



Rule 4
Ball in Play, Dead Ball
and Out of Bounds



Putting the Ball in Play

The ball can become live in one of two ways

1. Free kick – the following are times when a free kick can be made:

1. A kickoff to start each half
2. A kickoff after a try or a made field goal
3. After a safety
4. When a free kick is chosen following a fair catch or awarded fair catch
5. When the down following a fair catch or awarded fair catch is to be replayed and a free kick is chosen
6. When any free kick down is to be replayed

2. A legal snap



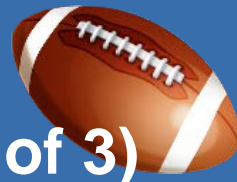
Live Balls

- **All snaps and free kicks must be put in play between the inbounds lines**
- **When the ball is live a down is in progress**



Ball Remains Dead

- **The ball remains dead (it does not become live) if any of the following occur:**
 - The ball is snapped or free kicked before the ball is marked ready for play
 - There is an illegal snap or other snap infraction
 - A dead ball foul occurs

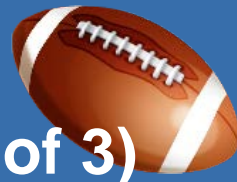


Ball Becomes Dead

(1 of 3)

The ball becomes dead and a down is ended when:

1. The runner goes out of bounds
2. Any part of the runner's body other than his hand or foot touches the ground
 - Exception – if at the snap a placekick holder has a knee(s) on the ground and there is a teammate in kicking position and one of the following occurs:
 - He catches or recovers the snap while the knee is on the ground and places the ball for a kick
 - He rises and catches or recovers an errant snap and immediately returns the knee(s) to the ground and places the ball for a kick
3. The runner's forward progress is stopped
4. A live ball goes out of bounds



Ball Becomes Dead

(2 of 3)

The ball becomes dead and a down is ended when:

5. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete or if there is a simultaneous catch by opposing players
6. Any legal free kick or scrimmage kick that is not a scoring attempt breaks the plane of **R**'s goal line
7. Any legal free kick or scrimmage kick that is a scoring attempt touches a **K** player in **R**'s end zone or after breaking the plane of **R**'s goal line has apparently failed
8. Any loose ball is simultaneously caught or recovered by opposing players (this includes an illegal pass)
9. The ball is on the ground motionless and no player attempts to secure possession of the ball
10. The ball touches or is touched by anything inbounds that is not a player, a substitute, a replaced player, an official, authorized equipment or the ground (e.g., a dog). If this happens the play is treated as an inadvertent whistle.



Ball Becomes Dead

(3 of 3)

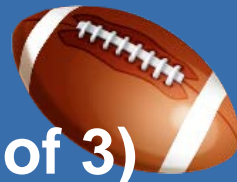
The ball becomes dead and a down is ended when:

11. The kickers catch or recover any free kick anywhere
12. The kickers are the first to touch a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone and between the goal lines that has come to rest
13. Any member of the receiving team catches or recovers the ball following a valid or invalid fair catch signal by the receiving team
14. A touchdown or field goal occurs
15. **B** gains possession on a try
16. **B** gains possession in overtime
17. An official sounds his whistle inadvertently
18. The helmet comes completely off of the player in possession of the ball



Inadvertent Whistle

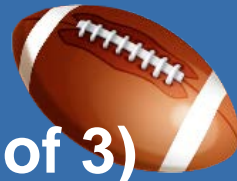
- **An inadvertent whistle is when an official blows the ball dead at a time when it should be live**
- **When an inadvertent whistle occurs, we can correct these situations as follows:**
 1. If during a legal forward pass or snap in flight, or during a legal kick, the down must be replayed
 2. If the ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass or illegal kick, the team last in possession may choose to put the ball in play where possession was lost, or replay the down
 3. If the ball is in player possession, the team may choose to accept the play at the dead ball spot, or replay the down



Inbounds Spot

(1 of 3)

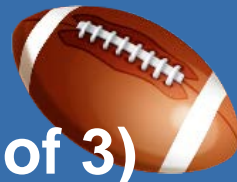
- **If the ball goes out of bounds, whether it is in player possession or it is loose, the spot is fixed by the yard line where the foremost point of the ball crossed the sideline. The ball is returned inbounds to an inbounds spot.**
 - Exceptions
 - A legal forward pass that is incomplete
 - A replay due to an inadvertent whistle



Inbounds Spot

(2 of 3)

- **If the ball becomes dead in a side zone, play will be resumed at the inbounds spot with the following exceptions:**
 - A legal forward pass incompleteness – ball is returned to previous spot
 - A replay due to an inadvertent whistle – ball is returned to previous spot
 - A replayed try – team may designate spot
 - A free kick or snap which follows a fair catch or awarded fair catch – team may designate the spot



Inbounds Spot

(3 of 3)

- **Before the ready-for-play signal a team may designate the place between the inbounds lines on the appropriate yard line that they want to snap or free kick the ball in the following situations:**
 - For a try
 - For a kickoff
 - Following a safety
 - Following a fair catch or awarded fair catch
 - Following a touchback
 - For the start of each series in the overtime procedure