**2024 NFHS Rule Book**

**2024 NFHS Rule Book – Rule 3 – Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions**

**SECTION 1 LENGTH OF PERIODS - HALFTIME INTERMISSION**

ART. 1 ... The clock running time for a game shall be 48 minutes for high schools with periods and intermissions as indicated in Table 3-1.

**NOTE:** By state association adoption, if, at the end of the fourth period, the teams have identical scores, the tie may be resolved if a method has been approved by the state high school association. This may include extending playing time. The overtime is considered part of the fourth period. An example of an overtime procedure is located in a supplemen­tary section following the rules.

ART. 2 ... By state association adoption, a point differential may be established whereby if one team has gained the established point differential, the game shall be terminated. A state association may also establish guidelines to use a running game clock when the point differential is reached.

ART. 3 ... A period or periods may be shortened in any emergency by agree­ment of the opposing coaches and the referee. By mutual agreement of the op­ posing coaches and the referee, any remaining period may be shortened at any time, or the game terminated.

ART. 4 ... Games interrupted because of events beyond the control of the responsible administrative authority shall be continued from the point of interruption, unless the teams agree to terminate the game with the existing score, or as otherwise provided for by state association adoption.

ART. 5 . . . When weather conditions are construed to be hazardous to life or limb of the participants, the crew of game officials is authorized to delay or suspend the game.

ART. 6 ... State high school associations may determine the length of halftime intermission, provided it is not less than 10 minutes and not more than 20 minutes.

a. 15 minutes is normal for halftime intermission.

b. Halftime intermission may be increased to a maximum of 20 minutes, provided opponents have been notified no later than five minutes prior to the game.

c. By mutual agreement of the opposing coaches, the halftime intermission may be reduced to a minimum of 10 minutes (not including the mandatory warm-up period)

**EXCEPTION:** If the game is interrupted due to weather during the last three minutes of the second period, and the delay is at least 30 minutes, the opposing coaches can mutually agree to shorten halftime intermission, provided there is at least a one-minute intermission (not including the three-minute warm-up period).

ART. 7 ... The game officials are responsible for ensuring that there is a three-minute warm-up period posted on the game clock and the game clock immediately started for use by the coaches immediately after the halftime intermission expires. The head coach is responsible for his team being on the field for mandatory warm-up time at the end of the scheduled halftime intermission.

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| **TABLE 3-1** |
| **TABLE OF GAME CLOCK TIMES** |
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| **PERIOD OF TIMING** | **CLOCK TIME** |
| **First Half:** |   |
| First period | 12 minutes |
| Intermission between periods | 1 minute |
| Second period | 12 minutes |
| **Halftime Intermission:** |   |
| When teams leave the field | 10 to 20 minutes |
| **Mandatory Warm-up Period:** | 3 minutes |
| Following halftime intermission |   |
| **Second Half:** |   |
| Third period | 12 minutes |
| Intermission between periods | 1 minute |
| Fourth period | 12 minutes |
| Charged Time-outs | 1 minute |

**SECTION 2 STARTING A PERIOD - HALF**

ART. 1 ... Each half of the game shall be started by a kickoff. Before the scheduled game starting time, the referee, in the presence of the field captains, shall instruct the visiting captain to give a "heads" or "tails" choice before the coin toss. If the coin toss, or simulated coin toss, is held on the playing field, it shall be held three minutes prior to the scheduled game starting time, or as otherwise specified by individual state associations.

ART. 2 ... At the coin toss or simulated coin toss conducted three minutes prior to the scheduled starting time on the field of play as in 3-2-1, not more than four team members in game uniform (captains) from each team may be present at the coin toss and only one from each team shall be designated as its spokesperson. All other team members in game uniform must remain outside the field of play.

ART. 3 ... The winner of the toss shall have first choice of options for the first half or to defer and have first choice for the second half. The loser shall have the first choice of options for the half the winner of the toss did not select. The options for each half shall be:

a. To choose whether his team will kick or receive.

b. To choose the goal his team will defend.

The team not having the first choice of options for a half shall exercise the remaining option.

ART. 4 ... Between the first and second and between the third and fourth periods, the teams shall change goals. Team possession, number of the next down, the relative position of the ball and the line to gain remain unchanged.

**SECTION 3 ENDING A PERIOD - HALF**

ART. 1 ... Approximately four minutes before the end of each half, the referee shall notify the field captains and their coaches of the time remaining. If time is not out, the referee shall order the game clock stopped while he does this. If an electric field clock is the official timepiece, no notification nor stoppage of the game clock is required.

ART. 2 ... If time for any period expires during a down (clock indicates 0:00), play shall continue until the down ends, even if a mechanical signal is allowed to sound.

ART. 3 ... A period shall be extended by an untimed down if one of the following occurred during a down in which time expires:

a. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted, except for those fouls listed in 3-3-4b.

b. There was a double foul.

c. There was an inadvertent whistle.

d. If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the fourth period and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

If (a), (b), (c) or (d) occurs during the untimed down, the procedure is repeated.

ART. 4 ... A period shall not be extended by.an untimed down if one of the following occurred during a down in which time expires:

a. When the defense fouls during a successful try/field goal and the offended team accepts the results of the play with enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot.

b. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted for:

1. unsportsmanlike fouls,

2. nonplayer fouls,

3. fouls that specify a loss of down,

4. fouls that are enforced on the subsequent kickoff as in Rule 8-2-2, 8-2-3, 8-2-4 or 8-2-5; or

5. fouls for which enforcement, by rule, result in a safety.

**NOTE:** The score is canceled in the event of an accepted penalty that specifies a loss of down.

ART. 5 ... At the end of each period the referee shall hold the ball in one hand overhead to indicate the period has officially ended, after delaying momentarily to ensure that:

a. No foul has occurred.

b. No obvious timing error has occurred.

c. No request for a coach-referee conference has occurred.

d. No other irregularity has occurred.

ART. 6 ... If a dead-ball foul occurs after time expires for any period, the penalty shall be measured from the succeeding spot unless 8-2-5 applies.

**SECTION 4 STARTING AND STOPPING THE GAME CLOCK**

ART. 1 ... The game clock shall start for a period:

a. If a period begins with a free kick when the kick is touched, other than first touching by K.

b. If a period begins with a snap, when the ball is legally snapped.

ART. 2 ... The game clock shall start with the ready-for-play on a down be­ ginning with a snap if the game clock was stopped for any reason other than specified in Rule 3-4-3 or an untimed down:

a. For an official's time-out, other than when B is awarded a new series or either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.

b. Because the ball has become dead following any foul provided:

1. There has been no charged time-out during the dead-ball interval.

2. The down is not an extension of a period or a try.

3. The action which caused the down to end did not also cause the game clock to be stopped.

c. Because of an inadvertent whistle, unless B or R is in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle during a running play and chooses to accept the result of the play.

ART. 3 ... The game clock shall start with the snap or when any free kick is touched, other than first touching by K, if the game clock was stopped because:

a. The ball goes out of bounds.

b. B or R is awarded a new series.

c. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.

d. The ball becomes dead behind the goal line.

e. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.

f. A request for a charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.

g. A period ends.

h. A team attempts to consume time illegally.

i. The penalty for a delay of game foul is accepted.

j. A fair catch is made.

ART. 4 ... The game clock shall be stopped when:

a. The down ends following a foul.

b. An official's time-out is taken.

c. A charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.

d. The period ends.

e. The ball is out of bounds.

f. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.

g. A score or touchback occurs.

h. A fair catch is made.

i. An inadvertent whistle is sounded.

j. An airborne receiver is carried out of bounds, unless the receiver is carried backwards and his forward progress was stopped inbounds.

ART. 5 ... The game clock shall not start on first touching by K.

ART. 6 ... When a team attempts to conserve or consume time illegally, the referee shall order the game or play clock started or stopped.

ART. 7 ... When a foul is committed with less than two minutes remaining in either half, the offended team will have the option to start the game clock on the snap.

ART. 8 ... The referee shall have the authority to correct obvious errors in timing by the game clock if discovery is prior to the second live ball following the error, unless the period has officially ended as in 3-3-5.

ART. 9 ... The referee shall have the authority to correct obvious errors in timing by the play clock if discovery is prior to the snap.

**SECTION 5 CHARGED AND OFFICIAL'S TIME-OUTS - INTERMISSIONS**

ART. 1 ... Each team is entitled to three charged team time-outs during each half. Unused first half time-outs cannot be used in the second half. Unused second half time-outs cannot be used in overtime.

ART. 2 ... A charged team time-out occurs when the ball is dead and:

a. The request of either a player or the head coach (or head coach's designee) is legally granted. When a decision on a penalty is pending, a time-out shall not be granted to either team until the designated representative makes his choice.

b. The repair of faulty player ,equipment requires the assistance of a team attendant or attendants, or which, without the assistance of a team attendant delays the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds other than as in

3-5-10d or 3-5-10e.

c. A time-out is requested and granted for the purpose of reviewing a game official's application of a rule which may have been misapplied or misinterpreted. The time-out remains charged to the requesting team, if no change in the ruling results.

ART. 3 ... A single charged time-out shall not exceed one minute. The referee shall notify the teams within five seconds after the time-out expires and shall mark the ball ready for play. Charged time-outs shall be reduced in length only if both teams are ready to play prior to the ready-for-play by the referee.

ART. 4 ... Successive charged time-outs may be granted during the same dead-ball period. An official's time-out may follow a charged time-out if it is for the continuance of a coach-referee conference, or if safety is involved. When a team's permissible charged time-outs for the half have been used, its captain and coach should be notified.

ART. 5 ... After a team has used its permissible charged time-outs for the half, any subsequent request shall be denied unless it is for:

a. An apparently injured player who is so designated when the request is made.

b. Necessary repair to player equipment except as in 3-5-10d or 3-5-10e.

c. The review of a possible misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule.

ART. 6 ... If repair of equipment without the assistance of a team attendant delays the ready-for-play for more than 25 seconds, or requires the assistance of a team attendant(s) and the player's team has used all permissible time-outs, the player shall be replaced for at least one down.

ART. 7 ... An official's time-out (which is not charged to either team) occurs during a dead ball:

a. For measurement of a possible first down.

b. When a first down is declared.

c. Following a change of team possession.

d. When captains and coaches are notified of the time remaining.

e. For a player in need of equipment repair.

f. To dry or change the ball.

g. For unusual heat or humidity which may create a health risk to the players.

h. When a coach-referee conference concerning the misapplication of a rule results in the referee altering his ruling. (3-5-11)

i. After a foul, to administer the penalty.

j. For any unusual delay in getting the ball ready for play.

k. For a TV/radio time-out that is permitted and granted as authorized by state association policy.

I. For a one-minute intermission between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety and prior to the succeeding free kick.

ART. 8 ... Authorized conferences

a. An authorized conference may be held during:

1. a charged time-out;

2. an official's time-out (3-5-7g, 3-5-7k and 3-5-71); or

3. if granted by the referee in 3-5-10.

b. Only one type of authorized team conference may be used during:

1. any charged time-out; or

2. official's time-out 3-5-7g, 3-5-7k and 3-5-71)

c. Only an Outside 9-Yard Mark Conference may be held in 3-5-8a(3).

ART. 9 ... Unless the game clock is already stopped, an official's time-out shall be taken as soon as the ball becomes dead following a change of team possession or whenever the covering official declares the ball dead, and it appears to the game official the ball has reached the line to gain.

ART. 10 ... An official's time-out (which is not charged to either team) occurs, and the player shall be replaced for at least one down, unless halftime intermission or an overtime intermission occurs when:

a. An apparently injured player is discovered by a game official while the ball is dead and the game clock is stopped and for whom the ready-for-play is delayed, or for whom the game or play clock is stopped.

b. Any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional. (NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports, in Appendix B.)

c. A game official discovers any player who is bleeding, has an open wound, has any amount of blood on his/her uniform, or has blood on his/her per­ son. The player shall be directed to leave the game until the bleeding is stopped, the wound is covered, the uniform and/or body is appropriately cleaned, and/or the uniform is changed before returning to competition. (NFHS Communicable Disease Procedures, in Appendix D.)

c. The helmet comes completely off during the down or subsequent dead-ball action related to the down without being directly attributable to a foul by an opponent.

e. Any required player equipment is missing or improperly worn.

ART. 11 ... A player, directed by his coach or the head coach, may request and be granted a time-out for the purpose of the coach and the referee reviewing a decision which may have resulted from misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, provided the request is made prior to the time the ball becomes live following the play to be reviewed, unless the period has officially ended. When a time-out is granted, the referee will confer with the coach at the sideline in front of his team box in the field of play. If the conference results in the referee altering the ruling, the opposing coach will be notified, the revision made, and the time-out shall be an official's time-out. If the referee's ruling prevails, the time-out remains charged to the team requesting the time-out for the conference.

**SECTION 6 PLAY CLOCK, BALL READY FOR PLAY AND DELAY**

ART. 1 ... Play clock and ready-for-play:

a. Play clock:

1. 25 seconds will be on the play clock and start on the ready-for-play signal:

(a) Prior to a try following a score;

(b) To start a period or overtime series;

(c) Following administration of an inadvertent whistle;

(d) Following a charged time-out;

(e) Following an official's time-out as in 3-5-7 or 3-5-10.

**EXCEPTIONS:**

1. 3-5-7b;

2. 3-5-7e, 3-5-7i or 3-5-10 if related to a defensive player.

(f) Following a legal kick, when either team is awarded a new series; and

(g) Following the stoppage of the play clock by the referee for any other reason.

2. 40 seconds will be on the play clock after a down other than specified in 3-6-1a(1), and start when the ball is declared dead by a game official.

b. The ball is ready for play:

1. When the ball has been placed for a down and the referee marks the ball ready for play after giving the

ready-for-play signal as in 3-6-1a(1) with the game officials in position.

2. Starting immediately after the ball has been ruled dead by a game official after a down, the ball has been placed on the ground by the game official and the game official has stepped away to position as in

3-6-1a(2).

ART. 2 ... Action or inaction which prevents promptness in putting the ball in play is delay of game. This includes:

a. Failure to snap or free kick prior to the expiration of the 25- or 40-second play clock.

b. Unnecessarily carrying the ball after it has become dead.

c. A coach-referee conference after all the permissible charged time-outs for the coach's team have been used, and during which the referee is requested to reconsider the application of a rule and no change in the ruling results.

d. Snapping or free kicking the ball before it is ready for play.

e. Any other conduct which unduly prolongs the game.

f. Failure to unpile from an opponent in a timely manner.

ART. 3 ... A team shall play within two minutes after being ordered to do so by the referee.

ART. 4 ... Game management is responsible for clearing the field of play and the end zones at the beginning of each half so play may begin at the scheduled time.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 2a-f, 4 - Delay of game - (S7-21) - 5 yards; Art. 3 - Failure to play following order of referee - forfeiture of game.

**SECTION 7 SUBSTITUTIONS**

ART. 1 ... Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players. Upon meeting the criteria of

2-32-12, replaced players shall begin to leave the field within three seconds.

ART. 2 ... A player, replaced player, or a substitute is required to leave the field at the side on which his team box is located and go directly to his team box.

ART. 3 ... During the same dead-ball interval, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and re-enter as a substitute unless a penalty is accepted, a dead-ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out or the period ends.

ART. 4 ... During a down a replaced player or substitute who attempts unsuccessfully to leave the field and who does not participate in or affect the play, constitutes an illegal substitution.

**NOTE:** Participation by a replaced player or substitute is illegal participation as in 9-6.

ART. 5 ... An entering substitute shall be on his team's side of the neutral zone when the ball is snapped or free kicked.

ART. 6 ... During a down, a replaced player or substitute who enters the field, but does not participate, constitutes illegal substitution.

**PENALTY:** Arts. 1, 2, 3 - Illegal substitution - (S7-22)- 5 yards, dead-ball foul; Arts. 4, 5 - Illegal substitution (S22) - 5 yards, live ball foul; Art. 6 - Illegal substitution (S22) - 5 yards, nonplayer foul.