



FOOTBALL RULES: SIMPLY STATED

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Common HS football myths

- ▶ “The QB threw the ball away outside the tackle box”
- ▶ He can’t throw it away in HS-must throw into area near eligible receiver.
- ▶ “The pass was uncatchable”
- ▶ Pass interference can still be called.
- ▶ “He got back on-side before the snap”
- ▶ He can’t get back-it is a dead ball foul to encroach.
- ▶ “We sent the guy in motion to get them to jump”
- ▶ This is a false start.
- ▶ “The kickers touched the punt so it is down”
- ▶ This is 1st touching, the receivers can advance the punt if the ball is still moving.

“The receiver touched the kick, why is it a touchback?”

- ▶ Every kick into the receivers end zone is a touchback, even if touched.
- ▶ “No fair catch signal, why is the ball dead?”
- ▶ Some other receiver signaled, it is dead upon possession, but it is not a fair catch.
- ▶ “He took his helmet off”
- ▶ Not a foul in HS rules.
- ▶ “They broke the huddle with 12 players”
- ▶ Not a foul in HS football. Replaced players shall begin leaving within 3 seconds.
- ▶ “When can linemen go down field on a punt?”
- ▶ Immediately at the snap.
- ▶ “That’s a horse collar tackle”
- ▶ Grabbing the collar or shirt from behind the ears and pulling the runner down backward so they “fall funny” is a HC tackle. Simply grabbing it or runner falling forward isn’t a HC tackle.

“The kickoff went 10 yds. so it’s a free ball”

- ▶ To be a free ball, it has to go 10 yards and hit the ground or receiver.
- ▶ “The receiver touched the kick so the kickers can advance the kick.”
- ▶ The only kick the kickers can advance is a blocked punt/FG that is behind the line of scrimmage (LOS). If a down field kick is voluntarily touched by Team R, Team K can recover, but not advance.
- ▶ “The halo around the punt receiver was violated.”
- ▶ No halo in HS rules, but he is a defenseless player, so he can’t be slobberknocked nor can he be impeded from catching an in-flight kick.
- ▶ “The receiver was chucked more outside the 5 yard belt.”
- ▶ In HS rules, he can be chucked anywhere until the pass leaves the passer’s hand.
- ▶ “We intercepted so why don’t we get to keep the ball?”
- ▶ A foul occurred before the interception. To keep it, your team needs “clean hands.”

“We ran the play with tackle eligible.”

- ▶ Not legal in HS. He can be uncovered, but must wear 1-49 or 80-99 to legally touch a forward pass. (not in youth levels)
- ▶ “#72 reported eligible.”
- ▶ He can not legally touch a forward pass. (not in youth levels)
- ▶ “What is an illegal shift?”
- ▶ All 11 offensive players must come to a full stop for one second then one can legally go into motion before the snap. Often a receiver goes into motion then the linemen get set-this is an illegal shift (usually a warning prevents this from happening twice Refs).
- ▶ “No one jumped, how was it a false start?”
- ▶ The snapper is restricted with what he can do to the ball, and once linemen put their hand down, they are locked into keeping it grounded.
- ▶ ‘We ran the “water bucket” play.’
- ▶ Not legal. Pretended substitutions are illegal participation.

“The fumble went forward.”

- ▶ HS football does not return the ball to the spot of the fumble.
- ▶ “4th down fumble, only the fumbler can advance.”
- ▶ Not the rule in HS football.
- ▶ “I fishhook my mouthpiece.”
- ▶ This is not properly wearing required equipment. Non-compliance=removal from game for one play.
- ▶ “The coaches area (white belt) is for the coaches.”
- ▶ It is until the snap. Once the snap is imminent, this area must be vacated.
- ▶ “My pants are too short to cover my knees.”
- ▶ Not properly wearing required equipment. Non-compliance=removal from game for one play (Refs, sending one player out for this usually gets everybody else’s knees covered).



“I have an eye condition and need a tinted eye-shield.”

- ▶ Can't wear tinted eye shield in HS game, but can wear shaded goggles.
- ▶ “Why isn't the clock running?”
- ▶ The HS clock runs very differently than the NCAA or NFL clock.

2020 RULE CHANGES

- ▶ **A DESIGNATED TEAM REPRESENTATIVE** (not just the Captain) can make penalty decisions.
- ▶ **IF THERE IS A WEATHER DELAY IN THE LAST 3 MINUTES** of the 2nd Qt., halftime can be shortened.
- ▶ **PLAY CLOCK FOR DEFENSIVE INJURIES** is a :40 sec. clock.
- ▶ **AFTER A LEGAL KICK**, the play clock is always a :25 sec. clock.
- ▶ **IF TEAM B DISCONCERTS THE SNAP**, it is a 5 yard penalty (previously a 15 yard UNS).
- ▶ **FOR TEAM A TO KILL THE CLOCK**, it can legally occur in shotgun formation (previously a direct hand to hand snap only).

The Game, Field, Players & Equipment

- ▶ Team A snaps the ball. Team B is defense. Team K is in kick formation. Team R attempts to field the kick.
- ▶ Officials are Referee, Umpire, Linesman, Line Judge & Back Judge (R, U, LM, LJ, BJ)
- ▶ GAME MUST BEGIN WITH 11 players, Officials take authority 30 min. before game.
- ▶ Head Coach must certify players are legally & properly equipped and will behave in a sportsmanlike manner.
- ▶ NO REPLAY, all Referee decisions are final. Protests are NOT recognized.
- ▶ HS Varsity field is 360' long by 160' wide
- ▶ YARDLINE MARKERS (often orange or black) placed 5 yards from sideline.
- ▶ WHITE LINES are recommended, every 5 yards marked with hash marks breaking the field into 1/3rds. The 9's or 12" mini hash is 9 yards from the sideline.
- ▶ A 2 YARD WHITE or slashed line is the coaches area until snap is imminent.

TEAM BOX is between the 25's, 2 yards off sideline

- ▶ Coaches area is the restricted area until the snap is imminent.
- ▶ NO END ZONE MARKS within 2 feet from boundaries. The GOAL LINE is COMPLETELY in the end zone.
- ▶ THE 3 YARD LINE shall be marked.
- ▶ PYLONS ARE RED OR ORANGE and placed at intersection of goal line and sideline, end line and sideline and where the hashes would parallel.
- ▶ THE GOAL (INSIDE UPRIGHTS) are 23' 4" wide, and 10' above the 4" crossbar-painted silver, white or yellow, can have 42" X 4" streamer on top of uprights (min. 10'high over crossbar). The lower stanchion(s) shall be padded up from ground to 6'.

THE BALL

- ▶ IT CAN BE RUBBER, weigh 14-15 ounces, have 8 or 12 laces, needs a stripe on the 2 panels with laces, inflated to 12.5-13.5 pounds pressure
- ▶ Each team should provide to the Referee at least 2 legal balls.
- ▶ A boll-boy should be on each sideline near the wing official.
- ▶ There is no “kicking” ball, after a touchdown, the scoring ball remains in the game (unless there is a turnover). A new ball is not brought in specifically for punts.

More equipment

- ▶ A KICKING TEE shall be a pliable material, and can raise the ball up to 2".
- ▶ USING AN ILLEGAL TEE=unfair act, 15 yard penalty and the score is removed.
- ▶ THE CHAINS are 10 yards, have flat lower ends and establish a new series line of scrimmage and line to gain. The down marker has the spot of the ball and the number of the down. They are run (preferably by adults) 6' off the sideline opposite the press-box.
- ▶ THE CLOCK should be visible and operated by (preferably and adult) approved by the Referee.

PLAYERS

- ▶ UP TO 4 CAPTAINS can attend the coin toss. A designated Captain may address game officials.
- ▶ PLAYER NUMBERS shall be #1-99, 5 offensive linemen (except in kick formation) shall wear #50-79, teammates can't wear identical numbers, and to legally touch a forward pass, backs and ends must wear #1-49 or 80-99.
- ▶ THE HOME TEAM shall wear a dark color, the visitors light (in 2021, white).

MANDATORY EQUIPMENT

- ▶ Not correctly wearing required equipment results and the player being removed from the game for 1 play.
- ▶ NOCSAE HELMET & FACE MASK with the warning sticker.
- ▶ 4 ATTACHED chin strap.
- ▶ HIP & BUTT PADS and THIGH PADS.
- ▶ KNEE PADS OVER THE KNEECAP and under the pants-unaltered.
- ▶ JERSEY with #1-99, tucked
- ▶ ATHLETIC SHOES, cleats ½" or less, no metal baseball or track cleats
- ▶ SHOULDER PADS covered by the jersey
- ▶ MOUTH PIECE that covers the upper or lower teeth

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- ▶ MEMORIAL PATCH, AMERICAN FLAG 2" x 3", ATHLETIC GLOVES with NOCSEA/FSIA label (no yellow gloves), HAND & FOREARM PADS, BRACES (if hard, padded), 3 turns of ATHLETIC TAPE, ARTIFICIAL LIMB, DRUM for deaf players, HEARING AID, KNEE BRACE under the pants, if hard over kneecap, padded, ONE SWEATBAND per arm within 3" of wrist, TOWEL (not yellow) all same color, MEDIC ALERT taped but showing, RELIGIOUS MEDAL (taped, not showing), SHIN GUARDS w/NOSCEA label, SHOULDER PAD ATTACHMENTS under the jersey, otherwise padded, IF ANY HARD RUBBER OR LEATHER on hand, wrist or forearm-padded, 100% CLEAR EYE SHIELD, PLAY CARD on the wrist only, EYE BLACK 1 finger stroke on orbitals, unadorned(except youth), TINTED EYE WEAR, SPATS, SKULL CAPS and HAND WARMERS.

ILLEGAL EQUIPMENT=15 yd. UNS on Coach

- ▶ THE COLOR BROWN is taboo
- ▶ TEAR AWAY JERSEYS, LOGO larger than 2 & ¼", HARD STUFF made of tin, wood or plastic-no metal finger splint, SHIRT that enhances contact with the ball, SLIPPERY OR STICKY substances, METAL, inc. jewelry, TINTED EYE SHIELDS, UNIFORM ADORNMENTS (candy striping facemask or belt), EYE-BLACK on the cheeks, JERSEY with knots, ANY EQUIPMENT NOT WORN AS INTENDED (like 2 mouthpieces, short pants, cut knee pads), visible BANDANAS, FACE PAINT
- ▶ MISSING OR ILLEGAL EQUIPMENT=removed from game 1 play.
- ▶ COACHES can use walkee-talkie, phones, and I-pads with non-players or outside the 9's with players.
- ▶ EACH STATE (Conference) decides on ball size, length of qts., Mercy Rule, How to finish interrupted games, size of field, # of officials, special need players, patches, halftime, time of coin toss, allowing artificial limbs, TV/radio time-outs, overtime, playoff ball, announcing offenders # and replay in post-season.

DEFINITIONS

- ▶ DEAD BALL from the ball being declared dead until the next legal snap or kick
- ▶ LOOSE BALL isn't in a players control ,but belongs to the team last in possession.
- ▶ BATTING is intentionally striking the ball (often illegal)
- ▶ BLOCKING is legal inside a players frame, onto on opponents frame, above the waist
- ▶ BLOCKING BELOW THE WAIST is only legal in the free blocking zone by Team A & B linemen in the zone until the ball leaves the zone
- ▶ A CHOP BLOCK (combination high/low double team) is illegal everywhere
- ▶ INTERLOCKED BLOCKING (encircling a teammates arm or leg) is illegal
- ▶ BLIND SIDE BLOCK unless leading with open hands, is illegal
- ▶ TEAM K can't block in the 10 yard neutral zone on free kicks, unless engaged by Team R
- ▶ CLIPPING from behind and below the waist is illegal everywhere.

DEFINITIONS

- ▶ BLOCK IN THE BACK means contact inside the shoulders on the numbers and opponent didn't turn
- ▶ TO COMPLETE A CATCH, one foot in-bounds, survive contact with opponent and ground
- ▶ CONFERENCE after scores and during time-outs, all outside the 9's or 1 coach inside the hashes
- ▶ ENCROACHMENT (off-sides) before snap after snapper puts hand on the ball. If the nose-tackle tries to steal or swipe the snap=encroachment.
- ▶ FAIR CATCH-a valid signal or awarded FC, the signaler is allowed unimpeded opportunity to complete an in-flight kick, but can not be hit and may not engage an opponent. AN INVALID SIGNAL looks bad (but kick becomes dead on possession) and an ILLEGAL SIGNAL is after the catch. After a FC, Team R can free ick off a tee for 3 points.
- ▶ THE GOAL LINE is completely in the endzone (like a waterfall-if the ball gets wet=touchdown/touchback, or if deep in own territory, if ball is wet when declared dead=safety.
- ▶ Acts not football related and a swing and a miss is a FIGHT (shoving isn't a fight)

More definitions

- ▶ **FIRST TOUCHING** is when Team K touched a kick they can't legally possess, will be given to Team R.
- ▶ **FORCE** is how the ball got into the end-zone. All kicks into Team R's end-zone are touchbacks.
- ▶ **IN LEGAL SCRIMMAGE FROMATION**, 7 offensive linemen on the line, if **SCRIMMAGE KICK**-no numbering requirement.
- ▶ **FORWARD PROGRESS** is the spot the runner furthest advanced the ball before being pushed back
- ▶ **FOULS**-dead ball=after play is declared dead until next legal snap or kick; live=during down; flagrant=ejection offense; double=both teams foul (offset and replay); multiple=2+ by same team.
- ▶ **LIVE & DEAD FOULS** are not combined to make double or multiple fouls, neither are unsportsmanlike and non-player fouls
- ▶ **POST SCRIMMAGE KICK (punt)**=Team R fouls down-field and foul occurs before the punt ends-the enforcement is from where the kick is possessed.

FREE BLOCKING ZONE

- ▶ LEGAL blocking below the waist (BBW) and in the back (B in B) can occur here.
- ▶ 6 yards wide by 8 yards tall around the snapper, the following is allowed by in-zone players until ball leaves the zone. Note, in shotgun, the contact has to be initial contact (a 3 or 4 pt. is wisest)
- ▶

<u>WHO (until ball leaves zone)</u>	<u>Against whom</u>	<u>Not against whom</u>
▶ Team A linemen BBW	Team B linemen	anyone else
▶ Team B linemen BBW	Team A linemen	anyone else
▶ Team A linemen B in B	Any Team B player in zone	outside the zone
- ▶ Team B players are considered linemen when they are within 1 yard of NZ at the snap
- ▶ EXAMPLES OF ILLEGAL ACTS: DE BBW leading full-back; snapper BBW a linebacker; fullback BBW a DE or corner

More definitions

- ▶ TEAM A LINEMEN can not receive a handoff unless they turn 180 degrees backward and be 1+ yard back when they receive the handoff
- ▶ ILLEGAL HELMET CONTACT includes; BUTT BLOCKING (face or helmet 1st an opponent; FACE TACKLING a runner (with face or helmet 1st); SPEARING (leading with crown of the helmet at the shoulder or below); and TARGETING (initial contact with the body above the shoulder)
- ▶ HURDLING with foot or knee forward 1st over a standing opponent is illegal
- ▶ A KICK IS A KICK UNTIL IT IS POSSESSED, not just by bounce. Scoring attempts must initiate from the ground. FG/kick PAT=7 yards back with a holder in position, scrimmage kick (punt) the kicker is 10+ yards deep and the snapper has protection. A POP UP KICK (kickoff straight down then up over 6+ feet is a dead ball. If Team K fouls from snap/kick until the kick ends can be a tack on foul.
- ▶ A MUFF is an unsuccessful recovery attempt.
- ▶ THE NEUTRAL ZONE is 11" wide on scrimmage plays, 10 yards wide on free kicks. It is expanded up to 2 yards on kicks and pass plays, unintentional touching in this area is ignored.

DEFINITIONS still

- ▶ OUT OF BOUNDS is the sideline or end-line. A LOOSE BALL is out when it touches anything out, but the RUNNER is IN as long as they are in, even if they touching something that is out.
- ▶ PARTICIPATION means active engagement in a play (not a late sub running off).
- ▶ A PASS IS BACKWARD if it goes parallel or toward a team's own end zone.
- ▶ DEFENSELESS PLAYERS HAVE PROTECTION due to their vulnerable position, risk of injury and concentration, includes but is not limited to: QB who has just passed or pitched the ball & isn't trying to participate; the QB in the act of throwing; the kicker in the act of kicking; a pass receiver hit by a defender not playing the ball; the pass receiver who has given up on a catch and is hit; the punt receiver attempting to catch the kick or just caught the kick; a player on the ground; the player contacted by an illegal blind side block; the runner is held up after forward progress is stopped; and a player obviously out of a play violently contacted. IF ANY OF THESE HITS ARE HIGH, IT IS ALSO TARGETING.

More Definitions

- ▶ THE HOLDER, KICKER, SNAPPER (scrimmage kick formation) and PASSER receive special protection.
- ▶ NON-PLAYERS are not playing, inc. coaches, trainers, and subs. REPLACED PLAYERS shall initial exit within 3 seconds.
- ▶ IF AN ILLEGAL SUB plays, it becomes ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION.
- ▶ THE READY FOR PLAY is when the Referee blows the whistle starting the :35 sec. play clock or once the Umpire places the ball.
- ▶ THE SNAP must be a quick continuous movement and the ball must leave the snappers hand and touch a back or the ground before it touches a lineman.
- ▶ HORSE COLLAR TACKLE, the runner is grabbed by the collar behind the ears or by the jersey name plate and is pulled down sideways or backward (they fall funny with a back or twisting motion).
- ▶ TOUCHING is not FORCED TOUCHING into a ball.
- ▶ TRIPPING, inc. the runner by extending the lower leg is illegal.

YOUTH SPECIFIC RULES & POLICIES

- ▶ Each age group has specific rules
- ▶ As a Conference and a Coach, it is your expectation to follow those rules
- ▶ Before each game, the Referee will share on a sheet of paper, each level's specific rules
- ▶ Non-compliance will stop the game then a warning and if needed, removal from the contest
- ▶ Please don't make excuses, they are YOUR rules
- ▶ The smallest level that uses bags or pucks-YOUR team or Coach will spot the ball
- ▶ PLEASE recruit a dependable adult for the clock operator (will be given a walkee-talkie)
- ▶ PLEASE recruit an adult chain crew
- ▶ Get your snapper/center or on-field Coach used to holding your ball and bring it in for turnovers

YOUTH BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

- ▶ Shortage of officials-likely 3 per game this season
- ▶ We wouldn't be here if we didn't love the game and the kids
- ▶ We meet 2 hours on Sundays, study rules and mechanics, your jamboree is our final training
- ▶ We enforce NFHS rules, not NCAA or NFL, and your youth specific policies
- ▶ We respond better to speaking than shouting
- ▶ Fans and all non-players are restricted to behind the ropes/barriers, inc. Team Moms
- ▶ Profanity directed to the kids and officials is not acceptable
- ▶ Coaches on the field are requested to assist with bags/pucks and clean up behind plays
- ▶ Concerns are to go through each site Commissioner to the NFFOA Commissioner (Annalee)
- ▶ Your patience and dedication to youth football is appreciated