

NFHS Differences (Reader's Digest version)

I. Free kicks

1. No three-man wedge restriction, when the players are shoulder-to-shoulder in any direction.
2. Block by fair catcher is a previous spot foul (prior to change of possession).
3. The ball is dead if it goes into the end zone touched or untouched as long as it remains a "kick" by rule.
4. Offside by kickers is a dead-ball foul.
5. Tack-on rules apply on free kicks and kickoffs.
6. Four-man rule applies, but it is a dead-ball foul if violated.
7. On an on-side kick attempt, K may not block an opponent until they are legally able to touch the ball (goes 10 yards *or unless R makes block, then all bets are off*).
8. All members of the kicking team must be within 5 yards of K's restraining line (except the kicker) from the "Ready for Play." **They cannot straddle that line or have one foot on it.** Penalty: Illegal formation (dead-ball foul).

II. Scrimmage Plays (general)

1. Following the Ready for Play signal, entering the neutral zone by either team is a foul. Offense: lining up in neutral zone is a dead-ball foul as it is in NCAA. Defense: Entering the neutral zone is an immediate "blow and throw" with an "encroachment" penalty assessed.
2. A shift is defined as "one man or more" in motion, rather than two. This means following any shift, there must be a one-second pause before the snap.
3. In order to receive a hand-off, a man coming from the line of scrimmage must be 5 yards behind the neutral zone at the snap.
4. A Free Blocking Zone three yards deep on either side of the neutral zone and four yards laterally form a 6 x 8-yard zone. Only those players stationary and inside the zone (even partially) at the snap – on offense and defense -- may block below the waist while the ball is in the zone.
5. "In the zone" is a physical demarcation. Unlike the NCAA where the ball has to touch a player, official or the ground, the ball is out of the zone in flight (for example) if in shotgun formation.
6. Once the FBZ dissipates, no blocking below the waist is allowed by either team.

III. Running plays

1. Fumble forward out of bounds rules do not apply.
2. Horse-collar is anywhere on the field, including inside tackle box.

3. Blocking below the waist except inside the free-blocking zone (6x8 yards) – and only by those on the line of scrimmage on O and D, is prohibited.
Backs are prohibited from blocking below the waist.
In a shotgun only lineman in a three-point stance may block below the waist if the block is begun immediately at the snap. If they are in a two-point stance, they may not block below the waist at all.
4. **Defensive players may not block below the waist, except if they are on the LOS and stationary at the snap (within 1 yard of LOS is considered on the line).**
5. **Tripping of the runner (and any player) is a foul. (new 2019)**

IV. Pass Plays

1. DPI is 15 yards from LOS no automatic first down.
2. Grounding is not allowed if no receiver is in the area. Tackle box rules do not apply.
3. ***A defensive player who runs unabated to a player in passing posture (both feet on the ground, not scrambling) and first strikes him at the knees or below with a helmet, shoulder, rolling block, etc. has committed a personal foul (by interpretation).***
4. ***A pass-receiver who has stepped out of bounds voluntarily. may not be first to touch the ball, nor may he participate in the play (Illegal participation – basic spot).***

V. Scrimmage kicks

1. All kicks into the end zone are touchbacks, and come out to 20, including missed field goals from beyond.
2. Ball in end zone on an unsuccessful FG is dead.
3. Tries that hit in end zone are dead.
4. Kicks that hit the ground beyond the Neutral Zone and bounce back behind the neutral zone MAY be advanced by K. If R touches it and K recovers behind the NZ, give K a new series of downs at spot of the end of the run or recovery.
5. Once the Defense touches a kick (blocks or partially blocks) the kicker may be hit if it is part of the block (by any R player).
6. Leveraging off a teammate to block at kick is legal. Climbing on or continued contact is illegal.

VI. Penalty enforcement

1. Only four automatic first downs: Any roughing penalty.
2. OPI is 15 yards no loss of down. Illegal touching by an eligible number that is ineligible by position is 5 yards and loss from basic spot..
3. Contact fouls by A are penalized from basic spot (could be spot of the foul) on pass plays and on runs that end behind the line.

- a. Defensive fouls on runs that end behind the line are penalized from the basic spot.
- b. Illegal batting or kicking behind the line is 15 yards from basic spot and no loss of down.
- c. Tack on rules apply on scrimmage kicks.

VII. Helmet coming off

1. A player whose helmet comes off completely (and not the result of a helmet foul such as facemask or helmet-to-helmet) must leave the game for one down, no exceptions.
2. A player whose helmet comes off completely must cease to participate in the play unless he is engaged. He can complete the engagement. If a ball comes loose at his feet he can fall on it; however, if he takes more than two steps to re-engage in the play, he is assessed a personal foul (basic spot).
3. If a player blocks a player who has lost his helmet (not engaged), he can be assessed a personal foul (basic spot).
4. If a player without a helmet is assessed a personal foul for participation, and a defensive player is assessed a foul for blocking that player, the fouls offset.
5. If a player loses his helmet, he may not be “bought back” by a time out.

VIII. Timing

1. Timing is the same as last two minutes of either half in NCAA. There is no 10-second runoff rule.
2. ***In the last two minutes of either half, if the clock is stopped only to complete a penalty (that is the reason it is stopped) against the team that is ahead, the offended team has the option of starting it on the snap.***

IX. Targeting

1. If a player is penalized for targeting he may be disqualified from the remainder of the game, and it is reported to the commissioner.