

Rule 9 Scrimmage Kick

Section 1 Kick From Scrimmage

KICK ON OR BEHIND LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

Article 1 Team A may attempt a punt, drop kick, or placekick from on or behind the line of scrimmage.

Penalty: For a punt, drop kick, or placekick that is kicked from beyond the line of scrimmage or not from scrimmage: Loss of 10 yards from the spot of the kick.

Note 1: This is not considered illegally kicking the ball.

Note 2: The penalty for a punt, drop kick, or placekick from beyond the line is to be enforced from the spot where the ball is punted or kicked when the player's entire body and the ball are beyond the line of scrimmage. This includes either when the player is airborne or touching the ground.

Note 3: A second kick from behind the line of scrimmage is legal provided the ball has not crossed the line.

KICKING TEAM PLAYERS ON LINE DURING KICK

Article 2 During a kick from scrimmage, only the end men (eligible receivers) on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap, or an eligible receiver who is aligned or in motion behind the line and is more than one yard outside the end man, are permitted to advance more than one yard beyond the line before the ball is kicked.

Penalty: For advancing more than one yard beyond the line of scrimmage before the ball is kicked: Loss of five yards.

DEFENSIVE TEAM FORMATION

Article 3: Defensive Team Formation

(a) When Team A presents a punt, field-goal, or Try Kick formation, a Team B player, who is within one yard of the line of scrimmage, must have his entire body outside the snapper's shoulder pads at the snap.

(b) When Team A presents a field-goal or Try Kick formation:

(1) No more than six Team B players may be on the line of scrimmage on either side of the snapper at the snap; and

Note: These restrictions do not apply if a team does not present a standard punt, field goal, or Try Kick formation (an equal number of players on the line of scrimmage on either side of the snapper in a tight formation), or if, after the offensive team has assumed a set position, there is a shift, or a player goes in motion.

Penalty: For illegal formation by the defense: Loss of five yards.

(2) Team B players cannot push teammates on the line of scrimmage into the offensive formation.

Penalty: For unnecessary roughness: Loss of 15 yards.

BLOCKING DURING KICK

Article 4 The following blocking rules apply during a scrimmage kick down:

(a) All players on the receiving team are prohibited from blocking below the waist during a down in which there is a scrimmage kick.

(b) Prior to the ball being kicked, the kicking team is subject to the blocking restrictions applicable to the offense, and the receiving team is subject to the blocking restrictions applicable to the defense, except that a kicking team player may use his hands to ward off, push, or pull aside a receiver who is legally or illegally attempting to obstruct his attempt to proceed downfield.

(c) After the ball is kicked and goes beyond the line of scrimmage, and until the kick ends (either team secures possession of the ball, or the ball is dead by rule), the kicking team is subject to the blocking restrictions of the defense, and the receiving team is subject to the blocking restrictions of the offense. (For the exception prohibiting a block in the back by the kicking team while the ball is in flight, see 12-1-3 b Note). After the kick ends, both teams are subject to the normal restrictions applicable to offense and defense.

Exception: If the ball goes beyond the line of scrimmage and returns behind the line untouched by the receiving team beyond the line, the blocking restrictions do not change, and the kicking team continues to be subject to the blocking restrictions of the offense and the receiving team to the blocking restrictions of the defense.

(d) After the ball has been kicked, and until the receiving team establishes possession, the yardage for penalties by either team should be enforced as for offensive fouls, unless the ball does not go beyond the line of scrimmage, or the ball goes beyond the line and returns behind the line untouched by the receiving team beyond the line.

Note: It is a foul for unnecessary roughness if a player of the receiving team goes out of bounds and contacts a kicking team player who is out of bounds (see Rule 12, Section 2, Article 6 (c)).

KICKING TEAM PLAYER VOLUNTARILY OUT OF BOUNDS

Article 5 During a punt that crosses the line of scrimmage, and prior to a change of possession, it is a foul if a kicking team player goes out of bounds voluntarily (without being contacted) prior to the end of the kick.

If a member of the kicking team is forced out of bounds, or goes out of bounds voluntarily, and does not attempt to return inbounds in a reasonable amount of time, it is a foul for Unsportsmanlike Conduct. See 12-3-1-(t).

Penalty: Loss of five yards.

Section 2 Touching a Scrimmage Kick

TOUCHING BEHIND THE LINE

Article 1 Any touching of the ball behind the line of scrimmage by a kicking team player is legal, even if the ball has crossed the line and returns behind the line.

FIRST TOUCHING BEYOND THE LINE

Article 2 "First touching" is when a player of the kicking team touches a scrimmage kick that is beyond the line of scrimmage before it has been touched by a player of the receiving team beyond the line. If the ball is first touched by a player of the kicking team, it remains in play. First touching is a violation, and the receivers shall have the option of taking possession of the ball at the spot of first touching, provided no penalty is accepted on the play, or at the spot where the ball is dead. First touching does not offset a foul by the receivers.

Note 1: There may be multiple "first touch" spots, if more than one player of the kicking team touches the ball before it is touched by a player of the receiving team.

Note 2: If the receiving team gains possession, subsequently loses possession, and fouls after the kicking team gains possession, the spot of first touching is disregarded, and the kicking team retains possession.

Item 1: A Team B player is deemed not to have touched a kick if such touching occurs in the immediate vicinity of the line in an attempt to block the kick.

Item 2: If a player of the kicking team touches the goal line with any part of his body while touching the ball, the ball is dead, and the result of the play is a touchback.

Note 3: The spot of first touching is normally the yard line at which the ball is at when touched. If the first touching occurs while the ball is in the air above or beyond the goal line, and prior to the ball touching the goal line or the ground beyond the goal line, the spot of first touching is deemed to be the spot from which the touching player left the field of play, but in no event inside the receiving team's one-yard line.

Note 4: If a distance penalty for a foul by the receivers is enforced, the violation by the kickers is disregarded.

KICKING TEAM PLAYER OUT OF BOUNDS

Article 3 A player of the kicking team, who has been out of bounds, may not touch or recover a scrimmage kick beyond the line of scrimmage until it has been touched by a kicking team player who has not been out of bounds, or until it has been touched by a player of the receiving team beyond the line.

Note: If a player touches or recovers the ball before he has re-established himself inbounds, the ball is out of bounds at the spot of the touch, and there is no foul.

Penalty: For illegal touching of a scrimmage kick: Loss of five yards. If the illegal touching is inside the receiver's five-yard line, in addition to the other specified options, the receiving team may elect to take a touchback.

BLOCKED INTO KICK

Article 4 There is no distinction between a player touching a ball or being touched by it, but a player is not considered to have touched the ball if he is blocked into it by an opponent, provided he is in a passive position and not blocking. A player who is engaged with and blocking his opponent when he contacts the ball is deemed to have touched the ball.

Section 3 Catch or Recovery of a Scrimmage Kick

KICKERS CATCH OR RECOVER BEHIND LINE

Article 1 When a scrimmage kick is caught or recovered by the kicking team behind the line of scrimmage, the kicking team may advance, even if the ball has crossed the line and returned behind the line (see 3-28-2, S.N. 2).

Note: If the kicking team catches or recovers a kick behind the line during a try-kick, the ball is dead as soon as it is evident that the kick has failed, and no advance is permitted (11-3-2).

Item 1: Same Series of Downs. If the ball has returned behind the line untouched by the receiving team beyond the line, and the kicking team catches or recovers the ball, the existing series of downs continues unless the kicking team advances the ball to the line to gain, in which case there is a new series of downs.

Item 2: New Series of Downs. If the ball has returned behind the line after being touched by the receiving team beyond the line, and the kicking team catches or recovers the ball, by rule there has been a change of possession, and the kicking team will be awarded a new series of downs.

KICKERS CATCH OR RECOVER BEYOND LINE

Article 2 When the kickers catch or recover a kick beyond the line of scrimmage, the ball is dead at the spot of recovery, even if a member of the receiving team has first touched the ball.

Item 1: Legal Catch or Recovery. If the receiving team touches the ball beyond the line, a subsequent catch or recovery by the kicking team is legal, but the ball is dead. In the event of such a catch or recovery, it is first-and-10 for the kickers, or if the ball is caught or recovered by the kickers in the receiver's end zone, it is a touchdown for the kickers. See 7-3-1-d.

Item 2: Illegal Catch or Recovery. If the kickers catch or recover a kick beyond the line that has not been touched beyond the line by the receiving team, the ball is dead, and it is first-and-10 for the receivers at the spot of catch or recovery (see 11-4-2 for missed goals). If a kick from behind the line is touched by the receiving team behind the line, such touching does not make the kicking team eligible to catch or recover the kick beyond the line.

Item 3: Touchback. If a player of the kicking team illegally catches or recovers a scrimmage kick, other than a field goal attempt from beyond the 20-yard line, and carries the ball across the goal line, or touches the goal line with any part of his body while in possession of the ball, the ball is dead, and the result of the play is a touchback. For a missed field goal from beyond the 20-yard line, see 11-4-2.

RECEIVERS CATCH OR RECOVER

Article 3 If the receivers catch or recover any kick, they may advance. For fair catch exception, see 10-2-3. For exception for a ball that has crossed the goal line, see Section 4.

SIMULTANEOUS CATCH OR RECOVERY

Article 4 When a legal kick is simultaneously caught or recovered anywhere by two eligible opposing players, or if the ball is lying on the field of play with no player attempting to recover it, it is awarded to the receivers. See 7-2-1-i.

Section 4 Ball Crosses Goal Line, Touches Goal Posts, Out of Bounds, Dead in Field of Play

BALL CROSSES RECEIVERS' GOAL LINE

Article 1 If a scrimmage kick crosses the receiver's goal line from the impetus of the kick, the following shall apply:

- (a) If the ball has not been touched by a player of the receiving team beyond the line of scrimmage, it is dead immediately, and the result of the play is a touchback, when: (1) it touches the ground on or behind the receiver's goal line, (2) it touches a player of the kicking team who is touching the ground on or behind the receiver's goal line, or (3) it touches a player of the kicking team who has touched the ground on or behind the receiver's goal line and has not re-established himself in the field of play. See Rule 11 for options for missed field goals beyond the 20-yard line.
- (b) If the receivers catch the ball in the end zone, or recover it in the end zone after touching it in the field of play or the end zone, they may advance.
- (c) If the kickers catch or recover the ball in the end zone after the receivers first touch the ball in the field of play or the end zone, it is a touchdown for the kickers.
- (d) If there is a spot of first touching by the kickers outside the receivers' 20-yard line, the receiving team has the option to take possession of the ball at the spot of the first touching.
- (e) If the scrimmage kick is a punt, and the ball goes out of bounds in the field of play after being touched by a receiver in the end zone or in the field of play, it is the receiving team's ball at the out-of-bounds spot.

KICK TOUCHES RECEIVERS' GOAL POSTS

Article 2 If a missed field goal or try, or a punt, has touched the receiver's goal post, uprights, or crossbar, the ball is dead in the receiver's end zone, and all customary rules pertaining to punts, missed field goals, and tries apply.

KICK TOUCHES KICKERS' GOAL POSTS

Article 3 If a scrimmage kick touches the kickers' goal post, uprights, or crossbar, the ball is dead, and it is a safety. See 11-5-1.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS OR NOT RECOVERED IN FIELD OF PLAY

Article 4 If a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines or is lying in the field of play with no player attempting to recover it, it is the receiver's ball at the dead-ball spot, unless the special rules for missed field goals in 11-4-2 apply.

Section 5 Spots of Enforcement

SPOTS OF ENFORCEMENT

Article 1 If there is a foul from the time of the snap until a legal scrimmage kick ends, enforcement is from the previous spot. This includes a foul during a run prior to a legal kick, and running into or roughing the kicker (12-2-10). If the offensive team commits a foul in its own end zone, it is a safety.

Exception 1: Unless the kick is a missed field-goal attempt, if there is a foul by the kicking team, the receiving team will have the option of taking the penalty at the previous spot and replaying the down, or adding the penalty yardage on to the dead-ball spot.

Note 1: The dead-ball spot for kicks that result in a touchback is the 20-yard line.

Note 2: If there is a foul for an illegal touch inside the five-yard line, the receiving team also has the option of accepting a touchback.

Exception 2: Fair catch interference, interference with the opportunity to make a catch, an invalid fair-catch signal, or a personal foul (blocking) after a fair-catch signal are enforced from the spot of the foul.

Exception 3: If the receiving team commits a foul during a kick that crosses the line of scrimmage, the penalty for its infraction will be enforced as if it had been in possession of the ball at the time the foul occurred (a post-possession foul) provided that the receiving team does not lose possession of the ball at any time during the down. The penalty shall be enforced from whichever of the following spots is least beneficial to the receiving team:

- (a) The spot where possession is gained;
- (b) The spot where the ball becomes dead; or
- (c) The spot of the foul.

Note: If the least beneficial spot is in the end zone, the spot of enforcement is the 20-yard line.

Exception 4: If the receiving team commits a foul during a kick that crosses the line of scrimmage, and there is a first-touch violation by the kicking team, if the receiving team possesses the ball and subsequently loses possession, the ball reverts to the receiving team, and its penalty shall be enforced from the spot where it gained possession, or the spot of the foul, whichever is less beneficial to them.

Note 1: The spot of the first-touch violation is not used.

Note 2: If a distance penalty for a foul by the receivers is enforced, the violation by the kickers is disregarded.

When Team B establishes possession of the ball, a scrimmage kick ends, and a running play begins, and fouls that occur thereafter are enforced from the dead-ball spot or the spot of the foul (three-and-one method, see 14-3-6).