



Rule 2 Definition of Playing Terms



Dead Ball – Live Ball

- **Dead ball – a ball that is not in play. The ball is dead during the interval between downs.**
- **Live ball – a ball in play. The only way to get a dead ball to become live is a**
 - Legal snap
 - Free kick
- **When the ball is live, a down is in progress**



Loose Ball

- **A loose ball is a pass, fumble, or kick**
 - It can only take place while the ball is live
- **A loose ball that has not touched the ground is in flight**
- **A loose ball that has touched the ground has been “grounded”**
- **A loose ball continues to be a loose ball until**
 - A player (not a substitute) secures possession
 - OR**
 - It becomes dead by rule



Batting

- **Batting – the intentional act of slapping or striking the ball with the arm or hand**
- **Batting can be either legal or illegal**



Blocking

- **Blocking – obstructing an opponent by contacting him with any part of the blocker's body**
- **There are two types of legal blocking techniques:**
 - Open hand
 - Closed or cupped hand
- **Illegal blocking**



Blocking Below the Waist

- **Blocking below the waist** – when a player contacts an opponent below the waist from the front or side when the opponent has one or both feet on the ground





Blocking Below the Waist

- **Blocking below the waist is illegal (except by offensive linemen or defensive players on the line and in the free blocking zone)**





Butt Blocking

- **Butt blocking** – an act by an offensive player who initiates contact against an opponent, who is not a runner, with the front of his helmet.



Chop Block

- **Chop block** – an illegal block that can only take place in the free blocking zone. It occurs when teammates combine to block an opponent.
- If either of the two blocks is at or below the opponent's knees, a chop block has taken place
- The blocks can take place with or without delay

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Chop Block





Catch

- **Catch – the act by a player of gaining possession of a ball in flight (loose ball)**
 - A loose ball can be a pass, fumble, or a kick
- **To be considered a catch the player must come down inbounds, unless an airborne player has his forward progress stopped and he is carried out of bounds by an opponent**
- **Catching of the ball is always preceded by touching. Thus if touching the ball causes the ball to become dead, catching the ball has no significance.**
- **A simultaneous catch is a catch inbounds when there is joint possession by two opponents. When this happens the ball is dead immediately and it belongs to **A** or **R**.**



Clipping

- **Clipping – an illegal act that is charging or falling into the back or across the back of the legs of an opponent who is not a runner or pretending to be a runner**
 - Legal clipping?
 - Legal clipping?
- **The defense can also be guilty of clipping**
- **New for 2016 – There is no longer an exception for offensive linemen to clip in the free blocking zone. Clipping is now illegal everywhere at all times.**
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5igQwdRFBE>



Conferences (Team)

- **A legal team conference can take place after a try, safety, field goal, between quarters, or during a time-out**
- **There are two types of conferences allowed by rule**
 - Any number of players and substitutes and any number of coaches directly in front of and within the nine yard sideline marks. Any type of communication device may be used by team members
 - No more than 11 players and only one coach on the field and between the inbounds marks (at his team's huddle)
- **A conference can last no more than 1 minute**



Encroachment

- **Encroachment** – a dead ball foul when a player is illegally in the neutral zone after the ball has been marked ready for play and until the ball is snapped





Encroachment

- **For an entering substitute, encroachment restrictions do not begin until the substitute is considered a player and he is on his side of the line of scrimmage**



Fair Catch

- **Fair catch – when a receiver gives up his right to advance a kicked ball for protection of not being blocked or tackled**
 - No signal given, compounding the issue
 - Invalid signal?
- **Considerations**
 - a. Free kick – a fair catch can only be made in or beyond the neutral zone to the goal line
 - b. Scrimmage kick – a fair catch can only be made beyond the neutral zone to the goal line
 - c. The signal must be valid
 - d. Anyone on the receiving team that gives a fair catch signal is prohibited from blocking until the kick ends
 - e. If a fair catch signal is given by any member of the receiving team the ball cannot be advanced once it is caught or recovered
 - f. Only the player giving a valid signal can make a fair catch
 - g. Once a fair catch is made, the receiving team may designate where it wants to snap the ball on the appropriate yard line between the inbounds lines



Field Area

- **End zones – 10 yards wide and includes the goal line**
- **Field of play – the playing area within the boundary lines and does not include the end zones. Thus the goal line is not in the field of play.**
- **Side zones – the areas bounded by the sidelines and the inbounds lines**



Fighting

- **Fighting – an attempt by a player or non-player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner that is unrelated to football**
- **Automatic disqualification**



First Touching

- **First touching** – when a member of the kicking team touches a kicked ball prior to it being touched by a member of the receiving team and before the ball comes to rest. First touching can only occur in an area where the kicking team may not legally possess the ball.
- The receiving team has the right to take the ball at the spot of first touching (can be more than one spot) unless they foul during the down
- On a **free kick, first touching** can only take place in the 10 yard neutral zone area
- On a **scrimmage kick, first touching** can take place anywhere beyond the expanded neutral zone and within the field of play



Force

- **Force – the result of energy exerted by a player which provides movement of the ball**
- **Force is only a factor in connection with the goal line and only in one direction (from the field of play into the end zone)**
- **Force can result from five things:**
Snap Carry Pass Fumble Kick
- **Once one of these five things has taken place a new force can only be applied if the ball has touched the ground**
- **A new force cannot occur on a ball in flight**
- **A new force can be added by a muff, a bat, or an illegal kick**



Formations

- **Scrimmage formation requires a minimum of seven **A** players (offensive) on their line of scrimmage at the snap**
- **Scrimmage kick formation requires**
 - No player in position to receive a hand to hand snap from the snapper
 - One player at least 7 yards behind the neutral zone and in position to be a holder and one additional team **K** player within 3 yards of the holder and in position to be a kicker

OR

 - One player 10 yards or more behind the line of scrimmage and in position to receive the snap
- **Free kick formation requires after the ready-for-play signal and until the ball is kicked**
 - All **R** players must be behind their free kick line (this is 10 yards from where the ball is kicked)
 - All players, except the kicker must be within 5 yards from the RFP to when the ball is kicked and there must be at least 4 players on each side of the kicker.
 - All **K** players, other than the kicker and holder, must be behind their free kick line



Fouls

- **Foul – an infraction of the rules for which a penalty is prescribed**
 - No foul causes a live ball to become dead
 - No foul causes loss of the ball



Fouls

- **Dead ball foul – a foul that occurs after a down ended and prior to the ball being legally snapped or free kicked**
 - Enforced from the succeeding spot





Fouls

- **Live ball foul – a foul which occurs during a down**





Fouls

- **Double foul – one or more live ball fouls committed by each team in which they offset (other than unsportsmanlike). The down is replayed and no yardage is marked off.**



Fouls

- **Multiple foul – two or more live ball fouls committed by the same team at such a time that the offended team can choose between the fouls**





Fouls

- **Non-player or unsportsmanlike foul – a non-contact foul that is committed while the ball is dead or during the down**
 - Is not illegal participation and does not influence the play
 - Enforced from the succeeding spot
- **Player foul – a foul by a player that is not unsportsmanlike**



Fouls

- **Post Scrimmage Kick (PSK) – a foul by R when the following conditions are met. R may retain possession of the ball.**
 1. During a scrimmage kick play other than a successful field goal or try
 2. The kicked ball crosses the expanded neutral zone
 3. The foul occurs beyond the expanded neutral zone
 4. The foul occurs before the kick ends
 5. K does not have possession of the ball when the down ends and K will not be the next team to put the ball in play
- **Simultaneous with the snap – an act that becomes a foul when the ball is snapped or free kicked**



Free Blocking Zone

(1 of 2)

- **Free blocking zone – a rectangular zone with the ball at its center**
- **The zone is 4 yards wide on each side of the ball (8 yards total) and 3 yards behind each line of scrimmage (6 yards total)**



Free Blocking Zone

(2 of 2)

- **The free blocking zone is established so that during close line play certain otherwise illegal blocking techniques are legal. They are:**
 - a. Blocking below the waist – this can be done by the offense or defense. Each player must be on the line of scrimmage and in the zone at the snap.
 - b. Blocking in the back – this can only be done legally by offensive linemen and against any defensive player that is in the zone at the snap
 - All players must be in the zone at the snap
 - The block itself must occur in the zone
 - The ball must be in the zone when the block takes place



Fumble

- **Fumble – when a player loses possession of a live ball other than by handing, passing, or a legal kick**



Handing

- **Handing** – transferring player possession of the ball from one player to a teammate while the first player is still in contact with the ball when the second player touches the ball
- **Forward handing** – when the runner releases the ball when the entire ball is beyond the yard line where the runner is positioned
 - Only legal behind the line of scrimmage
- **Backward handing** – when the runner releases the ball when any part of the ball is on or behind the line where that runner is positioned
 - Legal anywhere on the field



Helmet Contact

- **Illegal helmet contact is an act of initiating contact with the helmet against an opponent. There are several types of illegal helmet contact:**
 - **Butt Blocking** is an act by an offensive player who initiates contact against an opponent, who is not a runner, with the front of his helmet.
 - Face Tackling is an act by a defensive player who initiates contact with a runner with the front of his helmet.
 - **Spearing** is an act by an offensive or defensive player who initiates contact against any opponent with the top of their helmet to the body of an opponent.



Helmet Contact

- **Targeting** is an act of taking aim and initiating contact with an opponent above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow or shoulders .





Hurdling

- **Hurdling** – when a player attempts to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is contacting the ground with no part of his body except one or both feet



Interception

- **Interception – a catch of an opponent's pass or fumble**
 - In an interception the ball never hits the ground



Kick

- **Kick – intentionally striking the ball with the knee, lower leg, or foot**
- **A kick is a loose ball play that begins with the snap or free kick and ends when a player gains possession or the ball becomes dead**



Types of Kicks

- **Kickoff** – a free kick that puts the ball in play to start each half or after a field goal or try. You can use a place kick or drop kick for a kickoff.
- **Drop kick** – a legal kick that is made by dropping the ball to the ground and kicking it as it rises from the ground
 - A drop kick can be used any time a kick can be made
 - A drop kick can be used to score a field goal or an extra point
- **Place kick** – a legal kick in which the ball is held in a fixed position on the ground or on a kicking tee (cannot be elevated more than 2 inches)
 - Can be used anytime that a kick is made
- **Punt** – a legal kick that is made by a player who drops the ball toward the ground and kicks it before it reaches the ground
 - Most punts are made as scrimmage kicks, however, a punt can be made as a free kick after a safety
 - No points can be scored via a punt



Illegal Kick

- **Illegal kick – intentionally striking the ball with the knee, lower leg or foot which does not comply with the rules that make a kick legal**
- **An illegal kick retains the same status as it had prior to the kick**
- **An illegal kick cannot score**



Line of Scrimmage

- **Line of scrimmage** – a vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest the team's own goal line. The line of scrimmage is determined when the ball is marked ready for play and remains until the ball is next marked ready for play.
- **A defensive player is on his line of scrimmage when he is within one yard of his scrimmage line at the snap**
- **An offensive lineman is on his line of scrimmage when**
 - He is facing his opponent's goal line with his shoulders parallel to the goal line
 - His head or foot breaks the plane of the waist of the snapper



Lines

- **Boundary** – the end lines and sidelines. The entire line is out of bounds.
- **End lines** – the outer limits of each end zone
- **Goal line** – a vertical plane that separates the field of play from the end zone. The entire goal line is in the end zone.
- **Inbounds line** – a series of hash marks that divide the field into thirds in the length direction



Muff

- **Muff – the touching or accidental kicking of a loose ball in an unsuccessful attempt to secure possession of the ball**



Neutral Zone

- **Free kick – the neutral zone is 10 yards wide, the distance between the two free kick lines**
 - A fair catch can be made in the neutral zone during a free kick down
- **Scrimmage down – the neutral zone is the width of the football**
 - A fair catch cannot be made in the neutral zone on a scrimmage kick down
- **The neutral zone may be expanded up to two yards behind the defensive line of scrimmage (but not into the end zone) during any scrimmage down**
 - On passing plays offensive linemen are not illegally downfield if they are blocking within the expanded neutral zone
 - On scrimmage kicks, the touching of a kick is ignored if it is in or behind the expanded neutral zone



Free Kick Neutral Zone





Out of Bounds

- **A player is out of bounds when he is touching anything other than another player or game official that is out of bounds**
- **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 out of bounds**
- **A loose ball is out of bounds when it touches anything that is out of bounds (including a player or game official)**



Passing – Forward Pass

- **Passing** – throwing a ball that is in player possession
- **Forward pass** – a pass with the initial direction of the ball towards the opponent's end line
- A forward pass has gone beyond the neutral zone if at anytime during the pass the entire ball has gone beyond the neutral zone
 - This is important for pass interference and illegal down field calls
- A forward pass ends when it is caught, touches the ground, or goes out of bounds



Passing – Backward Pass

- **Backward pass** – a pass whose initial direction is parallel or towards the runner's own end line
- A backward pass ends when it is caught or recovered (if grounded) or goes out of bounds
- A backward pass is not dead when it hits the ground



Player Designations

(1 of 4)

- **Player** – someone that is in the game. He continues to be a player until a substitute enters the field and indicates to the player that he is to leave the field, or until the substitute otherwise becomes a player.
- **Back** – any team **A** player that is not on the offensive line of scrimmage. A back, other than the player under the snapper, cannot have any part of his body breaking the plane of the nearest teammate that is legally on the line of scrimmage.
- **Defenseless Player** - A defenseless player is a player, who because of his physical position and focus of concentration, is especially vulnerable to injury.
- **Disqualified player** – a player barred from further participation



Player Designations

(2 of 4)

- **Kicker** – a player that legally kicks the ball. To be a kicker, the player must make contact with the ball with his knee, lower leg or foot. He continues to be a kicker until
 - He has had a reasonable opportunity to regain his balance **OR**
 - He has advanced 5 yards beyond his free kick line **OR**
 - The kick has touched the ground or another player
- **Non-player** – anyone (coach, trainer, substitute) that is not in the game. A non-player cannot be guilty of influencing a play by touching the ball or hindering an opponent. Anyone that influences the play, touches the ball, or hinders an opponent has, in fact, become a player.
- **Passer** – a player that throws a legal forward pass. He continues to be a passer until the pass ends or until he moves to participate in the play.



Player Designations

(3 of 4)

- **Runner** – a player in possession of a live ball or pretending to be in possession. A potential passer or potential kicker is a runner until he throws a legal forward pass or kicks the ball.
- **Snapper** – someone that snaps the ball. In scrimmage kick formation a snapper remains a snapper until he
 - Has a reasonable opportunity to regain his balance and protect himself

OR

 - Blocks or otherwise participates in the play



- **Substitute – a team member who may replace a player or fill a player vacancy. A substitute becomes a player when he**
 - Enters the field and communicates with a teammate or an official
 - Enters the huddle
 - Is positioned in a formation
 - Participates in a play
- **A substitute entering to fill a player vacancy is not considered to be a player until he is on his team's side of the neutral zone**



Penalty Enforcement

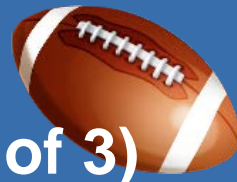
(1 of 3)

There are three types of plays for penalty enforcement purposes

1. Loose ball play – action that occurs during

- A free kick or scrimmage kick other than post scrimmage kick
- A legal forward pass
- A backward pass (including a snap), an illegal kick, or fumble by **A** from in or behind the neutral zone and prior to a change of team possession
- The run or runs which precede such legal or illegal kick, legal forward pass, backward pass, or fumble

On all loose ball plays, the basic spot for penalty enforcement is the previous spot (where the ball was last snapped or free kicked)



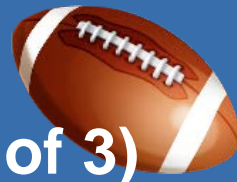
Penalty Enforcement

(2 of 3)

2. **Running play – any action not included in a loose ball play. On all running plays the basic spot for penalty enforcement is the end of the run.**

3. **Post Scrimmage Kick (PSK) – fouls by R when the following conditions are met:**
 - The kicked ball must go beyond the expanded neutral zone
 - The foul must be by team R and must be beyond the expanded neutral zone and before the kick has ended
 - Team K is not in possession of the ball when the down ends

The basic enforcement spot for PSK is where the kick ends



Penalty Enforcement

(3 of 3)

- **All penalties that take place during a down are enforced from the basic spot with the exception of one. The one foul that is not penalized from the basic spot is a foul by the offense that is behind the basic spot. This is known as the “All-But-One Principle.”**



Possession

- **A live ball is always in possession of a team**
- **A live ball is in possession of a player or it is loose**



Ready for Play

- **Ready-for-play – a signal by the referee that the ball may be put in play by a snap or free kick**
- **Once the ready-for-play signal has been given, the ball must be snapped or free kicked within 25 seconds**



Recovery

- **Recovery – the act of gaining possession of a live ball once the ball has hit the ground**



Scrimmage

- **Scrimmage – action by two teams during a down that begins with a snap**
- **Thus, a free kick down is not a scrimmage down**



Shift

- **Shift – the action of one or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking a set position, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap**



Snap

- **Snap – the act of passing or handing the ball from its position on the ground**
- **The action must be backward, and it must be a quick and continuous motion**
- **The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally**
- **The snap ends when it touches the ground or any player**
- **For a snap to be legal, it must touch the ground or a back prior to touching a team **A** lineman**



Spots

- **Enforcement spot – the spot from which a penalty is enforced**
- **Dead ball spot – the spot under the foremost point of the ball when the ball becomes dead**
- **Previous spot – the spot where the ball was last snapped or free kicked**
- **Succeeding spot – the spot where the ball would next be snapped or free kicked if a foul had not occurred**



Tackling

- **Tackling – the use of the hands, arms, legs, or the body by a defensive player to hold a runner or bring him to the ground**



Touching

- **Touching – any contact made with the ball**
- **Touching always precedes catching**
- **If a ball touches an official in the field of play it is ignored and play continues**



Tripping

- **Tripping – the use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent below the opponent's knee**
- **An illegal act**
- **Tripping can only take place against an opponent that is not a runner or pretending to be a runner. Thus, it is legal to trip a runner.**