**2024 NFHS Rule Book**

**2024 NFHS Rule Book – Rule 4 – Ball in Play, Dead Ball and Out of Bounds**

**SECTION 1 PUTTING THE BALL IN PLAY**

ART. 1 ... To start each half and to resume play after a field goal or after a try, the ball shall be put in play by a kickoff.

ART. 2 ... A free kick shall also put the ball in play;

a. After a safety.

b. When a free kick down is replayed.

c. When a free kick is chosen following a fair catch, an awarded fair catch, the replay of a down which follows a fair catch or an awarded fair catch.

ART. 3 ... A snap shall, if elected, put the ball in play when a free kick is not specified.

ART. 4 ... A snap or free kick shall be made between the hash marks.

ART. 5 ... After being put in play, the ball remains live until the down ends.

ART. 6 ... The ball remains dead, and a down is not begun if a snap or free kick is attempted before the ball is ready for play, or there is an illegal snap, other snap infraction or a dead-ball foul occurs.

**SECTION 2 DEAD BALL AND END OF THE DOWN**

ART. 1 ... A game official shall indicate the ball remains dead by sounding his whistle immediately when a foul occurs before a snap or free kick.

ART. 2 ... The ball becomes dead, and the down is ended:

a. When a runner goes out of bounds, is held so his forward progress is stopped or allows any part of his person other than hand or foot to touch the ground.

**EXCEPTIONS:**

1. The ball remains live if, at the snap, a place-kick holder with his knee(s) on the ground and with a teammate in kicking position catches or recovers the snap while his knee(s) is on the ground and places the ball for a kick, or if he rises to advance, hand, kick, or pass; or

2. The ball remains live if, at the snap, a place-kick holder with his knee(s) on the ground and with a teammate in kicking position rises and catches or recovers an errant snap and immediately returns his knee(s) to the ground and places the ball for a kick or again rises to advance, hand, kick or pass.

**NOTE:** The ball becomes dead if the place-kick holder muffs the snap or fumbles and recovers after his knees have been off the ground, and he then touches the ground with other than hand or foot while in possession of the ball.

b. When a live ball goes out of bounds.

c. When any forward pass (legal or illegal) is incomplete or is simultaneously caught by opposing players.

d. When any legal free kick or scrimmage kick:

1. Which is not a scoring attempt, or which is a grounded scoring attempt, breaks the plane of R's goal line.

2. Which is a scoring attempt, while in flight touches a K player in R's end zone, or after breaking the plane of R's goal line has apparently failed. EXCEPTION: If a scoring attempt kick touches an upright, crossbar, a game official or R player in the end zone and caroms through the goal, the touching is ignored, and the attempt is successful.

e. When any loose ball:

1. Is simultaneously caught or recovered by opposing players.

2. Is on the ground motionless and no player attempts to secure possession.

3. Touches, or is touched by, anything inbounds other than a player, substitute, replaced player, a game official, the ground or authorized equipment. In this case the ball will be put in play in accordance with the procedure for an inadvertent whistle as in 4-2-3b.

f. When the kickers catch or recover any free kick anywhere, and when the kickers catch or recover a scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone and when the kickers are first (i.e., before any touching by the receivers) to touch a scrimmage kick after it has come to rest beyond the neutral zone and between the goal lines.

g. Following a valid or invalid fair-catch signal given by any R player when a scrimmage kick or free kick is caught or recovered by any R player beyond, in or behind the neutral zone.

h. When any score occurs.

I. During a try if B secures possession or as soon as it is apparent that a kick has failed to score.

j. When a game official sounds his/her whistle inadvertently.

k. When the helmet comes completely off the runner.

I. When a prosthetic limb comes completely off the runner.

ART. 3 ... An inadvertent whistle ends the down. Inadvertent whistles are administered as follows:

a. The down shall be replayed if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while a legal forward pass or snap is in flight, or during a legal kick.

b. The team last in possession may choose to either put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while the ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, illegal forward pass, or illegal kick.

c. The team in possession may choose to either accept the results of the play at the dead-ball spot or replay the down if, during a down or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, an inadvertent whistle is sounded while the ball is in player possession.

d. The penalty shall be administered as determined by the basic spot and takes precedence over inadvertent whistle administration if, during a down, a live­ ball foul occurs prior to the inadvertent whistle and the penalty is accepted.

**SECTION 3 OUT-OF-BOUNDS AND INBOUNDS SPOTS**

ART. 1 ... When a loose ball goes out of bounds, the out-of-bounds spot is fixed by the yard line where the foremost point of the ball crossed the sideline. When the ball becomes dead in the field of play because of touching a person who is out of bounds, the out-of-bounds spot is fixed by the yard line through the foremost point of the ball.

ART. 2 ... When the out-of-bounds spot is between the goal lines, the ball shall be put in play at the nearest inbounds spot unless a forward pass is involved. If the out-of-bounds spot is behind a goal line, it is a safety, field goal or touchback. If the ball touches a pylon, it is out of bounds behind the goal line.

ART. 3 ... When a runner goes out of bounds, the nearest hash mark is fixed by the yard line through the foremost point of the ball at the time the runner crosses the plane of the sideline.

ART. 4 . . . When the ball becomes dead between the hash marks, play is resumed at the dead-ball spot, unless it is a legal forward-pass incompletion in which case the ball is returned to the previous spot.

ART. 5 ... When the ball becomes dead in a side zone or is awarded to a team there or is left there by a penalty, play is resumed at the nearest hash mark. This does not apply to:

a. A legal forward-pass incompletion.

b. A replay due to an inadvertent whistle.

c. A replayed try.

d. A free kick or snap which follows a fair catch or awarded fair catch in a side zone.

**Note:** In (a) and (b), the ball is returned to the previous spot.

ART. 6 ... Before the ready-for-play, A may designate the spot from which the ball is put in play anywhere between the hash marks:

a. For a try.

b. For a kickoff.

c. Following a safety.

d. Following a fair catch.

e. Following an awarded fair catch.

f. Following a touchback.

g. For the start of each series using an overtime procedure.

ART. 7 ... When a team may designate the spot along the proper yard line from which the ball is to be put in play, it shall have the same privilege if the down is to be replayed or a dead-ball foul occurs.