

2005 Major Football Rules Differences

These NFHS/NCAA Football Rules Differences are presented in summary form and should only to be used as a guide; not all nuances are described. This information is in no way meant to replace the NFHS rules books. 2005 changes are shaded. These differences have been generously compiled and provided by George Demetriou of Colorado. The NFHS is not responsible for content accuracy or the maintenance of this information. You may contact the author at George.Demetriou@mci.com.

NFHS	Backward Pass	NCAA
May be thrown by any player at any time for any purpose.		May not be thrown intentionally out of bounds to conserve time.

Ball	
Leather and composition allowed; no panel restrictions.	Must be leather with four panels; marking the ball for special use is prohibited.

Batting	
A grounded loose ball may not be batted in any direction.	A grounded loose ball may be batted backward except in the end zone.

Blocking Below the Waist	
<p>Not allowed outside the free-blocking zone.</p> <p>Within the zone, linemen of either team may only block opposing linemen.</p>	<p>Offensive linemen at the snap positioned more than seven yards from the middle lineman of the offensive formation, and backs who at the snap are positioned outside the normal tackle position in either direction or in motion at the snap, are prohibited from blocking below the waist toward the original position of the ball in or behind the neutral zone and within 10 yards beyond the neutral zone.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Additional restrictions apply.</p>

Catch, Interception/Recovery	
Valid if receiver is forced or carried out.	Valid only if carried out. No force outs.

Chop Block	
Delayed block at knees or below of opponent in contact with teammate of the blocker.	Obviously delayed block at thigh or below of opponent in contact with, in act of disengaging, or just disengaged with teammate of the blocker.

Clipping/Blocking in Back	
<p>Not allowed outside the free-blocking zone.</p> <p>Within the zone, offensive linemen may clip only opposing linemen who were in the zone at the snap and may block in the back opponents who were in the zone at the snap.</p>	<p>Blocks from behind at the knee or below are illegal anywhere except against the runner. Blocks from behind above the knee are legal within the rectangular area.</p>

Clock

The game clock starts on the snap after a legal kick only when a new series is awarded. The game clock always starts on the snap after a delay penalty is accepted.	The game clock always starts on the snap after a legal kick. The game clock starts on the snap after a delay penalty, regardless of whether it is accepted or declined, if committed by a team in scrimmage-kick formation.
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Coaching Box

Three coaches in a 2-yard belt between team box and sideline, shared with officials.	Separate 2-yard belts for officials and coaches.
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Defensive Pass Interference

Contact while pass is in flight. Not a foul if contact is away from direction of the pass. Faceguarding is interference.	Physical contact on a catchable pass only. Spot foul if less than 15 yards. Special enforcement inside 17 yard line. No PI if scrimmage kick is simulated.
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Eligible Receiver Contacted

No automatic first down.	Automatic first down if legal pass crosses line.
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Fair Catch Option

Free kick or snap.	Snap only.
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Field Goal From Outside the 20

Unsuccessful kick results in touchback if ball crosses goal line.	Ball returned to previous spot if untouched by B beyond the neutral zone.
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Fighting

Disqualified from the game.	Disqualified. First half fight - for game. Second-half fight - for second half and first half of next game. Second fight --players/substitutes/coaches for season.
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Forward Pass - Definition

Initial direction must be forward.	Point of first touching must be forward.
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Forward Pass - Spike to Conserve Time

Only immediately from hand to hand snap.	Hand to hand snap not required.
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Free-Kick Line

K's 40-yard line.	K's 35-yard line.
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Free-Kick Line Infractions

Encroachment – dead-ball foul.	Offside – live-ball foul. Penalty option to enforce from end of the run when kicking team is offside.
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Free-Kick Out-of-bounds

Place ball 25 yards from previous spot or 5-yard penalty and re-kick.	Place ball 30 yards from previous spot or 5-yard penalty and re-kick.
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Free-Kick Positions

All K players except kicker/holder must be behind line.	Same plus a minimum of four players must be on each side of kicker.
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Free-Blocking Zone

The zone is 3 yards on each side of the ball and 4 yards wide on each side of the line. Only players who are on the line and in the zone may block below the waist. Only offensive players who are on the line and in the zone may block in the back or clip. The zone exists only while ball is in the zone.	Only offensive players on the line of scrimmage within a rectangular area centered on the middle lineman of the offensive formation and extending 5 yards laterally in each direction and 3 yards on both sides of the neutral zone, may legally clip above the knee in the rectangular area. A player on the line of scrimmage within the legal clipping zone may not leave the zone and return to clip. Blocking in the back legal under the same conditions. The zone exists until the ball is in player possession outside the zone or is muffed or fumbled outside the zone.
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Fumble – Out of Bounds – Fourth Down

Spotted where it becomes dead. Clock starts on snap. No fourth down fumble rule.	Forward fumbles are returned to spot of fumble – clock starts on ready. Fourth down fumble rule.
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Game Length

12-minute quarters.	15-minute quarters.
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Goalpost Uprights

23 feet 4 inches apart.	18 feet 6 inches apart.
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Inbounds Lines

Divide field in thirds.	60 feet from each sideline.
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Injured Player

Must leave game for one down.	May remain if timeout taken. Medical personnel must clear bleeding player to return.
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Intentional Grounding

Loss of down and 5-yard penalty from spot of pass (end of run).	Loss of down at the spot of pass, no yardage assessed. Passer may avoid grounding when outside the normal position of the tackle by throwing the ball beyond neutral zone.
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Kicking Tee

Kicking tee allowed for free kicks and placekicks.	Tee allowed only for free kicks.
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Kick into Receiver's End Zone

Touchback when non-scoring breaks plane of R's goal line or when scoring attempt is unsuccessful.	Remains alive unless ball first touches the ground in the end zone before it touches a Team B player.
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Leaping

Defensive players may leap from the ground to block a kick without restriction.	It is a foul if the leaping player lands on any player.
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Neutral-Zone Infractions

Offensive false start and encroachment – dead ball. Encroachment – dead ball.	Offensive false start and encroachment – dead ball. Defensive offside – dead ball or live ball. Defensive lineman quick/abrupt – dead ball.
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Officials Jurisdiction

30 minutes before scheduled kickoff.	60 minutes before scheduled kickoff.
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Overtime

Equal series from 10-yard line (State Assn option).	Equal series from 25-yard line. No kick try after second series.
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Placekick Holder

Must rise to keep ball alive.	Need not rise to keep ball alive.
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Planned Loose Ball

Must be reported.	Illegal play.
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Player Voluntarily Out of Bounds

Player of A and K is guilty of illegal participation if they return to field.	Foul for K, but A player may return unless first to touch forward pass.
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Kicker/Holder Contacted

No foul if blocked into kicker/holder.	No foul only if illegally blocked into kicker/holder.
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Shift

Movement of one or more players.	Movement of two or more players.
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Substitution

Replaced player must depart immediately (3-5 seconds).	While in the process of substitution, Team A is prohibited from rushing quickly to the line of scrimmage and snapping. Cannot break huddle with 12 players.
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Time-out

Coach may go to huddle.	Coach may not enter field.
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Try for Point

Ball remains alive on fumble if Team A recovers. Not attempted following last timed down touchdown if game decided and playoff qualification is not a factor. Ball dead when kick fails or when B secures possession; B cannot score.	Prior to change of possession, the try ends if A1 fumbles and a teammate recovers. Mandatory unless team behind in score leaves the field. B may score two points.
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Unconscious Player

Physician must authorize return in writing.	No coverage.
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Uniforms/Equipment

Casts

Doctor's note required.	Doctor's note not required.
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Chin Strap

Either two- or four-point allowed until 2006.	Four-point required.
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Gloves/Hand Pads

Any color except ball- or penalty flag colored. In 2008, the specifications currently in effect for gloves will apply to hand pads.	Must be gray. In 2006, the specifications currently in effect for gloves will apply to hand pads.
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Eyeshields

Must be clear.	May be shaded if approval is obtained.
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Helmets

Similar team color not required. No rule on taking it off.	Team color and design must be same. Facemasks same color. Cannot remove unless in team box except for time-outs, etc.
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Illegal/Mandatory Equipment

15-yard penalty charged to coach.	Charged time-out until exhausted, then penalty.
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Jersey

All must be long enough to reach the top of the pants, and shall be tucked in if longer.	Full length and tucked in.
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Mouth Protectors

No color requirement until 2006.	May not be clear or white.
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Pants

Extra outside pad may be worn.	External pad not allowed. All players must have same color/design.
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Shoes

Required.	Not required. Disqualified if cleats are longer than ½ inch.
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Socks

Not required.	All players same color, design and length.
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Towels on players

One (4"x12" min/18"x36" max) plain white towel per player. Must be moisture absorbing and cannot be sticky.	Maximum of two players may have towels including those on K. White on one interior offensive lineman only. Plus (4"x12") on one back. Two defensive players may wear one (4"x12") solid white towel.
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PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

NFHS:

The all-but-one principle applies. All fouls are penalized from the basic spot, except a foul by the offense behind the spot. Loose-ball plays include the snap, kicks, legal passes or fumbles in or behind the neutral zone and includes the run(s) which precede such legal or illegal kick, legal forward pass, backward pass or fumble. The basic spot for loose-ball plays is the previous spot. The basic spot for running plays is the end of the run.

Only roughing the passer, snapper, or kicker /holder plus defensive pass interference include an automatic first down.

The following fouls have special enforcement provisions and options for the offended team: free kick out-of-bounds; kick-catching interference); unfair acts; roughing the passer; and fouls on scoring plays.

When unsportsmanlike or dead-ball personal fouls by both teams are reported to the referee, they are enforced in the order of their occurrence. If the order cannot be determined, the fouls cancel.

NCAA:

The all-but-one principle applies during running plays beyond the line or when there is no scrimmage line. The basic spot for fouls during a pass play (other than defensive pass interference less than 15 yards beyond neutral zone) is the previous spot. EXCEPTION: Holding, personal fouls, illegal facemask fouls and illegal use of hands behind the neutral zone are always enforced from the previous spot. Other specific penalty spots exist for kicking fouls. All personal fouls include an automatic first down. Numerous fouls carry a specific enforcement spot. Carry-over penalties only for personal fouls on a scoring play and personal fouls against snapper, holder, kicker and passer on a successful try.

When unsportsmanlike or dead-ball personal fouls by both teams are reported to the referee and before any of the penalties have been completed, the fouls cancel.