	19 to 20 inches	20 ³ / ₄ to 21 ¹ / ₄ inches
Inflation Pressure	10 to 13 psi	12 ¹ / ₂ to 13 ¹ / ₂ psi

- a. A tan-colored cover consisting of either pebbled-grain, cowhide or approved composition (leather or rubber) case without corrugations other than those formed by the natural seam grooves and the lace on one of the grooves.
- b. One set of either eight or 12 evenly spaced laces. The length of the lace shall be confined to within 3½ inches (Girls Ball) and 3¾ inches (Boys Ball) measured linearly from each end of the ball and not in the nose indentation. The laces shall extend from the center of the ball to at least the line which shall be 3½ inches (Girls Ball) and 3¾ inches (Boys Ball) measured linearly from each end of the ball and not in the nose indentation.
- c. A continuous 1-inch white or yellow stripe centered 2¼ to 3 inches (Girls Ball) and 3 to 3¼ inches (Boys Ball) from each end of the ball free from decorations or logos added during or after production. Stripes shall be located only on the two panels adjacent to and perpendicular to the seam upon which the laces are stitched.
- d. Weights between 12 and 14 ounces (Girls Ball) and 14 and 15 ounces (Boys Ball).

- e. Inflated to a psi (pounds per square inch) pressure of 10 to 13 psi (Girls Ball) and 12½ to 13½ psi (Boys Ball).
- f. Conforms to the shape and dimensions as shown in the following Figure 1-3-1A and Figure 1-3-1B:

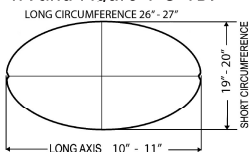


Figure 1-3-1A (GIRLS)
Football Dimensions

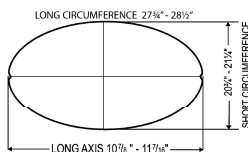


Figure 1-3-1B (BOYS)
Football Dimensions

- g. Method of measuring the ball:
1. All measurements shall be made after the ball is inflated to 10 to 13 psi (Girls Ball) and 13 psi (Boys Ball).
 2. The long circumference should be measured 90 degrees from lace around the ends of the ball, over the groove but not in the groove.
 3. The long axis should be measured from end to end but not in the nose indentation.
 4. The short circumference should be measured around the ball, over the valve, over the lace, but not over a cross lace.
 5. The laces must extend from the center of the ball to at least the line which shall be 3½ inches (Girls Ball) and 3¾ inches (Boys Ball) measured from each end of the ball linearly and not in the nose indentation.
- h. Contain only the following permissible items:
1. Ball manufacturer's name and/or logo;
 2. School name, logo and/or mascot;
 3. Conference name and/or logo;
 4. State association name and/or logos; and
 5. NFHS name and/or logos.
- i. Effective 2028, the ball for girls and boys flag football competitions for 9th grade and above shall include the NFHS Authenticating Mark. The mark shall be displayed in the following format:



A current list of NFHS authenticated products can be found on the web-site, www.nfhs.org.

ART. 2 . . . Each team shall provide at least one legal ball to the referee at the time the game officials assume authority for the game. Only legal balls approved by the referee may be used during the game.

NOTE: By state association adoption, a specific ball which meets specifications may be mandated for postseason or state playoff competition.

ART. 3 . . . The referee shall decide whether the ball meets specifications, and the referee or any other game official may order the ball changed between downs.

ART. 4 . . . By state association adoption, a kicking tee may be utilized and shall be made of pliable material which elevates the lowest point of the ball no more than 2 inches above the ground.

ART. 5 . . . A down indicator(s) shall be provided by game management.

- a. The down indicator or spot disc shall be used to mark the spot of the ball and indicate the number of the down in a series. A down indicator may also be placed to identify the zone to gain.
- b. The official down indicator shall be operated approximately 2 yards outside the sideline opposite the press box, except in stadiums where the total playing enclosure does not permit. If there is no press box, the location will be specified by game management.
- c. All down-indicator rods shall have flat lower ends covered by protective caps.

ART. 6 . . . A timing device referred to as the "game clock" shall be provided by the game management.

ART. 7 . . . Other than replay or video monitoring equipment, game officials may use supplementary equipment to aid in game administration as authorized by the state association.

SECTION 4 PLAYER DESIGNATIONS

ART. 1 . . . Each player shall be numbered 0 through 99 inclusive. Any number preceded by the digit zero is illegal. No two players of the same team shall participate in the same down wearing identical numbers.

ART. 2 . . . Each head coach shall designate a representative who will make decisions regarding penalty acceptance or declination. The first choice of any offered decision is final. Decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged time-out is granted either team. The head coach's designee shall remain in place for the entire game except in case of emergency.

SECTION 5 PLAYER EQUIPMENT

The NFHS does not perform scientific tests on any specific items of equipment to determine if the equipment poses undue risks to student-athletes, coaches, game officials or spectators. Such determinations are the responsibility of equipment manufacturers. For additional information on Equipment Guidelines, see Appendix C.

NOTE: As mentioned in Section 5, under Player Equipment, NOCSAE refers to the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment and SFIA refers to the Sports and Fitness Industry Association.

ART. 1 . . . Mandatory equipment. Each player shall participate while wearing the following pieces of properly fitted equipment, which shall be professionally manufactured and not altered to decrease protection:

- a. Jersey:

1. A jersey, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, and which shall be tucked in to the uniform bottom.

2. Players of the visiting team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
 - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) shall all be white.
 - (b) The body of the jersey shall contain only the listed allowable adornments and accessory patterns in a color(s) that contrasts to white:
 - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1b or as the school's nickname, school logo, school mascot, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders;
 - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3.5 inches;
 - (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width; and/or
 - (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any non-white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.
- NOTE:** One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.
- (c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.
3. Players of the home team shall wear jerseys, unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production, that meet the following criteria:
 - (a) The body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey) may not include white, except as stated below.
 - (b) The jerseys of the home team shall all be the same dark color(s) that clearly contrasts to white. If white appears in the body of the jersey of the home team, it may only appear:
 - (1) as the jersey number(s) required in 1-5-1b or as the school's nickname, school logo, school mascot, school name and/or player name within the body and/or on the shoulders,
 - (2) either as a decorative stripe placed during production that follows the curve of the raglan sleeve or following the shoulder seam in traditional yoke construction, not to exceed 1 inch at any point within the body of the jersey; or as decorative stripe(s) added in the shoulder area after production, not to exceed 1 inch per stripe and total size of combined stripes not to exceed 3 ½ inches,

- (3) within the collar, a maximum of 1 inch in width, and/or
- (4) as a side seam (insert connecting the back of the jersey to the front), a maximum of 4 inches in width but any white color may not appear within the body of the jersey (inside the shoulders, inclusive of the yoke of the jersey or the shoulders, below the collar, and to the bottom of the jersey). The exception to (4) would be what is stated in (2) above.

NOTE: One American flag, not to exceed 2 inches by 3 inches, may be worn or occupy space on each item of uniform apparel. By state association adoption, to allow for special occasions, commemorative or memorial patches, not to exceed 4 square inches, may be worn on the uniform without compromising its integrity.

- (c) The visiting team is responsible for avoidance of similarity of colors, but if there is doubt, the referee may require players of the home team to change jerseys.
- b. Numbers
- 1. The numbers shall be clearly visible and legible using Arabic numbers 0-99 inclusive and shall be on the front and back of the jersey.
 - 2. The numbers, inclusive of any border(s), shall be centered horizontally at least 6 inches and 8 inches high on front and back, respectively.
 - 3. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) exclusive of any border(s) shall be approximately 1½-inches wide.
 - 4. The color and style of the number shall be the same on the front and back.
 - 5. The entire body of the number (the continuous horizontal bars and vertical strokes) shall be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the body color of the jersey.
- c. Protective Equipment – The following protective equipment is required of all players:
- 1. (a) A single tooth and mouth protector (intraoral) which shall:
 - (1) include an occlusal (protecting and separating the biting surfaces) portion;
 - (2) include a labial (protecting the teeth and supporting structures) portion;
 - (3) cover the posterior teeth with adequate thickness;
 - (4) not include any attachment(s) that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth (Effective 2026); and
 - (5) not include anything on it that is a health risk issue and can pose a danger to themselves or other players (Effective 2026).
 - (b) It is recommended that the protector be properly fitted, protecting the anterior (leading) dental arch and:
 - (1) constructed from a model made from an impression of the individual's teeth; or
 - (2) constructed and fitted to the individual by impressing the teeth into the tooth and mouth protector itself.

- d. Pants, shorts or skirts which shall not have pockets of any type, exposed drawstrings, belts and/or belt loops. The color of the pants, shorts or skirts shall be the same single solid color that clearly contrast that with the color of the flag and flag belt.
- e. Shoes which shall be made of a material which covers the foot (canvas, leather or synthetic) and attached to a firm sole of leather, rubber or composition material. Shoes may have cleats or may be cleatless. Among the items which do not meet these requirements are gymnastic slippers, tennis shoes cut so protection is reduced, ski and logger boots and other apparel not intended for flag football use:
 - 1. Removable cleats shall conform to the following specifications:
 - (a) Constructed of a material which does not chip or develop a cutting edge.
 - (b) Legal cleat material includes leather, nylon, rubber and non-metallic polymers that will not chip or develop a cutting edge while functioning as a cleat. Cleats may be tipped with a steel material hardened to a Rockwell hardness approximately C55 to a depth of .005-.008 while minimizing the risk of brittle failure of the tip component, in its entirety, including any shafts or threads that may be a part of the tip.
 - (c) The base and the tip of the cleat shall be parallel.
 - (d) The free end of the cleat may be rounded in an arc with a radius of not less than $\frac{7}{16}$ inch provided the overall length is not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch measured from the tip of the cleat to the sole of the shoe.
 - (e) The cleat may be attached to a raised platform which is molded to the shoe. The platform may be no more than $\frac{5}{32}$ inch in height and must be wider than the base of the cleat. The widest part of the cleat must be in direct contact with the platform. The $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch raised platform must be wider than the base of the cleat and must extend across the width of the sole to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or less of the outer edges of the sole.
 - (f) A single toe cleat does not require a raised platform that extends across the width of the sole. The raised platform of the toe cleat is limited to $\frac{5}{32}$ inch or less.
 - (g) The $\frac{5}{32}$ -inch platform is measured from the lowest point of the platform to the sole of the shoe.
 - (h) An effective locking device which prevents the exposure of metal posts shall be incorporated.
 - (i) The cleat wall shall be at least $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter.
 - (j) The sides of the cleat shall taper uniformly from a minimum base of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter to a minimum tip of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter.
 - 2. Nonremovable cleats are limited to studs or projections that do not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in length measured from the sole of the shoe to the tip of the cleat and which are made with nonabrasive rubber or rubber-type synthetic material that does not have or develop a cutting edge.
- f. An unaltered flag belt of the same single solid color, with three flags of the same single solid color and a minimum flag dimension of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch by 14 inches. No article of clothing may cover the flag or belt. The belt must

be worn in such a way that one flag is located on each hip and one flag is located on the tailbone.

NOTE: State associations may determine the style of flag used and flag measurements (may not be below minimum).

ART. 2 . . . The following auxiliary equipment may be worn if sanctioned by the referee as being soft, nonabrasive, nonhardening material:

- a. Forearm pads, which may be anchored on each end with athletic tape.
- b. Hip pads and tailbone protector which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.
- c. Knee pads which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production and shall be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick or $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick if made of shock absorbing material.
- d. Effective 2027, arm sleeves, whether attached to a shirt or unattached, manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent must meet the SFIA specification at the time of manufacture. Arm sleeves must have a permanent, exact replica of the SFIA arm sleeve seal (meets SFIA Specification) (Figure 1-5-2d), that must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior of the arm sleeve. Figure 1-5-2d
- e. Thigh guards which are unaltered from the manufacturer's original design/production.
- f. Soft headwear not made from abrasive or hard material.
- g. Rubber, cloth or elastic bands to control hair. Hard items, including, but not limited to, beads, barrettes, bobby pins and other adornments in the hair that are securely fastened to the head and do not present an increased risk to the player, teammates or opponents are allowed.
- h. Head coverings worn for religious reasons shall not be made of abrasive or hard materials and must be attached in such a way that the coverings are highly unlikely to come off during play or interfere with the flag.
- i. Gloves, which may be anchored with athletic tape, and even though modified, must meet the NOCSAE standard or the SFIA specification at the time of manufacture, unless made of unaltered plain cloth. Gloves, unless made of unaltered plain cloth, must have a permanent, exact replica of the NOCSAE glove seal (Meets NOCSAE Standard) (Figure 1-5-2i) or SFIA glove seal (Meets SFIA Specification) (Figure 1-5-2i), that must be visible and appear legibly on the exterior wrist opening of the glove.



Figure 1-5-2d



Figure 1-5-2i



Figure 1-5-2i

NOTES:

1. A glove is a covering for the hand having separate sections for each finger. Pads worn on the hand, but not having separate sections encircling at least part of any finger are not gloves. The thumb is not considered a finger.
2. Non-athletic gloves, worn solely for warmth and made of unaltered plain cloth, and which do not enhance contact with the ball, do not require a label or stamp indicating compliance.

- j. Tape, bandage or support wrap on the hand or forearm to protect an existing injury.

EXCEPTION: Tape, bandage or support wrap(s) not to exceed three thicknesses are legal without inspection or approval.

ART. 3 . . . Illegal equipment. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the referee is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall always include but is not limited to:

- a. The following items related to the Game Uniform:

1. Jerseys, pants, shorts and skirts that have:
 - (a) A visible manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference exceeding 2¼ square inches and exceeding 2¼ inches in any dimension.
 - (b) More than one manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference on the outside of either item. (The same size restriction shall apply to either the manufacturer's logo/trademark or reference).
 - (c) Sizing, garment care or other nonlogo labels on the outside of either item.
 - (d) Pockets or belt loops.
2. Slippery or sticky substance of a foreign nature on equipment, towel, uniform, opponent or on an exposed part of the body which affects the ball or an opponent.
3. Any transverse stripe on the sleeve below the elbow.
4. Uniform adornments, with the exception of:
 - (a) Moisture-absorbing sweatbands.

- b. The following items related to Pads and Padding:

1. Hard and unyielding items (guards, casts, braces, etc.) on the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow or upper arm unless padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than ½" thick.
2. Knee and ankle braces which are altered from the manufacturer's original design/production.

NOTE: Knee and ankle braces that are unaltered do not require any additional padding.

3. Plastic material covering protective pads whose edges are not rounded with a radius equal to half the thickness of the plastic.
4. Rib pads and back protectors unless fully covered by a jersey.
5. Shin guards that do not meet the NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture. [Figure 1-5-3b(5)]
6. Shoulder pads.

- c. The following Other Illegal Equipment:

1. Ball-colored headwear, jerseys, patches, exterior arm covers/pads, undershirts or gloves.
2. Except during a legal conference, electronic audio or non-fixed video communication devices used to communicate with a player.
3. Any audio (microphone) or video (camera) device worn by a player during a game.



Figure 1-5-3b(5)

4. Eye shade (grease or no-glare strips or stickers) that includes words, numbers, logos or other symbols within the eye shade.
5. Jerseys, undershirts or exterior arm covers/pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent (through 2026). Effective 2027, jerseys or pads manufactured to enhance contact with the football or opponent.
6. Jewelry. Religious medals and a medical-alert indicator are not considered jewelry. Religious medals or other religious items must be taped to the body and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert indicator must be taped to the body and may be visible.
7. Metal which is projecting or other hard substance on clothes or person.
8. Play cards not worn on the wrist or arm.
9. A face shield that is not molded to the face or has protrusions.
10. Hand warmers or other items worn around the waist.
11. Equipment not worn as intended by the manufacturer.

ART. 4 . . . Prior to the start of the game, the head coach shall be responsible for verifying to the referee and another game official that all of their players are legally equipped in compliance with these rules and will use no illegal equipment. Any questions regarding legality of a player's equipment or the presence of required equipment shall be resolved by the referee.

ART. 5 . . . When any required player equipment is missing or worn improperly, an official's time-out shall be declared. If the missing or improperly worn equipment is detected during the down or subsequent dead-ball action related to the down without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent or if a player is wearing otherwise legal equipment in an illegal manner, the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs. If proper and legal equipment has become improperly worn through use but prompt repair is possible and does not delay the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds, such repair may be made without replacing the player for at least one down.

ART. 6 . . . Each player shall properly wear the mandatory equipment while the ball is live.

SECTION 6 COACHES FIELD EQUIPMENT

ART. 1 . . . Electronic communication devices including but not limited to audio recorder, Local Area Network (LAN) phones and/or headsets, mobile phones, still photograph(s), film, analog or digital video(s) and/or Internet depictions, shall not be used to communicate with a player except during a legal conference.

NOTE: Each state association may authorize the use of a drum by a team composed of deaf or partially deaf players, in order to establish a rhythmic cadence following the ready-for-play.

ART. 2 . . . Electronic communication devices including but not limited to audio recorder, Local Area Network (LAN) phones and/or headsets, mobile phones, still photograph(s), film, analog or digital video(s) and/or Internet depictions may be used by coaches and nonplayers.

SECTION 7 STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTIONS

TABLE 1-7
TABLE OF STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTIONS

1. Designate the field dimensions as official. (Flag Football Field Diagrams #1, 2 or 3)	11. Authorize the use of a drum for rhythmic cadence for deaf or partially deaf teams. (1-6-1 NOTE)
2. Determine the number of game officials. (1-1-4 NOTE)	12. Authorize the use of hash marks. (2-35-3 NOTE)
3. Determine the time for game officials to assume authority if greater than 30 minutes. (1-1-7)	13. Establish a procedure to resolve games tied following the fourth period. (3-1-1 NOTE)
4. Approve alteration of the team box if the same for both teams. (1-2-3e NOTE 3)	14. Establish a point differential to terminate games or to use a running game clock when the point differential is reached. (3-1-2)
5. Authorize the use of goals. (1-2-5)	15. Establish rules regarding continuation of interrupted games. (3-1-4)
6. Mandate the use of a specific ball for postseason or playoff competition. (1-3-2 NOTE)	16. Determine the length of halftime intermission. (3-1-6)
7. Authorize the use of a kicking tee. (1-3-4)	17. Determine when the coin toss is to be held. (3-2-1)
8. Authorize the use of supplementary equipment to aid in game administration. (1-3-7)	18. Authorize the use of TV/radio time-out. (3-5-7j)
9. Authorize the wearing of a commemorative/memorial patch. (1-5-1a(2) NOTE, 1-5-1a(3) NOTE)	19. Establish rules regarding place kicking for field goals and tries. (2-19-5, 8-3-3 NOTE, 8-4-1)
10. Determine the style of flag used and flag measurements (may not be below minimum). (1-5-1f NOTE)	

SECTION 8 STATE ASSOCIATION ACCOMMODATIONS

Each state association may, in keeping with applicable laws, authorize exceptions to NFHS playing rules to provide reasonable accommodations to individual participants with disabilities, as well as those individuals with unique and extenuating circumstances. The accommodations should not fundamentally alter the sport, heighten risk to the athlete/others or place opponents at a disadvantage.

Rule 2 Definitions of Playing Terms

SECTION 1 STATUS OF BALL — DEAD, LIVE, LOOSE

ART. 1 . . . A dead ball is a ball not in play. The ball is dead during the interval between downs.

ART. 2 . . . A live ball is a ball in play. A ball becomes live when the ball has been legally snapped and a down is in progress.

ART. 3 . . . A loose ball is a pass, fumble or a kick. The terms "pass," "fumble" and "kick" are sometimes used as abbreviations when the ball is loose following the acts of passing, fumbling or kicking the ball. A loose ball which has not yet touched the ground is in flight. A grounded loose ball is one which has touched the ground. A grounded loose ball immediately becomes dead (except during a scrimmage kick that has crossed the line of scrimmage as in 6-1). Any loose ball continues to be a loose ball until a player secures possession of it or until it becomes dead by rule, whichever comes first.

SECTION 2 BATTING

Batting is intentionally slapping or striking the ball with the arm or hand.

SECTION 3 BLOCKING

ART. 1 . . . Blocking is obstructing an opponent by contacting them with any part of the blocker's body.

ART. 2 . . . Screen blocking is taking position to obstruct the path of an opponent without contacting the opponent with any part of the blocker's body.

SECTION 4 CATCH

ART. 1 . . . A catch is the act of establishing control of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds while maintaining control of the ball.

ART. 2 . . . In order to complete a catch, the player must (after 2-4-1 has been fulfilled) perform an act common to the game or maintain control of the ball long enough to do so.

ART. 3 . . . If a player goes to the ground in the act of catching a pass the player must maintain complete and continuous control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground. If the player loses control of the ball which then touches the ground before the player regains control, it is not a catch.

ART. 4 . . . Catching is always preceded by touching the ball; thus, if touching causes the ball to become dead, securing possession of the ball has no significance.

ART. 5 . . . A simultaneous catch is a catch in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players who are inbounds. In the case of a simultaneous catch, the ball belongs to the team currently in team possession.

SECTION 5 CONFERENCES

ART. 1 . . . Coach-Referee Conference – The referee confers with the coach at the sideline in front of the team box in the field of play.

ART. 2 . . . Authorized Team Conference – One or more team members and one or more coaches directly in front of the team box or one coach in the middle of the field to confer with no more than seven players.

SECTION 6 DOWN — LOSS OF DOWN

ART. 1 . . . A down is action which starts with a legal snap (or a kick during a scrimmage kick play). A down ends when the ball next becomes dead.

ART. 2 . . . Loss of a down is the loss of the right to replay a down.

SECTION 7 ENCROACHMENT

Encroachment occurs when a player is illegally in the neutral zone during the time interval starting at the ready-for-play and until the ball is snapped or kicked (scrimmage kick play). For the purposes of enforcing encroachment restrictions, an entering substitute is not considered to be a player until the player is on their team's side of the neutral zone.

SECTION 8 FIELD AREAS

ART. 1 . . . The field is the area within the boundary lines.

ART. 2 . . . The field of play is the area within sidelines and the goal lines.

ART. 3 . . . The side zones are the areas bounded by the sidelines, the hash marks and the goal lines.

ART. 4 . . . The end zones are 10 yards in depth and are located at each end of the field between the goal line and the end line. The goal line is in the end zone and a team's end zone is the one it is defending.

SECTION 9 FIGHTING

Fighting is any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage a player or nonplayer in a combative manner unrelated to the game. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s) or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact.

SECTION 10 FLAG AND FLAG BELT

ART. 1... A flag belt is a required piece of player equipment as outlined in 1-5-1f.

ART. 2... A flag or flag belt is considered removed when:

- a. the coupling of the belt is detached; or
- b. a flag is separated from the flag belt.

ART. 3 . . . A flag inspection is the act of a teammate removing the flag or flag belt from a scoring player in order to show that a flag or flag belt has not been altered.

SECTION 11 FORCE

ART. 1 . . . Force is the result of energy exerted by a player which provides movement of the ball. The term force is used only in connection with the goal line and in only one direction, i.e., from the field of play into the end zone. Initial force results from a carry, fumble, kick, pass or snap.

ART. 2 . . . Responsibility for forcing the ball from the field of play across a goal line is attributed to the player who carries, snaps, passes, fumbles or kicks the ball.

ART. 3 . . . The muffing or batting of a pass, kick or fumble in flight is not considered a new force.

ART. 4 . . . Force is not a factor on kicks going into R's end zone, since these kicks are always a touchback regardless of who supplied the force.

SECTION 12 FORMATIONS

A scrimmage formation requires a snapper on the line of scrimmage and another offensive player in position to receive the snap. The player in position to receive the snap must be a minimum of 2 yards behind the snapper.

SECTION 13 FORWARD PROGRESS

Forward progress is the end of advancement of the ball, toward the opponent's goal, in a runner's possession or the forward-most point of the ball when it is fumbled out of bounds and it determines the dead-ball spot.

SECTION 14 FOULS AND PENALTIES

ART. 1 . . . A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is prescribed.

ART. 2 . . . Types of fouls are:

- a. Dead ball – a foul which occurs in the time interval after a down has ended and before the ball is next snapped.
- b. Double – one or more live-ball fouls (other than nonplayer or unsportsman-like) are committed by each team at such a time that the penalties offset.
- c. Flagrant – a foul so severe or extreme that it places an opponent in danger of serious injury, and/or involves violations that are extremely or persistently vulgar or abusive conduct.
- d. Live ball – a foul which occurs during a down.

- e. Multiple – two or more live-ball fouls (other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike) are committed during the same down by the same team at such a time that the offended team is permitted a choice of penalties.
- f. Nonplayer or unsportsmanlike – a noncontact foul while the ball is dead or during the down which is not illegal participation and does not influence the play in progress.
- g. Player – a foul (other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike) by a player in the game hereafter referred to as a foul.
- h. Post-scrimmage kick – a foul by R (other than an illegal substitution or illegal participation foul that occurs at the snap) when the foul occurs:
 - 1. During scrimmage kick plays, other than a try or successful field goal (if approved by state association).
 - 2. During a scrimmage kick play in which the ball crosses the expanded neutral zone.
 - 3. Beyond the expanded neutral zone.
 - 4. Before the end of a kick.
 - 5. K will not be next to put the ball in play.
- i. Simultaneous with the snap – an act which becomes a foul when the ball is snapped.

ART. 3 . . . No foul causes loss of the ball.

ART. 4 . . . No foul causes a live ball to become dead.

ART. 5 . . . A penalty is a result imposed by rule against a team or team member that has committed a foul.

SECTION 15 FUMBLE

A fumble is any loss of player possession other than by handing, passing or legal kick.

SECTION 16 HANDING

ART. 1 . . . Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one player to a teammate in such a way that the ball is still in contact with the first player when it is touched by the teammate. Handing the ball is not a pass. Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble.

ART. 2 . . . Forward handing occurs when the runner releases the ball when the entire ball is beyond the yard line where the runner is positioned.

ART. 3 . . . Backward handing occurs when the runner releases the ball when any part of the ball is on or behind the yard line where the runner is positioned.

SECTION 17 HUDDLE

A huddle is two or more players of the same team grouped together before a down.

SECTION 18 INTERCEPTION

An interception is the catch of an opponent's fumble or pass.

SECTION 19 KICKS

ART. 1 . . . A kick is the intentional striking of the ball with the knee, lower leg or foot.

ART. 2 . . . A kick ends when a player gains possession or when the ball becomes dead while not in player possession.

ART. 3 . . . A scrimmage kick is a declared kick from in or behind the neutral zone during a scrimmage down. Either a punt or place kick (if by state adoption) may be used.

ART. 4 . . . A punt is a legal scrimmage kick by a player who drops the ball and kicks it before it has touched the ground. A punt must be declared prior to the snap.

ART. 5 . . . An illegal kick is any intentional striking of the ball with the knee, lower leg or foot which does not comply with Article 3. When the ball is loose following an illegal kick, it retains the same status as prior to the illegal kick.

SECTION 20 LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

The line of scrimmage for Team A is a vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest that team's goal line. The line of scrimmage for Team B is 1 yard beyond the vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest that team's goal line. It is determined at the ready-for-play and remains until the next ready-for-play.

SECTION 21 LINES

ART. 1 . . . The boundary lines are the end lines and sidelines and are out of bounds.

ART. 2 . . . The end line is the outer limit of each end zone.

ART. 3 . . . The goal line is the vertical plane which separates the field of play from the end zone. When related to a live ball in a runner's possession (touching inbounds) while the ball is over the out-of-bounds area, the goal line includes the extension beyond the sidelines. A team's own goal line is the one it is defending.

ART. 4 . . . The zone to gain is the yard line established when a new series (first down) is awarded. Unless there is a penalty prior to the ready-for-play, the zone to gain is the next reachable zone when placed for the first down of the series. If the zone to gain extends into the end zone, the goal line is the zone to gain.

ART. 5 . . . The sideline is the lateral limit of the field of play and the end zones. It extends from one end line to the other.

ART. 6 . . . A yard line is any line and its vertical plane parallel to the end lines. The yard lines, marked or unmarked, in the field of play are numbered in yards from a team's own goal line to the middle of the field.

ART. 7 . . . A restraining line is a line placed around the outside of the field. No person, including but not limited to, spectators, game administrators or members of the media, shall be allowed within the restraining line. A maximum of three coaches as well as permitted nonplayers are allowed within the restraining line in front of the team box.

SECTION 22 MUFF

A muff is the touching of a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession.

SECTION 23 NEUTRAL ZONE

The neutral zone is the space between the two scrimmage lines during a scrimmage down. It is established when the ball is ready for play.

SECTION 24 OUT OF BOUNDS

ART. 1 . . . A player or other person is out of bounds when any part of the person is touching anything, other than another player or game official that is on or outside the sideline or end line, and that player remains out of bounds until returning to the field with any body part touching the field and no body part touching out of bounds.

ART. 2 . . . A ball in player possession is out of bounds when the runner or the ball touches anything, other than another player or game official that is on or outside a sideline or end line.

ART. 3 . . . A loose ball is out of bounds when it touches anything, including a player or game official that is out of bounds.

SECTION 25 PARTICIPATION

Participation is any act or action by a player or nonplayer that has an influence on play.

SECTION 26 PASSING

ART. 1 . . . Passing the ball is throwing a ball that is in player possession. In a pass, the ball travels in flight.

ART. 2 . . . A forward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent's end line.

ART. 3 . . . A forward pass ends when it is caught, touches the ground or is out of bounds.

ART. 4 . . . A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the runner's end line.

ART. 5 . . . A backward pass ends when it is caught, hits the ground, or is out of bounds.

SECTION 27 PLAYER DESIGNATIONS

ART. 1 . . . A player is one of the 14 team members who is designated to start either half of the game or who subsequently replaces another player. A player continues to be a player until a substitute enters the field and indicates to the player that they are replaced, or when the substitute otherwise becomes a player.

ART. 2 . . . A player of A is A1 and teammates are A2 and A3. Other abbreviations are B1 for a player of B, K1 for a player of the kickers and R1 for one of the receivers.

ART. 3 . . . A blocker is a player who is blocking or in position to block by being between the potential flag puller and the runner.

ART. 4 . . . A captain of a team is a player designated to represent the team during:

- a. The pregame and overtime coin toss. (Limit of four captains in game uniform.)
- b. Penalty decisions following a foul (if designated by the head coach, as in 1-4-2).

ART. 5 . . . A disqualified player is a player barred from further participation in game.

ART. 6 . . . A holder is a player who controls the ball on the ground or on a kicking tee.

ART. 7 . . . A kicker is any player who legally punts or place kicks. A player becomes a kicker when the player's knee, lower leg or foot makes contact with the ball. The player continues to be the kicker until the player has had reasonable opportunity to regain balance.

ART. 8 . . . A nonplayer is a coach, athletic trainer, other attendant, a substitute or a replaced player who does not participate by touching the ball, hindering an opponent or influencing the play. See 9-6 for illegal participation.

ART. 9 . . . A passer is a player who throws a legal forward pass. The player continues to be a passer until the legal forward pass ends or until the player moves to participate in the play.

ART. 10 . . . A replaced player is one who has been notified by a substitute that they are to leave the field. A player is also replaced when the entering substitute becomes a player.

ART. 11 . . . A runner is a player who is in possession of a live ball or is simulating possession of a live ball.

ART. 12 . . . A snapper is the player who snaps the ball.

ART. 13 . . . A substitute is a team member who may replace a player or fill a player vacancy. A substitute becomes a player when the player enters the field and communicates with a teammate or a game official, enters the huddle, is positioned in a formation or participates in the play. An entering substitute is not considered to be a player for encroachment restrictions until the player is on their team's side of the neutral zone. A team member entering the field to fill a player vacancy remains a substitute until the person is on their team's side of the neutral zone.

SECTION 28 PLAYS — FOR PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

ART. 1 . . . A loose-ball play is action during:

- a. A scrimmage kick other than post-scrimmage kick fouls as defined in 2-14-2h.
- b. A legal forward pass.
- c. A backward pass (including the snap), an illegal kick or fumble made by A from in or behind the neutral zone prior to a change of team possession.
- d. The run or runs which precedes such legal or illegal kick, legal forward pass, backward pass or fumble.

ART. 2 . . . A running play is any action not included in Article 1, including the related run as in 2-35-8.

SECTION 29 POSSESSION

ART. 1 . . . A ball in player possession is a live ball held or controlled by a player after it has been handed or snapped to the player, or after the player has caught or recovered it.

ART. 2 . . . A ball in team possession is a live ball which is in player possession or one which is loose following loss of such player possession. A live ball is always in the possession of a team.

ART. 3 . . . A change of possession occurs when the opponent gains player possession during the down.

SECTION 30 READY-FOR-PLAY

Ready-for-play signifies that the ball may be put in play by a snap with 25 seconds on the play clock.

SECTION 31 RULE

A rule is one of the groups of regulations which govern the game. A rule sometimes states what a player may do, but if there is no such statement for a given act, it is assumed that they may do what is not prohibited. In like manner, a rule sometimes states or implies that the ball is dead or that a foul is involved. If it does not, it is assumed that the ball is live and that no foul has occurred. If a foul is mentioned, it is assumed that it is not part of a double or multiple foul unless so stated or implied.

SECTION 32 SCRIMMAGE

Scrimmage is the action of the two teams during a down which begins with a legal snap.

SECTION 33 SHIFT

A shift is the action of one or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap.

SECTION 34 SNAP

ART. 1 . . . A snap is the legal act of passing the ball backward from its position on the ground and ahead of the snapper's body.

ART. 2 . . . The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally other than in adjustment. In a snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous backward motion of the ball during which the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches a back or the ground.

ART. 3 . . . The snap ends when the ball touches the ground or any player.

SECTION 35 SPOTS

ART. 1 . . . The enforcement spot is the point from which a penalty is enforced.

ART. 2 . . . The dead-ball spot is the spot under the foremost point of the ball when it becomes dead by rule.

EXCEPTION: Rule 5-3-2.

ART. 3 . . . The inbounds spot is the intersection of the center of the field and the yard line:

- Through the foremost point of the ball when the ball becomes dead in the field of play.
- Through the foremost point of the ball on the sideline between the goal lines when a loose ball goes out of bounds.
- Through the spot under the foremost point of the ball in possession of a runner when they cross the plane of the sideline and go out of bounds.

NOTE: State associations may adopt the use of hash marks to be utilized as inbounds spots.

ART. 4 . . . The out-of-bounds spot is where the ball becomes dead because of going out of bounds.

ART. 5 . . . The post-scrimmage kick spot is the spot where the kick ends. R retains the ball after penalty enforcement from the post-scrimmage kick spot when a post-scrimmage foul occurs. Fouls by R behind the post-scrimmage kick spot are spot fouls.

ART. 6 . . . The previous spot is where the ball was last snapped.

ART. 7 . . . The spot of a foul is where the foul occurs. If a foul occurs out of bounds, the spot of the foul is at the intersection of the center of the field and the yard line extended on which the foul occurs.

ART. 8 . . . The spot where a run ends is:

- Where the ball becomes dead in the runner's possession;
- Where the runner loses player possession if the run is followed by a loose ball, but the related run continues until the ball becomes dead or any player gains possession; or
- The spot of the catch or recovery when the momentum exception as in 8-5-2a EXCEPTION is in effect.

ART. 9 . . . The succeeding spot is where the ball would next be snapped if a foul had not occurred. When a foul occurs during a down in which a touchdown is scored, as in Rules 8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 and 8-2-5, the succeeding spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the subsequent teams starting spot.

ART. 10 . . . The starting spot is where the offense will snap the ball from to start a half or overtime, or where the defense will next snap the ball from following a try, safety or successful field goal.

SECTION 36 TEAM DESIGNATIONS

ART. 1 . . . The offense is the team which is in possession of the ball. The opponent is the defense.

ART. 2 . . . A is the team which puts the ball in play. The opponent is B.

ART. 3 . . . K is the team which legally kicks the ball during the down. The opponent is R.

ART. 4 . . . Team designations (A and B, K and R) are retained until the ball is next ready for play.

SECTION 37 TOUCHING

Touching refers to any contact with the ball, i.e., either by touching or being touched by it. Touching by a game official in the field of play or end zone is ignored.

SECTION 38 TRIPPING

Tripping is the intentional use of the lower leg, foot, hand, or arm to obstruct an opponent below the knee.

Rule 3 Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions

SECTION 1 LENGTH OF PERIODS – HALFTIME INTERMISSION

ART. 1 . . . The clock running time for a game shall be 48 minutes for high schools with periods and intermissions as indicated in Table 3-1.

NOTE: By state association adoption, if, at the end of the fourth period, the teams have identical scores, the tie may be resolved if a method has been approved by the state high school association. This may include extending playing time. The overtime is considered part of the fourth period.

ART. 2 . . . By state association adoption, a point differential may be established whereby if one team has gained the established point differential, the game shall be terminated. A state association may also establish guidelines to use a running game clock when the point differential is reached.

ART. 3 . . . A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time or the game terminated.

ART. 4 . . . Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible administrative authority shall be continued from the point of interruption, unless the teams agree to terminate the game with the existing score, or as otherwise provided for by state association adoption.

ART. 5 . . . When weather conditions are construed to be hazardous to life or limb of the participants, the crew of game officials is authorized to delay or suspend the game.

ART. 6 . . . State high school associations may determine the length of halftime intermission, provided it is not less than five minutes or not more than 20 minutes.

- a. Halftime intermission may be increased to a maximum of 20 minutes, provided opponents have been notified no later than five minutes prior to the game.
- b. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches, the halftime intermission may be reduced to a minimum of five minutes.

TABLE 3-1
TABLE OF GAME CLOCK TIMES

PERIOD OF TIMING	CLOCK TIME
First Half:	
First period	12 minutes
Intermission between periods	1 minute
Second period	12 minutes
Halftime Intermission:	
When teams leave the field	5 to 20 minutes
Second Half:	
Third period	12 minutes
Intermission between periods	1 minute
Fourth period	12 minutes
Charged Time-outs	1 minute

SECTION 2 STARTING A PERIOD — HALF

ART. 1 . . . Each half of the game shall be started by a play from scrimmage from A's 14-yard line (starting spot). Before the scheduled game starting time, the referee, in the presence of the field captains, shall instruct the visiting captain to give a "heads" or "tails" choice before the coin toss. If the coin toss, or simulated coin toss, is held on the playing field, it shall be held three minutes prior to the scheduled game starting time, or as otherwise specified by individual state associations.

ART. 2 . . . At the coin toss or simulated coin toss conducted three minutes prior to the scheduled starting time on the field of play as in 3-2-1, no more than four team members in game uniform (captains) from each team may be present at the coin toss and only one from each team shall be designated as its spokesperson. All other team members in game uniform must remain outside the field of play.

ART. 3 . . . The winner of the toss shall have first choice of options for the first half or to defer and have first choice for the second half. The loser shall have the

first choice of options for the half the winner of the toss did not select. The options for each half shall be:

- a. To choose whether their team will begin on offense or defense.
- b. To choose the goal their team will defend.

The team not having the first choice of options for a half shall exercise the remaining option.

ART. 4 . . . Between the first and second and between the third and fourth periods, the teams shall change goals. Team possession, number of the next down, the relative position of the ball and the zone to gain remain unchanged.

SECTION 3 ENDING A PERIOD — HALF

ART. 1 . . . During the first dead ball with two minutes or less remaining in either half, the referee shall stop the clock and notify the field captains and their coaches of the time remaining (two-minute time-out).

ART. 2 . . . If time for any period expires during a down (clock indicates 0:00), play shall continue until the down ends, even if a mechanical signal is allowed to sound.

ART. 3 . . . A period shall be extended by an untimed down if one of the following occurred during a down in which time expires:

- a. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted, except for those fouls listed in 3-3-4b.
- b. There was a double foul.
- c. There was an inadvertent whistle.
- d. If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the fourth period and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

If (a), (b), (c) or (d) occurs during the untimed down, the procedure is repeated.

ART. 4 . . . A period shall not be extended by an untimed down if one of the following occurred during a down in which time expires:

- a. When the defense fouls during a successful try or field goal (by state adoption) and the offended team accepts the results of the play with enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot.
- b. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted for:
 1. unsportsmanlike fouls,
 2. nonplayer fouls,
 3. fouls that specify a loss of down,
 4. fouls that are enforced on the subsequent kickoff as in Rule 8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 or 8-2-5; or
 5. fouls for which enforcement, by rule, result in a safety.

NOTE: The score is canceled in the event of an accepted penalty that specifies a loss of down.

ART. 5 . . . At the end of each period the referee shall hold the ball in one hand overhead to indicate the period has officially ended, after delaying momentarily to ensure that:

- a. No foul has occurred.
- b. No obvious timing error has occurred.

- c. No request for a coach-referee conference has occurred.
- d. No other irregularity has occurred.

ART. 6 . . . If a dead-ball foul occurs after time expires for any period, the penalty shall be measured from the succeeding spot unless 8-2-5 applies.

SECTION 4 STARTING AND STOPPING THE GAME CLOCK

ART. 1 . . . The game clock shall start for a period:

- a. When the ball is legally snapped.

ART. 2 . . . The game clock shall start with the ready-for-play on a down beginning with a snap if the game clock was stopped for any reason other than specified in Rule 3-4-3 or an untimed down:

- a. For an official's time-out, other than when B is awarded a new series or either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
- b. Because the ball has become dead following any foul provided:
 - 1. There has been no charged time-out during the dead-ball interval.
 - 2. The down is not an extension of a period or a try.
 - 3. The action which caused the down to end did not also cause the game clock to be stopped.
- c. Because of an inadvertent whistle, unless B or R is in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle during a running play and chooses to accept the result of the play.
- d. Team A forward fumble out of bounds.

ART. 3 . . . The game clock shall start with the snap if the game clock was stopped because:

- a. The ball goes out of bounds, unless 4-3-1 EXCEPTION for forward fumble applies.
- b. B or R is awarded a new series.
- c. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
- d. The ball becomes dead behind the goal line.
- e. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- f. A runner goes out of bounds with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- g. A request for a charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.
- h. A period ends.
- i. A team attempts to consume time illegally.
- j. The penalty for a delay-of-game foul is accepted.
- k. The two-minute time-out has occurred.

ART. 4 . . . The game clock shall be stopped when:

- a. The down ends following a foul.
- b. An official's time-out is taken.
- c. A charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.
- d. The period ends.
- e. The two-minute time-out occurs as in 3-3-1.
- f. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete with less than two minutes remaining in either half.

- g. A runner goes out of bounds with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- h. A score or touchback occurs.
- i. A new series is awarded to B.
- j. An inadvertent whistle is sounded.

ART. 5 . . . When a team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally, the referee shall order the game or play clock started or stopped.

ART. 6 . . . When a foul is committed after the two-minute time-out in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the game clock on the snap.

ART. 7 . . . The referee shall have the authority to correct obvious errors in timing by the game clock if discovery is prior to the second live ball following the error, unless the period has officially ended as in 3-3-5.

ART. 8 . . . The referee shall have the authority to correct obvious errors in timing by the play clock if discovery is prior to the snap.

SECTION 5 CHARGED AND OFFICIAL'S TIME-OUTS — INTERMISSIONS

ART. 1 . . . Each team is entitled to two charged team time-outs during each half. Unused first half time-outs cannot be used in the second half. Unused second half time-outs cannot be used in overtime.

ART. 2 . . . A charged team time-out occurs when the ball is dead and:

- a. The request of a player or the head coach (or head coach's designee) is legally granted. When a decision on a penalty is pending, a time-out shall not be granted to either team until the designated representative makes their choice.
- b. The repair of faulty player equipment requires the assistance of a team attendant(s), or which, without the assistance of a team attendant delays the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds.
- c. A time-out is requested and granted for the purpose of reviewing a game official's application of a rule which may have been misapplied or misinterpreted. The time-out remains charged to the requesting team, if no change in the ruling results.

ART. 3 . . . A single charged time-out shall not exceed one minute. The referee shall notify the teams within five seconds after the time-out expires and shall mark the ball ready for play. Charged time-outs shall be reduced in length only if both teams are ready to play prior to the ready-for-play by the referee.

ART. 4 . . . Successive charged time-outs may be granted during the same dead-ball period. An official's time-out may follow a charged time-out if it is for the continuance of a coach-referee conference, or if safety is involved. When a team's permissible charged time-outs for the half have been used, its captain and coach should be notified.

ART. 5 . . . After a team has used its permissible charged time-outs for the half, any subsequent request shall be denied unless it is for:

- a. An apparently injured player who is so designated when the request is made.
- b. Necessary repair to player equipment except as in 3-5-10d.
- c. The review of a possible misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule.

ART. 6 . . . If repair of equipment without the assistance of a team attendant delays the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds, or requires the assistance of a team attendant(s) and the player's team has used all permissible time-outs, the player shall be replaced for at least one down.

ART. 7 . . . An official's time-out (which is not charged to either team) occurs during a dead ball:

- a. When a first down is declared with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- b. Following a change of team possession.
- c. When the game clock first reaches two minutes or less remaining in either half.
- d. For a player in need of equipment repair.
- e. To dry or change the ball.
- f. For unusual heat or humidity which may create a health risk to the players.
- g. When a coach-referee conference concerning the misapplication of a rule results in the referee altering his ruling. (3-5-11)
- h. After a foul, to administer the penalty.
- i. For any unusual delay in getting the ball ready for play.
- j. For a TV/radio time-out that is permitted and granted as authorized by state association policy.
- k. For a one-minute intermission between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, safety or successful field goal (by state adoption) and prior to the succeeding possession.

ART. 8 . . . Authorized conferences

- a. An authorized conference may be held during:

1. a charged time-out;
2. an official's time-out (3-5-7f, 3-5-7j and 3-5-7k); or
3. if granted by the referee in 3-5-10.

ART. 9 . . . Unless the game clock is already stopped, an official's time-out shall be taken as soon as the ball becomes dead following a change of team possession.

ART. 10 . . . An official's time-out (which is not charged to either team) occurs, and the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs when:

- a. An apparently injured player is discovered by a game official while the ball is dead and the game clock is stopped and for whom the ready-for-play is delayed, or for whom the game or play clock is stopped.
- b. Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. (NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports, in Appendix B.)

- c. A game official discovers any player who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on their uniform, or has blood on their person. The player shall be directed to leave the game until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition. (NFHS Communicable Disease Procedures, in Appendix D.)
- d. Any required player equipment is missing or improperly worn.

ART. 11 . . . A head coach (or designee) may request and be granted a time-out for the purpose of the coach and the referee reviewing a decision which may have resulted from misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, provided the request is made prior to the time the ball becomes live following the play to be reviewed, unless the period has officially ended. When a time-out is so granted, the referee will confer with the coach at the sideline in front of the team box in the field of play. If the conference results in the referee altering the ruling, the opposing coach will be notified, the revision made, and the time-out shall be an official's time-out. If the referee's ruling prevails, the time-out remains charged to the team requesting the time-out for the conference.

SECTION 6 PLAY CLOCK, BALL READY FOR PLAY AND DELAY

ART. 1 . . . Play clock and ready-for-play:

- a. Play clock:
 - 1. 25 seconds will be on the play clock and start on the ready-for-play signal:
 - (a) Following a down;
 - (b) Prior to a try following a score;
 - (c) To start a period or overtime series;
 - (d) Following an inadvertent whistle;
 - (e) Following a charged time-out;
 - (f) Following an official's time-out as in 3-5-7 or 3-5-10;
 - (g) Following a legal kick, when either team is awarded a new series; and
 - (h) Following the stoppage of the play clock by the referee for any other reason.
- b. The ball is ready for play:
 - 1. When the ball has been placed for a down and the referee marks the ball ready for play after giving the ready-for-play signal as in 3-6-1a(1) with the game officials in position.

ART. 2 . . . Action or inaction which prevents promptness in putting the ball in play is delay of game. This includes:

- a. Failure to snap prior to the expiration of the 25-second play clock.
- b. After receiving the snap during a declared scrimmage kick play, failure to kick the ball within five seconds.
- c. Unnecessarily carrying the ball after it has become dead.
- d. A coach-referee conference after all the permissible charged time-outs for the coach's team have been used, and during which the referee is requested to reconsider the application of a rule and no change in the ruling results.

- e. Snapping the ball before it is ready for play.
- f. Any other conduct which unduly prolongs the game.

ART. 3 . . . A team shall play within two minutes after being ordered to do so by the referee.

ART. 4 . . . Game management is responsible for clearing the field of play and the end zones at the beginning of each half so play may begin at the scheduled time.

PENALTY: Arts. 2, 4 – Delay of game – (S7-21) – 5 yards; Art. 3 – Failure to play following order of referee – forfeiture of game.

SECTION 7 SUBSTITUTIONS

ART. 1 . . . Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players. Upon meeting the criteria of 2-27-10, replaced players shall begin to leave the field within three seconds.

ART. 2 . . . A player, replaced player or a substitute is required to leave the field at the side on which their team box is located and go directly to their team box.

ART. 3 . . . During the same dead-ball interval, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw and no player shall withdraw and re-enter as a substitute unless a penalty is accepted, a dead-ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out or the period ends.

ART. 4 . . . During a down, a replaced player or substitute who attempts unsuccessfully to leave the field and who does not participate in or affect the play, constitutes an illegal substitution.

ART. 5 . . . An entering substitute shall be on their team's side of the neutral zone when the ball is snapped.

ART. 6 . . . During a down, a replaced player or substitute who enters the field, but does not participate, constitutes illegal substitution.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 2, 3 – Illegal substitution – (S7-22) – 5 yards, dead-ball foul; Arts. 4, 5 – Illegal substitution (S22) – 5 yards, live ball foul; Art. 6 – Illegal substitution (S22) – 5 yards, nonplayer foul.

Rule 4

Ball in Play, Dead Ball and Out of Bounds

SECTION 1 PUTTING THE BALL IN PLAY

ART. 1 . . . To start each half and to resume play after a try or successful field goal (by state adoption), the ball shall be put in play by a snap from scrimmage from A's 14-yard line. Following a safety, the team whose goal line was not involved shall put the ball in play by a snap from scrimmage from its own 30-yard line.

ART. 2 . . . A snap shall be made from the center of the field. State associations may authorize the use of hash marks as in 2-35-3 NOTE.

ART. 3 . . . After being put in play, the ball remains live until the down ends.

ART. 4 . . . The ball remains dead and a down is not begun if a snap is attempted before the ball is ready for play, or there is an illegal snap, other snap infraction or a dead-ball foul occurs.

SECTION 2 DEAD BALL AND END OF THE DOWN

ART. 1 . . . A game official shall indicate the ball remains dead by sounding a whistle immediately when a foul occurs before a snap.

ART. 2 . . . The ball becomes dead and the down is ended:

- a. When a runner goes out of bounds or allows any part of their person other than hand or foot to touch the ground.

EXCEPTIONS (If place kicks have been authorized by the state association as in 2-19-5):

1. The ball remains live if, at the snap, a place-kick holder with their knee(s) on the ground and with a teammate in kicking position catches or recovers the snap while their knee(s) is on the ground and places the ball for a kick; or
2. The ball remains live if, at the snap, a place-kick holder with their knee(s) on the ground and with a teammate in kicking position rises and catches or recovers an errant snap and immediately returns their knee(s) to the ground and places the ball for a kick.

NOTE: The ball becomes dead if the place-kick holder muffs the snap or fumbles the ball.

- b. When a player in possession of the ball has their flag or flag belt removed as in 2-10-2.
- c. If the flag belt of the player in possession of the ball inadvertently falls to the ground and an opponent delivers a one-hand touch between the shoulders and knees (including arms and hands).
- d. When a live ball goes out of bounds.
- e. When any forward pass (legal or illegal) is incomplete or is simultaneously caught by opposing players.
- f. When any legal scrimmage kick:
 1. Which is not a scoring attempt breaks the plane of R's goal line.
 2. Which is a scoring attempt, touches the ground or while in flight touches a K player in R's end zone, or after breaking the plane of R's goal line has apparently failed (If 2-19-5 applies).

EXCEPTION: If a scoring attempt kick touches an upright, crossbar, a game official or R player in the end zone and caroms through the goal, the touching is ignored and the attempt is successful.

- g. When any loose ball:
 1. Is simultaneously caught or recovered by opposing players.
 2. That is a fumble, muff or backward pass touches the ground.
 3. Touches, or is touched by, anything inbounds other than a player, substitute, replaced player, a game official, the ground or authorized equipment. In this case, the ball will be put in play in accordance with the procedure for an inadvertent whistle as in 4-2-3b.

- h. When the kickers catch or recover a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone and when the kickers are first (i.e., before any touching by the receivers) to touch a scrimmage kick after it has come to rest beyond the neutral zone and between the goal lines.
- i. When any score occurs.
- j. During a try if B secures possession or as soon as it is apparent that a kick has failed to score (if 2-19-5 applies).
- k. When a game official sounds a whistle inadvertently.
- l. When a prosthetic limb comes completely off the runner.

ART. 3 . . . An inadvertent whistle ends the down. Inadvertent whistles are administered as follows:

- a. The down shall be replayed if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while a legal forward pass or snap is in flight, or during a legal kick.
- b. The team last in possession may choose to either put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while the ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick.
- c. The team in possession may choose to either accept the results of the play at the dead-ball spot or replay the down if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while the ball is in player possession.
- d. The penalty shall be administered as determined by the enforcement spot and takes precedence over inadvertent whistle administration if, during a down, a live-ball foul occurs prior to the inadvertent whistle and the penalty is accepted.

SECTION 3 OUT-OF-BOUNDS AND INBOUNDS SPOTS

ART. 1 . . . When a loose ball goes out of bounds, the out-of-bounds spot is fixed by the yard line where the foremost point of the ball crossed the sideline. When the ball becomes dead in the field of play because of touching a person who is out of bounds, the out-of-bounds spot is fixed by the yard line through the foremost point of the ball.

EXCEPTION: When a forward fumble goes out of bounds or is ruled out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball shall be returned to the spot of the fumble.

ART. 2 . . . When the out-of-bounds spot is between the goal lines, the ball shall be put in play at the inbounds spot unless a forward pass is involved. If the out-of-bounds spot is behind a goal line, it is a safety, touchback or field goal (if 2-19-5 applies). If the ball touches a pylon, it is out of bounds behind the goal line.

ART. 3 . . . When a runner goes out of bounds, the inbounds spot is fixed by the yard line through the foremost point of the ball at the time the runner crosses the plane of the sideline.

ART. 4 . . . When the ball becomes dead, play is resumed at the inbounds spot, unless it is a legal forward-pass incompleteness, a replay due to an inadvertent whistle or a replayed try, in which case the ball is returned to the previous spot.

Rule **5** Series of Downs, Number of Down and Team Possessions After Penalty

SECTION 1 SERIES OF DOWNS

ART. 1 . . . The team which next puts the ball in play by scrimmage to start the game or half, following a try or touchback is awarded a series of four consecutive-ly numbered downs in which to advance the ball to the zone to gain.

- Each awarded first down starts a new series of four consecutively num-bered downs.
- The referee shall correct the number of the next down prior to the ball be-coming live after a new series of downs is awarded and prior to the decla-ration of the end of any period.

ART. 2 . . . A new series of downs is awarded:

- After a first, second or third down, a new series of downs shall be awarded only after considering the effect of any act during the down other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike conduct fouls by A, and any dead-ball foul by B.
- After a fourth down, a new series of downs shall be awarded only after considering the effect of any act during the down, except a nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul.

ART. 3 . . . When a scrimmage down ends with the ball in the field of play or out of bounds between the goal lines, a new series is awarded to:

- A, if the ball belongs to A on or beyond the zone to gain.
- B, if the ball belongs to B at the end of any down.
- B, if at the end of the fourth down, the ball belongs to A behind the zone to gain.
- The team in possession at the end of the down, if there is a change of team possession during the down, unless the penalty is accepted for a non post-scrimmage kick foul which occurred before the change of possession.
- R, if K legally kicks during any scrimmage kick down and the ball is re-covered by R, is in joint possession of opponents, goes out of bounds or becomes dead with no player in possession..
- R at the spot of first touching by K, if K is first to touch the kicked ball be-yond the expanded neutral zone before it is touched beyond this zone by R and before it has come to rest.

SECTION 2 DOWN AND POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY

ART. 1 . . . When a penalty is declined, the number of the next down is the same as if the foul had not occurred. If a double foul occurs during a down, the number of the next down is the same as that of the down in which the foul occurred. After a distance penalty, the ball belongs to the team in possession at the time of the

foul unless it is a 2-14-2h (post-scrimmage kick) foul. Team possession may then change if a new series is awarded.

ART. 2 . . . Foul during a scrimmage down and before any change of possession:

- When a foul occurs during a scrimmage down and before any change of team possession, and before a receiver is first to touch a scrimmage kick while it is beyond the neutral zone, the ball belongs to A or K after enforcement unless:
 - It is a 2-14-2h (post-scrimmage kick) foul; or
 - K fouls and R selects succeeding spot enforcement. (10-4-2 EXCEPTION)
- The number of the next down is the same as that of the down during which the foul occurred unless penalty acceptance includes a first down or loss of down, or the enforcement or the advance results in a first down.
- The loss-of-down aspect of a penalty has no significance following a change of possession or if the zone to gain is reached after enforcement.

ART. 3 . . . When a foul occurs prior to a scrimmage down, or simultaneously with the snap, the number of the next down after enforcement is the same as the number established before the foul occurred, unless enforcement for a foul by B results in a first down.

ART. 4 . . . Following a foul, a series of downs ends when:

- The acceptance of the penalty includes the award of a first down.
- Acceptance or declination of any penalty leaves A in possession beyond the line-to-gain.
- Declination of any penalty leaves A in possession behind the line to gain after fourth down.
- Declination of any penalty leaves B in possession.
- There is acceptance or declination of the penalty for any foul which occurs after team possession changes during the down.
- R is first to touch a scrimmage kick while it is beyond the neutral zone, unless a non-post-scrimmage kick foul occurs before the kick ends and the penalty is accepted.
- Acceptance of a penalty on fourth down which carries a loss of down leaves A in possession behind the line to gain.

ART. 5 . . . After a series of downs ends, a new series is awarded unless one of the following is involved: a try or a field goal (if 2-19-5 applies). The first down is awarded to the team in possession when the foul occurs unless, declining the penalty leaves the other team in possession, or as in (c) and (f), accepting or declining the penalty leaves the other team in possession after fourth down. (5-2-4c, f)

SECTION 3 THE ZONE TO GAIN AND MEASUREMENTS

ART. 1 . . . The zone to gain is the next 20- or 40-yard line in advance of the ball's foremost point when a new series of downs is awarded. When a new series of downs is awarded, the penalties for all fouls (including nonplayer and unsportsmanlike) committed prior to the ready-for-play shall be administered before the zone to gain is established. The zone to gain then remains fixed until the series ends and a new zone to gain is established.

ART. 2 . . . A ball touching the goal-line plane, when it becomes dead is in the end zone, even though it is moving away from the nearer end line and has its foremost point in the field of play.

Rule **6** Kicking the Ball

SECTION 1 SCRIMMAGE KICKS

ART. 1 . . . K may punt or place kick (if 2-19-5 applies) from at least 2 yards behind the neutral zone if declared prior to the ball being made ready for play. If a scrimmage kick is declared, R must be given adequate time to substitute. If a scrimmage kick is declared, K must kick the ball. K may again declare its intention to either kick or run a play from scrimmage following: a charged team time-out by either team, an official's time-out, a period ends, or a penalty is enforced. R may not punt or place kick.

ART. 2 . . . Any receiver may catch or recover a scrimmage kick in the field of play and advance, unless it is during a try. R may catch a scrimmage kick in K's end zone.

ART. 3 . . . Any K player may catch a scrimmage kick. Such catch causes the ball to become dead.

ART. 4 . . . Any K player may recover a scrimmage kick while it is beyond the neutral zone or the expanded neutral zone. Such catch or recovery by K beyond the neutral zone causes the ball to become dead.

ART. 5 . . . When a punt, that has crossed the neutral zone touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, it is dead and belongs to R at that spot.

ART. 6 . . . When a punt that has crossed the neutral zone and not yet touched the ground touches a player from R and is then caught by K, it is dead and belongs to K at that spot.

ART. 7 . . . When any K player touches a scrimmage kick beyond the expanded neutral zone to R's goal line before it is touched beyond the neutral zone by R and before the ball has come to rest, it is referred to as "first touching of the kick" and the place is the "spot of first touching." Such touching is ignored if it is caused by R pushing or blocking K into contact with the ball.

If any K player touches a scrimmage kick in this manner, R may take the ball at the spot of first touching, or any spot if there is more than one spot of first touching, or R may choose to have the ball put in play as determined by the action which follows first touching. The right of R to take the ball at the spot of first touching by K is canceled if R touches the kick and thereafter during the down commits a foul or if the penalty is accepted for any foul committed during the down.

ART. 8 . . . The touching of a low scrimmage kick by any player is ignored if the touching is in or behind the neutral zone. If a scrimmage kick occurs, the neutral zone shall not be expanded into the end zone.

ART. 9 . . . When any scrimmage kick is out of bounds between the goal lines or becomes dead inbounds between the goal lines while no player is in possession, or inbounds anywhere while opponents are in joint possession, the ball is awarded to R. Following an out-of-bounds kick, the ball is put in play at the inbounds spot unless R chooses a spot of first touching.

PENALTY: Art. 1 – Illegal kick – (S27) – 10 yards.

SECTION 2 TOUCHBACK

ART. 1 . . . It is a touchback if any scrimmage kick:

- Which is not a scoring attempt or which is a grounded three-point field-goal attempt (if 2-19-5 applies), breaks the plane of R's goal line, unless R chooses a spot of first touching by K
- Which is a three-point field-goal attempt (if 2-19-5 applies), in flight touches a K player in R's end zone, or after breaking the plane of R's goal line is unsuccessful.

ART. 2 . . . If a scrimmage kick becomes dead in the kicker's end zone, it is a safety.

SECTION 3 KICK CATCH INTERFERENCE

ART. 1 . . . While any scrimmage kick is in flight beyond the neutral zone to the receiver's goal line, K shall not:

- Touch the ball or R, unless blocked into the ball or R, or to ward off a blocker; or
- Obstruct R's path to the ball.

NOTE: This prohibition does not apply after a scrimmage kick has been touched by a receiver who was clearly beyond the neutral zone at the time of touching.

EXCEPTION: K may catch, touch, muff or bat a scrimmage kick in flight beyond the neutral zone if no player of R is in position to catch the ball.

PENALTY: Art. 1 – kick-catching interference – (S28) – R may accept the results of the play, an awarded first down after enforcement of a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul, or a 10-yard penalty from the previous spot and a replay of the down.

Rule **7** Snapping, Handling and Passing the Ball

SECTION 1 BEFORE THE SNAP

ART. 1 . . . The snapper may be over the ball, but the snapper's feet must be behind the neutral zone and no part of the snapper's person, other than a hand(s) on the ball, may be beyond the foremost point of the ball.

ART. 2 . . . The snapper may lift the ball for lateral rotation but may not rotate end-for-end, or change the location or fail to keep the long axis of the ball at right angles to the line of scrimmage.

ART. 3 . . . Following the ready-for-play and after touching the ball, the snapper shall not:

- Remove both hands from the ball.
- Make any movement that simulates a snap.
- Fail to clearly pause before the snap.
- Following adjustment, lift or move the ball other than in a legal snap.

ART. 4 . . . An illegal snap or other snap infraction causes the ball to remain dead.

ART. 5 . . . No player, other than the snapper, shall encroach on the neutral zone after the ball is ready for play by touching the ball or an opponent or by being in the neutral zone to give defensive signals.

ART. 6 . . . Following the ready-for-play and after the snapper has placed a hand(s) on the ball during a non-scrimmage kick play, encroachment occurs if:

- Any other player breaks the plane of the neutral zone;
- A defensive player makes contact with the ball prior to the end of the snap; or
- A defensive player makes contact with the hand(s) or arm(s) of the snapper prior to the snapper releasing the ball.

ART. 7 . . . Following the snap and before the ball is kicked during a scrimmage kick play, encroachment occurs if:

- Any player of either team breaks the plane of the neutral zone;

ART. 8 . . . After the ball is ready for play and before the snap begins during a non-scrimmage kick play, no false start shall be made by any A player. It is a false start if:

- A shift, feigned charge, or quick movement that simulates action at the snap.
- Any act is clearly intended to cause B to encroach.

ART. 9 . . . After the ball is snapped and before the ball is kicked during a scrimmage kick play, no false start shall be made by any A player. It is a false start if:

- A shift, feigned charge, or quick movement that simulates action at the snap.
- Any act that is clearly intended to cause B to encroach.
- Any A player other than the kicker is moving at the time the ball is kicked.

ART. 10 . . . If a false start causes B to encroach, only the false start is penalized.

ART. 11 . . . No B player shall use disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with A's signals or movements.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 5, 6, 7 – Encroachment – (S7-18) – 5 yards; Arts. 2, 3 – snap infraction (S7-19) – 5 yards; Art. 8,9 – false start – (S7-19) – 5 yards; Art. 11 – disconcerting act – (S7-23) – 5 yards

SECTION 2 FORMATION/POSITION, NUMBERING AND ACTION AT THE SNAP

ART. 1 . . . After the ready-for-play and before the snap, each player of A who participated in the previous down and each substitute for A must have been, momentarily, 5 yards inbounds.

ART. 2 . . . Player formation and numbering requirements include:

- Players of the same team shall not participate during the same down while wearing identical numbers.
- At the snap, A must be in a legal scrimmage formation as in 2-12-1.
- B players may be anywhere on or behind their line of scrimmage.

ART. 3 . . . A snap shall be such that the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches another A player or the ground. A scrimmage down must start with a legal snap. An illegal snap causes the ball to remain dead.

ART. 4 . . . After a huddle or shift, all A players shall come to an absolute stop and shall remain stationary simultaneously without movement of hands, feet, head or body for at least one second before the snap.

ART. 5 . . . Only one A player may be in motion at the snap and then only if such motion is not toward the opponent's goal line.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 2b, c – Illegal formation – (S19) – 5 yards; Art. 3 – illegal snap – (S7-19) – 5 yards; Art. 2a – illegal numbering – (S19) – 5 yards; Art. 4 – illegal shift – (S20) – 5 yards; Art. 5 – illegal motion – (S20) – 5 yards;

SECTION 3 HANDING THE BALL

ART. 1 . . . Any player may hand the ball backward at any time.

ART. 2 . . . No player may hand the ball forward except during a scrimmage down before a change of possession, provided both players are behind the neutral zone.

ART. 3 . . . During a scrimmage down after a change of team possession, no player may hand the ball forward to a teammate.

PENALTY: Arts. 2, 3 – Illegal handing – (S30-9) – 5 yards and loss of down. The loss-of-down penalty does not apply when there has been a change of team possession.

SECTION 4 FUMBLE AND BACKWARD PASS

ART. 1 . . . During any down, any player in possession may make a backward pass or may lose player possession through a fumble.

ART. 2 . . . If a fumble or a backward pass is caught by any player, the player may advance.

ART. 3 . . . If a fumble or backward pass hits the ground, the play is dead.

ART. 4 . . . The ball belongs to the passing or fumbling team (unless lost after fourth down) if a fumble or a backward pass:

- a. Goes out of bounds between the goal lines; or
- b. Becomes dead inbounds while opponents are in joint possession.

ART. 5 . . . If a fumble or a backward pass is out of bounds behind a goal line, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal and the result is either a touch-back or a safety.

SECTION 5 FORWARD-PASS CLASSIFICATION

ART. 1 . . . It is a legal forward pass, if during a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a player of A throws the ball with both feet of the passer behind the neutral zone when the ball is released. Only one forward pass may be thrown during the down.

ART. 2 . . . An illegal forward pass is a foul. Illegal forward passes include:

- a. A pass after team possession has changed during the down.
- b. A pass from in or beyond the neutral zone.
- c. A second and subsequent forward pass(es) thrown during a down.
- d. A pass intentionally thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible offensive receiver, or thrown incomplete to save loss of yardage or to conserve time.

EXCEPTION: It is legal for a player positioned directly behind the snapper to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball forward to the ground immediately after receiving the snap that has neither been muffed nor touched the ground.

ART. 3 . . . If the penalty for an illegal forward pass is accepted, measurement is from the spot of such forward pass. If the offended team declines the distance penalty, it has the choice of having the down counted at the spot of the illegal incomplete forward pass or (if the illegal forward pass is caught or intercepted) of having the ball put in play as determined by the action which followed the catch.

ART. 4 . . . A forward pass, legal or illegal, is complete and the ball may be advanced when caught by any player of A or B. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by two opponents, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the passing team.

ART. 5 . . . A forward pass, legal or illegal, is incomplete and the ball becomes dead when the pass touches the ground or goes out of bounds. It is also incomplete when a player in the air possesses the pass and alights so that their first contact with the ground or with anything other than a player or game official is on or outside a boundary. When an incompletion occurs the down counts unless the pass is after a change of possession. If the pass is legal, the passing team next snaps the ball at the previous spot, unless lost after fourth down.

ART. 6 . . . All player are eligible pass receivers.

ART. 7 . . . Pass interference restrictions only apply beyond the neutral zone and only if the legal forward pass, untouched by B in or behind the neutral zone,

crosses the neutral zone. Pass interference restrictions are in effect for all A and B players until the ball is touched or the pass is incomplete.

ART. 8 . . . Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass begin for:

- A with the snap.
- B when the ball leaves the passer's hand.

ART. 9 . . . Pass interference restrictions on a legal forward pass end for:

- All players when the pass has been touched by any player.
- All players when the pass is incomplete.

ART. 10 . . . It is forward-pass interference if any player of A or B who is beyond the neutral zone interferes with an eligible opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch or bat the pass.

ART. 11 . . . It is not forward-pass interference if unavoidable contact occurs when two or more players are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.

PENALTY: Art. 2a – Illegal forward pass – (S30) – 5 yards; Arts. 2b, c – Illegal forward pass – (S30-9) – 5 yards plus loss of down; Art. 2d – intentional grounding – (S31-9) – 5 yards plus loss of down; Art. 10 – Pass interference – (S28) – 10 yards.

Rule 8 Scoring Plays and Touchbacks

SECTION 1 POINT VALUES

The game is won by the team which accumulates the most points. Points are scored as follows for:

TABLE 8-1
POINT VALUES

Touchdown	6 points
Field Goal (if approved by State Association Adoption)	3 points
Safety Points awarded to the opponent	2 points
Successful Try	
a. Touchdown - 10 yd	2 points
b. Touchdown - 3 yd	1 point
c. Field Goal - 3 yd (if approved by State Association Adoption)	1 point
Forfeited Game	Game score is: Offended Team: 1, Opponent: 0 But if offended team is ahead, the score stands.

SECTION 2 TOUCHDOWN

ART. 1 . . . Possession of a live ball in the opponent's end zone is always a touchdown.

- a. It is a touchdown when a runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line.
- b. It is a touchdown when a loose ball is caught by a player while the ball is on or behind the opponent's goal line.
- c. Following a touchdown, a teammate of the scoring player must remove the scorer's flag in view of the official.

ART. 2 . . . If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike conduct or a nonplayer foul) during a down in which a touchdown is scored, and there was not a change in possession during the down, A may accept the results of the play and choose enforcement of the PENALTY:

- a. On the try; or
- b. At the subsequent starting spot.

ART. 3 . . . If an opponent of the scoring team commits a foul (other than unsportsmanlike conduct or a nonplayer foul) during a down in which a touchdown is scored and there was a change of possession during the down, and such foul occurs after the change of possession, the scoring team may accept the results of the play and choose enforcement of the PENALTY:

- a. On the try; or
- b. At the subsequent starting spot.

ART. 4 . . . If either team commits an unsportsmanlike conduct or a nonplayer foul during a down in which a touchdown is scored, the opponent may accept the penalty and choose enforcement of the PENALTY:

- a. On the try; or
- b. At the subsequent starting spot.

ART. 5. . . If after a down in which a touchdown is scored, and prior to the initial ready-for-play signal for the try, either team commits any foul for which the enforcement spot is the succeeding spot, the offended team may accept the penalty and choose enforcement of the PENALTY:

- a. On the try; or
- b. At the subsequent starting spot.

SECTION 3 TRY

ART. 1 . . . After a touchdown, the scoring team shall attempt a try during which the ball is snapped from a spot designated by A (either B's 3-yard or 10-yard line) unless moved by penalty. This involves a scrimmage down which is neither numbered nor timed.

EXCEPTION: If a touchdown is scored during the last down of the fourth period, the try shall not be attempted unless the point(s) would affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

ART. 2 . . . The try begins when the ball is ready for play. It ends when:

- a. B secures possession.

- b. It is apparent a place kick will not score (If 8-3-3 note applies).
- c. The try is successful.
- d. The ball becomes dead for any other reason.

ART. 3 . . . During a try, A may score two points from what would be a touchdown (from B's 10-yard line). A may score one point for what would be a touchdown (from B's 3-yard line), field goal (from B's 3-yard line) under rules governing play at other times during the game. Only A may score during a try.

NOTE: A may score one point from what would be a field goal (from B's 3-yard line) if approved by state association.

ART. 4 . . . If during a successful try, a loss of down foul by A occurs, there is no score and no replay.

ART. 5 . . . If during a successful try, a foul by B occurs, A is given the choice of:

- a. Accepting the penalty and replaying the down following enforcement; or
- b. Accepting the result of the play and enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding starting spot.

ART. 6 . . . If during an unsuccessful try:

- a. A foul by A/K occurs, the penalty is obviously declined, the results of the play stand and there is no replay.
- b. A foul by B/R occurs, and the penalty is accepted, the down is replayed after enforcement.

ART. 7 . . . If a double foul occurs, the down shall be replayed.

ART. 8 . . . When a try is replayed, A may choose to move to the other try spot (B's 3-yard line or B's 10-yard line). Any penalties previously enforced on the try will be enforced at the new spot.

ART. 9 . . . After a try, the opponent of the scoring team shall gain possession.

SECTION 4 FIELD GOAL

ART. 1 . . . State associations may adopt the use of a field goal.

ART. 2 . . . A field goal is scored as follows:

- a. The field-goal attempt shall be a place kick from scrimmage.
- b. The ball must be snapped to a placeholder, and the placeholder must receive the snap anywhere at least 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. The kicked ball shall pass between the vertical uprights or the inside of the uprights extended and above the crossbar of the opponent's goal.

ART. 3 . . . After a field goal, the opponent of the scoring team shall gain possession.

ART. 4 . . . If a foul by R occurs during a successful field goal, K is given the choice of:

- a. Accepting the penalty and replaying the down following enforcement; or
- b. Accepting the result of the play and enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot.

SECTION 5 FORCE, SAFETY AND TOUCHBACK

ART. 1 . . . Responsibility for forcing the ball from the field of play across a goal line is attributed to the player who carries, snaps, passes, fumbles or kicks the ball.

- a. The muffing or batting of a pass, kick or fumble in flight is not considered a new force; and

ART. 2 . . . It is a safety when:

- a. A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across their own goal line, and it becomes dead there in that team's possession.

EXCEPTION: When a defensive player intercepts an opponent's forward pass; intercepts an opponent's fumble or backward pass; or an R player catches or recovers a scrimmage kick between R's 5-yard line and the goal line, and their original momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball remains in the end zone and is declared dead in the end zone in that team's possession or it goes out of bounds in the end zone, the ball belongs to the team in possession at the spot where the pass or fumble was intercepted or the kick was caught. This includes a fumble that goes from the end zone into the field of play and out of bounds. (4-3-1 EXCEPTION)

- b. A player who is either in the field of play or in their end zone, forces a loose ball from the field of play to or across their goal line by kick, pass, fumble, or snap, provided the ball becomes dead there in their team's possession, or the ball is out of bounds when it becomes dead on or behind their goal line. This does not apply to a legal forward pass which becomes incomplete.
- c. A player on offense commits any foul in their own end zone and the penalty is accepted.

ART. 3 . . . It is a touchback when:

- a. Any scrimmage kick:
 1. Which is not a scoring attempt, breaks the plane of R's goal line unless R chooses a spot of first touching by K.
 2. Which is a three-point field-goal attempt, in flight touches a K player in R's end zone, or after breaking the plane of R's goal line is unsuccessful.
- b. A forward pass is intercepted in B's end zone and becomes dead there in B's possession.

ART. 4 . . . The team whose goal line is involved shall put the ball in play on its 14-yard line by a snap after a touchback.

ART. 5 . . . The team whose goal line was not involved shall put the ball in play on its 30-yard line by a snap after a safety.

Rule 9 Conduct of Players and Others

SECTION 1 HELPING THE RUNNER

An A player shall not push, pull or lift the runner to assist the runner's forward progress.

PENALTY: Helping the runner (S35) – 5 yards.

SECTION 2 ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS

ART. 1 . . . An offensive player (except the runner) shall not:

- Grasp or encircle any teammate to form interlocked blocking.
- Use hands, arms or legs to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent.

ART. 2 . . . The runner shall not:

- grasp a teammate.
- Extend hands or arms to ward off an opponent.
- Use hands, arms or the ball where contact occurs between the runner and an opponent that denies the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag or flag belt.

ART. 3 . . . A defensive player shall not:

- Initiate contact with an opponent.
- Use hands to add momentum to the charge of a teammate.
- Use hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent other than the runner.
- Initiate contact with an eligible receiver.
- Intentionally remove a flag or flag belt from an opponent who does not have possession of the ball.

EXCEPTIONS:

- A player who has been faked to.
- A player who has muffed a pass or airborne fumble and is attempting to secure possession.

PENALTY: Arts. 1a, 3a, b, d, e – Illegal use of hands or arms – (S34) – 10 yards; Art. 1b – interlocked blocking – (S35) – 10 yards; Arts. 1c, 3c – holding – (S33) – 10 yards; Art. 2 – flag guarding – (S38) – 10 yards

SECTION 3 BLOCKING

ART. 1 . . . Blocking by any player is illegal unless it is a screen block.

ART. 2 . . . After assuming a legal position, a screen blocker may move to maintain legal position by moving in the same direction or path as the opponent. Screen blocking shall take place without initiating contact during the process of the block. A screen blocker shall not extend the arms, or use hands, arms, elbows or legs to initiate contact.

PENALTY: Art. 1 – Illegal Blocking – (S34) – 10 yards.

SECTION 4 ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT

ART. 1 . . . No player or nonplayer shall fight.

ART. 2 . . . No player or nonplayer shall intentionally contact a game official.

ART. 3 . . . No player or nonplayer shall:

- Swing the foot, shin or knee into an opponent, nor extend the knee to meet a blocker.
- Charge into or throw an opponent to the ground.
- Hurdle an opponent.

- d. Position themselves on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
- e. Lift a teammate to gain an advantage.
- f. Throw a piece of equipment to trip an opponent.
- g. Make any other contact with an opponent, which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness.
- h. Strike an opponent with fist, locked hands, forearm or elbow, nor kick or knee them.
- i. Trip an opponent.

ART. 4 . . . Roughing the passer. Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer or player attempting to pass the ball. Defensive players must make an effort to pull the passer's flag. Defensive players may not contact the passing arm or head of the player attempting to throw a pass. Defensive players may not bat a ball from the attempted passer's arm. No defensive player shall commit any illegal personal contact foul listed in 9-4-3 against the passer.

ART. 5 . . . Unintentional contact between a nonplayer and a game official in the restricted area while the ball is live.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 2, 3h – Fighting, intentionally contacting a game official, striking, kicking or kneeling – (S32-37) – 10 yards and disqualification. Also, a first down if by the defense. If a coach is the offender in Article 2, see 9-8 Penalty for disqualification procedure; Arts. 3a through g– Other personal fouls – (S32) – 10 yards, and first down if by the defense; Art. 3i – illegal tripping – (S32-36) – 10 yards, and first down if by the defense; Art. 4 – roughing the passer – (S32-29-8) – 10 yards and a first down from the dead ball spot when the dead ball spot is beyond the neutral zone and A has possession of the ball at the end of the down and there has been no change of team possession, or otherwise 10 yards and first down from previous spot; Art. 5 – Unintentional contact with a game official in the restricted area – (S32-26) – 10 yards, and first down if by the defense – Nonplayer foul. For the first offense, 10 yards from the succeeding spot. For the second offense (S32-26-37) – 10 yards from the succeeding spot and disqualification of the head coach. Arts. 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 – Disqualification also if any fouls under these articles are judged by the game official to be flagrant – (S37).

SECTION 5 NONCONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY PLAYERS

ART. 1 . . . No player shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority for the game. Examples are, but not limited to:

- a. Baiting or taunting acts or words or insignia worn which engenders ill will.
NOTE: The NFHS disapproves of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean others under any circumstances.
- b. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
- c. Any delayed, excessive or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon them self.
- d. Kicking at the ball, other than during a legal kick.

- e. Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or unless with permission of a game official.
- f. Refusing to comply with a game official's request.
- g. Using any form of alcohol or tobacco, or be under the influence of (i.e., impaired by) a controlled or illicit substance(s) beginning with arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the game.

ART. 2 . . . When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, the player shall not:

- a. Intentionally kick the ball.
- b. Spike the ball into the ground.
- c. Throw the ball high into the air or from the field of play or end zone.
- d. Intentionally fail to place the ball on the ground or immediately return it to a nearby game official.

PENALTY: Arts. 1a-g, 2 – Unsportsmanlike conduct – (S24) 10 yards, first down if by defense. If dead ball, (S7-24) – 10 yards, first down if by defense. Also disqualification if judged by the game official to be flagrant – (S37). In Article 1a, the player must remove the offending item before they are allowed to participate. The second unsportsmanlike foul results in disqualification.

SECTION 6 ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION

ART. 1 . . . Prior to a change of possession, or when there is no change of possession, no player of A or K shall go out of bounds and return to the field during the down unless blocked out of bounds by an opponent. If a player is blocked out of bounds by an opponent and returns to the field during the down, they shall return at the first opportunity.

ART. 2 . . . No player shall intentionally go out of bounds during the down and:

- a. Return to the field;
- b. Intentionally touch the ball;
- c. Influence the play; or
- d. Otherwise participate.

ART. 3 . . . No replaced player, substitute, coach, athletic trainer or other attendant shall hinder an opponent, touch the ball, influence the play or otherwise participate.

ART. 4 . . . It is illegal participation:

- a. When any player, replaced player, substitute, coach, athletic trainer or other attendant enters and participates during a down.
- b. If an injured player is not replaced for at least one down; unless the halftime intermission or overtime intermission occurs.
- c. To have eight or more players participating at the snap.
- d. To use a player, replaced player, substitute, coach, athletic trainer or other attendant in a substitution or pretended substitution to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap.
- e. For a player to be lying on the ground to deceive opponents at or immediately before the snap.
- f. For a disqualified player to re-enter the game.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 2, 3, 4 – Illegal participation – (S25) – 10 yards.

SECTION 7 ILLEGAL KICKING AND BATTING

ART. 1 . . . No player shall intentionally kick the ball other than a kicker during a scrimmage kick.

ART. 2 . . . No player shall bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight, or a low scrimmage kick in flight which they are attempting to block from behind the neutral zone.

ART. 3 . . . Any pass in flight may be batted in any direction by a receiver unless it is a backward pass batted forward by the passing team.

ART. 4 . . . A ball in player possession shall not be batted by a player of either team.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 2, 3, 4 – Illegal kicking or batting – (S27) – 10 yards.

SECTION 8 NONCONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY NONPLAYERS

ART. 1 . . . No coach, substitute, athletic trainer or other team attendant shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority for the game. Examples are, but not limited to:

a. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.

NOTE: The NFHS disapproves of any form of taunting which is intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule or demean others under any circumstances.

b. Attempting to influence a decision by a game official.

c. Disrespectfully addressing a game official.

d. Indicating objections to a game official's decision.

e. Using any illegal communication equipment as outlined in 1-5-3c(2) and 1-6.

f. Holding an unauthorized conference.

g. The failure of a team to:

1. Comply with the restrictions of 3-2-2 at the coin toss or simulated coin toss; or

2. Be ready to start the first half; or

3. Be on the field following the conclusion of the halftime intermission; or

4. Be ready to start the second half at the conclusion of the mandatory warm-up period.

h. Following pregame verification as in 1-5-4, a coach allowing his/her players to use illegal equipment. (1-5-3)

i. Being on the field except as a substitute or replaced player. (3-7-6, 9-6-4a)

j. Using any form of alcohol or tobacco, or be under the influence of (i.e., impaired by) a controlled or illicit substance(s) beginning with arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the game.

k. Being outside the team box, but not on the field. (9-8-3)

l. A substitute leaving the team box during a fight.

ART. 2 . . . Three attendants, none of whom is a coach, may enter the field to attend their team during a charged time-out or a TV/radio time-out; during the one-minute time-out following a try, a successful field goal or safety; and between periods and during an official's time-out for unusual heat and humidity. During a time-out for injury, the coach and/or such attendants as may be deemed necessary by the referee may, with permission, enter to attend the injured player(s).

In no other case, except as in 2-5, shall any nonplayer other than an entering substitute enter without the referee's permission.

ART. 3 . . . A nonplayer shall not be outside their team box unless to become a player or to return as a replaced player. A maximum of three coaches may be in the restricted area. No player, nonplayer or coach shall be in the restricted area when the ball is live.

PENALTY: Art. 1a through j – Nonplayer foul – (S24), (S7-24 if dead ball) – 10 yards, and first down if by defense. Arts. 1g, 1h and 3 – Each nonplayer foul is charged to the Head Coach – (S24-37), (S7-24 if dead ball) – 10 yards, and first down if by defense. Disqualification of the Head Coach if 1h is related to the illegal alteration of flags. Art. 2 – Nonplayer foul – (S19) – 5 yards, unless repeated – or unsportsmanlike (S24) – 10 yards, and first down if by defense. Arts. 1k, 3 – Nonplayer foul – First offense – (S15) – warning, Second offense – (S7-26) – 5 yards, Each subsequent offense – (S7-26-24) – 10 yards, and first down if by defense; Art. 1l – Nonplayer foul – (S24-37) – 10 yards and disqualification, and first down if by defense. Arts. 1 and 2 – Any single foul judged by the game official to be flagrant is disqualification. A second unsportsmanlike foul with a 10-yard penalty results in disqualification. A disqualified member of the coaching staff shall be removed from the stadium area and be prohibited from any further contact, with his team, direct or indirect, during the remainder of the game. For failure to comply, the referee may forfeit the game.

SECTION 9 UNFAIR ACTS

ART. 1 . . . No player or nonplayer or person(s) not subject to the rules shall hinder play by an unfair act which has no specific rule coverage.

ART. 2 . . . No team shall repeatedly commit fouls which halve the distance to the goal line.

ART. 3 . . . No player shall hide the ball under a jersey.

ART. 4 . . . No player shall use a kicking tee in violation of Rule 1-3-4.

ART. 5 . . . Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.

PENALTY: Arts. 1, 2, 5 – Unfair act – (S24) – the referee enforces any penalty he/she considers equitable, including the award of a score; Art. 2 – Repeated fouls – the game may be forfeited; Art. 3 – Hiding the ball under a jersey – (S24) – 10 yards; Art. 4 – Using illegal kicking tee (S24) – 10 yards.

NOTE: The penalties in Rules 9-9-3 and 9-9-4 are not charged to the coach or player for the purpose of unsportsmanlike conduct disqualifications.

Rule Enforcement of Penalties

SECTION 1 PROCEDURE AFTER A FOUL

ART. 1 . . . When a foul occurs during a live ball, the referee shall, at the end of the down, notify both teams. The officials shall inform the designated representative of the offended team regarding the rights of penalty acceptance or declination and shall indicate to them the number of the ensuing down, distance to be gained, and status of the ball for each available choice. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined. If the penalty is declined or if there is a double foul, there is no loss of distance. In case of a double foul, the designated representative is not consulted since the penalties offset. The choice of options may not be revoked. Decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged team time-out is granted.

ART. 2 . . . When a foul occurs during a dead ball between downs or prior to a snap, the covering official shall not permit the ball to become live. The referee shall notify both teams, and the designated representative of the offended team will be presented with the options and the effect of acceptance or declination on the down and distance to be gained. The designated representative may accept or decline the penalty.

ART. 3 . . . When a live-ball foul by one team is followed by a dead-ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence.

ART. 4 . . . When the same team commits a live-ball foul followed by one or more dead-ball fouls, all fouls may be penalized.

ART. 5 . . . Enforcement of a penalty cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the prescribed penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway from the spot of enforcement to the goal line.

ART. 6 . . . The following fouls by A include loss of the right to replay a down:

- Illegally handing the ball forward.
- Illegal forward pass.
- Intentional grounding.

ART. 7 . . . The following fouls by B give A an automatic first down:

- Illegal personal contact as in 9-4.
- Noncontact unsportsmanlike conduct by players as in 9-5.
- Noncontact unsportsmanlike conduct by nonplayers as in 9-8-1.
- Team box and restricted area violations (third and subsequent) as in 9-8-2 and 9-8-3.

SECTION 2 DOUBLE AND MULTIPLE FOULS

ART. 1 . . . It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls, other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike, during the same live-ball period in which:

- There is no change of team possession, unless all fouls committed by R are post-scrimmage kick fouls; or
- There is a change of team possession, and the team in possession at the end of the down fouls prior to final change of possession unless all fouls committed by R are post-scrimmage kick fouls; or
- There is a change of possession and the team in final possession accepts the penalty for its opponent's foul at any time during the down.

In (a), (b) or (c), the penalties cancel and the down is replayed.

ART. 2 . . . If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession and the play does not have a post-scrimmage kick foul, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided:

- The foul by the team last gaining possession is not prior to the final change of possession; and
- The team last gaining possession declines the penalty for its opponent's foul(s), other than a nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul.

In this case, the team that was not last in possession has no penalty options until the team last in possession has made its penalty decision on the fouls prior to the change of possession. After that decision by the team last in possession, the team not last in possession may decline or accept the penalty for the foul by the team last in possession or choose which penalty to have enforced in the case that the team last in possession committed more than one foul following the change.

ART. 3 . . . If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of possession and all R fouls are post-scrimmage kick fouls, then R may retain the ball, provided R declines the penalty for K's foul(s), other than a nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul. In this case, K has no penalty options until R has made its penalty decision. After that decision by R, K may decline or accept the penalty for the foul by R or choose which penalty to have enforced in the case that R committed more than one foul following the change.

ART. 4 . . . When two or more live-ball fouls (other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike) are committed during the same down by the same team (multiple fouls), only one penalty may be enforced. The designated representative of the offended team may choose which one shall be administered, or all penalties may be declined. When a team commits a nonplayer or unsportsmanlike foul during that same down, it is administered from the succeeding spot as established by the acceptance or declination of the penalty for the other foul.

ART. 5 . . . Enforcement of penalties for unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball fouls:

- Penalties for dead-ball fouls, other than when both teams commit unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball personal fouls prior to the completion of penalty administration for those fouls, are administered separately and in

the order of occurrence. A dead-ball foul is not coupled with a live-ball foul or another dead-ball foul to create a double or multiple foul.

- b. If both teams commit unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball personal fouls prior to the completion of penalty administration for those fouls, the distance penalty for an equal number of 10-yard unsportsmanlike, nonplayer or dead-ball personal fouls will offset. Any remaining penalties will be enforced separately and in the order of occurrence.
- c. A disqualified player or nonplayer shall be removed.

ART. 6 . . . A foul during a try is not paired with a dead-ball foul to create a double or multiple foul.

SECTION 3 TYPES OF PLAY

ART. 1 . . . A loose-ball play is action as defined in 2-28-1a-d.

ART. 2 . . . A running play is any action as defined in 2-28-2

ART. 3 . . . The end of the run is:

- a. Where the ball becomes dead in the runner's possession.
- b. Where the runner loses possession if the run is followed by a loose ball.
- c. The spot of the catch or recovery when the momentum exception as in 8-5-2a EXCEPTION is in effect.

SECTION 4 ENFORCEMENT SPOTS

ART. 1 . . . If a foul occurs during a down, the enforcement spot is determined by the action that occurs during the down. This is the spot for penalty enforcement.

ART. 2 . . . The enforcement spot is the previous spot unless 8-5-2c applies for:

- a. A foul which occurs simultaneously with the snap or scrimmage kick;
- b. A foul which occurs behind the line of scrimmage during a loose ball play, as defined in 10-3-1. See 10-5-1e for special enforcement on roughing the passer;
- c. A foul which occurs during a down in which a legal kick occurs and an inadvertent whistle ends the down prior to possession by either team;
- d. A foul by A or B when the related run ends behind the line of scrimmage when there is no change of possession;
- e. A foul by A that occurs behind the line of scrimmage when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage;
- f. A foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage; and
- g. A foul by A or B when the run or related run ends behind the line of scrimmage before a change of possession.

EXCEPTION: The enforcement spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the succeeding spot for fouls by K during a legal scrimmage kick down (other than kick catch interference) prior to the end of the kick when K will not be next to put the ball in play.

ART. 3 . . . The enforcement spot is the spot where the kick ends when R commits a post-scrimmage kick foul (2-14-2h). R fouls behind the post-scrimmage kick spot are spot fouls.

ART. 4 . . . The enforcement spot is the spot of the foul for:

- Illegal batting or illegal kicking;
- An illegal forward pass as in 7-5-2c and intentional grounding as in 7-5-2d;
- A foul by the team in possession that occurs behind the end of the run or related run following a change of possession;
- When A commits any foul in its end zone for which the penalty is accepted (8-5-2c); and
- A foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 when:
 - The run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage; and
 - The foul occurs behind the end of the run or related run.

ART. 5 . . . The enforcement spot is the succeeding spot for:

- An unsportsmanlike foul.
- A dead-ball foul.
- A nonplayer foul.
- Following a change of possession, when the final result is a touchback.

NOTE: The succeeding spot may, at the option of the offended team, be the subsequent starting spot as in 8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 and 8-2-5.

ART. 6 . . . The enforcement spot is the end of the run or related run for:

- A foul by B when the run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage;
- A foul that occurs beyond the end of the run or related run following a change of possession; and
- A foul by A that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 when:
 - The run or related run ends beyond the line of scrimmage; and
 - The foul occurs in advance of the end of the run or related run.

ART. 7 . . . The enforcement spot is the 14-yard line for fouls following a change of possession which are committed by either team when the opponent of the team in possession at the time of the foul is responsible for forcing the ball across the goal line of the team in possession, and the related run ends in the end zone and is followed by a loose ball, regardless of where the loose ball becomes dead.

ART. 8 . . . The enforcement spot is the goal line for fouls following a change of possession, which are committed during running plays by the opponent of the team in possession at the time of the foul when the team in possession is responsible for forcing the ball across its own goal line, and the related run ends in the end zone.

ART. 9 . . . The enforcement spot is the spot where the related run ends for a foul which occurs during a running play as defined in 10-3-2 unless the provisions of 10-4-2 through 10-4-8, or 10-5 apply.

SECTION 5 SPECIAL ENFORCEMENT RULES

ART. 1 . . . The following fouls have special enforcement provisions and options for the offended team:

- Unfair acts. (9-9)

- b. A foul by the opponent of the scoring team on a successful try. (8-3-5)
- c. A foul by the opponents of the scoring team on a successful field goal. (8-4-4)
- d. Fouls that occur during or after a touchdown scoring play. (8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 and 8-2-5)
- e. Roughing the passer. (9-4-4)
- f. Fouls by K during a scrimmage kick down prior to the end of the legal kick. (10-4-2 EXCEPTION)

ART. 2 . . . The score is nullified if the penalty is accepted for a foul, other than nonplayer or unsportsmanlike, by A which occurs during a down resulting in a successful try, field goal or touchdown.

ART. 3 . . . If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone or commits any other foul in its end zone for which the penalty is accepted and enforcement is from or behind its goal line, it is a safety.

PENALTY SUMMARY

LOSS OF 5 YARDS		
Foul	Reference	Signal
Delay of game	3-6-2, 3-6-4	7-21
Illegal substitution	3-7	22
Encroachment	7-1-1, 7-1-5, 7-1-6, 7-1-7	7-18
Snap infraction	7-1-2, 7-1-3, 7-2-3	7-19
False start	7-1-8, 7-1-9	7-19
Disconcerting act	7-1-11	7-23
Illegal formation	7-2-1; 7-2-2b, c	19
Numbering violation	7-2-2a	19
Illegal shift or illegal motion	7-2-4, 7-2-5	20
Illegally handing ball forward (also loss of down)	7-3-2, 7-3-3	30-9
Illegal forward pass (by A; also loss of down)	7-5-2	30-9
Illegal forward pass (by B)	7-5-2	30
Intentional grounding (also loss of down)	7-5-2d	31-9
Helping runner	9-1	35
Sideline interference	9-8-1k	7-26
Attendant illegally on field	9-8-2	19
Nonplayer outside of the team box, but not on field	9-8-3	7-26

LOSS OF 10 YARDS		
Foul	Reference	Signal
Kick-catching interference	6-3	28
Forward-pass interference	7-5-10	28
Illegal blocking technique	9-3-1	34
Interlocked blocking	9-2-1a	35
Holding	9-2-1b; 9-2-3c	33
Runner grasping a teammate	9-2-2a	34
Illegal use of hands or arms	9-2-3a, b, d, e	34
Flag guarding	9-2-2b, c	38
Charging into an opponent obviously out of the play (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3b	32
Hurdle an opponent (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3c	32
Tripping (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3i	36
Roughing passer (also first down)	9-4-4	32-29-8
Illegal personal contact in restricted area (also first down if by defense)	9-4-5	32-26
Unsportsmanlike conduct by player or nonplayer (also first down if by defense)	9-5, 9-8-1	24
Illegal participation	9-6	25
Illegal kicking or batting the ball	9-7	27
Sideline interference (third and subsequent) (also first down if by defense)	9-8-3	26
Nonplayer illegally on field	9-8-3	24
Unfair acts	9-9	24
DISQUALIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN 10-YARD PENALTIES		
Foul	Reference	Signal
Fighting by player or nonplayer (also first down if by defense)	9-4-1	32-37
Intentionally contacting a game official (also first down if by defense)	9-4-2	32-37
Striking, kicking, kneeling (also first down if by defense)	9-4-3h	32-37
Any act if unduly rough or flagrant (give proper signal and follow with 37) (also first down if by defense)	9-4	37
A second unsportsmanlike foul by player or nonplayer (also first down if by defense)	9-5, 9-8	24-37
A substitute leaving team box during a fight (also first down if by defense)	9-8-11	24-37
Illegally tampering with flag belt	9-8-1h	24-37



NFHS OFFICIAL FLAG FOOTBALL SIGNALS

1 Ball ready for play *Untimed down 	2 Start clock 	3 Time-out Discretionary or injury time-out (followed by tapping hands on chest) 		
4 TV/radio time-out 	5 Touchdown, Field goal, Point(s) after touch-down 	6 Safety 	7 Dead ball foul, Touchback (move side to side) 	
8 First down 	9 Loss of down 	10 Incomplete forward pass Penalty declined No play, no score Toss option deferred 	11 Legal touching of forward pass or scrimmage kick 	12 Inadvertent whistle 
13 Disregard flag 	14 End of period 	15 Sideline warning 	16 First touching Illegal touching 	
17 Reset play clock to 25 seconds 	18 Encroachment 	19 False start Illegal formation 	20 Illegal shift (2 hands) Illegal motion (1 hand) 	21 Delay of game 



NFHS OFFICIAL FLAG FOOTBALL SIGNALS

22 Substitution infraction	23 Disconcerting act	24 Unsportsmanlike conduct Noncontact foul	25 Illegal participation
26 Sideline interference (Face press box)	27 Illegal batting/kicking (Followed by pointing toward toe for kicking)	28 Forward pass interference Kick catching interference	29 Roughing passer
31 Intentional grounding	32 Personal foul	33 Holding	34 Illegal block Illegal use of hands/arms
35 Helping runner Interlocked blocking	36 Tripping	37 Disqualification	38 Flag guarding



MISSION STATEMENT

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) serves its members by providing leadership for the administration of education-based high school athletics and activities through the writing of playing rules that emphasize health and safety, educational programs that develop leaders, and administrative support to increase participation opportunities and promote sportsmanship.

CORE BELIEFS AND VALUES

WE BELIEVE

Student participation in education-based high school athletics and activities:

- Is a privilege.
- Enriches the educational experience.
- Encourages academic achievement.
- Promotes respect, integrity and sportsmanship.
- Prepares for the future in a global community.
- Develops leadership and life skills.
- Fosters the inclusion of diverse populations.
- Promotes healthy lifestyles and safe competition.
- Encourages positive school/community culture.
- Should be fun.

THE NFHS:

- Serves as the national authority that promotes and protects the defining values of education-based high school athletics and activities in collaboration with its member state associations.
- Serves as the national authority on competition rules while promoting fair play and seeking to minimize risk of injury for student participants in education-based high school athletics and activities.
- Promotes lifelong health and safety values through participation.
- Develops and delivers impactful, innovative and engaging educational programs to serve the changing needs of state associations, administrators, coaches, directors, officials, students and parents.
- Provides professional development opportunities for member state association staffs.
- Promotes cooperation, collaboration and communication with and among state associations.
- Collects and provides data analysis in order to allow its membership to make informed decisions.



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SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION IN SPORTS

COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION INCLUDE:

- **Headache** or “pressure” in head;
- **Neck pain**
- **Dizziness**
- Dazed or stunned or vacant appearance;
- Confusion about assignment or position;
- Forgetfulness;
- Uncertainty of game, score, or opponent;
- Clumsy movements;
- Slow response to questions;
- Mood, behavior or personality changes;
- Can’t recall events prior to or after hit or fall;
- Nausea;
- Balance problems or dizziness;
- Double or blurry vision;
- Sensitivity to light or noise;
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy;
- Concentration or memory problems;
- Emotions of “not feeling right” or “feeling down.”

Activate the Emergency Medical System or Call 9-1-1 if, after a blow, or jolt to the head or body, an athlete has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other;
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up;
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away;
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination;
- Repeated vomiting or nausea;
- Convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching);
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation;
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously. Consider activating EMS for prolonged loss of consciousness.

SUGGESTED CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT:

1. No athlete should return-to-sport (RTS) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional as soon as possible.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health-care professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTS should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTS based upon return of any signs or symptoms at rest, while doing school work or with physical activity.

For further details, please see the “NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports” at www.nfhs.org.



EQUIPMENT GUIDELINES

1. Each NFHS sports rules committee is responsible for recommending the official playing rules to the NFHS Board of Directors for adoption. The committee is NOT responsible for testing or approving playing equipment for use in interscholastic sports. Equipment manufacturers are responsible for the development of playing equipment that meets the specifications established by the committee, and that is otherwise of good design and quality. The NFHS urges manufacturers to work with the various independent testing agencies to ensure the production of safe products. Neither the NFHS nor the applicable NFHS sport rules committee certifies the safety of any sport equipment. Non-compliant equipment is inappropriate for use in competition under NFHS sports rules. While the committee does not regulate the development of new equipment and does not set technical or scientific standards for testing equipment, the committee may, from time to time, provide manufacturers with guidance as to the equipment-performance levels it considers consistent with the integrity of the game. The committee reserves the right to intercede to protect and maintain that integrity.
2. Each NFHS sport rules committee suggests that manufacturers planning innovative changes in sports equipment submit the equipment to the applicable NFHS sport rules editor and/or rules committee for review before production.
3. Protective headgear is required by NFHS rules in some sports and is permissive in others. Hard helmets can decrease the incidence of certain head trauma, such as skull fractures and subdural hematomas. Soft headgear may protect against cuts and bruises to the scalp and forehead. Coaches, athletes and parents/guardians should review the manufacturers' warnings about proper usage and performance limits of such products. **No helmet or headgear can eliminate the risk of concussion and all sports should be played, coached and officiated in recognition of that fact.**



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GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SPORTS HYGIENE, SKIN INFECTIONS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Proper precautions are needed to minimize the potential risk of the spread of communicable disease and skin infections during athletic competition. These conditions include skin infections that occur due to skin contact with competitors and equipment. The transmission of infections such as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and Herpes Gladiatorum, blood-borne pathogens such as HIV and Hepatitis B, and other infectious diseases such as Influenza and COVID-19 can often be greatly reduced through proper hygiene. The NFHS SMAC has outlined and listed below some general guidelines for the prevention of the spread of these diseases.

UNIVERSAL HYGIENE PROTOCOL FOR ALL SPORTS:

- Shower immediately after every competition and practice, using liquid soap and not a shared bar soap;
- Wash all workout clothing after each practice, washing in hot water and drying on a high heat setting;
- Clean and/or wash all personal gear (knee pads, head gear, braces, etc.) and gym bags at least weekly;
- Do not share towels or personal hygiene products (razors) with others;
- Refrain from full body and/or cosmetic shaving of head, chest, arms, legs, abdomen, and groin;
- Students should clean hands with an alcohol-based gel or soap and water before and after every practice and contest to decrease bacterial load on the hands;
- Covering up coughs and sneezes in the bend of the elbow instead of the hand;
- Stay home from school and athletic participation if frequent cough, diarrhea, vomiting or fever.

INFECTIOUS SKIN DISEASES

Strategies for reducing the potential exposure to these infectious agents include:

- Students must notify a parent/guardian and coach of any skin lesion prior to any competition or practice. An appropriate health-care professional must evaluate all concerning skin lesions before returning to practices or competition;
- If an outbreak occurs on a team, especially in a contact sport, all team members should be evaluated to help prevent the potential spread of the infection. All shared equipment shall be properly cleaned/disinfected prior to use;
- Coaches, officials, and appropriate health-care professionals must follow NFHS or state/local guidelines on "time until return to competition." Participation with a covered lesion may be considered if in accordance with NFHS, state or local guidelines and the lesion is no longer contagious.

BLOOD-BORNE INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Strategies for reducing the potential exposure to these agents include following Universal Precautions such as:

- A student who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on a uniform, or has blood on their body, shall be directed to leave the activity (game or practice) until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to activity;
- Athletic trainers or other caregivers must wear gloves and use Universal Precautions to prevent blood or body fluid-splash from contaminating themselves or others;
- In the event of a blood or body fluid-splash, immediately wash contaminated skin or mucous membranes with soap and water. Skin antiseptics (e.g., isopropyl alcohol) or moist towelettes may be used if soap and water not available;
- Clean all contaminated surfaces and equipment with disinfectant before returning to competition. Be sure to use gloves when cleaning;
- Blood on an opponent's uniform during competition or teammate's uniform during practice should be cleaned at that time by wiping with a disinfectant such as isopropyl alcohol;
- Any blood exposure or bites to the skin that break the surface must be reported and immediately evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.

OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Means of reducing the potential exposure to these agents include:

- Make certain that students, coaching staff, and medical staff are current on all required vaccinations (MMR, Hepatitis B, Chickenpox, Meningitis, Hepatitis A). COVID-19 vaccine and yearly influenza vaccine are strongly encouraged;
- During times of outbreaks, follow the guidelines set forth by the CDC as well as State and local Health Departments.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Blood-Borne Pathogens," "Infectious Mononucleosis" and "Skin Conditions and Infections" sections contained in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.



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GUIDELINES ON HANDLING PRACTICES AND CONTESTS DURING LIGHTNING OR THUNDER DISTURBANCES

It is important that state associations continue to educate their member schools on the importance of having an established Lightning Policy/Plan in place for all outdoor high school sports and activities and for indoor swimming pools and that this Policy/Plan is current, practiced and executed.

These guidelines provide a default policy to those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

PROACTIVE PLANNING

1. Assign a specific staff member to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests. This staff member is charged with suspending outdoor activities and determining when to resume activities. Any individual following these guidelines shall not be challenged.
 2. Develop an emergency action plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safer areas and determine the amount of time needed to get everyone to a designated safer area:
 - a. A designated safer place is a substantial building with plumbing and wiring where people live or work, such as a school, gymnasium or library. An alternate safer place from the threat of lightning is a fully enclosed (not convertible or soft top) metal car or school bus.
 3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a. When thunder is heard or lightning is seen*, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for at least 30 minutes and vacate the outdoor activity to the previously designated safer location immediately.
 - b. 30-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or lightning is witnessed* prior to going outdoors and resuming play.
 - c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning* after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count will begin.
 - d. If available, data from a nationally connected network for lightning detection network should be monitored closely when storms are possible or during lightning delays. Play shall be suspended when lightning is within a 10-mile radius of the event and will not be resumed until at least 30 minutes have passed since the last lightning within the 10-mile radius. However, never depend on the reliability of any detection device if the sky looks threatening, you hear thunder, or see lightning*. Visual and audio indications of a storm should always take precedence over information from a mobile app or lightning-detection device.
- * – At night, under certain atmospheric conditions, lightning flashes may be seen from distant storms. In these cases, it may be safe to continue an event. If no thunder can be heard and the flashes are low on the horizon, the storm may not pose a threat. Independently verified lightning detection information would help eliminate any uncertainty.
4. Review the lightning safety policy annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel and train all personnel.
 5. Inform student-athletes and their parents of the lightning policy at start of the season.



COACHES CODE OF ETHICS

The function of a coach is to educate students through participation in interscholastic competition. An interscholastic program should be designed to enhance academic achievement and should never interfere with opportunities for academic success. Each student should be treated with the utmost respect and the student's welfare should be considered in decisions by the coach at all times. Accordingly, the following guidelines for coaches have been adopted by the NFHS Board of Directors:

- **Coaches** shall be aware that they have a tremendous influence, for either good or ill, on the education of the student and, thus, shall never place the value of winning above the value of instilling the highest ideals of character.
- **Coaches** shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession. In all personal contact with students, officials, athletic directors, school administrators and staff, the state high school athletic association, the media, parents, and the public, coaches shall strive to set an example of the highest ethical and moral conduct. Communication with all parties should be wholesome, appropriate and positive.
- **Coaches** shall respect and support contest officials. Coaches shall not indulge in conduct which would incite players or spectators against the officials. Public criticism of officials or players is unethical and inappropriate.
- **Coaches** shall take an active role in the prevention of drug, alcohol, tobacco and other substance abuse.
- **Coaches** shall avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products when in contact with players.
- **Coaches** shall promote the entire interscholastic program of the school and direct the program in harmony with the total school program.
- **Coaches** shall master the contest rules and shall teach the rules to their team members.
- **Coaches** shall not seek an advantage by circumvention of the spirit or letter of the rules.
- **Coaches** shall utilize their positive influence to enhance sportsmanship by spectators, both directly and by working closely with cheerleaders, other school club sponsors, booster clubs and administrators.
- **Coaches** shall promote a culture that encourages diversity and inclusion.
- **Coaches** shall ensure they familiarize themselves and their teams with their schools' emergency action plans and, where applicable, with concussion and heat illness prevention plans.
- **Coaches** should meet and exchange cordial greetings with the opposing coach to set the positive example and correct tone for the event before and after the contest.
- **Coaches** shall not exert pressure on faculty members to give students special consideration.
- **Coaches** shall not scout opponents by any means other than those adopted by the league and/or state high school association.



OFFICIALS CODE OF ETHICS

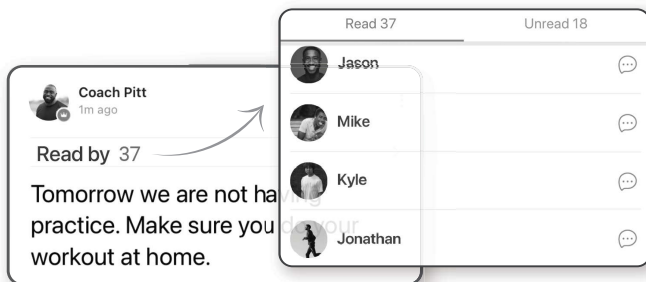
Officials at an interscholastic athletic event are participants in the educational development of high school students. As such, they must exercise a high level of self-discipline, independence and responsibility. The purpose of this Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all interscholastic officials.

- **Officials** shall master both the rules of the game and the mechanics necessary to enforce the rules, and shall exercise authority in an impartial, firm and controlled manner.
- **Officials** shall work with each other and their state associations in a constructive and cooperative manner.
- **Officials** shall uphold the honor and dignity of the profession in all interaction with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, school administrators, colleagues, and the public. This includes, but is not limited to, positive verbal and nonverbal communication with coaches, bench personnel and players.
- **Officials** shall not use any form of alcohol or tobacco, or be under the influence (i.e., impaired by) a controlled or illicit substance(s), beginning with arrival at the competition site until departure following the completion of the contest.
- **Officials** shall prepare themselves both physically and mentally, shall dress neatly and appropriately, and shall comport themselves in a manner consistent with the high standards of the profession.
- **Officials** shall be punctual and professional in the fulfillment of all contractual obligations.
- **Officials** shall remain mindful that their conduct influences the respect that student-athletes, coaches and the public hold for the profession.
- **Officials** shall, while enforcing the rules of play, remain aware of the inherent risk of injury that competition poses to student-athletes. Where appropriate, officials shall inform event management of conditions or situations that appear unreasonably hazardous.
- **Officials** shall take reasonable steps to educate themselves in the recognition of emergency conditions that might arise during the course of competition.
- **Officials** shall maintain an ethical approach while participating in forums, chat rooms and all forms of social media.



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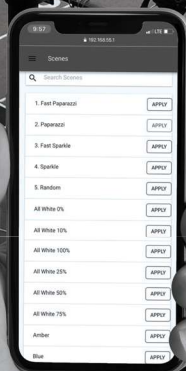
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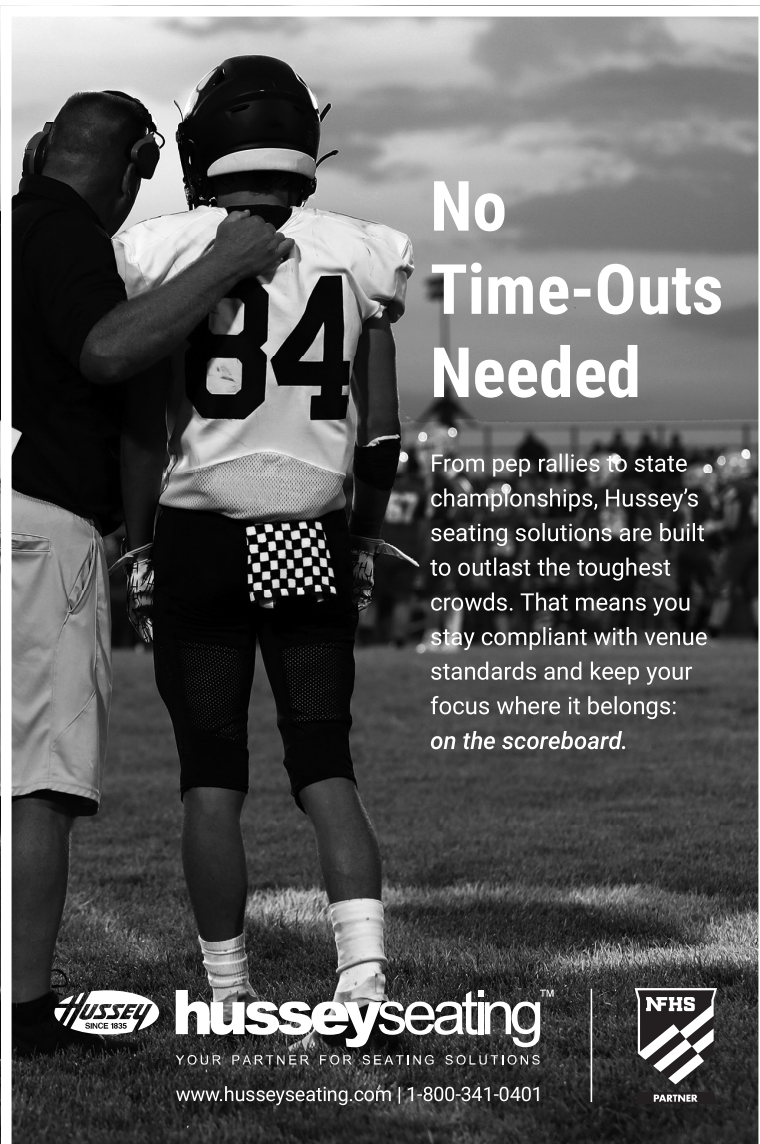
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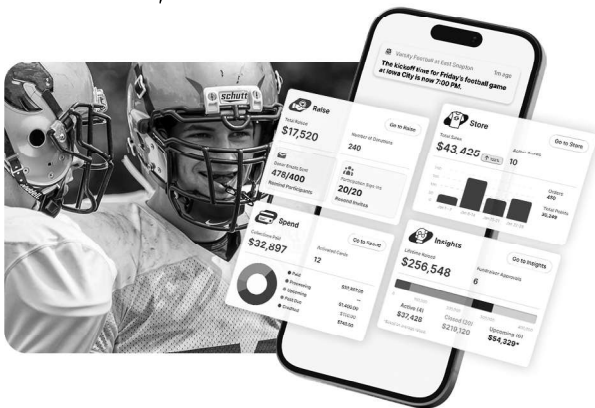
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