

# Rule 12 Player Conduct

## Section 1 Blocking, Use of Hands, Arms, and Body

### LEGAL AND ILLEGAL BLOCK

**Article 1** A player of either team may block (obstruct or impede) an opponent at any time, provided that the act is not:

- (a) pass interference;
- (b) illegal contact;
- (c) fair catch interference;
- (d) clipping against a non-runner;
- (e) an illegal chop block;
- (f) an illegal crackback block;
- (g) an illegal low block during a free kick, scrimmage kick, or after a change of possession;
- (h) unnecessary roughness;
- (i) roughing the passer;
- (j) an illegal cut block;
- (k) roughing the kicker;
- (l) offensive or defensive holding;
- (m) illegal use of hands;
- (n) tripping;
- (o) illegal peel back block; and
- (p) illegal blindside block

**A.R. 12.1** Defensive B1 blocks offensive A1 which allows B2 to recover a loose ball.

**Ruling:** Legal block. Cannot use hands unless it is a personal attempt to recover, but may block (12-1-5).

### USE OF HANDS BY OFFENSIVE PLAYER

**Article 2** An offensive player cannot obstruct or impede an opponent by grasping him with his hands or encircling any part of a defender's body with his arms, except in the following situations:

- (a) If he is a runner. A runner may ward off opponents with his hands and arms. He also may lay his hand on a teammate or push him into an opponent, but he may not grasp or hold on to a teammate; or
- (b) During a loose ball that has touched the ground. An offensive player may use his hands/arms legally to block or otherwise push or pull an opponent out of the way in a personal attempt to recover the ball. See specific fumble, pass, or kick rules and especially 6-2-1; or
- (c) During a kick. A kicking team player may use his hands/arms to ward off or to push or pull a receiver who is legally or illegally attempting to obstruct his attempt to proceed; or
- (d) During a legal block.

**Penalty: For illegal use of hands, arms, or body by the offense: Loss of 10 yards.**

### LEGAL BLOCK BY OFFENSIVE PLAYER

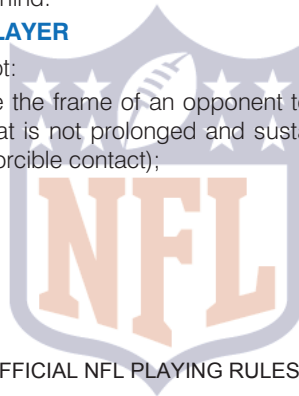
**Article 3** An offensive player is permitted to block an opponent by contacting him with his head, shoulders, hands, and/or outer surface of the forearm, or with any other part of his body.

A blocker may use his arms, or open or closed hands, to contact an opponent on or outside the opponent's frame (the body of an opponent below the neck that is presented to the blocker). If a blocker's arms or hands are outside an opponent's frame, it is a foul if the blocker materially restricts him. The blocker immediately must work to bring his hands inside the opponent's frame, and as the play develops, the blocker is permitted to work for and maintain his position against an opponent, provided that he does not illegally clip or illegally push from behind.

### ILLEGAL BLOCKS BY OFFENSIVE PLAYER

**Article 4** An offensive blocker cannot:

- (a) thrust his hands forward above the frame of an opponent to contact him on the neck, face, or head (Note: Contact in close-line play that is not prolonged and sustained is not a foul unless the opponent's head is pinned back by direct and forcible contact);



- (b) charge or fall into the back of an opponent above the waist, or use his hands or arms to push an opponent from behind in a manner that affects his movement, except in close-line play (the guideline for officials to use for illegal use of hands in the back above the waist is: if either hand is on the back, it is a foul. If both hands are on the opponent's side, it is not a foul);

*Note: The prohibition applies to a player of the kicking team while the ball is in flight during a scrimmage kick.*

- (c) use his hands or arms to materially restrict an opponent or alter the defender's path or angle of pursuit. Material restrictions include but are not limited to:
  - (i) grabbing or tackling an opponent;
  - (ii) hooking, jerking, twisting, or turning him; or
  - (iii) pulling him to the ground.

**Penalty: For holding, illegal use of hands, arms, or body by the offense: Loss of 10 yards.**

**Blocking notes:**

- (1) When a defensive player is held by an offensive player during the following situations, offensive holding will not be called:
  - (a) if the runner is being tackled simultaneously by another defensive player;
  - (b) if the runner simultaneously goes out of bounds;
  - (c) if a fair catch is made simultaneously;
  - (d) if the action clearly occurs after a forward pass has been thrown to a receiver beyond the line of scrimmage;
  - (e) if the action occurs away from the point of attack and not within close-line play;
  - (f) if a free kick results in a touchback;
  - (g) if a scrimmage kick simultaneously becomes a touchback;
  - (h) if the action is part of a double-team block in close-line play.

**Exception:** Holding will be called if the opponent is pulled to the ground by one or both of the blockers.

- (i) if, during a defensive charge, a defensive player uses a "rip" technique that puts an offensive player in a position that would normally be holding.

**Exception:** Holding will be called if the defender's feet are taken away from him by the offensive player's action.

- (2) a blocker falls on or pushes down a defender whose momentum is carrying him to the ground, offensive holding will not be called unless the blocker prevents the defender from rising from the ground.
- (3) If the official has not seen the entire action that sends a defender to the ground, offensive holding will not be called.

**OTHER PROHIBITED ACTS**

**Article 5** No offensive player may:

- (a) lift a runner to his feet or pull him in any direction at any time; or;
- (b) use interlocking interference, by grasping a teammate or by using his hands or arms to encircle the body of a teammate; or
- (c) trip an opponent; or
- (d) push or throw his body against a teammate to aid him in an attempt to obstruct an opponent or to recover a loose ball.

**Penalty: For assisting the runner, interlocking interference, tripping, illegal use of hands, arms, or body by the offense: Loss of 10 yards.**

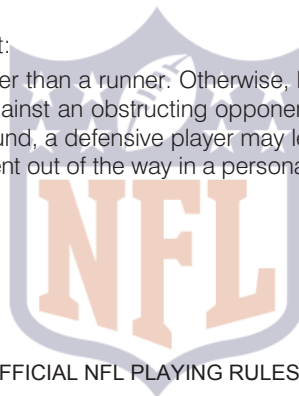
**A.R. 12.2** Second and goal on B2. Runner A1 gets to the line of scrimmage and is stopped but A2, who is behind him, pushes him from behind and shoves him over the goal line.

**Ruling:** Touchdown.

**DEFENSIVE HOLDING**

**Article 6** A defensive player may not:

- (a) tackle or hold an opponent other than a runner. Otherwise, he may use his hands, arms or body only to defend or protect himself against an obstructing opponent in an attempt to reach a runner. After a loose ball has touched the ground, a defensive player may legally block or otherwise use his hands or arms to push or pull an opponent out of the way in a personal attempt to recover the ball;



- (b) on a punt, field-goal attempt, or Try-kick attempt, grab and pull an offensive player out of the way which allows another defensive player(s) (B2) to shoot the gap (pull and shoot) in an attempt to block the kick, unless the defensive player (B1) is advancing towards the kicker.
- (c) thrust his hands forward above the frame of an opponent to contact him on the neck, face, or head (Note: Contact in close-line play that is not prolonged and sustained is not a foul, unless the opponent's head is pinned back by direct and forcible contact).

#### LEGAL CONTACT WITHIN FIVE YARDS OF LINE

**Exception 1:** See Rule 8, Section 4, Articles 1-4 for legal and illegal contact against an eligible receiver.

#### ILLEGAL CONTACT WITHIN FIVE YARDS OF LINE

Within the five-yard zone, a defender may not make original contact in the back of a receiver, nor may he use his hands or arms to hang onto or encircle a receiver. The defender cannot extend an arm(s) to cut off or hook a receiver causing contact that impedes and restricts the receiver as the play develops, nor may he maintain contact after the receiver has moved beyond a point that is even with the defender.

#### ILLEGAL CONTACT BEYOND FIVE-YARD ZONE

Beyond the five-yard zone, if the player who receives the snap remains in the pocket with the ball, a defender may use his hands or arms only to defend or protect himself against impending contact caused by a receiver. If the receiver attempts to evade the defender, the defender cannot chuck him, or extend an arm(s) to cut off or hook him, causing contact that redirects, restricts, or impedes the receiver in any way.

#### INCIDENTAL CONTACT BEYOND FIVE-YARD ZONE

Beyond the five-yard zone, incidental contact may exist between receiver and defender as long as it does not materially affect or significantly impede the receiver, creating a distinct advantage.

**Exception 2:** See Rule 8, Section 4, Article 5 for legal and illegal cut blocks.

*Note 1: Once the quarterback or receiver of the snap hands off, is tackled, throws a forward or backward pass, loses possession of the ball by a fumble or a muff that touches the ground, or if the quarterback leaves the pocket area (see 3-24), the restrictions on the defensive team relative to offensive receivers (illegal contact, illegal cut block) will end.*

*Note 2: Whenever a team presents an apparent punting formation, defensive action that would normally constitute illegal contact (chuck beyond five yards) will no longer be considered a foul.*

**Penalty: For illegal contact or holding by the defense: Loss of five yards and automatic first down.**

**Penalty: For illegal cut block by the defense: Loss of 15 yards and automatic first down. (Personal Foul)**

#### SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

- (1) An eligible pass receiver who takes a position more than two yards outside of his own tackle (flexed receiver) may not be blocked below the waist (illegal cut), unless the quarterback hands off, is tackled, pitches the ball to a back, or if the quarterback leaves the pocket area.
- (2) The unnecessary use of the hands by the defense, except as provided in Article 6, is illegal and is commonly used in lieu of a legal block (Article 5) (See 12-2-2).
- (3) Any offensive player who pretends to possess the ball and/or one to whom a teammate pretends to give the ball, may tackled provided he is crossing his scrimmage line between the offensive tackles of a normal tight offensive line.

**A.R. 12.3** Second-and-10 on B40. B1 holds End A1 on the line of scrimmage. Quarterback A2 cannot throw the ball and is tackled at the 50.

**Ruling:** Not a forward pass. Enforcement is from the previous spot. A's ball first-and-10 on B35.

**A.R. 12.4** Second-and-10 on A40. Eligible end A1 goes downfield to the B45 and is contacted (chucked) by defender B1 as A1 attempts to evade him. The pass falls incomplete.

**Ruling:** A's ball first-and-10 on A45. Illegal contact. Eligible receiver A1 is not considered an obstructing player as he was more than five yards beyond line of scrimmage.

**A.R. 12.5** Second-and-10 on A40. Eligible receiver A1 is chucked by B1 at the scrimmage line. B1 then chucks back A2 on the A44 prior to the pass. The pass then falls incomplete.

**Ruling:** Legal use of hands as A1 and A2 were not the same player.

**A.R. 12.6** Second-and-10 on A30. Eligible pass receiver A1 takes a position three yards outside his own tackle and is blocked below the waist at line of scrimmage. The pass falls incomplete.

**Ruling:** Illegal cut as eligible receiver was more than two yards outside of his tackle. Fifteen-yard penalty. A's ball first-and-10 on A45.

**A.R. 12.7** Second-and-10 on A30. Eligible pass receiver A1 lines up one yard outside of his own tackle and is blocked below the waist at the line of scrimmage. Pass falls incomplete.

**Ruling:** Legal block as receiver was lined up within two yards of the tackle. A's ball third-and-10 on A30.

**A.R. 12.8** During a pass behind the line (forward or backward), B1 uses his hands on potential receiver A1 who is behind A's line. B1 is not using his hands to ward off A1, to push or pull A1 out of the way in order to get to the runner (passer), or to push or pull him out of the way in an actual attempt to catch or recover a loose ball.  
**Ruling:** **Holding** by the defense. Loss of five yards and first down for Team A (14-8-5).

**Article 7** No defensive player may trip an opponent.

**Penalty: For tripping by defense: Loss of 10 yards.**

#### **Illegal Bat**

**Article 8** A player may not bat or punch:

- (a) a loose ball (in field of play) toward opponent's goal line;
- (b) a loose ball (that has touched the ground) in any direction, if it is in either end zone;
- (c) a backward pass in flight may not be batted forward by an offensive player.

**Exception:** A forward pass in flight may be tipped, batted, or deflected in any direction by any eligible player at any time.

*Note: If a forward pass that is controlled by an airborne player prior to completing the catch is thrown forward, it is an illegal bat. If it is caught by a teammate or intercepted by an opponent, the ball remains alive. If it is not caught, the ball is dead when it hits the ground.*

**Penalty: For illegal batting or punching the ball: Loss of 10 yards. For enforcement, treat as a foul during a backward pass or fumble (see 8-7-7).**

#### **ILLEGALLY KICKING BALL**

**Article 9** No player may deliberately kick any loose ball or ball in player's possession.

**Penalty: For illegally kicking the ball: Loss of 10 yards. For enforcement, treat as a foul during a backward pass or fumble (see 8-7-7).**

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES**

- (1) If a loose ball is touched by any part of a player's leg (including knee), it is not considered kicking and is treated merely as touching.
- (2) If the penalty for an illegal bat or kick is declined, the procedure is the same as though the ball had been merely muffed. However, if the act (impetus) sends the ball in touch, 3-15-3 applies.
- (3) The penalty for Article 8 and 9, does not preclude a penalty for a palpably unfair act, when a deliberate kick or illegal bat actually prevents an opponent from recovering. See Palpably Unfair Act 12-3-3.
- (4) The ball is not dead when an illegal kick is recovered.

**A.R. 12.9** Second-and-15 on A2. Quarterback A1 fumbles a snap in the end zone. While the ball is loose on the ground there, A1 deliberately kicks it. The ball is last touched by B1 before going out of bounds on A's 2-yard line.  
**Ruling:** Safety. See 8-7-3-Item 3-c; 11-5-1; and 12-1-9.

## **Section 2 Personal Fouls**

### **STRIKING, KICKING, OR KNEEING OPPONENT**

**Article 1** All players are prohibited from:

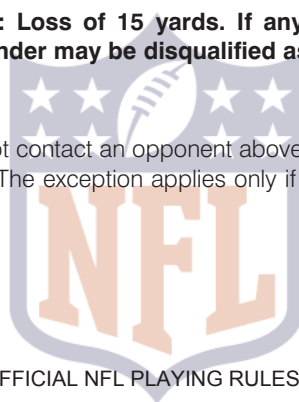
- (a) striking with the fists;
- (b) kicking or kneeing; or
- (c) striking, swinging, or clubbing to the head, neck, or face with the heel, back, or side of the hand, wrist, arm, elbow, or clasped hands. See 12-2-3.
- (d) grabbing the inside collar of the back of the shoulder pads or jersey, or the inside collar of the side of the shoulder pads or jersey, and immediately pulling down the runner. This does not apply to a runner who is in the tackle box or to a quarterback who is in the pocket.

*Note: It is not necessary for a player to pull the runner completely to the ground in order for the act to be illegal. If his knees are buckled by the action, it is a foul, even if the runner is not pulled completely to the ground.*

**Penalty: For fouls in a, b, c, and d: Loss of 15 yards. If any of the above acts is judged by the official(s) to be flagrant, the offender may be disqualified as long as the entire action is observed by the official(s).**

#### **HEAD SLAP**

**Article 2** A defensive player shall not contact an opponent above the shoulders with the palm of his hands except to ward him off on the line. The exception applies only if it is not a repeated act against the same opponent during any one contact.



## LEGAL CONTACT

**Article 3** A defensive player may use the palm of his hands on an opponent's head, neck, or face only to ward off or push him in an actual attempt to get at a loose ball.

## NO STRIKING

**Article 4** A player in blocking shall not strike an opponent below the shoulders with his forearm or elbows by turning the trunk of his body at the waist, pivoting or in any other way that is clearly unnecessary.

**Penalty: For illegal use of the palm of the hands or for striking an opponent below the shoulders with the forearm or elbow: Loss of 15 yards.**

*Note: Any impermissible use of elbows, forearms, or knees shall be penalized under the unnecessary roughness rule; flagrantly unnecessary roughness shall be penalized under the same rule and the player disqualified.*

**A.R. 12.10** Second-and-10 on A30. Defensive player B1, on his initial charge, head slaps an offensive tackle on the helmet once with his open hand trying to get at runner A1. A1 is downed on the A35  
**Ruling:** Illegal. A's ball first-and-10 on the 50.

**A.R. 12.11** Second-and-10 on A30. Defensive player B1, on his initial charge, head slaps an offensive tackle on his repeatedly with his open hand in trying to get at a runner. The runner is downed on the A35.  
**Ruling:** Illegal. Loss of 15 yards. A's ball first-and-10 on the 50.

## GRASPING FACEMASK

**Article 5** No player shall twist, turn, or pull the facemask of an opponent in any direction.

**Penalty: For twisting, turning, or pulling the mask: Loss of 15 yards. A personal foul. The player may be disqualified if the action is judged by the official(s) to be of a flagrant nature.**

**A.R. 12.12** Third-and-10 on A30. Runner A1 runs to the A33, where he is tackled by B1, who incidentally grasps A1's facemask on the tackle, but it is not a twist, turn, or pull.  
**Ruling:** A's ball, fourth-and-seven, on A33. No Foul.

## RUNNING INTO KICKER

**Article 6** No defensive player may run into or rough a kicker who kicks from behind his line unless such contact:

- (a) is incidental to and after he has touched the kick in flight;
- (b) is caused by the kicker's own motions;
- (c) occurs during a quick kick;
- (d) occurs during a kick or after a run behind the line;
- (e) occurs after the kicker recovers a loose ball on the ground; or
- (f) is caused because a defender is blocked into the kicker.

## RUNNING, ROUGHING KICKER

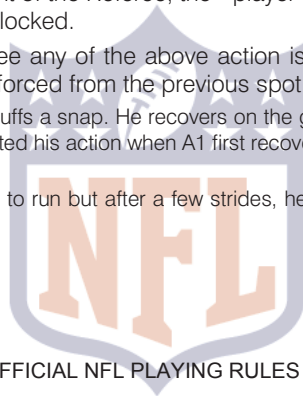
**Penalty: For running into the kicker: Loss of five yards from the previous spot, no automatic first down. (This is not a personal foul). For roughing the kicker or holder, loss of 15 yards from the previous spot. (This is a personal foul, and also disqualification if flagrant).**

## SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

- (1) Avoiding the kicker is a primary responsibility of defensive players if they do not touch the kick.
- (2) Any contact with the kicker by a single defensive player who has not touched the kick is running into the kicker.
- (3) Any unnecessary roughness committed by defensive players is roughing the kicker. Severity of contact and potential for injury are to be considered.
- (4) When two defensive players are making a bona fide attempt to block a kick from scrimmage (punt, drop kick, and/or placekick) and one of them runs into the kicker after the kick has left the kicker's foot at the same instant the second player blocks the kick, the foul for running into the kicker shall not be enforced, unless in the judgment of the Referee, the player running into the kicker was clearly the direct cause of the kick being blocked.
- (5) If in the judgment of the Referee any of the above action is unnecessary roughness, the penalty for roughing the kicker shall be enforced from the previous spot as a foul during a kick.

**A.R. 12.13** Kicker A1 in punt formation muffs a snap. He recovers on the ground and then kicks. A1 is run into, blocked, or tackled by B1 who had started his action when A1 first recovered.  
**Ruling:** Legal action by B1.

**A.R. 12.14** A1 receives a snap. He starts to run but after a few strides, he kicks from behind his line. As A1 kicks, he is tackled or run into.



**Ruling:** The kicker is to be protected, but the Referee should use his judgment when ordinary line play carries an opponent into such a kicker or at any time when it is not obvious that a kick is to be made (quick kick).

**A.R. 12.15** Fourth-and-12 on B30. On a field-goal attempt which is not good, receiver B1 runs into the kicker without touching the ball.

**Ruling:** A's ball fourth-and-7 on B25. Running into the kicker. If the field goal had been good, no penalty would be enforced on the succeeding kickoff, since it was not a personal foul.

## NO PILING ON

**Article 7** No player shall fall upon any prostrate player (other than the runner), or upon a runner after the ball is dead.

**Penalty: For piling on: Loss of 15 yards.**

*Note: An official should prevent piling on a prostrate or helpless runner before the ball is dead. When opponents in close proximity to such a runner are about to pile on, and further advance is improbable, the official covering should sound his whistle for a dead ball, in order to prevent further play and roughness. See 7-2-1-b.*

**A.R. 12.16** The holder of a Try-kick is run into or piled on and the act is not incidental to blocking the kick.

**Ruling:** Unnecessary roughness. Such a player is obviously out of play unless the kick is blocked, and even then until he arises and participates in play. See 14-1-14 and 14-6-Exc. 6.

## UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

**Article 8** There shall be no unnecessary roughness. This shall include, but will not be limited to:

- (a) striking an opponent anywhere with the foot or any part of the leg with a whipping motion;
- (b) contacting a runner out of bounds;

*Note: Defensive players must make an effort to avoid contact. Players on defense are responsible for knowing when a runner has crossed the boundary line, except in doubtful cases where he might step on a boundary line and continue parallel with it.*

- (c) a member of the receiving team cannot go out of bounds and contact a kicking team player out of bounds. If this occurs on a kick from scrimmage, post-possession rules would apply if appropriate (9-5-1);
- (d) running or diving into, or throwing the body against or on a ball carrier who falls or slips to the ground untouched and makes no attempt to advance, before or after the ball is dead;
- (e) unnecessarily running, diving into, cutting, or throwing the body against or on a player who (i) is out of the play or (ii) should not have reasonably anticipated such contact by an opponent, before or after the ball is dead; or throwing the runner to the ground after the ball is dead;
- (f) a kicker/punter, who is standing still or fading backwards after the ball has been kicked, is out of the play and must not be unnecessarily contacted by the receiving team through the end of the play or until he assumes a distinctly defensive position.
- (g) If a player uses any part of his helmet (including the top/crown and forehead/"hairline" parts) or facemask to butt, spear, or ram an opponent violently or unnecessarily.
- (h) any player who grabs a helmet opening of an opponent and forcibly twists, turns, or pulls his head.
- (i) Illegal contact with the helmet against the knee of the snapper during an attempt for a field goal or kick try.
- (j) if a player illegally launches into a defenseless opponent. It is an illegal launch if a player (1) leaves both feet prior to contact to spring forward and upward into his opponent, and (2) uses any part of his helmet (including the top/crown and forehead/"hairline" parts) to initiate forcible contact against any part of his opponent's body.

*Note: This does not apply to contact against a runner, unless the runner is still considered to be a defenseless player, as defined in Rule 12, Section 2, Article 9.*

**Penalty: For unnecessary roughness: Loss of 15 yards. The player may be disqualified if the action is judged by the official(s) to be flagrant.**

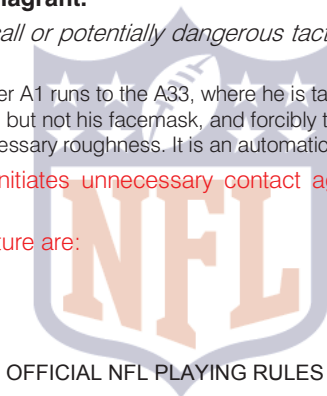
*Note: If in doubt about a roughness call or potentially dangerous tactics, the covering official(s) should always call unnecessary roughness.*

**A.R. 12.17** Third-and-20 on A30. Runner A1 runs to the A33, where he is tackled by B1, who hooks his fingers under the front of the runner's helmet, but not his facemask, and forcibly twists his head.

**Ruling:** 15 yards for unnecessary roughness. It is an automatic first down. A's ball first-and-10 on A48.

**Article 9** It is a foul if a player initiates unnecessary contact against a player who is in a defenseless posture.

- (a) Players in a defenseless posture are:



- (1) A player in the act of or just after throwing a pass;
  - (2) A receiver attempting to catch a pass; or who has completed a catch and has not had time to protect himself or has not clearly become a runner. If the receiver/runner is capable of avoiding or warding off the impending contact of an opponent, he is no longer a defenseless player;
  - (3) A runner already in the grasp of a tackler and whose forward progress has been stopped;
  - (4) A kickoff or punt returner attempting to field a kick in the air;
  - (5) A player on the ground at the end of a play;
  - (6) A kicker/punter during the kick or during the return;
  - (7) A quarterback at any time after a change of possession, and
  - (8) A player who receives a “blindside” block when the blocker is moving toward his own endline and approaches the opponent from behind or from the side.
- (b) Prohibited contact against a player who is in a defenseless posture is:
- (1) Forcibly hitting the defenseless player’s head or neck area with the helmet, facemask, forearm, or shoulder, regardless of whether the defensive player also uses his arms to tackle the defenseless player by encircling or grasping him; and
  - (2) Lowering the head and making forcible contact with the top/crown or forehead/“hairline” parts of the helmet against any part of the defenseless player’s body.

*Note: The provisions of (2) do not prohibit incidental contact by the mask or helmet in the course of a conventional tackle on an opponent.*

**Penalty: For unnecessary roughness: Loss of 15 yards. The player may be disqualified if the action is judged by the official(s) to be flagrant.**

#### CLIPPING

**Article 10** There shall be no clipping from behind below the waist against a non-runner. This does not apply to offensive blocking in close-line play where it is legal to clip above the knee(s), but it is illegal to clip at or below the knee(s).

**Penalty: For clipping: Loss of 15 yards.**

#### CLOSE-LINE PLAY

##### SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

- (1) Close-line play is that which occurs in an area extending laterally to the position originally occupied by the offensive tackles and longitudinally three yards on either side of each line of scrimmage.

#### CLOSE-LINE PLAY—ROLL-UP BLOCK

- (2) In close-line play, if an offensive player’s block (legal or illegal) is followed by the blocker rolling up on the back of the leg(s) of the defender, the action is illegal and is considered unnecessary roughness.

**Exception:** An offensive lineman may not clip a defender who, at the snap, is aligned on the line of scrimmage opposite another offensive lineman who is more than one position away when the defender is responding to the flow of the ball away from the blocker.

**Example:** Tackle cannot clip nose tackle on sweep away.

- (3) Doubtful cases involving a side block or the opponent turning his back as the block is being made are to be judged according to whether the opponent was able to see or ward off the blocker.
- (4) The use of hands from behind above the waist on a non-runner is illegal use of hands (see 12-1-3).
- (5) The use of hands on the back is not a foul when it is by:
  - (a) one of the kickers in warding off a receiver, while going downfield under a kick, or
  - (b) any player in an actual personal legal attempt to recover a loose ball.
- (6) It is not considered clipping if:
  - (a) a blocker is moving in the same direction as an opponent, and has initial contact on the side of the opponent and then continues to contact with the opponent below his waist from behind with any part of his body, or
  - (b) in any case if an official has not observed the blocker’s initial contact.

**A.R. 12.18** Second-and-10 on B30. B1 is hit from behind, below the waist, at the B25 by A2 throwing his body across the back of B1’s legs. Runner A1 is downed on B15.

**Ruling:** Clipping. A’s ball second-and-20 on B40.

**A.R. 12.19** Second-and-10 on B30. A2 pushes B1 from behind above the waist at the B25. Runner A1 is down on B15.

**Ruling:** Illegal block above the waist. A’s ball second-and-15 on B35.

## CRACKBACK (ILLEGAL)

**Article 11** At the snap, an offensive player who is aligned in a position more than two yards laterally outside an offensive tackle, or a player who is in a backfield position at the snap and then moves to a position more than two yards laterally outside a tackle, may not clip an opponent anywhere, nor may he contact an opponent below the waist if the blocker is moving toward the position where the ball was snapped from, and the contact occurs within an area five yards on either side of the line of scrimmage.

*Note 1: A player aligned more than two yards laterally outside a tackle at the snap is designated as being flexed.*

*Note 2: If runner (passer) scrambles on the play, significantly changing the original direction (broken play), the crackback block is legal.*

**Penalty: Illegal crackback block: Loss of 15 yards.**

**A.R. 12.20** Second-and-10 on A40. Flanker A1 sets up five yards outside of offensive tackle A2. At the snap, A1 comes back and crackback blocks B1. Contact is made at the A38 behind the offensive tackle's original position. Runner goes to 50.

**Ruling:** A's ball second-and-25 on A25. Illegal crackback block. Penalize from previous spot.

## ILLEGAL PEEL BACK BLOCK

**Article 12** When a player who is aligned in the tackle box at the snap moves to a position outside the box, he cannot initiate contact on the side and below the waist on an opponent if:

- (a) the blocker is moving toward his own end line; and
- (b) he approaches the opponent from behind or from the side.

*Note: If the near shoulder of the blocker contacts the front of his opponent's body, the "peel back" block is legal.*

**Penalty: For illegal "peel back" block: Loss of 15 yards.**

## ROUGHING THE PASSER

**Article 13** Because the act of passing often puts the quarterback (or any other player attempting a pass) in a position where he is particularly vulnerable to injury, special rules against roughing the passer apply. The Referee has principal responsibility for enforcing these rules. Any physical acts against passers during or just after a pass which, in the Referee's judgment, are unwarranted by the circumstances of the play will be called as fouls. The Referee will be guided by the following principles:

### PASS LEAVING PASSER'S HAND; ONE-STEP RULE

- (1) Roughing will be called if, in the Referee's judgment, a pass rusher clearly should have known that the ball had already left the passer's hand before contact was made; pass rushers are responsible for being aware of the position of the ball in passing situations; the Referee will use the release of the ball from the passer's hand as his guideline that the passer is now fully protected; once a pass has been released by a passer, a rushing defender may make direct contact with the passer only up through the rusher's first step after such release (prior to second step hitting the ground); thereafter the rusher must be making an attempt to avoid contact and must not continue to "drive through" or otherwise forcibly contact the passer; incidental or inadvertent contact by a player who is easing up or being blocked into the passer will not be considered significant.

### UNNECESSARY ACTS AGAINST PASSER

- (2) A rushing defender is prohibited from committing such intimidating and punishing acts as "stuffing" a passer into the ground or unnecessarily wrestling or driving him down after the passer has thrown the ball, even if the rusher makes his initial contact with the passer within the one-step limitation provided for in (1) above. When tackling a passer who is in a defenseless posture (e.g., during or just after throwing a pass), a defensive player must not unnecessarily or violently throw him down and land on top of him with all or most of the defender's weight. Instead, the defensive player must strive to wrap up or cradle the passer with the defensive player's arms.

### HITS TO PASSER'S HEAD AND USE OF HELMET AND FACEMASK

- (3) In covering the passer position, Referees will be particularly alert to fouls in which defenders impermissibly use the helmet and/or facemask to hit the passer, or use hands, arms, or other parts of the body to hit the passer **forcibly** in the **head or neck area** (see also the other unnecessary-roughness rules covering these subjects). A defensive player must not use his helmet against a passer who is in a defenseless posture for example, (a) forcibly hitting the passer's **head or neck area** with the helmet or facemask, regardless of whether the defensive player also uses his arms to tackle the passer by encircling or grasping him, or (b) lowering the head and making forcible contact with the **top/crown or forehead/"hairline"** parts of the helmet against any part of the passer's body. This rule does not



prohibit incidental contact by the mask or non-crown parts of the helmet in the course of a conventional tackle on a passer.

#### **CLUBBING PASSER'S ARM**

- (4) A defensive player is prohibited from clubbing the arm of a passer during a pass or just after a pass has been thrown; however, a defensive player may grasp, pull, or otherwise make normal contact with a passer's arm in attempting to tackle him;

#### **HITTING PASSER'S KNEE**

- (5) A rushing defender is prohibited from forcibly hitting in the knee area or below a passer who has one or both feet on the ground, even if the initial contact is above the knee. It is not a foul if the defender is blocked (or fouled) into the passer and has no opportunity to avoid him;

*Note 1: A defender cannot initiate a roll or lunge and forcibly hit the passer in the knee area or below, even if he is being contacted by another player.*

*Note 2: It is not a foul if the defender swipes, wraps, or grabs a passer in the knee area or below in an attempt to tackle him.*

#### **GRASP AND CONTROL**

- (6) The Referee must blow the play dead as soon as the passer is clearly in the grasp and control of any tackler behind the line, and the passer's safety is in jeopardy;

#### **PASSER OUT OF THE PLAY**

- (7) A passer who is standing still or fading backwards after the ball has left his hand is obviously out of the play and must not be unnecessarily contacted by the defense through the end of the play or until the passer becomes a blocker, or until he becomes a runner upon taking a lateral from a teammate or picking up a loose ball, or, in the event of a change of possession on the play, until the passer assumes a distinctly defensive position. **However, at any time after the change of possession, it is a foul if (a) an opponent forcibly hits the quarterback's head or neck area with his helmet, facemask, forearm, or shoulder, or (b) if an opponent lowers his head and makes forcible contact with the top/crown or forehead/"hairline" parts of his helmet against any part of the quarterback's body. This provision (b) does not prohibit incidental contact by the mask or the helmet in the course of a conventional block.**

#### **PASSER OUT OF THE POCKET**

- (8) When the passer goes outside the pocket area and either continues moving with the ball (without attempting to advance the ball as a runner) or throws while on the run, he loses the protection of the one-step rule provided for in (1) above, **and the protection against a low hit provided for in (5) above,** but he remains covered by all the other special protections afforded to a passer in the pocket (numbers 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7), as well as the regular unnecessary-roughness rules applicable to all player positions. If the passer stops behind the line and clearly establishes a passing posture, he will then be covered by all of the special protections for passers.

**Penalty: For Roughing the Passer: Loss of 15 yards from the previous spot; disqualification if flagrant.**

*Note 1: If in doubt about a roughness call or potentially dangerous tactic on the quarterback, the Referee should always call roughing the passer.*

*Note 2: See 8-6-2 for personal fouls prior to completion or interception.*

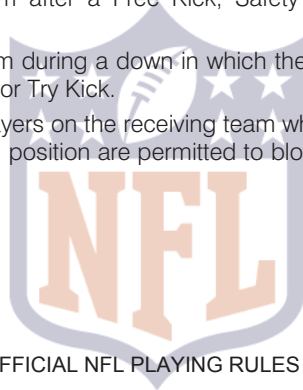
**A.R. 12.21** Passer A1 is run into or tackled by defensive B1 after a pass. B1 had started his action prior to pass.  
**Ruling:** A legal action, unless the official rules that B1 had a reasonable chance to avoid or minimize the contact and made no attempt to do so.

#### **BLOCKING BELOW WAIST ON KICKS AND CHANGE OF POSSESSION**

**Article 14** Blocks below the waist are prohibited in the following situations:

- (a) By players of either team after a change of possession; or  
(b) By players of the kicking team after a Free Kick, Safety Kick, Fair-Catch Kick, Punt, Field-Goal Attempt, or Try Kick; or  
(c) By players of the receiving team during a down in which there is a Free Kick, Safety Kick, Fair-Catch Kick, Punt, Field-Goal Attempt, or Try Kick.

**Exception:** Immediately at the snap, players on the receiving team who are on the line of scrimmage and lined up on or inside the normal tight end position are permitted to block low during a Punt, Field-Goal Attempt, or Try Kick.



*Note: Illegal contact with the helmet against the knee of the snapper during a Field-Goal Attempt or a Try Kick is unnecessary roughness (see 12-2-8-i).*

**Penalty: For illegally blocking below the waist: Loss of 15 yards.**

**A.R. 12.22** Third-and-6 on B26. B1 intercepts a forward pass in the end zone and runs it out to the B31. During B1's run, A2 blocks B3 low from the side at B28, so that A4 could tackle B1 at the B31.

**Ruling:** Illegal block. B's ball first-and-10 on B46.

### USE OF HELMET AS A WEAPON

**Article 15** A player may not use a helmet (that is no longer worn by anyone) as a weapon to strike, swing at, or throw at an opponent.

**Penalty: For illegal use of helmet as a weapon: Loss of 15 yards and automatic disqualification.**

**Article 16** A chop block is a foul by the offense in which one **offensive** player (designated as A1 for purposes of this rule) blocks a defensive player in the area of the thigh or lower while another offensive player (A2) occupies that same defensive player in one of the circumstances described in subsections (1) through (10) below.

### CHOP BLOCK ON PASS (ENGAGEMENT)

- (1) On a forward pass play, A1 chops a defensive player while the defensive player is physically engaged above the waist by the blocking attempt of A2.

### CHOP BLOCK ON PASS (AFTER ENGAGEMENT)

- (2) On a forward pass play in which A2 physically engages a defensive player above the waist with a blocking attempt, A1 chops the defensive player after the contact by A2 has been broken and while A2 is still confronting the defensive player.

### CHOP BLOCK ON PASS (WITH "LURE")

- (3) On a forward pass play, A1 chops a defensive player while A2 confronts the defensive player in a pass-blocking posture but is not physically engaged with the defensive player (a "lure").

### REVERSE CHOP BLOCK ON PASS

- (4) On a forward pass play, A1 blocks a defensive player in the area of the thigh or lower, and A2, simultaneously or immediately after the block by A1, engages the defensive player high.

*Note: Each of the above circumstances in subsections (1) through (4), which describes a chop-block foul on a forward-pass play, also applies on a play in which an offensive player indicates an apparent attempt to pass block but the play ultimately becomes a run.*

- (5) On a running play, A1 is lined up in the backfield at the snap and subsequently chops a defensive player engaged above the waist by A2, and such block occurs on or behind the line of scrimmage in an area extending laterally to the positions originally occupied by the tight end on either side.

### CHOP BLOCK ON RUN (BY A LINEMAN)

- (6) On a running play, A1, an offensive lineman, chops a defensive player after the defensive player has been engaged by A2 (high or low), and the initial alignment of A2 is more than one position away from A1. This rule applies only when the block occurs at a time when the flow of the play is clearly away from A1.

### CHOP BLOCK ON KICKS

- (7) On a kicking play, A1 chops a defensive player while the defensive player is physically engaged above the waist by the blocking attempt of A2.
- (8) On a kicking play in which A2 physically engages a defensive player above the waist with a blocking attempt, A1 chops the defensive player after the contact by A2 has been broken and while A2 is still confronting the defensive player.
- (9) On a kicking play, A1 chops a defensive player while A2 confronts the defensive player in a kick-blocking posture but is not physically engaged with the defensive player (a "lure").
- (10) On a kicking play, A1 blocks a defensive player in the area of the thigh or lower, and A2, simultaneously or immediately after the block by A1, engages the defensive player high.

*Note: Each of the above circumstances in subsections (7) through (10), which describes a chop-block foul on a kicking play, also applies on a play in which an offensive player indicates an apparent attempt to kick protect, but the play ultimately becomes a run.*

**Penalty: For Chop Block: Loss of 15 yards.**



## Section 3 Unsportsmanlike Conduct

**Article 1** There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct. This applies to any act which is contrary to the generally understood principles of sportsmanship. Such acts specifically include, among others:

- (a) Throwing a punch, or a forearm, or kicking at an opponent even though no contact is made.
- (b) The use of abusive, threatening, or insulting language or gestures to opponents, teammates, officials, or representatives of the League.

### TAUNTING

- (c) The use of baiting or taunting acts or words that engender ill will between teams.
- (d) Individual players involved in prolonged or excessive celebrations. Players are prohibited from engaging in any celebrations while on the ground. A celebration shall be deemed excessive or prolonged if a player continues to celebrate after a warning from an official.
- (e) Two-or-more players engage in prolonged, excessive, premeditated, or choreographed celebrations.
- (f) Possession or use of foreign or extraneous object(s) that are not part of the uniform during the game on the field or the sideline, or using the ball as a prop.

### CONTACT—GAME OFFICIAL

- (g) Unnecessary physical contact with a game official.

### REMOVAL OF HELMET

- (h) Removal of his helmet by a player in the field of play during a celebration or during a confrontation with a game official or any other player.

*Note 1: Under no condition is an official to allow a player to shove, push, or strike him in an offensive, disrespectful, or unsportsmanlike manner. Any such action must be reported to the Commissioner.*

**Penalty: (for a through h): Loss of 15 yards from succeeding spot or whatever spot the Referee, after consulting with the crew, deems equitable.**

*Note 2: Violations of (b) or (c) (above), which occur before or during the game may result in disqualification in addition to the yardage penalty. Any violations at the game site on the day of the game, including postgame, may result in discipline by the Commissioner. Any violation of (g) (above) may result in disqualification and also will include discipline by the Commissioner. An official must see the entire action for a player to be disqualified.*

*Note 3: Violations of (b) will be penalized if any of the acts are committed directly at an opponent. These acts include but are not limited to: sack dances; home run swing; incredible hulk; spiking the ball; spinning the ball; throwing or shoving the ball; pointing; pointing the ball; verbal taunting; military salute; standing over an opponent (prolonged and with provocation); or dancing.*

*Note 4: Violations of (c) will be penalized if any of the acts occur anywhere on the field. These acts include but are not limited to: throat slash; machine-gun salute; sexually-suggestive gestures, prolonged gyrations; or stomping on a team logo.*

*Note 5: Violations of (d) will be penalized if they occur anywhere on the field other than the bench area.*

*Note 6: If any foreign object(s) are deemed a safety hazard by the game officials, in addition to a yardage penalty, the player will be subject to ejection from the game, whether he uses the object or not.*

### DISCONCERTING

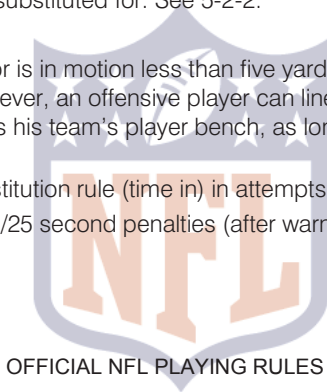
- (i) The defensive use of acts or words designed to disconcert an offensive team at the snap. An official must blow his whistle immediately to stop play.
- (j) Concealing a ball underneath the clothing or using any article of equipment to simulate a ball.

### LINGERING

- (k) Using entering substitutes, legally returning players, substitutes on sidelines, or withdrawn players to confuse opponents. The clarification is also to be interpreted as covering any lingering by players leaving the field when being substituted for. See 5-2-2.

### HIDE OUT

- (l) An offensive player lines up or is in motion less than five yards from the sideline in front of his team's designated bench area. However, an offensive player can line up less than five yards from the sidelines on the same side as his team's player bench, as long as he is not in front of the designated bench area.
- (m) Repeatedly abusing the substitution rule (time in) in attempts to conserve time. See 5-2-2.
- (n) More than two successive 40/25 second penalties (after warning) during same down.



## LEVERAGE

- (o) Jumping or standing on a teammate or opponent to block or attempt to block an opponent's kick.
- (p) Placing a hand or hands on a teammate or opponent to gain additional height in the block or attempt to block an opponent's kick.
- (q) Being picked up by a teammate in a block or an attempt to block an opponent's kick.

## LEAPING

- (r) Clearly running forward and leaping in an obvious attempt to block a field goal, or Try-kick after touchdown and landing on players, unless the leaping player was originally lined up within one yard of the line of scrimmage when the ball was snapped.

## GOAL TENDING

- (s) Goal-tending by a defensive player leaping up to deflect a kick as it passes above the crossbar of a goalpost is prohibited. The Referee could award three points for a palpably unfair act (12-3-3).
- (t) A punter, placekicker, or holder who simulates being roughed or run into by a defensive player.
- (u) A member of the kicking team who goes out of bounds, whether forced out or voluntarily, and does not attempt to return inbounds in a reasonable amount of time.

## FREEZING THE KICKER

- (v) An attempt to call an excess or illegal timeout to freeze a kicker prior to a field-goal attempt or a Try attempt, when:
  - (i) a team has already been charged a timeout during the same dead ball period; or
  - (ii) a team has exhausted the three charged team timeouts that are permitted in a half.

If an attempt is made to call a timeout in these situations, the officials shall not grant a timeout, play will continue, and a penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct shall be enforced. If a timeout is inadvertently granted, the penalty shall also be enforced.

*Note: The Referee (or another official) will notify the Head Coach (i) that two charged timeouts by the same team in the same dead ball period are not permitted, and (ii) when he has exhausted his three charged team timeouts in a half.*

**Penalty: For unsportsmanlike player conduct (i) through (v): Loss of 15 yards from:**

- a) the succeeding spot if the ball is dead.**
- b) the previous spot if the ball was in play.**

**If the infraction is flagrant, the player is also disqualified.**

## FOULS TO PREVENT SCORE

**Article 2** The defense shall not commit successive or continued fouls to prevent a score.

**Penalty: For continuous fouls to prevent a score: If the violation is repeated after a warning, the score involved is awarded to the offensive team.**

## PALPABLY UNFAIR ACT (PLAYER)

**Article 3** A player or substitute shall not interfere with play by any act which is palpably unfair.

**Penalty: For a palpably unfair act: Offender may be disqualified. The Referee, after consulting his crew, enforces any such distance penalty as they consider equitable and irrespective of any other specified code penalty. The Referee could award a score. See 15-1-6.**

