Rule 4  Game Timing

Section 1  Periods, Intermissions, Halftime

LENGTH OF GAME

Article 1  The length of the game is 60 minutes, divided into four periods of 15 minutes each. In the event the score is tied at the end of four periods, the game is extended by an overtime period(s) as prescribed in Rule 16.

INTERMISSIONS

Article 2  There will be intervals of at least two minutes between the first and second periods (first half) and between the third and fourth periods (second half). During these intermissions all playing rules continue in force, and no representative of either team shall enter the field unless he is an incoming substitute, or a team attendant or trainer, entering to see to the welfare of a player.

Penalty: For illegally entering the field: Loss of 15 yards from the succeeding spot (13-1-6-Pen.).

The Back Judge times the two-minute intermissions and shall sound his whistle (and signal visibly) after one minute and 50 seconds. The Referee shall sound his whistle immediately thereafter for play to start and for the play clock operator to start the 25-second clock. See 4-6-2.

HALFTIME

Article 3  Between the second and third periods, there shall be an intermission of 12 minutes, plus any prescribed delay times established by the League office for teams to return to their locker rooms. During this intermission, play is suspended, and teams may leave the field. The Back Judge will time halftime. See 13-1-1 for fouls by non-players between halves.

OFFICIAL TIME

Article 4  The stadium electric clock shall be the official time. The game clock operator shall start and stop the clock upon the signal of any official in accordance with the rules. The Line Judge (15-5-2) shall supervise timing of the game, and in case the stadium clock becomes inoperative, or if it is not being operated correctly, he shall take over official timing on the field.

Note: Game officials can correct the game clock only before the next legal snap or kick, including an untimed down or try.

Section 2  Starting a Period or Half

KICKOFF ON SCHEDULE

Article 1  Both teams must be on the field to kick off at the scheduled time for the start of each half. Prior to the start of the game, both teams are required to appear on the field at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff in order to ensure sufficient time for proper warm-up. Designated members of the officiating crew must notify both head coaches personally of the scheduled time for kickoff prior to the start of each half.

Penalties:

(a) For delaying the start of a half: Loss of 15 yards from the spot of the kickoff as determined by 6-1-2-a.

(b) For failure to appear on the field at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff: Loss of the coin-toss option for both halves and overtime, and loss of 15 yards from the spot of the kickoff.

TOSS OF COIN

Article 2  Not more than three minutes before the kickoff of the first half, the Referee, in the presence of both team’s captains (limit of six per team, all of whom must be uniformed members of the Active List) shall toss a coin at the center of the field. Prior to the Referee’s toss, the call of “heads” or “tails” must be made by the captain of the visiting team, or by the captain designated by the Referee if there is no home team. Unless the winner of the toss defers his choice to the second half, he must choose one of two privileges, and the loser is given the other. The two privileges are:

(a) The opportunity to receive the kickoff or to kick off; or

(b) The choice of goal his team will defend.

Penalty: For failure to comply: Loss of coin-toss option for both halves and overtime, and loss of 15 yards from the spot of the kickoff for the first half only.
For the second half, the captain who lost the pregame toss is to have the first choice of the two privileges listed in (a) or (b), unless one of the teams lost its first and second half options pursuant to 4-2-1, or unless the winner of the pregame toss deferred his choice to the second half, in which case he must choose (a) or (b) above. Immediately prior to the start of the second half, the captains of both teams must inform the Referee of their respective choices.

A captain’s first choice from any alternative privileges listed above is final and not subject to change.

**CHANGE OF GOALS**

**Article 3** At the end of the first and third periods, the teams must change goals. Team possession, the number of the succeeding down, the relative position of the ball on the field of play, and the line to gain remain the same.

**Section 3 Starting the Game Clock**

**Free Kick Down**

**Article 1** The game clock operator shall start the game clock (time in) after a free kick when the ball is legally touched in the field of play. The game clock shall not start if:

(a) the receiving team recovers the ball in the end zone and does not carry the ball into the field of play;
(b) the kicking team recovers the ball in the field of play; or
(c) the receiving team signals for and makes a fair catch.

**A.R. 4.1 a)** With three seconds remaining in the second quarter, A1 attempts an onside kick from the A30. The kick is caught or recovered legally at the A41: a) by A2, b) by B1 who signals for and completes a fair catch, c) by B1 on his feet and he immediately goes to the ground, or d) by B1 on the ground and he makes no effort to get up or advance.

**Rulings:**

a) A’s ball, first-and-10 on A41. Three seconds on the clock. (No time runs off the clock).
b) B’s ball, first-and-10 on A41. Three seconds on the clock. (No time runs off the clock).
c) B’s ball, first-and-10 on A41. Two seconds on the clock. (One second runs off the clock).
d) B’s ball, first-and-10 on A41. Two seconds on the clock. (One second runs off the clock).

**A.R. 4.1 b)** During the last two minutes of the game the offensive team safety kicks from the A20.

**Ruling:** Time in starts when the safety kick is legally touched by any player in the field of play.

*Note: No extension of the automatic timeouts in this section shall be allowed unless any player requests a team timeout, or a Referee orders a team timeout or suspends play himself.*

**Scrimmage Down**

**Article 2** Following any timeout (3-36), the game clock shall be started on a scrimmage down when the ball is next snapped, except in the following situations:

a) Whenever a runner goes out of bounds on a play from scrimmage, the game clock is started when an official spots the ball at the inbounds spot, and the Referee gives the signal to start the game clock, except that the clock will start on the snap:

   (1) after a change of possession;
   (2) after the two-minute warning of the first half; or
   (3) inside the last five minutes of the second half.

**A.R. 4.2** With three minutes remaining in the first quarter, back A2 takes a handoff and runs out of bounds at the A27.

**Ruling:** Stop game clock. Time in on Referee’s signal.

**A.R. 4.3** B7 intercepts a forward pass and runs out of bounds at the A14.

**Ruling:** Stop game clock. Time in on snap.

b) If the player who originally takes the snap is tackled behind the line of scrimmage prior to the two minute warning, the game clock starts when the Referee signals that the ball is ready for play. (The play clock starts at 40 seconds immediately after the tackle.)

c) If there is an injury timeout prior to the two-minute warning, the game clock is started as if the injury timeout had not occurred.

d) If there is an excess team timeout after the two-minute warning, the game clock is started as if the excess timeout had not occurred.

e) If there is a Referee’s timeout, the game clock is started as if the Referee’s timeout had not occurred.
(f) If the game clock is stopped after a down in which there was a foul by either team, following enforcement or declination of a penalty, the game clock will start as if the foul had not occurred, except that the clock will start on the snap if:

1. the foul occurs after the two-minute warning of the first half;
2. the foul occurs inside the last five minutes of the second half; or
3. a specific rule prescribes otherwise.


Ruling: A’s ball second-and-20 on A20. Game Clock starts on ready-to-play signal after penalty is enforced except inside the last two minutes of the first half or the last five minutes of the second half.


Ruling: A’s ball second-and-20 on A20. Game clock starts with Referee’s ready signal as ball was dead when runner ran out of bounds, except inside the last two minutes of first half or inside last five minutes of the second half.

(g) If a fumble or backward pass by any player goes out of bounds, the game clock starts when an official places the ball at the inbounds line, and the Referee signals that the ball is ready for play.

(h) When there is a 10-second runoff, the game clock starts when the Referee signals that the ball is ready for play.

(i) During the Try, which is an untimed down.

(k) When a specific rule prescribes otherwise.

FAIR CATCH KICK DOWN

Article 3 The game clock operator shall start the game clock for a fair-catch kick down when the ball is kicked.

Section 4 Stopping the Game Clock

The game clock operator shall stop the game clock (timeout) upon a signal by any official or upon the operator’s own positive knowledge:

(a) at the end of a down in which there is a free kick or fair-catch kick;
(b) when the kicking team recovers a scrimmage kick that has been touched by the receiving team beyond the line of scrimmage;
(c) when the ball is out of bounds;
(d) when the ball is dead on or behind a goal line;
(e) at the end of a down during which a foul occurs;
(f) when a forward pass is incomplete;
(g) when the player who originally takes the snap is tackled behind the line of scrimmage;

Exception: After the two-minute warning of a half, the game clock shall not be stopped.

A.R. 4.6 Quarterback A1 drops back to pass and is tackled behind the line.

Ruling: Stop the game clock until the ball can be respotted at succeeding spot. (40-second play clock starts when timeout signal is given).

(h) at the time of a foul for which the ball remains dead or is dead immediately;
(i) when the Referee signals the two-minute warning for a half;
(j) when a down is completed during which or after there is a change of possession; or
(k) when any official signals a timeout for any other reason.

Section 5 Timeouts

CHARGED TEAM TIMEOUTS

Article 1 The Referee shall suspend play while the ball is dead and declare a charged team timeout upon the request for a timeout by the head coach or any player to any official.

Item 1: Three Timeouts Allowed. A team is allowed three charged team timeouts during each half.

Item 2: Length of Timeouts. Charged team timeouts shall be two minutes in length, unless the timeout is not used by television for a commercial break. Timeouts shall be 30 seconds in length when the designated number of television commercials have been exhausted in a quarter, if it is a second charged team timeout in the same dead-ball period, or when the Referee so indicates.
Item 3: Consecutive Team Timeouts. Each team may be granted a charged team timeout during the same dead-ball period, but a second charged team timeout by either team during the same dead-ball period is prohibited. Such team timeouts may follow a Referee’s timeout or any automatic timeouts in Section 4 above.

Item 4: Unsportsmanlike Conduct. An attempt to call an excess team timeout or to call a second timeout in the same dead-ball period by Team B in an attempt to “freeze” a kicker, will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will subject the offending team to a 15-yard penalty (See 12-3). This will apply to field goal or Try attempts.

Note: If an attempt is made to call a timeout in such situations, the officials shall not grant a timeout; instead, play will continue and a penalty will be called, with customary enforcement. If a timeout is inadvertently granted, the penalty shall also be enforced. See 12-3-1-v.

INJURY TIMEOUTS

Article 2 If an official determines a player to be injured, or if attendants from the bench come on the field to assist an injured player, an injury timeout will be called by the Referee.

A.R. 4.7 Runner A1 is tackled and appears injured since he does not move.

Ruling: Official should call timeout for injured player. Official should not try to determine if player is injured. Timeout is not charged if conditions are not violated.

INJURY TIMEOUTS PRIOR TO TWO-MINUTE WARNING OF EITHER HALF

Article 3 When an injury timeout is called, the injured player must leave the game for the completion of one down. The player will be permitted to remain in the game if:

(a) either team calls a charged team timeout;
(b) the injury is the result of a foul by an opponent; or
(c) the period ends or the two-minute warning occurs before the next snap.

At the conclusion of an injury timeout, the game clock will start as if the injury timeout had not occurred. If either team takes, or is charged with, a timeout, the clock will start on the snap.

INJURY TIMEOUTS AFTER TWO-MINUTE WARNING OF EITHER HALF

Article 4 After the two-minute warning of a half, the following shall apply:

(a) If a team has not used its three charged team timeouts, the team of the injured player will be charged a team timeout, unless:
   (i) the injury is the result of a foul by an opponent;
   (ii) the injury occurs during a down in which there is a change of possession, a successful field goal, or an attempted Try; or
   (iii) the opponent calls a timeout.
(b) If a team has used its three charged team timeouts, an excess team timeout shall be called by the Referee, unless:
   (i) the injury is the result of a foul by an opponent;
   (ii) the injury occurs during a down in which there is a change of possession, a successful field goal, or an attempted Try; or
   (iii) the opponent calls a timeout.

Penalty: For the second and each subsequent excess team timeout after the two-minute warning: Loss of five yards from the succeeding spot for delay of the game.

(c) The player must leave the game for the completion of one down, unless:
   (i) the injury is the result of a foul by an opponent; or
   (ii) either team calls a charged team timeout.
(d) No yardage penalty will be assessed for the first excess team timeout, but a 10-second runoff of the game clock may be applicable pursuant to (f) below. At the conclusion of an excess timeout taken while time is in, the game clock shall start with the ready-for-play signal. For any excess timeout charged to the defense, the play clock is reset to 40 seconds.
(e) If the Referee has already called an excess team timeout in that half for a team, any subsequent excess timeout for that team will result in a five-yard penalty. (Such penalty shall be considered a foul between downs and will not be offset by a foul by the defense or be part of a multiple foul by the offense.)
(f) If an excess team timeout is charged against a team in possession of the ball, and time is in when the excess timeout is called, the ball shall not be put in play until the time on the game clock has been reduced by 10 seconds, if the defense so chooses.
A.R. 4.8  Offensive team A, in the last two minutes of the half and the clock running:
 a)  Requests its fourth timeout because of an injured player.
  **Ruling:** Granted. No five-yard penalty. Player has to be removed. Ten-second runoff. Ball will not be put in play until the Referee blows his whistle and gives the wind-the-clock signal.

 b)  Requests its fifth timeout because of an injured player.
  **Ruling:** Granted. Five-yard penalty. Player has to be removed. Ten-second runoff. Ball will not be put in play until the Referee blows his whistle and gives the wind-the-clock signal.

**SUPPLEMENTAL NOTES:**
(1) Either half can end as the result of the 10-second runoff referenced in (f) above.
(2) If an injury timeout is called for both teams during or after a down, charged team timeouts and/or excess team timeouts are charged as appropriate, but no yardage or 10-second runoff penalties shall be enforced.
(3) If a foul by either team occurs during a down in which there is also an injury, such foul does not affect the charging of an excess timeout, but it does prevent a 10-second runoff that may result from the excess timeout, because the foul stopped the clock.
(4) The  **Competition** Committee deprecates feigning injuries, with subsequent withdrawal, to obtain a timeout without penalty. Coaches are urged to cooperate in discouraging this practice.
(5) There can never be a 10-second runoff against the defensive team.
(6) See Rule 16 (Sudden-Death Procedures), Section 1, Article 3 for application to overtime games.

**REFEREE’S TIMEOUT**
**Article 5** Provided that calling timeout is not in conflict with another rule, the Referee may suspend play and stop the clock (Referee’s timeout) at any time without penalty to either team when playing time is being consumed because of an unintentional delay. Such situations include but are not limited to the following:
(a) when there is the possibility of a measurement for a first down, or if the Referee is consulting with a captain about one;
(b) when there is an undue pileup on the runner, or while determining possession after a fumble while time is in;
(c) when there is an undue delay by officials in spotting the ball for the next snap;
(d) if the snap is made before the officials can assume their positions. See 4-6-5-b if it is a repeated act;
(e) when there is an injury to an official or member of the chain crew;
(f) during an officials’ conference (see 15-1-6); or
(g) while repairing or replacing game equipment, except player equipment.

After a Referee’s timeout, the game clock will start pursuant to Rule 4, Section 3, as if the Referee’s timeout had not occurred.

**Section 6  Delay of Game**

**40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK**
**Article 1** It is a delay of the game if the ball is not put into play by a snap within 40 seconds after the start of the play clock. The play clock operator shall time the interval between plays upon signals from game officials. The 40-second interval starts when a play ends, unless Article 2 below applies.

**25-SECOND PLAY CLOCK**
**Article 2** In the event of certain administrative stoppages or other delays, a team will have 25 seconds, beginning with the Referee’s whistle, to put the ball in play by a snap or a kick. Such stoppages include, but are not limited to, the following:
(a) a change of possession;
(b) a charged team timeout;
(c) the two-minute warning;
(d) the expiration of a period;
(e) a penalty enforcement;
(f) a Try; or
(g) a Free Kick.

A 25-second interval will be used in these situations, even if the 40-second clock is already counting down.

**INTERRUPTION OF PLAY CLOCK**
**Article 3** If the play clock is stopped prior to the snap for any reason, after the stoppage has concluded, the time remaining on the play clock shall be the same as when it stopped, unless:

(a) the stoppage has been for a charged team timeout, the two-minute warning, the expiration of a period, a penalty enforcement, or an Instant Replay challenge prior to the two-minute warning, in which case the play clock shall be reset to 25 seconds;

(b) the stoppage has been for an Instant Replay review after the two-minute warning that results in a reversal, in which case the play clock shall be reset to 25 seconds;

(c) the stoppage has been for an excess timeout while time is in that is charged to the defense, in which case the play clock shall be reset to 40 seconds; or

(d) fewer than 10 seconds remain on the play clock, in which case it shall be reset to 10 seconds.

**BALL REMAINS DEAD**

**Article 4** If the ball is not put in play within the applicable period, the Back Judge shall blow his whistle for the foul, and the ball remains dead. See 14-6-Exc. 4.

**OTHER DELAY OF GAME FOULS**

**Article 5** Other examples of action or inaction that are to be construed as delay of the game include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) a player unnecessarily remains on a dead ball or on a runner who has been downed;

(b) the snapper repeatedly snaps the ball after the neutral zone is established and before the Referee can assume his position (see 7-6-3-c);

(c) undue delay by either team in assembling after a timeout;

(d) a defensive player aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage makes quick and abrupt actions that are not a part of normal defensive player movement and are an obvious attempt to cause an offensive player(s) to foul (false start). (The Referee shall blow his whistle immediately);

(e) spiking or throwing the ball in the field of play after a down has ended, except after a score;

Penalty: For delay of the game: Loss of five yards:

(a) from the succeeding spot if it occurs between downs. The ball remains dead; or

(b) from the previous spot if the ball was in play.

**Section 7   Actions to Conserve Time**

**ILLEGAL ACTS**

**Article 1** A team is not permitted to conserve time inside of one minute of either half by committing any of the following acts:

(a) a foul by either team that prevents the snap (i.e., false start, encroachment, etc.)

(b) intentional grounding;

(c) an illegal forward pass thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage;

(d) throwing a backward pass out of bounds;

(e) spiking or throwing the ball in the field of play after a down has ended, except after a touchdown; or

(f) any other intentional foul that causes the clock to stop.

Penalty: For Illegally Conserving Time: Loss of five yards unless a larger distance penalty is applicable.

When actions referred to above are committed by the offensive team while time is in, officials will run 10 seconds off the game clock before permitting the ball to be put in play on the ready-for-play signal. The game clock will start on the ready-for-play signal. If the offensive team has timeouts remaining, it will have the option of using a timeout in lieu of a 10-second runoff, in which case the game clock will start on the snap after the timeout. The defense always has the option to decline the 10-second runoff and have the yardage penalty enforced, but if the yardage penalty is declined, the 10-second runoff is also declined.

If the action is by the defense, the play clock will be reset to 40 seconds, and the game clock will start on the ready signal, unless the offense chooses to have the clock start on the snap. If the defense has timeouts remaining, it will have the option of using a timeout in lieu of the game clock being started.
A.R. 4.9  With eight seconds remaining in the first half, A1 throws a backward pass out-of-bounds to stop the game clock.
Ruling: Half over, 10-second runoff for conserving time.

A.R. 4.10  With seven seconds remaining in the first half, guard A1 commits a false start in order to stop the game clock.
Ruling: Half over, 10-second runoff for conserving time.

Note 1: More than two successive delay penalties during the same down, after a warning, is unsportsmanlike conduct (12-3-1-n).

Note 2: Certain acts of delay may involve stopping the game clock immediately. Repeated violations of the substitution rule to conserve time are unsportsmanlike conduct (12-3-1-m and 5-2-2).

SUBSTITUTION VIOLATION AFTER TWO-MINUTE WARNING

Article 2  Inside one minute of either half, if there is a violation of the substitution rule while the ball is dead and time is in, in addition to the applicable yardage penalty for illegal substitution, there will be a 10-second runoff pursuant to Article 1 above.

Penalty: For Illegal Substitution: Loss of five yards (unless a larger distance penalty is applicable) and a 10-second runoff.

DEFENSIVE FOULS DURING LAST 40 SECONDS

Article 3  In the last 40 seconds of either half, if there is a defensive foul prior to the snap while time is in, the half will end, unless the defense has timeouts remaining, or the offense chooses to have the Game Clock start on the snap.

Article 4  If a replay review inside of one minute of either half results in the on-field ruling being reversed and the correct ruling would not have stopped the game clock, then the officials will run 10 seconds off the game clock before permitting the ball to be put in play on the ready-for-play signal. All normal rules regarding 10-second runoffs will apply.

Section 8  Extension of a Period or a Half

BALL IN PLAY

Article 1  If time expires at the end of any period while the ball is in play, the period continues until the down ends.

PERIOD EXTENDED

Article 2  At the election of the opponent, a period may be extended for one untimed down, if any of the following occurs during a down during which time in the period expires:
(a) If there is a foul by the defensive team that is accepted, the offensive team may choose to extend the period by an untimed down after enforcement of the penalty. If the first or third period is not so extended, any accepted penalty is enforced before the start of the succeeding period.
(b) If there is a foul by the offense, there shall be no extension of the period. If the foul occurs on the last play of the half, a score by the offense is not counted. However, the period may be extended for an untimed down, upon the request of the defense, if the offensive team’s foul is for:
   (1) illegal touching of a kick;
   (2) fair-catch interference;
   (3) a palpably unfair act;
   (4) a personal foul or unsportsmanlike conduct foul committed prior to an interception of a forward pass or the recovery of a backward pass or fumble; or
   (5) a foul by the kicking team prior to a player of the receiving team securing possession of the ball during a down in which there is a safety kick, a scrimmage kick, or a free kick.
(c) If a double foul occurs during the last down of either half, the period shall be extended by an untimed down.

Exceptions: The half is not extended if:
(1) both fouls are dead-ball fouls;
(2) if there is a major-minor double foul (“5 vs. 15”), and the major foul is by the offense, or if the major foul is a dead ball foul by the defense (see 14-3-1-Exc 1.); or

Note 1: Dead ball personal fouls by either team at the end of a half are enforced on the ensuing kickoff (14-1-7).
Note 2: Dead ball unsportsmanlike or taunting fouls by either team at the end of a half are disregarded.
(3) if there is a double foul with a change of possession (“clean hands” rule, see 14-3-2) that does not involve a replay of the down.

(If a double foul occurs on the last play of the first or third periods, the period is not extended.)

(d) If a touchdown is made on the last play of a period, the Try attempt shall be made (except during a sudden-death period).

(e) If no fair-catch signal is given and the kickers interfere with the receiver’s opportunity to catch a kick, the receiving team may extend the period by a down from scrimmage.

(f) If a fair-catch is signaled and made, the receivers may choose to extend the period by a fair-catch kick down (10-2-4). If the first or third period is not so extended, the receivers may start the succeeding period with a snap or fair-catch kick (11-4-3).

(g) If a fair catch is signaled and the kickers interfere with a receiver’s opportunity to catch a kick, the receiving team may extend the period by either a down from scrimmage or a fair-catch kick (10-2-4).

(h) If a safety results from a foul during the last play of a half, the score counts. A safety kick is made if requested by the receivers.

If the first or third period is extended for any reason, or if a touchdown occurs during the last play of such a period, any additional play, including a Try attempt, shall be completed before the teams change goals.

If any period is extended for any reason, it shall continue until the completion of a down free from any foul specified in (a) through (i) above.

A.R. 4.11 Fourth-and-10 on B40. On the last play of the first quarter, offensive team misses an attempted field goal. Defensive team was offside. There is a strong wind at the team’s back.

Ruling: Offensive team has option of extending period by an untimed down. It can put ball in play from the B35 and kick the same way. If the period is not extended, it would be fourth-and-five on the B35 at start of second period.

A.R. 4.12 Third-and-10 on A45. Offensive team is offside. Quarterback A1 throws a legal pass which is completed to end A2 who runs for a score. Time for second half expired during play.

Ruling: No score and game over as it was an offensive foul on last play of half.

A.R. 4.13 Fourth-and-10 on A20. A punt is first touched by kicking team player A1 on the A45 as time runs out in the second half.

Ruling: One scrimmage down allowed, if desired, by receivers from the A45. Untimed down as it was a first touch violation.


Ruling: Extend the period with an untimed down from A40. B’s ball. See 14-3-3.

A.R. 4.15 The offensive team punts as time for the half expires. Defensive player B1 gives a valid fair-catch signal and catches the ball on the A35.

Ruling: The receiving team may extend the period by a fair-catch kick (10-2-4, 11-4-3).