

Rule 3 Definitions

Section 1 Approved Ruling (A.R.)

APPROVED RULING

An Approved Ruling (A.R.) is an official decision on a given statement of facts and serves to illustrate the intent, application, or amplification of a rule. Supplemental notes are often used for the same purpose (3-33).

OFFICIAL RULING

An Official Ruling (O.R.) is a ruling made by the Interpretation Committee in the interim between the annual rules meeting and is official only during the current season.

TECHNICAL TERMS

Technical Terms are such terms that have a fixed and exact meaning throughout the code. Because of their alphabetical arrangement in Rule 3, certain ones are used prior to being defined. In such cases, they are accented only the first time they are used.

Section 2 Ball in Play, Dead Ball

BALL IN PLAY

Article 1 The Ball is in Play (or Live Ball) when it is:

- (a) legally free kicked (6-1-1), or
- (b) legally snapped (7-1-1).

It continues in play until the down ends (3-7-1; 7-2-1).

DEAD BALL

Article 2 A Dead Ball is one that is not in play. The time period during which the ball is dead is Between Downs. This includes the interval during all time outs (including intermission) and from the time the ball becomes dead until it is legally put in play.

LOOSE BALL

Article 3 A Loose Ball is a live ball that is not in player possession, i.e., any kick, pass, or fumble. A loose ball that has not yet struck the ground is In Flight. A loose ball (either during or after flight) is considered in possession of team (offense) whose player kicked, passed, or fumbled. It ends when a player secures possession or when the down ends if that is before such possession. (For exception, see 9-5-1-Exc. 3).

FUMBLE

Article 4 A Fumble is any act, other than a pass or kick, which results in loss of player possession. The term Fumble always implies possession. (8-7-3).

Note: If a player pretends to fumble and causes the ball to go forward, it is a forward pass and may be illegal (8-1-2-Pen. a, c).

A.R. 3.1 While runner A1 is in possession, defensive player B1 grabs the ball away from him.

Ruling: Fumble.

A.R. 3.2 While runner A1 is in possession, defensive player B1 kicks the ball away from him.

Ruling: A foul during a fumble. Kicking a ball in player possession is a foul (12-4-3).

MUFF

Article 5 A Muff is the touching of a loose ball by a player in an unsuccessful attempt to obtain possession of it.

Note 1: A muff does not change the status of a loose ball.

Note 2: Any ball intentionally muffed forward is a bat and may be a foul. (3-2-5-g; 12-4-1).

TOUCHING THE BALL

Touching the Ball refers to any contact. Ordinarily there is no distinction between a player touching the ball with his hands or any part of his body being touched by it except as specifically provided for (3-15-3-Note 1 and 9-2-4).

Note: The result of the touching is sometimes influenced by the intent or the location.

TOUCHING FREE KICK

- (a) See 6-1-4-c and 6-2-4 for touching a free kick.

INTENT OR LOCATION OF TOUCHING

- (b) See 6-1-4 for touching a free kick before it goes out of bounds between the goal lines.

INELIGIBLE PLAYER TOUCHING A PASS

- (c) See 8-1-8 for ineligible offensive player touching a forward pass on, behind, or beyond the line.

PUSHED INTO A KICK

- (d) See 9-2 for touching a scrimmage kick on or behind the line, and also 9-2-4 for being pushed into a kick by an opponent.

TOUCHING KICK DURING ATTEMPTED FIELD GOAL

(e) See 11-4-2 for touching a kick during an attempted field goal.

SIMULTANEOUS TOUCHING

(f) Simultaneous touching by two opponents of a kick is treated as a first touch by the kicking team.

BAT OR PUNCH

(g) A Bat or Punch is the intentional striking of the ball with hand, fist, elbow, or forearm. See 12-4-1.

PLAYER INBOUNDS

Article 6 A player (5-2-2) is inbounds when he first touches both feet or any other part of his body, other than his hands, to the ground within the boundary lines (1-1). See (3-21-1) for a player out of bounds.

Note: Unless otherwise stated in the Rules, a player is deemed to be inbounds.

PLAYER POSSESSION

Article 7

Item 1: Player in Possession. A player is in possession when he is inbounds and has a firm grip and control of the ball with his hands or arms.

Item 2: Possession of Loose Ball. To gain possession of a loose ball that has been caught, intercepted, or recovered, a player must have complete control of the ball and have both feet or any other part of his body, other than his hands, completely on the ground inbounds, and maintain control of the ball long enough to perform any act common to the game. If the player loses the ball while simultaneously touching both feet or any other part of his body to the ground, there is no possession. This rule applies in the field of play and in the end zone.

Item 3: Simultaneous Possession of a Loose Ball. If a Loose Ball is controlled simultaneously by two opponents, and both players retain it, it is simultaneous possession, and the ball belongs to the team last in possession, or to the receiving team when there has been a Free Kick, Scrimmage Kick, or Fair Catch Kick. It is not simultaneous possession if a player gains control first and an opponent subsequently gains joint control.

The terms catch, intercept, recover, advance, and fumble denote player possession (as distinguished from touching or muffing).

Note 1: A player who goes to the ground in the process of attempting to secure possession of a loose ball (with or without contact by an opponent) must maintain control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground, whether in the field of play or the end zone. If he loses control of the ball, and the ball touches the ground before he regains control, there is no possession. If he regains control prior to the ball touching the ground, it is a catch, interception, or recovery.

Note 2: If a player goes to the ground out of bounds (with or without contact by an opponent) in the process of attempting to secure possession of a loose ball at the sideline, he must maintain complete and continuous control of the ball throughout the process of contacting the ground, or there is no possession.

Note 3: If a player has control of the ball, a slight movement of the ball will not be considered loss of possession. He must lose control of the ball in order to rule that there has been a loss of possession.

CATCH

A catch is made when a player inbounds secures possession of a pass, kick, or fumble in flight (See 8-1-3).

Note 1: It is a catch if, in the process of attempting to catch the ball, a player secures control of the ball prior to it touching the ground and that control is maintained during and after the ball has touched the ground.

Note 2: In the field of play, if a catch of a forward pass has been completed, and there is contact by a defender causing the ball to come loose before the runner is down by contact, it is a fumble, and the ball remains alive. In the end zone, the same action is a touchdown, since the receiver completed the catch beyond the goal line prior to the loss of possession, and the ball is dead when the catch is completed.

INTERCEPTION

An interception is made when a pass (forward or backward) is caught by an opponent of the passer.

RECOVER

The term recover indicates securing possession of a loose ball by either the offense or defense after it has touched the ground.

Note 1: If there is any question by the covering official(s) as to whether a forward pass is complete, intercepted, or incomplete, it always will be ruled incomplete.

Note 2: Recovery does not imply advance, unless so stated.

Note 3: If a player would have caught, intercepted, or recovered a ball inbounds, but is carried out of bounds, player possession will be granted (8-1-3 item 6).

Section 3 Blocking

LEGAL BLOCK

Blocking is the act of obstructing or impeding an opponent by contacting him with a part of the blocker's body.

A Block in the Back is a block that is delivered from behind an opponent above his waist. It is not a block in the back:

- (a) if the opponent turns away from the blocker, or
- (b) if both of the blocker's hands are on the opponent's side.

A Block Below the Waist is when the initial contact is below the waist with any part of the blocker's body against an opponent, other than the runner, who has one or both feet on the ground. A blocker who makes contact above the waist and then slides below the waist has not blocked below the waist.

Note: If an opponent uses his hands to ward off a block, and the blocker contacts the opponent below the waist, it is not a block below the waist unless the blocker is obviously intending to deliver a low block.

Section 4 Chucking

CHUCKING

Chucking is a means of warding off an eligible receiver who is in front of a defender by contacting him with a quick extension of arm or arms followed by the return of arm(s) to a flexed position, or by maintaining continuous and unbroken contact within five yards of the line of scrimmage, so long as the receiver has not moved beyond the point that is even with the defender (See 8-4 Articles 1-4).

Section 5 Clipping

CLIPPING

Clipping is throwing the body across the back of the leg of an eligible receiver or charging or falling into the back of an opponent below the waist after approaching him from behind, provided the opponent is not a runner.

Note 1: It is clipping (including 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 legs of the defender.

Note2: See 12-2-1 for additional interpretations or restrictions concerning clipping in close line play.

A.R. 3.3 Runner A1 advances 10 yards and is hit from behind by defensive player B1, who throws his body across the back of A1's leg.
Ruling: Legal and not a clip, because A1 was a runner. If A1 was not a runner, it would have been a clip.

Section 6 Close Line Play

Close Line Play is an area extending from tackle to tackle and three yards on either side of the line of scrimmage.

Section 7 Disqualified Player

DISQUALIFIED PLAYER

A Disqualified Player is one who is banished from further participation in the game and must return to his dressing room within a reasonable period of time for any of the following:

- (a) flagrant striking, kneeling, or kicking an opponent (12-2-11);
- (b) flagrant roughing of a kicker, passer, or any other opponent (12-2-8,9,);
- (c) a palpably unfair act (12-3-3);
- (d) flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct by players or non-players (Rule 13); or
- (e) repeat violation of a suspended player rule (5-4-Pen. c).

Note: Disqualified player is not to reappear in his team uniform nor return to any area other than to which spectators have access.

Section 8 Down

DOWN

Article 1 A Down is a period of action that starts when the ball is put in play (3-2-1) and ends when ball is next dead (7-2-1).

SCRIMMAGE DOWN

A down that starts with a snap is known as a Scrimmage Down (3-29).

FAIR CATCH KICK DOWN

A down that starts with a fair catch kick is known as a fair catch kick down (10-2-4; 11-4-3).

FREE KICK DOWN

A down that starts with a free kick is known as a Free Kick Down (6-1-1).

SERIES OF DOWNS

Article 2 A Series of Downs is the four consecutive charged scrimmage downs allotted to the offensive team during which it must advance the ball to a yard line called the necessary line in order to retain possession (7-3-1).

NECESSARY LINE

The Necessary Line is always 10 yards in advance of the spot of the snap (which starts the series) except when a goal line is less than 10 yards from this spot. In that case, the necessary line is the goal line.

CHARGED DOWN

When the offensive team has been in possession constantly during a scrimmage down, the down is counted as one of a series except as provided for a foul (14-8), and is known as a Charged Down.

FIRST DOWN

The initial down in each series is known as the First Down, and if it is a charged down, subsequent charged downs are numbered consecutively until a new series is declared for either team (7-1-1).

Section 9 Drop Kick

DROP KICK

A Drop Kick is a kick by a kicker who drops the ball and kicks it as, or immediately after, it touches the ground.

Section 10 Fair Catch

FAIR CATCH

A Fair Catch is an unhindered catch by any player of the receivers of a free kick or of a scrimmage kick except one that has not crossed the line of scrimmage (3-18-3), provided he has legally signaled his intention of attempting such a catch (10-2-2-Item 1).

MARK OF THE CATCH

Article 1 The Mark of the Catch is the spot from either:

- (a) where the ball is actually caught by a receiver after a fair catch signal, valid or invalid (10-2-2); or
- (b) the spot of ball after a penalty for fair catch interference (10-1-1-Pen. b), and after a penalty for running into the maker of a fair catch (10-2-3-c).

Note: For fair catch kick, see 10-2-4-a and 11-4-3.

Section 11 Field Goal

FIELD GOAL

A Field Goal is made by kicking the ball from the field of play through the plane of the opponents' goal by a drop kick or a placekick either:

- (a) From behind the line on a play from scrimmage; or
- (b) During a fair catch kick. See 11-4-3; 3-9; and 10-2-4-a.

Section 12 Foul and Spots of Enforcement

FOUL

Article 1 A Foul is any infraction of a playing rule. The Spot of Enforcement (or Basic Spot) is the spot at which a penalty is enforced. **Five** such spots are commonly used:

SPOTS OF ENFORCEMENT

- (a) **The Previous Spot:** The spot at which the ball was last put in play.
- (b) **The Spot of the Foul:** The spot at which a foul was committed or, by rule, is considered to have been committed.
- (c) **The Spot of a Backward Pass or a Fumble:** The spot at which the backward pass or fumble occurred during the down in which there was a foul.
- (d) **The Dead Ball Spot:** The spot at which the ball became dead.
- (e) **The Succeeding Spot:** The spot at which the ball will next be put in play (i.e., the spot of the ball after enforcement for a foul, or, if there has been no foul, the foul at which the ball became dead).

Note: After a penalty enforcement, the ball is next put in play at the nearest inbound line if the penalty enforcement would leave the ball outside the inbound line.

ENFORCEMENT AFTER TOUCHDOWN

Exception: If a foul occurs after a touchdown and before the ready for play signal for a Try, the succeeding spot is the spot of the next kickoff.

Note: A penalty is never enforced from the spot of a legal kick from scrimmage (9-5-1).

An enforcement includes a declination (14-1-1). See 14-3-5 and 14-3-6 for definition of basic spot and 3 and 1 rule.

DEAD BALL FOUL

Article 2 Types of Fouls

- (a) A Dead Ball Foul (or a subsequent foul) is a foul that occurs after a down ends and before the next snap or free kick. See 14-4-9.

Note: A dead ball foul is always enforced from the succeeding spot.

MULTIPLE FOUL

- (b) A Multiple Foul is two or more fouls by the same team during the same down (14-1-3).

DOUBLE FOUL

- (c) A Double Foul is a foul by each team during the same down and includes any multiple foul by either team, including dead ball fouls (14-5).

- A.R. 3.4** A's ball first-and-10 on A30. Runner A1 runs out of bounds on the A45, after which offensive A2 clips on the A30.
Ruling: A's ball first-and-10 on A30. A dead ball foul. See 14-4-9. It happened after the down ended and was a personal foul. See A.R. 14.159.
- A.R. 3.5** Defensive B1 holds an offensive player on the line of scrimmage. Defensive B2 was offside.
Ruling: A multiple foul because it was two fouls by the same team during the same down. See 14-1-3.
- A.R. 3.6** The offensive team is offside. The defensive team interferes with an eligible receiver downfield. The pass falls incomplete.
Ruling: A double foul because each team committed a foul during the same down. See 14-5.
- A.R. 3.7** The offensive team clips after Runner A1 scored.
Ruling: A foul between downs because the down ended when the score was made. Penalize on subsequent kickoff. See 14-4-9.

Section 13 Free Kick

FREE KICK

Article 1 A Free Kick is one that puts the ball in play to start a free kick down (3-2-1, 6-1-1): It includes:

- (a) kickoff;
(b) safety kick (6-1-1-b).

FREE KICK LINES

Article 2 The Free Kick Line for the kicking team is a yard line through the most forward point from which the ball is to be kicked (6-1-2-a).

The Free Kick Line for the receiving team is a yard line 10 yards in advance of the kicking team's free kick line (6-1-2-b).

Section 14 Handing the Ball

HANDING THE BALL

Article 1 Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one teammate to another without passing or kicking it.

- (a) Except where permitted by rule, handing the ball forward to a teammate is illegal.
(b) Loss of player possession by unsuccessful execution of attempted handing is a fumble charged to the player that last had possession. A muffed handoff (legal or illegal) is a fumble, and the ball remains alive.
(c) A forward handoff occurs when the ball is handed (regardless of the direction of the movement of the ball) to a player who is in advance of a teammate whose hands he takes or receives it.

Section 15 Huddle

HUDDLE

A Huddle is the action of two or more players of the offensive team who, instead of assuming their normal position for the snap, form a group for getting the signal for the next play or for any other reason.

Section 16 In Touch and Impetus

IN TOUCH

Article 1 Ball is In Touch:

- (a) after it has come from the field of play, it touches a goal line (plane) while in player possession; or
(b) while it is loose, it touches anything on or behind a goal line.

Note (1): If a player while standing on or behind the goal line touches a ball that has come from the field of play and the official is in doubt as to whether the ball actually touched the goal line (plane), he shall rule that the ball was in touch.

Note (2): A ball in the end zone which is carried toward the field of play is still in touch. It is a safety or touchback if any part of the ball is on, above, or behind the goal line (plane) when dead. In such a case, the ball must be entirely in the field of play in order not to be in touch.

BALL DEAD IN TOUCH

Article 2 A Ball Dead in Touch is one dead on or behind a goal line and it is either a touchdown, a safety, a touchback, a field goal, or the termination of a Try (11-3).

Note 1: Sometimes a safety, touchdown, or Try (unsuccessful) is awarded because of a foul. In such cases, they are penalties.

Note 2: Momentum is an exception to dead in touch. See 11-5-1-Exc 2.

IMPETUS

Article 3 Impetus is the action of a player that gives momentum to the ball and sends it in touch.

The Impetus is attributed to the offense except when the ball is sent in touch through a new momentum when the defense muffs a ball which is at rest, or nearly at rest, or illegally bats:

- (a) a kick or fumble;
- (b) a backward pass after it has struck the ground;
- (c) or illegally kicks any ball (12-4-3).

Note 1: If a passive player is pushed or blocked into any kick or fumble, or into a backward pass after it has struck the ground, and if such pushing or blocking is the primary factor that sends such a loose ball in touch, the impetus is by the pusher or blocker, and the pushed (blocked) player will not be considered to have touched the ball. See 9-2-4.

Note 2: Momentum is not applicable (11-5-1-Exc. 2).

Section 17 Kicker

KICKER

A Kicker is the player of the offensive team who legally punts, placekicks, or dropkicks the ball. The offensive team is known as the Kickers during a kick.

A Receiver is any defensive player during a kick. The defensive team is known as the Receivers during a kick.

Section 18 Kickoff

KICKOFF

A Kickoff is a free kick used to put the ball in play:

- (a) At start of the first and third periods;
- (b) After each Try;
- (c) After a successful field goal (6-1-1-a); and
- (d) At the start of overtime.

If a kicker obviously attempts to kick a ball short and the ball never goes 20 yards, it is defined as an onside kick (this also applies to a safety kick).

Section 19 Line of Scrimmage

SCRIMMAGE LINE

Article 1 The Line of Scrimmage is the yard line (plane) passing through the forward point of the ball after it has been made ready for play. The term scrimmage line, or line, implies a play from scrimmage.

PLAYER ON LINE

Article 2 A Player of Team A is on his line:

- (a) when his shoulders face Team B's goal line, and
- (b) if he is the snapper, no part of his body is beyond the line at the snap,
- (c) if he is a non-snapper, his helmet must break the vertical plane that passes through the belt line of the snapper.

Note: Interlocking legs are permissible.

A.R. 3.8 Offensive A1 assumes a three-point stance with his shoulders facing defensive B's goal line. A1's helmet is even with the belt line of the center.

Ruling: A1 is legally on the line.

BALL CROSSES LINE

Article 3 The ball has crossed the scrimmage line (crosses line) when, during a play from scrimmage, it has been run, fumbled, passed, or legally kicked by a Team A player, through the plane of the line and has then touched the ground or anyone beyond the line.

Section 20 Neutral Zone, Start of Neutral Zone, and Encroaching

NEUTRAL ZONE

The Neutral Zone is the space between the forward and backward points of the ball (planes). It starts when the ball is ready for play. (See neutral zone infraction, 7-4-4)

ENCROACHING

A player is Encroaching (7-4-3) on the neutral zone when any part of his body is in it and contact occurs prior to the snap. The official must blow his whistle immediately.

Section 21 Offside

OFFSIDE

A player is Offside when any part of his body or his person is in the neutral zone, or is beyond the free kick line, or fair catch kick line, when the ball is put in play.

Exceptions: The snapper may be in the neutral zone provided he is not beyond the line (3-18-2).

The holder of a placekick for a free kick may be beyond the free kick line (6-1-3-b-1).

The holder of a fair catch kick may be beyond the fair catch kick line (11-4-3).

The kicker may be beyond the line, but his kicking foot may not be (6-1-3-b-2).

Section 22 Out of Bounds and Inbounds Spot

PLAYER OR OFFICIAL OUT OF BOUNDS

Article 1 A player or an Official is Out of Bounds when he touches:

- (a) A boundary line; or
- (b) Anything other than a player, an official, or a pylon on or outside a boundary line.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS

Article 2 The Ball is Out of Bounds when:

- (a) the runner is out of bounds;
- (b) while in player possession, it touches a boundary line or anything other than a player or an official on or outside such line; or
- (c) a loose ball touches a boundary line or anything on or outside such line.

INBOUNDS SPOT

Article 3 The Inbounds Spot is a spot 70 feet 9 inches in from the sideline on the yard line passing through the spot where the ball or a runner is out of bounds between the goal lines.

Under certain conditions, the ball is dead in a side zone or has been placed there as the result of a penalty. See 7-6-2.

Note: Ordinarily the out-of-bounds spot is the spot where the ball crossed a sideline. However, if a ball, while still within a boundary line, is declared out of bounds because of touching anything that is out of bounds, the out-of-bounds spot is on the yard line through the spot of the ball at the instant of such touching.

A.R. 3.9 Runner A1, with his feet inbounds, touches an official who is touching a sideline.

Ruling: Inbounds.

A.R. 3.10 Runner A1, with his feet inbounds, touches any player who is touching a sideline.

Ruling: Inbounds.

A.R. 3.11 Runner A1 fumbles backwards, and the loose ball touches a defensive player B1 who is standing on sideline, and then ball rebounds into the field of play where B1 falls on it.

Ruling: Dead ball and out of bounds as soon as the loose ball touches the player on sideline. Offensive team's ball at inbounds spot. Start game clock on the ready.

A.R. 3.12 Runner A1 touches the defensive team's pylon with any part of his body.

Ruling: Not out of bounds. The runner is not out of bounds until he touches anything other than a player, an official, or a pylon on or outside the boundary line. Position of the ball is determined by its position when the runner touches out of bounds.

Section 23 Pass

PASS

Article 1 A Pass is the movement of the ball caused by the runner who throws, shoves (shovel pass), or pushes (push pass) the ball (3-28-1).

FORWARD PASS

Article 2 It is a Forward Pass if:

- (a) the ball initially moves forward (to a point nearer the opponent's goal line) after leaving the passer's hands; or

- (b) the ball first strikes the ground, a player, an official, or anything else at a point that is nearer the opponent's goal line than the point at which the ball leaves the passer's hand.

Note 1: When a Team A player is holding the ball to pass it forward, any intentional movement forward of his hand starts a forward pass. If a Team B player contacts the passer or the ball after forward movement begins, and the ball leaves the passer's hand, a forward pass is ruled, regardless of where the ball strikes the ground or a player.

Note 2: When a Team A player is holding the ball to pass it forward, any intentional forward movement of his hand starts a forward pass. If the player loses possession of the ball during an attempt to bring it back toward his body, or if the player loses possession after he has tucked the ball into his body, it is a fumble.

Note 3: If the player loses possession of the ball while attempting to recock his arm, it is a fumble.

Note 4: A fumble or muff going forward is disregarded as to its direction, unless the act is ruled intentional. In such cases, the fumble is a forward pass (8-1-1) and the muff is a bat (12-4-1).

A.R. 3.13 A ball legally handed forward to an eligible pass receiver is followed by a forward pass in flight from behind the line.
Ruling: A legal pass because the first handoff is not considered a forward pass.

A.R. 3.14 A ball is legally handed forward to an eligible pass receiver, who muffs the ball and it is recovered by the defensive team.
Ruling: Not an incomplete pass. It is treated as a fumble and the defensive team keeps the ball.

PASSER, PASSING TEAM

Article 3 A player who makes a legal forward pass is known as the Passer until the pass ends. The teammates of any player who passes forward (legally or illegally) are known collectively as the Passing Team or Passers.

BACKWARD PASS

Article 4 A Backward Pass (8-7-1) is any pass that is not a forward pass.

FORWARD, BEYOND, IN ADVANCE OF

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

- (1) Forward, Beyond, or In Advance Of are terms that designate a point nearer the goal line of the defense unless the defense is specifically named. Converse terms are Backward or Behind.
- (2) A pass parallel to a yard line or an offensive player moving parallel to it at the snap is considered backward.
- (3) If a pass is batted, muffed, punched, or kicked in any direction, it does not change its original designation. However, such an act may change the impetus (3-15-3) if sent in touch or may be a foul (12-4-1, 12-4-3).

Section 24 Placekick

PLACEKICK

A Placekick is a kick made by a kicker while the ball is in a fixed position on the ground except as provided for a permissible manufactured tee at kickoff (6-1-1-Note). The ball may be held in position by a teammate. See 11-4-4.

Section 25 Pocket Area

POCKET AREA

The Pocket Area applies from the normal tackle position on each side of the center and extends backward to the offensive team's end line. *After the ball leaves the pocket area, this area no longer exists.*

Section 26 Post-Possession Foul

POST-POSSESSION FOUL

A foul by the receiving team that occurs after a ball is legally kicked from scrimmage prior to possession changing. The ball must cross the line of scrimmage and the receiving team must retain possession of the kicked ball. See 9-5-1-Exc. 3.

Section 27 Punt

PUNT

A Punt is a kick made by a kicker who drops the ball and kicks it while it is in flight (9-1-1).

Section 28 Runner and Running Play

RUNNER

Article 1 The Runner is the offensive player who is in possession of a live ball (3-2-1), i.e., holding the ball or carrying it in any direction.

RUNNING PLAY

Article 2 A Running Play is a play during which there is a runner and which is not followed by a kick or forward pass from behind the scrimmage line. There may be more than one such play during the same down.

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

- (1) The exception to a running play is significant only when a foul occurs while there is a runner prior to a kick or pass from behind the line (8-6-1, 9-5-1).
- (2) The statement, a player may advance, means that he may become a runner, make a legal kick (9-1-1), make a backward pass (8-7-1), or during a play from scrimmage, an offensive player may throw a forward pass (8-1-1) from behind his scrimmage line, provided it is the first such pass during the down and the ball had not been beyond the line of scrimmage previously.

A.R. 3.15 Receiving team player B1 catches a kickoff, advances, and fumbles. Kicking team player A2 recovers and advances.
Ruling: While runners B1 and A2 were in possession, there were two running plays during the same down.

Section 29 Safety

SAFETY

A Safety is the situation in which the ball is dead on or behind a team's own goal line provided:

- (a) the impetus (3-15-3) came from a player of that team;
- (b) it is not a touchdown (11-2).

MOMENTUM

Note: It is not a safety if a defensive player in the field of play intercepts a pass; catches or recovers a fumble, backward pass, scrimmage kick, free kick, or fair catch kick and his original momentum carries him into his end zone where the ball is declared dead in his team's possession. Instead the ball belongs to the defensive team at the spot where the ball was intercepted, caught or recovered. (11-5-1 Exc. 2)

Section 30 Scrimmage, Play From Scrimmage

SCRIMMAGE DOWN

A Scrimmage Down is one that starts with a snap (3-32). From Scrimmage refers to any action from the start of the snap until the down ends or if Team A loses possession and Team B secures possession. Any subsequent action during the down, after a change of team possession, is Not From Scrimmage.

SCRIMMAGE LINE

Notes: The term scrimmage line or line implies a play by A from scrimmage. Line is used extensively for brevity and is not to be confused with side, end, or yard line. Line is also used for free kick line or fair catch kick line. For given reasons, action during a free kick down (6-1), or fair catch kick down, is sometimes referred to as a play not from scrimmage.

Section 31 Shift

SHIFT

A Shift is the action of two or more offensive players who (prior to a snap), after having assumed a set position, simultaneously change the position of their feet by pivoting to or assuming a new set position with either one foot or both feet (7-4-8).

Section 32 Snap and the Snapper

SNAP AND THE SNAPPER

A Snap is a backward pass that puts the ball in play to start a scrimmage down. The Snapper is the offensive player who attempts a snap. See 7-6-3, for conditions pertaining to a legal snap.

Section 33 Supplemental Notes (S.N.)

SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES

Supplemental Notes (S.N.) are descriptive paragraphs used to amplify a given rule, which would otherwise be too cumbersome or involved in its scope or wording.

An Approved Ruling (A.R.) is often used for the same purpose (3-1). Additional Approved Rulings are also found in The Official Casebook of the National Football League.

Notes are usually more specific and apply to a particular situation. They are also used to indicate pertinent references to other rules.

Section 34 Suspended Player

SUSPENDED PLAYER

A Suspended Player is one who must be withdrawn, for at least one down, for correction of illegal equipment (5-4).

Section 35 Tackle Box

The Tackle Box is an area extending from tackle to tackle and from three yards beyond the line of scrimmage to the offensive team's end line. After the ball leaves the tackle box, this area no longer exists.

Section 36 Tackling

TACKLING

Tackling is the use of hands, or arms, or shoulders by a defensive player in his attempt to hold a runner or bring him to the ground (12-1-6).

Section 37 Team A and B, Offense and Defense

OFFENSE AND DEFENSE

Article 1 Whenever a team is in possession (3-2-7), it is the Offense and, at such time, its opponent is the Defense.

TEAM A AND TEAM B

Article 2 The team that puts the ball in play is Team A, and its opponent is Team B. For brevity, a player of Team A is referred to as A1 and his teammates as A2, A3, etc. Opponents are B1, B2, etc.

Note: A team becomes Team A when it has been designated to put the ball in play, and it remains Team A until a down ends, even though there might be one or more changes of possession during the down. This is in contrast with the terms Offense and Defense. Team A is always the offense when a down starts, but becomes the defense if and when B secures possession during the down, and vice versa for each change of possession.

CHANGE OF POSSESSION

Article 3 A change of possession occurs when a player of the defensive team secures possession of a ball that has been kicked, passed, or fumbled by a player of the offensive team, or when the ball is awarded to the opposing team by rule. A change of possession includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) an interception of a forward pass; or
- (b) a catch or recovery of a fumble or backward pass; or
- (c) a catch or recovery of a Scrimmage Kick, Free Kick, or Fair-Catch Kick.
- (d) when the offensive team fails to reach the line to gain on fourth down.
- (e) when the offensive team misses a field-goal attempt.

Section 38 Time Out or Time In

TIME OUT

Article 1 A Time Out is an interval during which the Game Clock is stopped (4-4) and includes the intermission (4-1-2 and 4-1-3).

During any time out, including an intermission, all playing rules continue in force. Representatives of either team are prohibited from entering the field unless they are incoming substitutes, or team attendants or trainers entering to provide for the welfare of a player, and any game-type activities are prohibited on the Field of Play.

Note: The term Time Out (general) is not to be confused with a charged team time out, which is specific. (4-5-1).

TIME IN

Article 2 Time In is the converse (4-3) and is also used to indicate when the clock operator is to start the clock.

Section 39 Touchback

TOUCHBACK

A Touchback is the situation in which a ball is dead on or behind a team's own goal line, provided the impetus came from an opponent and provided it is not a touchdown (11-6).

Section 40 Touchdown

TOUCHDOWN

A Touchdown is the situation in which any part of the ball, legally in possession of a player inbounds, is on, above, or behind the opponent's goal line (plane), provided it is not a touchback (11-2).

Section 41 Tripping

TRIPPING

Tripping is the use of the leg or foot in obstructing any opponent (including a runner) (12-1-4c and 12-1-8).

Section 42 Try

TRY

A Try is an opportunity given a team that has just scored a touchdown to score an additional one or two points during one scrimmage down (11-3).

Section 43 Two-Minute Warning

TWO-MINUTE WARNING

The two-minute warning is an automatic time out that occurs at the conclusion of the last down for which the ball is legally snapped or kicked prior to two minutes remaining on the game clock in the second and fourth periods.

Section 44 Yard Line, Own Goal

OWN GOAL

Article 1 A team's Own Goal during any given period is the one it is guarding. The adjacent goal line is known as its (own) goal line.

YARD LINE

Article 2 A Yard Line is any line and its vertical plane parallel to the end line. The Yard Lines (marked or unmarked) in the field of play are named by number in yards from a team's goal line to the center of the field.

Note: The yard line 19 yards from team A's goal line is called A's 19-yard line. The yard line 51 yards from A's goal line is called B's 49-yard line. (For brevity, these are referred to as A's 19 and B's 49.)