

19. CALLING FOULS

19.1 – Calling official

19.1.a – Priorities

When observing a foul:

1. Dropping or throwing a foul^λ marker (flag) at the proper spot, i.e. where the foul occurs. *If the foul occurs out of bounds, keeping the flag within the limit lines.* §
 - (a) Making sure that the flag falls on the correct side of the goal line on spot fouls near either end zone.
 - (b) Throwing the flag high in the air when there is no importance to marking the spot of the foul (e.g. line of scrimmage infractions, dead-ball fouls).
2. Noting the yard line where the foul occurred.
3. Noting the status of the ball, i.e. which team had possession of the ball at the moment the foul occurred, whether it was in player possession or loose, and whether the ball was live or dead.

At the end of the play:

4. When the ball becomes dead, ensuring that all colleagues know that you have thrown a penalty flag.
5. Staying at the dead-ball spot (if you are the Coverer) until another official relieves you of the responsibility.
6. Consulting with colleagues who also had a flag on the play, or who may have had a better view of the play than you. This is particularly important for targeting fouls.
7. Ensuring that the Referee, Umpire and the rest of the crew are aware of what the foul is.
8. Verifying that the Referee and Umpire enforce the penalty^λ correctly. Staying in the vicinity of the Referee to make sure they have all the necessary information or in case they need a reminder of the player's number. Checking the enforcement spot, the distance, and the direction. If you think anything is wrong, informing the Referee immediately.
9. Recording for each foul you call:
 - (a) the time on the clock (if known);
 - (b) the foul (using the codes listed in section 28);
 - (c) the number of the fouling player;
 - (d) whether the penalty was accepted, declined, offset or cancelled by rule.

19.1.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If the ball is live when the foul occurred, do *not* blow the whistle until the ball becomes dead (unless the foul causes the ball to become dead).
2. *If the ball is dead or when*[◊] the ball becomes dead, continue to toot your whistle in short blasts until all other officials know that you have seen a foul. Give the timeout signal [S3] prominently.
3. If the foul is a spot foul, ask an available colleague to cover your flag.
4. [USING CREW RADIO]
 - (a) If you are the Coverer, remain at the dead-ball spot unless another official takes over responsibility for the spot from you.
 - (b) Use your radio to report your foul(s) to the Referee, Umpire and the rest of the crew.
 - (c) If there are multiple fouls on the play, it may be necessary for all officials involved to gather together in one place (normally, the succeeding spot) and report them in turn.
 - (d) If there is a Video Judge, using the radio informs them of the situation.
 - (e) If your radio is defective but others' are working, ask a nearby official to report the foul(s) for you.

5. [OTHERWISE]
 - (a) If you are the Coverer, do not leave the dead-ball spot until another official takes over responsibility for the spot from you.
 - (i) If you are not relieved, make the Referee and Umpire come to you.
 - (ii) If you have a foul for defensive pass interference, stay by your flag and make the Referee and Umpire come to you.
 - (b) If you are not the Coverer, once all action has ceased in your area, move quickly towards the Referee and Umpire.
 - (c) [REFEREE] Report the foul to the Umpire. [UMPIRE] Report the foul to the Referee. [OTHERWISE] Report the foul to the Referee and Umpire.
6. Give the following information:
 - the nature of the foul;
 - the offending team, by name and/or colour and/or by offense/defense;
 - the offending player, by number or position;
 - the spot of the foul and the likely enforcement spot;
 - whether the ball was live or dead at the time of the foul and, if appropriate, whether it occurred before or after a change of team possession or while loose from a pass, kick or fumble.
7. If more than one official throws their flag for a foul (e.g. scrimmage line infractions, interference), all calling officials must consult with each other before reporting the foul.
 - (a) If you observe an official throw a flag which may be for pass interference and you believe the pass was uncatchable, the recommended thing to say to the official is, "Was that pass catchable?" If sure it was, they should reply, "Yes, it was." If not sure that it was, they should reply, "What did you see?"
 - (b) Don't assume that everyone saw the same as you.
 - (c) If you have to throw a flag for a foul clearly in someone else's area, it is courteous to discuss it with them.
8. If your flag is for targeting, you must have direct, verbal communication with at least one other official prior to reporting the foul to the Referee. Rarely does targeting occur where there are not multiple views of the action. Because the penalty involves mandatory disqualification, we require this communication to reduce the risk of an incorrect call.
9. When a defensive player, before the snap, moves and an offensive player reacts, a conference between the Umpire and the wing officials is mandatory. This is to determine if the defensive player was in the neutral zone and if the offensive player was threatened.
10. When reporting fouls to the Referee, do not point to teams or players. After reporting, stay near the Referee in case they need to ask you for further details. Avoid conferences except when absolutely necessary to obtain information from more than one official. Only those involved should be included.
11. In the event of a disqualifying foul:
 - (a) Accompany the Referee to notify the Head Coach of the number of the player disqualified and the nature of the foul.
 - (b) *It is diplomatic to inform the Head Coach of the disqualification before the Referee notifies the spectators. @*
 - (c) When notifying the Head Coach, the recommended wording is "X just disqualified themselves because ..." or "X is disqualified because ...", rather than "I am disqualifying X because ...".
 - (d) [REFEREE] If you called the foul, the wing official should accompany you.
 - (e) Another official (normally the opposite wing official) should inform the opposing Head Coach of the disqualification.

19.1.c – Advanced techniques

1. If your flag falls on the wrong spot, move it to the correct spot. Move the flag with authority – don't try to nudge it with your foot in the hope that no one will notice!

19.2 – Other officials

19.2.a – Priorities

1. If the flag was thrown in your normal area of responsibility, or you believe the penalty may be against a player for whom you were responsible during the down (e.g. your key player at the snap, or a receiver who passed through your area of responsibility), or if you believe there was contact on an uncatchable pass:
 - (a) making sure that you know what the penalty is;
 - (b) reporting any information relevant to it;
2. Not allowing the penalty to be incorrectly administered because someone else did not know what you knew or saw.
3. Sharing an equal responsibility for rule interpretation. If you believe a foul has been called *incorrectly, or the penalty administered incorrectly*,[°] it is your responsibility to draw this to the Referee's attention without fuss, indiscretion or delay. If you have information to contribute, make sure that your colleagues, especially the Referee, know about it. If an official blows a rule interpretation, the whole crew has blown it.
4. Covering the dead-ball spot if nobody else is doing it. If a ball is not at the dead-ball spot, assisting in getting one there. Leaving the ball on the ground at the dead-ball spot until it is called for.
5. [REFEREE] Identifying the official(s) who has/have thrown a flag, going towards them, and finding out the details of the foul they observed.
6. [UMPIRE] Identifying the official(s) who has/have thrown a flag, hearing what they tell the Referee and ensuring that the Referee has understood what they said.
7. [CENTRE JUDGE] Assisting the Referee and Umpire with their penalty enforcement duties.
8. Noting the yard line where the ball is dead.
9. If the foul is a spot foul, covering and holding the spot of the foul. If the foul has post-scrimmage kick enforcement, covering and holding the spot where the kick ends.
10. If other officials are huddling to discuss a situation, keeping players away from them.
11. If all spots are covered, observing the players and assisting where needed.
12. Getting a new ball to the Umpire/Centre Judge.
13. If you are the nearest official to the Head Coach (and you have nothing else to do), standing near them and assisting in communicating to them what the penalty is and what their options are, and relaying their decision to the Referee. This is particularly important when there is:
 - (a) a complex penalty situation;
 - (b) a 10-second *runoff*^² option (or a timeout to avoid it).
14. [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C)] [LINE JUDGE]
[IN xx2/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D/7/8)] [FIELD JUDGE] Recording for each foul called: quarter, time, team, player, foul code, calling official(s) and whether the penalty is accepted, declined, offset or cancelled by rule.

19.2.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. At the end of the play, repeat the timeout signal [S3] given by an official who has thrown a flag.
2. When the Umpire starts to enforce the penalty, pick up the flag (or bean bag) you are covering and return it to the official who called the foul.

19.3 – Enforcement procedure

1. [REFEREE] After receiving the report of the foul:
 - (a) [USING CREW RADIO] If the details of the foul have not yet been broadcast over radio, do so now.
 - (b) If you are unsure of whether a penalty would bring up a first down, use the "penalty yards for a first down" signal [Sup43] to ask the question of the Linesman.

- (c) Unless the enforcement (and clock option)[§] is obvious, give the preliminary signals in a crisp clear manner to the press box side. (Preliminary signals consist of (i) the signal for the foul; and (ii) point to the offending team's end line.) If there is potential confusion as to whether a foul is live- or dead-ball, give the dead-ball signal [S7] before giving the foul signal for each dead-ball foul. Do not announce the foul to the public [USING PUBLIC RADIO][@] at this stage.
 - (d) If the enforcement is "obvious", inform the on-field captain of the offended team of the foul and where the ball will be placed. You may forgo this if you believe they are already aware of the nature of the foul. If the captain objects, follow the procedure below for "non-obvious" enforcement. If the captain makes an obviously inappropriate choice, confirm that they fully understand
 - (e) If not obvious, explain the foul and options to the on-field captain. If they wish to consult their Head Coach, allow them to do so by shouting or signals (but not by going over to speak to them). While you are consulting the captain, if it becomes clear what the Head Coach's choice is, go with that. If the captain and Head Coach make conflicting choices, go with the Coach's.
 - (f) Notify the on-field captain of the offending team of the foul called and, if possible, the number or position of the offending player.
 - (g) Notify the on-field captain and Head Coach of each team if the penalty involves the loss of a down.
 - (h) If they do not already know, instruct the Umpire and Centre Judge (and [USING CREW RADIO] other officials) as to the spot of enforcement and the yardage to be marked off.
2. [LINESMAN, LINE JUDGE, FIELD JUDGE AND SIDE JUDGE][^] If the penalty enforcement (or clock option)[§] is not obvious:
- (a) If you are the official (other than the Coverer) who is nearest to the Head Coach of the offended team, attempt to get the options from them. Explain to them what the foul was and what the options are.
 - (b) Communicate by radio, signal (e.g. gesturing towards the chosen spot) or shout to the Referee whether the choice is to accept or decline the penalty (or, in the case of more complex enforcement, which penalty if any the Coach wishes to accept).
3. [UMPIRE OR CENTRE JUDGE]
- (a) [IN 3xx FORMATION (CREW OF 6C/8)] The Umpire and Centre Judge should work in cooperation to do the following. It does not matter much which official performs each specific task, but they must communicate together to ensure that all the tasks are done and none are duplicated. (Exception: only the Umpire should move the ball on penalties enforced from the previous spot on free kick plays.)
 - (b) Ensure that you know what the foul is that has been reported to the Referee.
 - (c) If the acceptance/declination of the penalty is not obvious, call a captain of the offended team while the Referee gives the preliminary signals, so that they may be notified of the foul and the options. If the penalty is complex or may involve options for both teams, call both captains.
 - (d) Obtain a new ball. Other officials may assist in relaying one to you. Hold it in your hand rather than place it on the ground. The ball should only be placed on the ground once penalty enforcement is complete.
 - (e) Be present if the options are given to the offended captain, and check that they are given correctly.
 - (f) While carrying a ball, determine the spot to which the ball should be taken and move directly to it, without stepping off each yard of the penalty. It should only be necessary to step off the penalty on badly marked fields.
 - (g) Before enforcing a penalty(ies) from the previous spot on a free kick, repeat the Referee's penalty announcement signals to the press box.
 - (h) Error prevention procedures:
 - (i) Before starting, confirm with the Line Judge or Linesman that you have the correct enforcement spot.

- (ii) [USING CREW RADIO] You may transmit the distance, enforcement spot and succeeding spot (Mechanic 25.4.4). This needs to be timed to avoid the Referee's penalty announcement. @
- (iii) When you reach the succeeding spot, confirm with the Line Judge or Linesman that you have moved the correct distance.
 - (iv) Do not place the ball on the ground until you have confirmed that you are at the right spot.
 - (v) Do not delay by waiting for the Line Judge or Linesman to be in position at the spot they are checking. They should be able to give you confirmation verbally or by signalling wherever they are. ×
 - (vi) When a penalty is enforced from the previous spot on a free kick, the official(s) responsible for confirming the penalty enforcement with you is/are the official(s) on Team A's restraining line (normally the Back Judge, but others may be responsible when in onside-kick formation).
4. [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER] If there is less than one minute remaining in the half, ensure that the rest of the crew know that a 10-second runoff may apply.
 5. If a 10-second runoff option applies:
 - (a) [REFEREE] If the 10-second runoff option is not obvious, give the option to the relevant captain. §
 - (b) [REFEREE] If the 10-second runoff option is chosen and the other team has a remaining timeout, ask its captain whether they wish to use a timeout.
 - (c) [LINESMAN, LINE JUDGE, FIELD JUDGE AND SIDE JUDGE] If you are the official (other than the Coverer) nearest to the relevant Head Coach, attempt to get the option from them and communicate it to the Referee.
 - (d) If the 10-second runoff option is chosen:
 - (i) [ON-FIELD TIMEKEEPER] Adjust your clock accordingly.
 - (ii) [REFEREE] Remind Team A that the clock will start on the ready for play.
 - (iii) [UMPIRE OR CENTRE JUDGE] Make sure the snapper knows that they must not snap the ball before the Referee signals the ready for play.
 - (e) If the 10-second runoff option is declined:
 - (i) [REFEREE] Remind Team A that the clock will start on the snap.
 6. [LINESMAN] Be prepared to respond to the Referee giving the "penalty yards for a first down" signal [Sup43] to you. Answer yes (or nod or give thumbs up) if the enforcement of the penalty from the previous spot would give a first down. Answer no (or shake head or give thumbs down) if not.
 7. Error prevention procedures:

- (a) [LINESMAN AND LINE JUDGE] Listen for the Umpire or Centre Judge transmitting the distance, enforcement spot and succeeding spot, or you may transmit it yourself (avoiding the Referee's penalty announcement). Check with them if you do not think they are correct.
 - (b) [LINE JUDGE] Confirm that the penalty(ies) is/are enforced from the correct enforcement spot. × Verbally or visually confirm to the Umpire or Centre Judge that they are starting from the correct position. Also check that the ball has been moved the correct distance (including half distance enforcement). Hold the enforcement spot until the enforcement is complete, except in the following situations:
 - (i) penalties enforced from the previous spot on a free kick;
 - (ii) [IN 2x0/2x1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5)] when you are responsible for covering the end of a kick.

Note that checking penalty enforcement is a higher priority than (i) covering a penalty flag; (ii) talking to coaches.
 - (c) [LINESMAN] Confirm that the penalty(ies) is/are enforced to the correct succeeding spot. This process does not require you to move in synchrony with the Umpire or Centre Judge, but you must check that you both end up at the same yard line and that the correct distance (including half distance enforcement) has been moved. Verbally or visually confirm to the Umpire or Centre Judge that they are finishing at

- the correct position. Do not move the down box until the enforcement is confirmed as correct.
- (d) [BACK JUDGE OR OTHER OFFICIALS ON TEAM A'S RESTRAINING LINE WHEN IN ONSIDE-KICK FORMATION] For penalties enforced from the previous spot on a free kick, check that the penalty is enforced from the correct spot and that the ball is moved the correct distance (including half distance enforcement). Verbally or visually confirm to the Umpire that they are finishing at the correct position.
8. [REFEREE]
- (a) While the Umpire or Centre Judge is enforcing the penalty, move to a position in clear view and give the final signals to the press box side of the field only. (The Head Coach on the opposite side will be notified by the Linesman or Side Judge). Don't take too long to get into position, though occasionally taking an extra second can help you compose yourself and think about what you are going to say. Come to a complete stop before starting the announcement.
 - (b) For each foul, give the appropriate signal and then point towards the offending team's goal line.
 - (c) In the case of the following penalties, precede the appropriate signal by the personal foul signal [S38]:
 - (i) facemask [S45]
 - (ii) roughing the passer [S34]
 - (iii) horse collar tackle [S25]
 - (iv) roughing the kicker/snapper/holder [S30]
 - (v) chop block [S41]
 - (vi) targeting [S24]
 - (vii) blind-side block [S28][®]
 - (d) If the penalty is declined, also give the penalty declined signal [S10].
 - (e) If there are offsetting penalties, signal the home team's foul, point to that team's goal line, then signal the away team's foul, point to that team's goal line, and finally give the offsetting penalty signal [S10].
 - (f) While facing the press box, indicate the number of the next down.
 - (g) [USING PUBLIC RADIO] Announce the penalty, including the identity of the offending player by number (or position if the number is not known).
 - (i) For brevity, the numbers of the players may be omitted if there are more than two fouls.
 - (ii) [USING PUBLIC RADIO] If you are provided with a radio microphone for communication with spectators and/or broadcast viewers/listeners, it is mandatory for you to use it provided you have a control switch. [@]
 - (iii) If the foul is the first unsportsmanlike conduct against an individual, announce that fact as a warning against their future conduct.
 - (iv) If a player is disqualified as a result of a foul, announce that accompanied by the disqualification signal [S47]. Use the same words suggested for use when informing their Head Coach (Mechanic 19.1.b).
9. If there are penalties for[°] multiple dead-ball fouls which do not cancel by rule or because their net yardage precisely cancels,[§] each penalty distance must be traversed and (except for fouls between series) the position of the chain reconsidered after each. Half distance enforcement should also be checked before each penalty administration. The chain clip, however, need only be set after the last penalty has been enforced.
10. The nearest sideline official on the appropriate side of the field *must* relay to the Head Coach details of the foul if it is by their team, including, where possible, the number or position of the offending player and precisely what the player did that was illegal. If the penalty involves loss of down, the Coach must be notified of that fact. The Coach must also be notified of any unusual enforcements or judgments whether or not they are against their team. Examples might include: flags waved off (disregarded); uncatchable passes; any unfair tactics or unfair acts calls (Rules 9-2-2 and 9-2-3).
11. [REFEREE] If the penalty for a foul is to be enforced at the next free kick, give the final signals (and announce the penalty) and point to the spot of the kick. The Umpire will repeat the signals to the press box before moving the ball.

12. [REFEREE] If a penalty flag is to be disregarded, give the disregard flag signal [S13] to the press box. This signal is not given by the official who threw the flag (unless it was the Referee). [USING PUBLIC RADIO] Announce a brief explanation as to why the flag is being disregarded.
13. [REFEREE] [USING PUBLIC RADIO] If a penalty enforcement or game situation is complex or unusual, explain it to everyone. Focus on stating facts (e.g. the fouls that were called) and a brief reference to the rule(s) that apply. You may also do this if there are no penalty flags on the play, if the game has already been halted. Do not stop the game just to make an announcement.

19.4 – Obvious and non-obvious enforcement

1. Officials may normally regard enforcement of the following penalties as "obviously" accepted:
 - (a) dead-ball penalties (except possibly those committed by teams about to punt) will be accepted;
 - (b) post-scrimmage kick penalties will be accepted;
 - (c) defensive penalties where the yardage is added to the end of the play will be accepted;
 - (d) Team A penalties that include loss of down will be accepted;
 - (e) Team B penalties that include an automatic first down will be accepted (unless declining gives better field position);
 - (f) Team A penalties that result in a safety will be accepted (unless declining gives Team B the ball in good field position);
 - (g) Team A penalties on plays where they gained a first down will be accepted.
2. Officials may normally regard enforcement of the following penalties as "obviously" declined:
 - (a) penalties where the result of the play is the same as the penalty (e.g. defensive pass interference at the spot of the catch beyond the line to gain, or a safety) will be declined;
 - (b) penalties against the opponents of the team that scores a touchdown (or 2-point try) will be declined unless they carry over to the next free kick;
 - (c) opponent's penalties prior to the offended team gaining possession will be declined;
 - (d) defensive penalties that leave the offense in a less favourable position and less favourable down number will be declined;
 - (e) Team A penalties on plays where they lost significant yardage will be declined.
3. In the following cases, acceptance/declination will be obvious based on the state of the game:
 - (a) where there are multiple penalties, the one that puts the offending team in the worst position will be accepted;
 - (b) where a penalty will extend/terminate the game, it will be accepted/declined according to which team is leading;
 - (c) where a penalty will extend/terminate the first half, it will be accepted/declined according to whether either team is in position to score.
4. Note, however, that a Head Coach or team captain may at any time up to the ready for play overrule the officials' choice of option in the cases above.
5. Officials should normally regard enforcement of the following penalties as not "obvious":
 - (a) where the penalty removes/awards points for a field goal, safety or 1-point try;
 - (b) where better/worse field position has to be traded against more/less favourable down number;
 - (c) where Team B can choose enforcement at the previous spot or the dead-ball spot after a kick (including when an untouched free kick has gone out of bounds) and the length of the kick and/or return does not "obviously" indicate the preferable outcome; generally:
 - (i) a long kick and a short return will suggest previous spot enforcement;
 - (ii) a short kick or long return will suggest dead-ball spot enforcement;

- (d) where the team last in possession can choose to decline offsetting fouls due to the "clean hands" (Rule 10-1-4 Exception 1) or "postscrimmage kick enforcement" (Rule 10-1-4 Exception 2) rules;
- (e) where (at or near the end of a quarter) a strong wind or other factors may affect which way a team wants to play the next down;
- (f) where Team A may decline the distance portion of a penalty on a try in order to maintain the same spot for the kicker (Rule 8-3-3-b-2).

6. As well as whether a penalty will be accepted or declined, officials may also regard a team's clock option as "obvious". This covers 10-second runoff situations and whether to start the clock on the ready or snap. "Obvious" situations include:[§]
- (a) In the closing stages of the game, the team in the lead generally will want to consume time and the team trailing will want to conserve time. An exception to this might be if a lead change is likely to occur in the next play or two.
 - (b) In the closing stages of the first half, a team in a position to score will generally want to conserve time.