

Section 1

RULE 6 — KICKS**Section 1. Free Kicks****Putting the Ball in Play**

ARTICLE 1. A free kick begins each half of a game, and begins play following a touchdown, field goal, or safety. The ball shall be put in play by a place kick or a drop kick from some spot on or behind the kicker's restraining line and between the inbounds lines. Unless relocated by penalty the kicking team's restraining line on kickoffs shall be its 20 yard line on fields 100 yards long.

Formation

ARTICLE 2. When the ball is legally kicked, all players of the kicking team must be inbounds and all players, except the holder and kicker of a place kick, must be behind their restraining line. At least four players of the receiving team with 8 players, must be within five yards of their restraining line after the ball is ready for play and until the ball is kicked. *Penalty: 5 yards.*

Restraining Lines

ARTICLE 3. For any free kick formation the kicking team's restraining line shall be the yard-line through the forward-most point from which the ball may be kicked. The receiving team's restraining line shall be the yard line *twenty yards* beyond that point. It is encroachment for any player other than the kicker and the holder to be beyond the free kick line after the ball is ready for play and until it is kicked.

Recovery of a Free Kick

ARTICLE 4. No player of the kicking team shall touch a free kick before it reaches the receiver's restraining line. Thereafter, all players of the kicking team become eligible to touch, recover, or catch the kick. However, no player of the kicking team may interfere with the receiving team's opportunity to catch the ball. A free kick touched by a player of the kicking team which then touches the ground is dead at the spot at which it touches the ground. If first touched before reaching the restraining line of the receiving team, it belongs to the receiving team. If first touched after reaching the restraining line of the receiving team, the ball belongs to the kicking team. A free kick touched by a player of the receiving team, which then touches the ground, is dead at the spot at which it touches the ground and belongs to the receiving team.

Free Kick Caught or Recovered

ARTICLE 5. If a free kick is caught or recovered by a player of the receiving team, the ball continues in play; If caught or recovered by the kicking team, the ball becomes dead.

Section 2

Free Kick At Rest

ARTICLE 6. If a free kick inbounds comes to rest and no player of either team attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at the dead ball spot.

Section 2. Free Kick Out-of-Bounds

Out-of-Bounds Untouched Between the Restraining Lines

ARTICLE 1. If a free kick goes out-of-bounds untouched between the restraining lines, receiving team will put the ball in play on the inbound spot on the line opposite the out-of-bounds spot.

Out-of-Bound Untouched Beyond the Restraining Lines and Between the Goal Lines

ARTICLE 2. If a free kick goes out-of-bounds beyond the receiving team's restraining line, but between the goal lines, the ball is put in play at the receiving team's restraining line.

Out-of-Bounds Touched Between the Goal Lines

ARTICLE 3. If a free kick, which is touched by either team, goes out-of-bounds before touching the ground after being touched between the goal lines, the ball belongs to the receiving team at the inbounds spot on the line opposite the out-of-bounds spot.

Out-of-Bounds Behind End Line

ARTICLE 4. If a free kick goes out-of-bounds behind the end line, it is a touchback and the ball belongs to the team defending that goal line at their 20 yard line.

Section 3. Scrimmage Kicks

Legal Kick

ARTICLE 1. A legal scrimmage kick is a punt, drop kick or place kick made in accordance with the rules.

Protection on Scrimmage Kicks

ARTICLE 2. When a scrimmage kick is to be made, the kicking team must announce it to the referee before the ball is declared ready-for-play. After such an announcement, the kick must be attempted. No Rushing.

ARTICLE 3. Until the kick is made, both teams must maintain at least 4 players on the line of scrimmage. *Penalty: 5 yards. Illegal procedure.* Unannounced punts permitted on other than 4th down provided no forward pass had been completed (during down), ball must be turned over to opponent.

Section 3

Kicking the Ball

ARTICLE 4. The kicker must be at least 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage when receiving the snap. After receiving the snap, the kicker must kick the ball immediately and in a continuous motion. The kicker (punt, field goal, PAT) will have five (5) seconds from the snap to make foot contact and actually kick the ball. *Penalty: Delay — 5 yards. If repeated, Unsportsmanlike conduct — 15 yards and loss of down.*

Failure to Cross the Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 5. Except on a try-for point, a scrimmage kick which fails to cross the scrimmage line continues in play and all players are eligible to catch or recover the ball and advance it.

Crossing the Neutral Zone

ARTICLE 6. No player of the kicking team shall touch a scrimmage kick which goes beyond the neutral zone before it touches an opponent. Such illegal touching is a violation which gives the receiving team the option of taking the ball at the spot of the touching when the ball becomes dead. However, if a penalty occurred by either team before or as the ball becomes dead is accepted, the option is cancelled.

All Players Become Eligible

ARTICLE 7. When a scrimmage kick which has crossed the neutral zone touches a player of the receiving team, any player may catch the ball.

Spot of First Touching

ARTICLE 8. A scrimmage kick which touches a player of either team and then touches the ground is dead at the spot of touching the ground and belongs to the receiving team at that spot, or at the spot of first touching by the kicking team.

Forced Touching Disregarded

ARTICLE 9. A player who is pushed or blocked into a scrimmage kick which has crossed the neutral zone shall not be considered as having touched the kick unless the player's hand touched it.

Catch or Recovery By Receiving Team

ARTICLE 10. If a scrimmage kick is caught, or recovered after hitting the ground, by a player of the receiving team, the ball continues in play. *Note: If muffed, it becomes dead at the spot of hitting the ground after being muffed.*

Section 4**Catch or Recovery By Kicking Team**

ARTICLE 11. If a player of the kicking team who is beyond the neutral zone catches or recovers a scrimmage kick, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team.

Kick Out-Of-Bounds Between the Goal Lines Or At Rest

ARTICLE 12. If a scrimmage kick goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines or comes to rest inbounds untouched and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at that spot.

Kick Touching On Or Behind the Goal Line

ARTICLE 13. When any kick (other than a successful field goal or try) touches anything while the kicked ball is on or behind the receiver's goal line (plane), it is dead immediately and is a touchback. Exception: Kickoffs and punts caught or recovered in the end-zone may be run out or downed for a touchback. Unsuccessful field goal attempts are dead balls.

Section 4. Opportunity To Catch a Kick**Interference With Opportunity**

ARTICLE 1. A player of the receiving team who is so located that he could catch; (1) a free kick or, (2) a scrimmage kick which is beyond the neutral zone and in flight, must be given an unencumbered opportunity to catch such a kick. Protection terminates when the kick is touched by any player of the receiving team. *Penalty: 10 yards from previous spot or awarded fair catch at spot of interference.*

Section 5. Fair Catch

ARTICLE 1. When a player makes a fair catch, the ball becomes dead where caught and belongs to the receiving team at that spot.

ARTICLE 2. No player of a team or a teammate who has signalled for a fair catch may carry the ball more than two steps in any direction. *Penalty: 5 yards.*

ARTICLE 3. After a legal fair catch the receiving team may choose to snap or free kick anywhere between the inbounds line on the yard-line through the spot of the catch or through the spot of interference, if awarded.

ARTICLE 4. A valid fair catch signal is the extending of one arm at full arm's length above the head and waving the hand from side to side of the body more than once.

ARTICLE 5. An invalid fair catch signal is a five yard penalty from the previous spot and the down replayed if accepted.

ARTICLE 6. A muffed fair catch shall be declared dead when the ball makes contact with the ground.