

## SCRIMMAGE REQUIREMENTS



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## SCRIMMAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Offensive Team Requirements
  - Prior to Snap
    - Snapper; Player Location
    - Encroachment, False Start Restrictions
    - Shift Plays
  - At the Snap
    - Formations
    - Motion
- Defensive Team Requirements
  - Prior to Snap
  - At the Snap

## SCRIMMAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Teams must have 11 players to start
  - May later play with fewer than 11
  - When on offense, must have 7 players on the line
- Except for a Free Kick
  - Play must start with a legal snap
  - Between hash marks
  - May not be snapped until referee has whistled it ready for play

## SNAP

- Snap – To hand or pass ball backward from the ground with a quick, continuous motion.
- Snap begins when snapper legally moves ball, other than in adjustment.
- Snap ends when the ball touches the ground or any player.
- If snap touches a lineman, the ball remains dead and it is an illegal snap.
- Does not have to be between snapper's legs.
- Legal snap is such that the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper & touches a backfield player or ground before it touches an A lineman.

## NEUTRAL ZONE

- Established when referee declares ball ready for play.
- Strip of territory, sideline to sideline, width is length of ball
- Two lines that mark the boundary of Neutral Zone are the scrimmage lines.
- Neutral zone ceases to exist after a change of possession.
- May be expanded to a maximum of two yards beyond defensive line of scrimmage – Applies on scrimmage kicks and forward passes, but not running plays.

## OFFENSIVE REQUIREMENTS PRIOR TO SNAP

- SNAPPER
  - After touching ball, may not do anything that looks like a play is about to begin
    - Can't rotate ball end-for-end or move the ball forward
    - Can't fail to keep long axis perpendicular to line of scrimmage
    - Can't take both hands off ball.
    - Following adjustment, lift or move ball other than a legal snap
  - May lift ball for lateral rotation, can roll ball on ground for lace adjustment
  - Can tilt the ball to an angle of 90 degrees (7.1.3 cb)
  - May remove one hand (if placed both hands on it) as long as it is done smoothly and slowly
  - After all this, must clearly pause before snap.

## OFFENSIVE REQUIREMENTS PRIOR TO SNAP

- Encroachment – Two phases of restrictions
  - First begins at ready-for-play and primarily restricts defense
  - Second Begins when snapper touches the ball
- Once snapper touches ball
  - Offense not allowed to be in Neutral Zone
    - Except replaced players and incoming substitutes
    - Snapper may be in Neutral Zone, but not beyond it (except his hands)
  - Dead ball foul – 5 yard penalty (Encroachment)
- In Scrimmage Kick formations
  - Lineman may break plane of scrimmage plane by pointing at opponents to confirm blocking assignments (Common Sense)

## LOCATION OF PLAYERS

- Offensive Players
  - After the ball is ready to play, each player of A who participated in the previous down and each substitute for A must have been, momentarily, between the 9-yard marks, before the snap.
  - Rule to prevent “Hide-out” plays
  - Tough to enforce with no huddle offense
  - Foul is illegal formation, 5 yards
- Defensive Players
  - Behind Neutral Zone
  - Inbounds

## FALSE START RESTRICTIONS

- Rule 7-1-7 “ After ball is ready for play and before the snap begins, no false start shall be made by any A player,”
  - Shift or feigned charge that simulates action at snap Veer/Wishbone action)
  - Shift designed to cause B to encroach. Consider if players move to a new position, the speed and abruptness of movement, down and distance.
  - Any act that is clearly intended to cause B to foul
- If a false start causes B to encroach, only the false start is penalized.

## FALSE START

- Interior lineman restrictions
  - Lineman between snapper & the end lineman
  - If he has placed his hand(s) on or near the ground may not move his hands or make any quick movement
  - If he is “covered up” and is in a 3 point position, he cannot shift from that until he is no longer covered
  - If he is “covered up” but standing up, he may move to put hands on knees or go to 3 point and even move to a new position as long as it is not abrupt (usually covered tight end).
  - Restriction on interior lineman is by position, not by number
  - If A lineman reacts to B who enters NZ, it is a foul on B
  - Rare, but possible that both A & B move at same instant – If so, offset both fouls

## FALSE START

- For Balance of Team A
  - Cannot simulate beginning of a play
  - Player going into motion may be a tough judgment call (Must judge HOW he went into motion) Question is “Did he miss the snap count and covered it up by motion?” Tough call.
  - Quarterbacks may also foul by their actions, particularly if it causes B to foul (Head nods, jerky movements, chuck hands)
- No offensive player may make a quick, jerky movement or any movement that is intended to cause the defense to encroach (Verbal sounds as line becomes set or Dallas Cowboy line set or hard start to motion)

## SHIFTS

### 2-37

- Action of ONE or more offensive players who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the snap.
- After a shift, all 11 players of A must come to an absolute stop and remain stationary simultaneously without movement of hands, feet, head or body for at least one second before the snap.
- Can have multiple shifts, but after the last shift all members must comply.
- Can have multiple shifts with no one second pause. Just must have one second pause after the LAST shift.

## SHIFTS

- After One second pause, we can have a snap or one player may legally go into motion ( if didn't pause, technically it is not motion, but part of shift).
- QB may move one foot up or down while otherwise stationary to signal motion.
- If QB lowers his body into position behind snapper, or move either foot forward, or make any other forward movement, he has shifted and must pause one second before the snap.
- Common error – lineman is going set and back starts motion

## RESTRICTIONS AT THE SNAP

- Formations
  - Refer to players position “on the line” or “in the backfield”
  - Two imaginary lines, both parallel to the line and both perpendicular to the ground
    - One runs through waist of the snapper
    - Other runs through waist of a lineman
  - Back – Has no part of his body breaking the plane of an imaginary line through the waist of the nearest legal lineman (except player under snapper)
  - Lineman
    - Facing opponent's goal, with line of shoulders approx parallel (within 30 degrees of the line)
    - Head or Foot breaking imaginary plane through waist of snapper

## FORMATIONS

- Team A must have at least 7 players on line; can have more
- Of the 7, at least 5 must be numbered 50-79 (unless team is in a scrimmage kick formation)
- If not on the line, must be in the backfield, can't be a Mug-Rump
- Two lineman on either side of snapper may interlock legs with snapper.
- Other lineman must have each foot outside the foot of the player next to him.
- Players may stand, crouch or kneel.

## FORMATIONS

- Scrimmage Kick Formation Exception
  - Formation: Team A has at least one player 7 yards or more behind NZ in position to receive a long snap with no person in position to receive a hand-to hand snap.
  - In SK formation, Team A is allowed to have any number of lineman whose numbers are outside 50-79 range
- To gain exemption, player must assume an initial position on his line between the ends.
- He is now an interior lineman and is an ineligible receiver
- If a subsequent shift leaves him in position of an eligible receiver, he remains ineligible. Officials must know.

## FORMATIONS

- Illegal Formations:
  - Less than 7 on the line
  - Fewer than 5 on line numbered 50-79, except when in a scrimmage kick formation
  - Any player other than QB neither on the line nor in the backfield
  - Lineman other than guards and snapper interlocking legs
  - Non-compliance with regard to 9-yd marks
- Not a foul until ball is snapped. Means Team A may legally shift to correct situation and make Formation legal prior to snap.

## MOTION

- Offense may have one man in motion at the snap.
- This player must be moving parallel to or towards his own goal line at the moment the ball is snapped. (Can't have 2 in motion)
- If starts from a position not clearly behind the line (on line or a mug-rump), must either
  - Establish himself as a back by stopping for at least one full second while in the backfield, or
  - Must be at least 5 yards behind his line of scrimmage at the snap.
- Man in motion must be in the backfield at the snap
- Live ball foul; 5 yards from previous spot.

## DEFENSIVE TEAM REQUIREMENTS

- After the ready, can't touch the ball, an opponent or enter the neutral zone to give defensive signals.
- Can be in or beyond NZ until snapper touches ball. After that no one may encroach. (Exception: replaced players and substitutes)
- Not permitted to call defensive signals that simulate sound or cadence of A's snap count or otherwise interfere. "Disconcerting Acts."
- If QB uses audible, can't interfere with that.
- Can use verbal signals, but must be different.
- Team A has 1<sup>st</sup> choice; so Defense must change if same.
- Dead ball foul – 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct

## DEFENSIVE TEAM

- Can be moving at the snap.
- Must be inbounds at the snap.
- Must be behind their side of the neutral zone at the snap.
- Defensive player is on his line of scrimmage when he is within one yard of his scrimmage line at the snap.



## MECHANICS AT THE SNAP

- Referee
  - One second delay met for shift in backfield
  - Snap irregularities and movement of lineman
  - Alert for illegal shift or player in motion.
  - Number of A players and eligible backs
- Umpire
  - Number of A players
  - Five A players on line numbered 50 to 79 and ineligible receivers
  - Interference with snap, false start or encroachment
  - Snap irregularities and movement of lineman
  - Disconcerting signals by B
  - B's players on line of scrimmage in the free blocking zone

## MECHANICS AT THE SNAP

- Head Linesman and Line Judge
  - Players meet the 9-yard mark requirement
  - Identify if closest A player is on or off LOS
  - Count B and know eligible receivers on respective side. Be alert for illegal substitutions.
  - Check player in motion away from you, stay with him even if he reverses motion
  - Check wingbacks, flankers split ends and slot backs for positioning
  - Know that have a minimum of 7 A players on LOS
  - Encroachment or false start
- Back Judge
  - 25 second clock operation
  - Provide visible count of last 5 seconds if no 25 second game clock in use
  - Count B players