

2022 NFHS Football New Rules

1. Intentional Grounding has been modified to reflect the rules of the NCAA and NFL. Now, a passer (regardless of their position) who throws a legal forward pass to avoid a sack is allowed to throw the ball across the Neutral Zone, or Neutral Zone Extended out of bounds, provided that they are outside the width of the Free Blocking Zone that is 4-yards in width from either side of the spot of the snap. The 4-yards to either side of the ball shall be interpreted as "three full strides" to the right or left of an imaginary perpendicular line extended from the line of scrimmage from the spot of the snap directly into the offensive backfield. --Rule 7-5-2 Exception 2
2. The Play Clock will be set to 40-seconds following any official's time out caused by a defensive-only penalty (even if the foul is declined) as well as a defensive-only injured player or helmet coming off. --Rule 3-6-1a (1) Exception 4
3. In the last two-minutes of a half, the offended team of a foul committed by the opponent-only will have the option to start the game clock on either the snap or Referee's Ready for Play signal if the foul is either accepted or declined. --Rule 3-4-7
4. The number zero (0) is now a legal number and is an eligible number. Players may wear any number from 0-99 only. Numbers that begin with a zero (0) followed by number from 0-9 remain illegal and will not be allowed such as 00, 01, 02, etc. --Rule 1-4-3
5. A Chop Block has been redefined as any combined block by at least two teammates against an opponent that has one teammate blocking above the waist and the other teammate blocking below the waist. Previously, a Chop Block involved a block at or below the knee. --Rule 2-3-8
6. The Team Box, normally located between each sideline's 25-yard lines, may be extended further down the sideline by state association approval provided that the team boxes on both sidelines are equal. --Rule 1-2-3g
7. The game ball used to start a series of downs may be changed out on any down by any official without having to wait for a series to end. --Rule 1-3-3
8. The Neutral Zone Expanded Rule has been amended to include the end zone when the ball is snapped within Team B's 2-yard line or less. --Rule 2-28-2, 6-2-6

2021 New Rules

1. Blocking Below the Waist has been amended to so that, now, any legal blocking below the waist must occur with an immediate and direct motion by the blocker, without delaying, rising up, or taking a step and then initiating block, & the player committing the block is positioned on the line of scrimmage at the snap and is within the width of the Free Blocking Zone. The player being blocked below the waist must be either lined up directly overhead of the blocker or in the gap adjacent to the blocker, and on the line of scrimmage and within the width of the Free Blocking Zone at the snap and when contacted. --Rule 2-17-2c

2. The home team jerseys must be a dark color that clearly contrasts to the visiting team's white jerseys. --Rule 1-5-1b(3)

2020 Rules

1. The passer, in order to spike the ball for an incomplete pass to stop the game clock, may choose either a hand-to-hand snap or a shotgun formation snap positioned as a back. This legal form of intentional grounding must be done without hesitation or delay nor without bobbling the snap otherwise it shall be a foul for a Intentional Grounding and the game clock shall start on the Ready for Play signal. --Rule 7-5-2 Exception

2. Disconcerting Acts made by the defensive team in order to interfere with the offensive team's signals (yelling hike, go, hut, or clapping their hands or stomping their feet at the line of scrimmage) are now a 5-yard penalty. Shut play down when this occurs as a dead ball foul prior to the snap. It is no longer an Unsportsmanlike Conduct foul and the signal is the old "Failure to Wear Proper Equipment" signal. --Rule 7-1-9

3. The Head Coach may designate an assistant coach or a player to officially accept or decline penalties. --Rule 1-4-4

4. Clarification as to the 25/40-second play clock: When a new series is awarded to either team following a legal kick, the 25-second play clock shall be used upon the Ready for Play signal. Also, the 40-second play clock shall be used whenever an official's time out is used for a defensive-only injured player, a defensive-only helmet coming off, and any delay caused by defensive-only equipment issue. -- Rule 3-6-1a

5. If the game has a weather delay during the last three-minutes of the 1st half, and the delay lasts longer than 30-minutes, the Head Coaches of both teams may mutually agree to shorten the length of halftime to a one-minute plus the three-minute warmup. --Rule 3-1-6c Exception

6. Ineligible Receivers in the Neutral Zone Expanded- Rule 7-5-12 was amended to delete the requirement that an offensive lineman must first engage a defensive lineman on the line of scrimmage in order to then enter the Neutral Zone Expanded. Now, an ineligible Team A player may enter the Neutral Zone Expanded to then go look for a Team B player to block within the Neutral Zone Expanded.

2019 Rule Changes

1. The 40-second play clock was added to the rules. --Rule 3-6-1

2. Tripping the ball carrier deliberately with the lower leg is now illegal. Now, no player may be deliberately tripped with the lower leg. --Rule 9-4-3c

3. Line of Scrimmage requirements were drastically altered so that now, we no longer count if 7-Team A players are on the line of scrimmage. Now, Team A must have a minimum of 5-players on the line of scrimmage and those players must be numbered 50-79 except when the scrimmage kick formation exception is used. Also, we now will focus on seeing if Team A has more than 4-players in the back field. It will be a foul for an Illegal Formation when Team A has 5-players or more in the backfield rather than for a 6-man line and for less than five players numbered 50-79 on the line of scrimmage. --Rule 7-2-5a

4. A Horse Collar Tackle foul now includes the nameplate area of the player (between the shoulder blades and above the numbers) being tackled and pulled down to the ground to the player's direct rear or side. --Rule 9-4-3k

5. The yardage penalty for Illegal Batting and Illegal Kicking is now a 10-yard penalty. Rule 9-7 Penalty & 6-2-1 Penalty

6. Beginning in 2024, jersey numerals must be a single solid color that clearly contrasts with the jersey color. --Rule 1-5-1c