



Rule 7

Snapping, Handing, and Passing the Ball



Before the Snap

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- 1. The snapper may be over the ball but no part of his body other than a hand(s) that is on the ball may be beyond the foremost point of the ball**
- 2. The snapper may lift the ball for lateral rotation. However, he may not rotate the ball end for end and he must keep the long axis of the ball at right angles to the line of scrimmage.**



Before the Snap

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- 3. After the ready-for-play signal and after touching the ball, the snapper may not**
 - Remove both hands from the ball
 - Make any movement that simulates a snap
 - Fail to pause before the snap
 - Following adjustments, lift or move the ball other than a legal snap

- 4. An illegal snap causes the ball to remain dead**
 - This is a dead ball foul and is penalized from the succeeding spot.



Before the Snap

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- 5. After the ready-for-play signal, no player other than the snapper shall**
 - Encroach in the neutral zone by touching the ball or an opponent
 - Be in the neutral zone to give defensive signals

- 6. After the ready-for-play signal and once the snapper has placed his hand(s) on the ball, it is encroachment if any other player breaks the plane of the neutral zone**



Before the Snap

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7. After the ready-for-play signal and before the snap, it is a false start by the offense when

- A shift or feigned charge simulates action at the snap
- Any action is clearly intended to cause **B** to encroach
- Any **A** player on his line and between the snapper and the player on the end of the line has his hand(s) on the ground or near the ground and then moves his hand or makes any quick movement

8. If a false start causes **B to encroach, only the false start is penalized**



Before the Snap

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9. After the ready-for-play signal and prior to the snap, each player for team **A** must be momentarily between the 9 yard marks including all incoming substitutes

10. Each player on team **A** that is next to the snapper and on the line may lock legs with the snapper. No other **A** linemen may lock legs.



Formations

- Only one **A** back may penetrate the waistline of the nearest teammate that is on the line and that player must have his hands in position to receive a snap from the snapper
 - He does not have to actually receive the snap
- All other **A** backs must clearly be in the backfield



Snaps

- A scrimmage down must begin with a legal snap
- For the snap to be legal it must be a quick and continuous motion in which the ball leaves the hand(s) of the snapper and touches the ground or an **A** back prior to touching a team **A** lineman
- An illegal snap causes the ball to remain dead



Player Numbering Requirements

- At the snap there must be seven team **A** players on the line of scrimmage
- Team **B** players may be anywhere on or behind their scrimmage line
- Unless team **A** is in scrimmage kick formation, at least five of the seven team **A** linesman must be numbered between 50-79 (inclusive)
- Players of the same team may not participate while wearing the same number
 - Illegal numbering is a 5 yard penalty



Shifts

- **Prior to the snap and after a huddle or shift (a huddle is a shift), all 11 of team **A** players must come to a complete stop simultaneously for at least one second (no hand, feet, head or body movements)**
- **Only one **A** player may be in motion at the snap. The motion cannot be toward the opponent's goal line. If the player was not in the backfield prior to going in motion, the player shall be at least 5 yards behind his line of scrimmage.**



Handing the Ball

- **Any player may hand the ball backwards at any time**
- **On a free kick down no player may hand the ball forward at any time**
- **On a scrimmage down the ball may be handed forward**
 - When both players are in or behind the neutral zone
 - To a back
 - To a teammate who was on the end of the line at the snap and was not the snapper nor beside the snapper
 - To a lineman provided that he faces his own goal by making a half turn, and is at least one yard behind his scrimmage line when he receives the ball



Fumble and Backward Pass

(1 of 2)

- **A backward pass is a pass with its initial direction parallel to or towards the passer's own goal line**
 - The ball remains alive
- **A player may lose possession as a result of a fumble or backward pass at any time and on any down**
- **A backward pass or fumble that is caught or recovered may be advanced by any player**



Fumble and Backward Pass

(2 of 2)

- **The ball belongs to the passing or fumbling team if a backward pass or fumble**
 - Goes out of bounds
 - Is dead inbounds with no player in possession
 - Is dead inbounds while opponents are in joint possession
- **If a backward pass or fumble goes out of bounds behind a goal line, the ball belongs to the team defending that goal line. The result of the play is either a touchback or safety.**



Forward Pass

- **A legal forward pass is a pass with its initial direction toward the opponent's goal line while both feet of the passer are in or behind the neutral zone when the pass is released**
- **It is illegal to throw more than one forward pass during a down**
- **If a forward pass is caught (legal or illegal) it may be advanced unless it is a forward pass that is simultaneously caught by opponents (inbounds)**
- **If a simultaneous catch is made, the ball becomes dead immediately and the ball belongs to the passing team**



Illegal Forward Pass Examples

- A forward pass thrown after team possession has changed during the down
- A forward pass thrown while the passer is beyond the neutral zone
- A forward pass intentionally thrown into an area that is not occupied by an eligible offensive receiver
- A forward pass that is intentionally thrown to save loss of yardage or to conserve time
 - Exception – it is legal to conserve time if the passer accepts a direct hand-to-hand snap and immediately throws the ball to the ground

An illegal forward pass is part of a running play and thus the penalty is from the spot of the illegal pass



Incomplete Forward Pass

- **A forward pass is incomplete when**
 - It touches the ground
 - Goes out of bounds
 - The receiver is in the air and he first contacts the ground or anything other than a player or game official out of bounds
- **If a legal forward pass is incomplete the ball is returned to the previous spot and belongs to the offense unless the previous down was fourth down**



Pass Eligibility Rules

- **Pass eligibility rules apply only to a legal forward pass**
- **The following players are eligible pass receivers:**
 - Team **A** players must be eligible by position and by number
 - Position – on the end of the line of scrimmage or in the backfield at the snap
 - Numbering – 1-49 and 80-99 inclusive
 - There are a maximum of 6 eligible **A** players
 - All team **B** players
 - All **A** players become eligible when team **B** touches the pass
- **A player that is eligible at the start of the down remains eligible throughout the down**



Passing Game Truths

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- **To be a passer the player must actually throw a legal forward pass. Thus you cannot have a roughing the passer penalty if there is no legal forward pass thrown.**
- **For a forward pass to be legal the following must occur:**
 - There has to be an eligible receiver in the area of the passed ball
 - The initial direction of the pass has to be forward
 - The pass has to be thrown from in or behind the neutral zone
 - The pass has to be thrown prior to a change of team possession



Passing Game Truths

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- **Eligible pass receivers are**
 - Team **A** backfield players (including the quarterback) that are numbered 1-49 and 80-99
 - Players on the end of team **A**'s line that are numbered 1-49 and 80-99
 - All team **B** players
- **Thus the only players that are ineligible are team **A** interior linemen or any team **A** player that is not numbered 1-49 and 80-99**



Passing Game Truths

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- **Ineligible receivers cannot do the following if an untouched legal forward pass crosses the line of scrimmage:**
 - Be downfield more than 2 yards until the thrown ball has crossed the line of scrimmage
 - Catch or muff a pass untouched by a team **B** player

Note: a team **A ineligible player can be touched by the ball (accidentally) without the ball first being touched by team **B****



Passing Game Truths

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- **Pass interference**

- Always a 15 yard penalty
- The enforcement spot is always the previous spot
- There can be no pass interference on **A** if the passed ball is first touched by **B**
- There can be no pass interference on **A** or **B** if the passed ball does not go beyond the line of scrimmage



Passing Game Truths

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- **Pass interference restrictions**

- Team **A**

- Begin at the snap
 - End for eligible team **A** players when the passed ball is touched by any other eligible player
 - End for all team **A** players when the forward pass is touched by team **B**

- Team **B**

- Begin when the passed ball leaves the passer's hand
 - End for team **B** when
 - The passed ball is touched by team **A**
 - Team **B** touches any pass