

10. UMPIRE

10.1 - Free kicks

10.1.a – Priorities

Prior to the kick:

1. Being aware of whether the Referee has instructed the crew to switch to onside-kick positions, and moving position (if appropriate) if they have.
2. If the free kick takes place after a score, timing the one-minute intermission, starting from when the Referee signals the score to the press box (Rule 3-3-8-f).
3. Counting Team A players and signalling the count [one of Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24] to colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
4. Reminding the players to count their number if the team you are responsible for counting does not have precisely **the correct number of²** players on the field.
5. Handing the ball to the kicker (or leaving it in the middle of the field on Team A's restraining line if the kicker delays setting up for the kick).
6. Briefing the kicker, including:
 - (a) Cautioning the kicker not to kick the ball if it falls off the tee.
 - (b) Reminding the kicker that other kicking team players must be no more than 5 yards behind their restraining line.
 - (c) Being sure that they understand that they must not kick the ball until the Referee sounds their whistle.
 - (d) Reminding the kicker that they have 25 seconds to put the ball into play after the Referee sounds their whistle.
 - (e) Reminding them that they are responsible for removing the kicking tee from the field at the end of the play.

You may skip the briefing if you're sure the kicker remembers it all from previous briefings, or if the kicker is not around to be briefed.

7. Checking readiness for play:
 - (a) [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] Checking side areas to ensure that all non-players are out of the restricted areas, that non-participants are off the field of play, **that the safety zone is clear,[®]** and that all team personnel are within the team area.
 - (b) Ensuring that the chain crew (and the alternate down box and line-to-gain marker operators, where provided) have moved themselves and their equipment well out of the way and that the equipment has been placed on the ground outside the team areas and **outside the safety zone[®]** at the receiving team's end of the field. Checking that the ball persons are in position.
 - (c) Checking that the kicking team has at least **the minimum number of** players on either side of the kicker, and reminding them to count if they do not.
 - (d) Reminding colleagues on the restraining lines to get into position and get ready if they have not already done so.
 - (e) Noting (when satisfied that all is ready) the readiness of the officials on the restraining lines, then holding your arm aloft until the ready signal is given by the Referee.
 - (f) Getting the ball ready for play as quickly as possible. Reminding the Referee to declare the ball ready promptly when all officials are in position. Doing this even if Team A is not ready.
 - (g) [IN F5-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6/7/8)] Staying between the kicker and the ball until the Referee gives the ready for play signal.
 - (h) Being alert always for short kicks.

During the kick play:

8. [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] Observing whether a free kick goes out of bounds nearest to you without being touched by the receiving team. Ruling whether a Team B player near the sideline touches the ball while out of bounds.
9. Watching players for a fair catch signal, and being prepared to rule on any interference with the opportunity to catch the kick.
10. If[×] the kick is short:
 - (a) Knowing whether the kicked ball has touched the ground and whether it was driven directly into the ground or goes a short distance and then touches the ground.
 - (b) Knowing where and by whom the ball was first touched.
 - (c) Observing illegal blocks by Team A (Rule 6-1-12).
 - (d) Marking any spot of illegal touching with a bean bag.
 - (e) [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] Marking the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official and there is little or no return run.
11. Giving the start the clock signal [S2] only if the ball is first legally touched in the field of play **and you are the nearest official or you have the best view of it.**

12. [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] Marking the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official when the ball carrier is tackled or goes out of bounds.
13. [IN F4-6 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6)][‡] Ruling a touchdown at Team A's goal line.
14. Observing fouls/violations by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) all actions against the kicker until a roughing the kicker foul is no longer possible by rule
 - (b) illegal touching of a short kick
 - (c) infractions of your restraining line
 - (d) kicking team players (other than the kicker) more than 5 yards behind their restraining line after the ready for play
 - (e) [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] blocks made by the three players from Team B who were nearest you at the kick
 - (f) [OTHERWISE] blocks made by the middle player on Team B's front line at the kick
 - (g) illegal blocks in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack
 - (h) illegal blocks below the waist
 - (i) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (j) safety-related fouls such as face mask, tripping, chop blocks, illegal wedges or illegal blind-side blocks
 - (k) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (l) any player of the kicking team who enters the field of play after the kick or who voluntarily goes out of bounds during the kick and returns inbounds
 - (m) illegal forward handing or illegal forward passes
15. [IN F5-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6/7/8)] Directing the nearest official to the out of bounds spot if the kicked ball goes out of bounds in flight.

10.1.b – Initial positioning

Normal kicks:

1. [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] After briefing the kicker and handing them the ball, move to position F (see 26.1) outside the sideline on the press box side on Team A's restraining line.
2. [OTHERWISE] Until the referee declares the ball ready for play, stand between the kicker and the ball to prevent them from kicking it. Once the ball is ready for play, move to position H (see 26.1) slightly to one side of the kicker (to their kicking foot side if possible), making sure that you do not impede their actions and are in position to see kicking team players who are more than 5 yards behind their restraining line.

Onside-kicks:

3. As per 10.1.b.2 above.[‡]

Free kicks after a penalty or safety:

4. When a free kick is taken following a penalty or a safety, the same relative positions should be taken, moving up or down the field as appropriate.

10.1.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

Prior to the kick:

1. Watch the ball prior to the kick and blow your whistle if it starts to fall off the tee before it is kicked. Give the timeout signal [S3] to indicate that there has been no play.[§] After the ball has been blown or fallen off the tee twice, insist that the kicking team use a holder.
2. If anything happens that should prevent the kick taking place (e.g. a non-player enters or approaches the field of play), toot your whistle, give the timeout signal [S3] and deal with the problem.

During any kick play:

3. If you see any player of the kicking team voluntarily go out of bounds during the kick, drop your bean bag or hat to mark their exit, and your flag if they return.
4. If the clock should start when the ball is first legally touched in the field of play, give the start the clock signal [S2] if you are the nearest official or the one with the best view.

During a kick play that goes deep:

5. [IN F5-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6/7/8)] If the ball goes out of bounds in flight, after the ball is kicked, go to the spot of the kick and assist other officials to locate the out of bounds spot using signals [Sup17, Sup18 & Sup19].
6. [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] Move downfield along the sideline while the kick is in the air. During the return, stay ahead of the ball carrier, keeping them boxed in[‡] between you and the downfield official. On a long run, be at Team A's goal line before the ball carrier. You have shared responsibility for the goal line.[°] Mark the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official when the ball carrier is tackled or is out of bounds.
7. [IN F5-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6/7/8)] Move downfield slowly after the players. Keep all the players in front of you (with the exception of an unthreatened kicker).
 - (a) [IN F7-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] On a long run, keep out of the way of the players, let the ball carrier go past you and continue to officiate from the inside out.
 - (b) [IN F5-6 FORMATION (CREW OF 5/6)] On a long run, stay ahead of the players and get to the goal line ahead of the ball carrier. You have shared responsibility for the goal line.[§] You also have[‡] responsibility

for the end line should that be threatened (e.g. after a fumble near Team A's goal line). When you are sharing responsibility for a line (or pair of lines) with other officials, adjust so that you get a complementary view of the play.

8. [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] If the ball goes out of bounds in your area, go to and hold the spot, dropping your flag if appropriate.

During a kick play where the kick is short:

9. Maintain a position where you can see the ball and the blocks by Team A players.
10. If the ball is immediately driven into the ground and goes into the air, when the ball becomes dead inform colleagues of that fact, especially if kick catch interference may be an issue.
11. Particularly [observe⁴](#) the blocks made by Team A players before they are eligible to touch the ball (Rule 6-1-12).
12. Know where and by whom the ball was first touched. Be particularly alert for a second touch by the kicker. Mark any spot of illegal touching with your bean bag (Rule 6-1-3).
13. [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] If you are the nearest official when the ball becomes dead, signal timeout [S3] and mark the dead-ball spot.

10.1.d – Advanced techniques

1. If the kick goes deep:
 - (a) [IN F7 FORMATION (CREW OF 7)] Angle across to favour the [Side Judge/Down Judge's](#) side of the field as you move down the field. You and the Back Judge each take responsibility for half of the middle of the field.
 - (b) [IN F8 FORMATION (CREW OF 8)] Stay in the middle of the field as you move down the field. You, the Back Judge and the Centre Judge each take responsibility for a third of the middle of the field. You should stay deepest of the three.
2. [IF USING ONSIDE-KICK POSITIONS] If an expected onside kick is kicked deep:
 - (a) [IN F4 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] Stay in the centre of the field. You, the [Down Judge](#) and the Line Judge each take responsibility for one third of the field (Figure 26.1.C).
 - (b) [IN F5 FORMATION (CREW OF 5)] Angle across to the [Down Judge's](#) side. You and the Back Judge each take responsibility for half of the middle of the field (Figure 26.1.E).
 - (c) [IN F6-8 FORMATION (CREW OF 6/7/8)] Stay in the centre of the field. You and the other two officials on Team A's restraining line each take responsibility for one third of the middle of the field (Figures 26.1.G, 26.1.I and 26.1.J).
 - (d) In all cases, observe action ahead of the ball carrier in your portion of the field.
3. [After the ball is dead and all action is ceased, if you are the nearest official to the previous spot make sure that any kicking tee has been removed from the field. [◇]](#)

10.2 - Basic scrimmage plays

10.2.a – Priorities

1. Knowing the down and distance, and signalling the down to your colleagues. Noting the down signals given by colleagues. Checking that the down box displays the correct number. Not allowing play to start if there is a dispute about the down number.
2. Counting Team A players and signalling the count [one of Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24] to your colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
3. Observing false starts in general and, in particular, by interior linemen. [This includes when Team A never sets.](#)
4. [Observing other illegal shifts \(no 1-second pause after simultaneous movement by Team A players\). [◇]](#)
5. Observing line of scrimmage infractions by Team B that involve contact with or a reaction by a Team A player.
6. Observing the legality of the snap.
7. If there is a pre-snap foul, stopping all action by tooting on your whistle and giving the timeout signal [S3].
8. Anticipating whether the play is a run or a pass by reading the initial action of the interior linemen. If they move backwards it is likely that a pass play will develop. If they charge forwards or pull, it is likely that a running play will develop.
9. Being aware of where the line to gain is in relation to the line of scrimmage so that you don't have to look at the chain to know if the dead-ball spot is close to the line to gain.
10. Observing substitution infractions by Team A, For example:
 - (a) replaced players not leaving the huddle within 3 seconds of an incoming substitute entering it
 - (b) breaking the huddle with [too many⁴](#) players
 - (c) keeping [too many⁴](#) players in the huddle/formation for more than three seconds
 - (d) substitutes coming on to the field, communicating, and then leaving the field
11. Observing that defensive players do not use words or signals that disconcert opponents when they are trying to put the ball in play.
12. [Observing that defensive linemen do not make movements that are not normal. [®]](#)
13. Noting any ineligible receivers in the backfield between the tackles, because of the potential for illegal touching and ineligible receiver downfield fouls.

14. Observing the legality of the formation, in particular the requirement for a minimum number of[†] players numbered 50-79.
15. Managing the substitution process if Team A makes a substitution while the snapper is at, near or moving towards their position at the line of scrimmage. §
16. Spot checking players' equipment, and reminding them to check their chinstrap and mouthpiece if necessary.

10.2.b – Initial positioning

1. Be where you can see the ball at the snap and all interior linemen.
2. Normal scrimmage down position is in the defensive backfield approximately 5 to 7 yards deep from the line of scrimmage and between the offensive tackles.
3. The position must be varied to prevent teams being able to take advantage of it.
4. Be in a position from which you can officiate without obstructing players.

10.2.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If defensive players move their position, ensure you can still see the ball and the interior linemen.
2. Keep out of the way of defensive players.
3. If Team A is in a scrimmage kick formation, verbally remind Team B players not to rough the snapper, nor to line up over the snapper, nor to contact any Team A player 3-to-1. §
4. If there is a foul before the snap, blow your whistle, throw your flag and signal timeout [S3]. Confer with the wing officials about the call (unless there is absolutely no doubt what it is) and then inform the Referee.
5. If a lineman moves before the snap, and they may have been threatened by movement of a defensive player, confer with both wing officials[‡] near the succeeding spot.

10.2.d – Advanced techniques

Reasons for varying (or not) your initial position:

1. Generally, the higher the standard of play and the faster the players, the deeper and wider you need to stand. [IN xx2/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D/7/8)] You can be 10 yards off the line of scrimmage if you are comfortable there (except in goal line situations, where you must be able to get to the line of scrimmage to rule on the legality of a pass).
2. Be deeper and wider if your mobility is hindered either by your condition or ground conditions (e.g. mud or uneven surface).
3. There is no need to coordinate your position to the position of the Referee.

Signalling the player count:

4. The latest time to make the player count signal is when the offensive team breaks its huddle (but it can and should be done earlier if possible). [IN 3xx FORMATION (CREW OF 6C/8)] You do not need to count and signal if you don't have time to do so because you have spotted the ball.

10.3 - Running plays

10.3.a – Priorities

1. Observing the action around and ahead of the ball carrier.
2. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
3. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) illegal block in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack, especially those made by interior linemen
 - (b) safety-related fouls such as face mask, tripping, illegal blocks below the waist, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
 - (c) late hits by any player after the ball is dead

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

1. If the action comes towards you, move laterally to get out of the way and allow the players to pass by you.
2. When the play develops between the tackles, your primary responsibility is to cover the action of players at the point of attack, then around the ball carrier and finally between you and the ball on longer runs.
3. When the ball carrier moves into a side zone, turn and move so that you keep the ball carrier and their lead blockers in view. Don't move towards the ball so far that you will get in the way if the ball carrier cuts back infield, but also go far enough that you don't get left behind if the play ultimately reaches the sideline.
4. [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] You will likely be the second nearest official to the out-of-bounds spot after a long run. Move laterally far enough that you can get to the sideline quickly if action there demands it or your presence would serve to defuse a difficult situation.
5. Only blow your whistle if the ball carrier's forward progress ends directly in front of you and it is likely they are obscured from the sideline officials. Take the exact forward progress from the sideline officials.

10.3.c – Advanced techniques

1. Don't blow your whistle when the ball carrier's back is toward you or you are obscured by other players or officials⁴ – they may have fumbled the ball without you seeing it. See leather! Be certain that the ball is dead.
2. If a pile-up of players forms, give the timeout signal [S3], converge on the pile, determine who has possession (MOFO 6.10) and encourage players to unpile safely.
3. If you're not the nearest official to the dead-ball spot, observe for late hits and other illegal acts. It is particularly your responsibility to observe action close to the wing officials as they are concentrating on the forward progress spot.

Particular types of run play:

4. On plays into the line, if the ball carrier is driven back after their forward progress is stopped, discourage players from joining the pile.
5. If the run ends near to the line to gain, assist the wing official by handing a ball to them so that they can mark the exact dead-ball spot.

10.4 - Pass plays

10.4.a – Priorities

1. Keeping out of the way of the players, particularly eligible receivers crossing the field in your vicinity.
2. Ruling whether passes are caught or incomplete when the receiver is facing you.
3. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) ineligible receivers downfield
 - (b) [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C) OR IN A GOAL LINE SITUATION] illegal passes because the ball carrier has crossed the neutral zone
 - (c) illegal block in the back and holding fouls by linemen and backs protecting the passer, especially the centre and guards, and [IN 2xx FORMATION (NO C)] the tackle on the side of the formation opposite the Referee
 - (d) safety-related fouls such as face mask, tripping, illegal blocks below the waist, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
 - (e) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (f) clear pass interference fouls, but only if you see all the action
4. [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C) OR IN A GOAL LINE SITUATION] Knowing whether or not a forward pass first touches anything in or behind the neutral zone, and giving the ball touched signal [S11] if it happens. The wing officials may be able to assist you with this.[§]
5. Advising the Referee if the pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver, or the pass clearly did not reach the neutral zone.

Once the pass is complete, apply the same priorities as on a running play (above).

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

1. Move towards the line of scrimmage.
 - (a) [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C) OR IN A GOAL LINE SITUATION] Move quickly all the way up to the line of scrimmage. Except on quick passes or when you are obstructed by players, you should be on the line of scrimmage before the pass is thrown.
 - (b) [IN xx2/xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 6D/7/8) AND NOT IN A GOAL LINE SITUATION] Move some way towards the line of scrimmage, but it is not essential for you to get all the way there.
 - (c) This movement removes you as a target, opens up your area for shallow passes and allows you to observe ineligible receivers⁴ illegally downfield.
2. When the ball is thrown, turn and observe the end of the pass. Signal incomplete pass [S10] if you see the ball touch the ground before the receiver has control of it.
3. If there is a run after the catch, respond as you would on a running play (above).

10.4.c – Advanced techniques

1. Once the pass is thrown, your number one priority is to see the end of the pass. There is no further need to watch the pass blocking: the Referee (or Centre Judge) will hopefully spot any personal fouls. Holding in the backfield after the pass is thrown does not normally affect the play.
2. If the pass is incomplete in your area:
 - (a) If there is no eligible receiver in the area, and/or the pass clearly does not reach the neutral zone, move quickly towards the Referee to inform them of this. If the ball crossed the neutral zone, give signal [Sup42] by pointing to the ground beyond the neutral zone. If the ball did not cross the neutral zone, move towards the Referee while pointing to the ground behind the neutral zone.
 - (b) If there is a receiver in the area, and you believe the Referee may not be aware of that fact, move towards the Referee while pointing towards the eligible receiver. Calling out "Number 34 was in the area of the pass" (for example) is also permissible.
 - (c) [USING O2O/CREW RADIO] Transmitting this information is also an option.

3. If you observe the pass being tipped, give the ball touched signal [S11]. The signal should normally be used on passes tipped in the offensive backfield, but inconspicuous (to the spectators) touching downfield could be signified in this way too. It is not necessary to give it when the pass is obviously touched (e.g. when a defensive lineman bats it into the ground).
4. If you see the pass caught, move towards the receiver, but give no signal. If unsure, move towards the receiver but look to other officials who may have had a view. If they signal incomplete pass [S10], repeat the signal once to confirm you've seen it.
5. If the **play** ends near to the line to gain, assist the wing official by handing a ball to them at the exact dead-ball spot, so that they can mark it.

10.5 - Goal line plays

10.5.a – Priorities

Same priorities as on other scrimmage plays, plus:

1. Being prepared to assist the wing officials with forward progress, fumbles or goal line penetration if their view is obstructed.
2. Observing fouls such as illegal passes (MOFO 10.4.a.3.b) and knowing whether a forward pass first touches anything in or behind the neutral zone (MOFO 10.4.a.4).

10.5.b – Initial positioning

1. Take a position slightly closer to the neutral zone than normal, providing that you do not get in the way of players. Be careful not to line up on the goal line or obstruct the view of the wing officials.

10.5.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. On a pass play, move quickly all the way up to the line of scrimmage (MOFO 10.4.b.1.a). Except on quick passes or when you are obstructed by players, you should be on the line of scrimmage before the pass is thrown.
2. If the wing officials' view is obstructed, and you are absolutely sure, you may give an unobtrusive signal to communicate what you saw. Before giving any signal, establish eye contact with the wing officials to ensure that they are not going to give a signal contradictory to yours. Give the touchdown-conditions signal [Sup25] to the appropriate wing official(s) only if you believe all the conditions for a touchdown have been met. Don't try to do the wing officials' job for them.

10.5.d – Advanced techniques

1. It is convention that the Umpire never gives the touchdown signal [S5]. Possible exceptions to this might include:
 - (a) if a wing official falls down, or is otherwise well out of position, and not able to make the call
 - (b) on free kick returns
2. Should any doubt exist about a score, be part of the consultation among members of the crew. It is likely that you have some relevant information to offer.
3. In 3rd and 4th down short yardage situations, treat the line to gain as you would the goal line.

10.6 - Returns

10.6.a – Priorities

1. Observing the ball carrier and action around them while you are the nearest official.
2. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
3. Observing blocks by players in your area of responsibility ahead of and around the ball carrier, particularly:
 - (a) illegal block in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack
 - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls anywhere
 - (c) safety-related fouls such as face mask, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
 - (d) assisting the runner
 - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (f) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
4. Observing any **legal**^o hand-off or pass where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
5. Observing any **illegal** forward pass or forward handing, especially if you have a view that is level or nearly level with the ball carrier.

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

1. Keep out of the players' way.
2. Move towards Team A's goal line keeping out of the way of the play. Allow the ball carrier to pass you but continue to observe action around them.
3. If you are watching a block develop, stay with it before switching to the ball carrier or another block. Even if you expect another official to take responsibility for it, stay with the block until you are confident it is legal.
4. If the ball becomes dead in your area of responsibility, blow your whistle, give the timeout signal [S3], and then signal first down [S8] to show which team is in possession. Hold the signal until you know the Referee has seen it.

10.6.c – Advanced techniques

1. Do not get too close to the play – move away from it if necessary to maintain a safe position on the field.

10.7 - Punts**10.7.a – Priorities**

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. Noting players with numbering exceptions [when the snapper is established and determining the legality of the formation](#). [†] Also, during the down, observing whether they go downfield if a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone.
2. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) [defensive linemen lined up over the snapper or[®]](#) any action against the snapper that might be roughing
 - (b) before the kick, illegal block in the back and holding fouls by linemen and backs protecting the kicker, especially the tight end and/or wing back on the side opposite the Referee
 - (c) during the kick, illegal block in the back and holding fouls against Team A players trying to get down the field
 - (d) illegal blocks below the waist
 - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (f) safety-related fouls such as face mask, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
 - (g) unnecessary roughness fouls away from the ball
 - (h) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (i) illegal formation
3. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate.
4. Knowing whether a short kick touches the ground, a player or official beyond the neutral zone.

During a punt return, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

10.7.b – Initial positioning

1. Take normal scrimmage down position, ensuring that you have a clear view of the snapper.

10.7.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Maintain a position where you can watch the initial charge by both teams, blocking by the offense, and action by defensive players.
2. Pay particular attention to actions by and against the snapper and also holding and tripping by the defense which prevents offensive players getting downfield.
3. [IN xx0/xx1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5/6C)] On short kicks or kicks that are partially blocked and in front of you, be prepared to rule on any interference with the opportunity to catch, and watch for fair catch signals.
4. Do not turn round to watch a long kick. Stay focused on players in your area.
5. As players start to go past your position, turn and move quickly in the same direction.
6. If the play turns into a run or pass, respond as you would do normally for that type of play.

10.7.d – Advanced techniques

1. Particularly check for the correct number of players on Team A. Teams get mixed up more often on punt plays than any other.
2. If you can, help the Referee determine whether the player who contacted the kicker was also the one who blocked the kick.

10.8 - Field goal & try attempts**10.8.a – Priorities**

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. Noting players with numbering exceptions [when the snapper is established and determining the legality of the formation](#). [†] Also, during the down, observing whether they go downfield if a legal forward pass crosses the neutral zone.

2. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) **defensive linemen lined up over the snapper** or[®] any action against the snapper that might be roughing
 - (b) illegal block in the back and holding fouls by linemen and backs protecting the kicker, especially the tight end and/or wing back on the side opposite the Referee or [IN xx3 FORMATION (CREW OF 7/8)] the press box side of the formation
 - (c) defensive players illegally attempting to block the kick (defensive restrictions), **e.g. by using leverage or leaping**[§]
 - (d) illegal blocks below the waist
 - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (f) safety-related fouls such as face mask, tripping, chop blocks or illegal blind-side blocks
 - (g) players meeting opponents with a knee
 - (h) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (i) illegal formation
3. After the ball is kicked, continuing to observe players until they are totally separated. Never turning around to see whether the kick is successful or not, never echoing the success/failure signals made by the official(s) ruling on the kick, never writing down the score, never getting a new ball, never doing anything other than observing the players until there is no possible threat of trouble.
4. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate. During a field goal return, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

10.8.b – Initial positioning

1. Take normal scrimmage down position, ensuring you have a clear view of the snapper.

10.8.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Maintain a position where you can watch the initial charge, check blocking by the offense and action by defensive players.
2. Pay particular attention to actions by and against the snapper.
3. Be vocal to avoid cheap shots.
4. **[IN 2x0/2x1 FORMATION (CREW OF 4/5)][‡]** Move to the goal line if a run or pass develops to the Line Judge's side of the field and they are not in position there.
5. When the attempt is over, start timing the one-minute intermission to the kickoff (Rule 3-3-8-f).

10.8.d – Advanced techniques

1. Be alert for blocked kicks and their recovery and advance. On fake kicks switch to normal run or pass coverage.
 - (a) If the play turns into a run or pass, respond as you would do normally for that type of play. [×]
 - (b) **Be aware of the jersey numbers of any players with eligible numbers who are in ineligible positions, so that, if a pass develops, you can rule on ineligibles touching a pass or being illegally downfield.** [§]
2. Give the ball touched signal [S11] ONLY if the kick is touched (but not forced touched) by Team B BEYOND the neutral zone.

10.9 - After each down

10.9.a – Priorities

1. Observing dead-ball action by players of both teams.
2. Encouraging the players to unpile safely, and either return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot, as appropriate.
3. Checking whether the line to gain has been reached or is close, and signalling appropriately.
4. Checking whether any penalty flags have been thrown, and, if so:
 - (a) Giving the timeout signal [S3].
 - (b) Reporting any fouls you have called to the Referee.
 - (c) Knowing what fouls have been called by any colleagues.
 - (d) Assisting the Referee with penalty enforcement, ensuring that they give appropriate options (where necessary) or **make** an appropriate decision that the option is "obvious".
 - (e) Ensuring that all penalties are enforced correctly.
 - (f) Keeping the wing officials informed of the penalty and its enforcement.
5. Checking for injured players or other occurrences that may delay play.
6. Allowing legitimate requests for timeouts. Checking that a request coming from the coaching box or team area was made by the Head Coach.
7. Timing the duration of a timeout.
8. Echoing all timeout signals [S3] of your colleagues.
9. Assisting in relaying the dead ball or a new ball to the succeeding spot.
10. Spotting the ball at the succeeding spot, or relaying it to the Referee or Centre Judge to spot it there.

11. Noting the lateral placement of the ball using elastic bands or some other device. The system for denoting lateral position is described in paragraph 6.6.10.
12. Standing over the ball if any of the conditions of MOFO 10.9.c.14 apply. [IN 3xx FORMATION (CREW OF 6C/8)] This should primarily be the Centre Judge's responsibility, but you need to do it if they do not.

10.9.b – Initial positioning

1. Shortly after the end of the previous down, you should be in a position where you can observe the dead-ball spot and the action around it. The precise position will depend on what happened on the previous play.

10.9.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If you are the Coverer, [give only one signal that the ball is dead](#). See paragraph 6.5.14.⁴
2. If a penalty flag has been thrown follow the procedure in Chapter 19. [If an inadvertent whistle has been blown, follow the procedure in Section 6.15.](#)[§] If a team or injury timeout has been called, follow the procedure in Chapter 17. If a period has ended, follow the procedure in Chapter 20.
3. As a play ends, move into position to assist other officials and to observe players in potentially explosive situations.
4. If the play ends in bounds, move rapidly (but with regard to your own safety) towards the dead-ball spot to assist the Coverer.
5. If the play ends out of bounds, move quickly towards the sideline to assist other officials either in supervising players or in obtaining a ball.
6. On an incomplete pass, ensure that all action around the end of the pass is over (move quickly to cover it if necessary), then quickly move to retrieve, relay or spot the ball as appropriate.

Spotting the ball for the next down:

7. Help separate players congregated around the dead-ball spot.
8. Co-ordinate with the other officials to get a ball to the succeeding spot (MOFO 6.7).
9. In hurry-up situations, when the clock is running, go get the ball wherever it is (unless the Referee or Centre Judge is clearly nearer) (MOFO 6.2.10).
10. If there is a penalty that requires options to be given to one or both captains, get the captain(s) and approach the Referee. Listen to the Referee explain the options.
11. While a penalty is being enforced, keep the ball in your hands rather than putting it at the dead-ball spot.
12. If you are spotting the ball:

(a) [Before doing so, quickly check that there are no injured players.](#)[®]

- (b) Face the Coverer, not the goal line, when spotting the ball. Take the forward progress from the Coverer and place the ball at the succeeding spot. Following an incomplete forward pass, penalty, etc., verify that the lateral placement of the ball is correct.
- (c) Place the ball laces down if there is any risk of it rolling away from its position.

Getting ready for the next down:

13. If you spotted the ball, before backing away from it:
 - (a) Set your lateral placement marker (MOFO 6.6.10).
 - (b) Set your down counter.
 - (c) Check that the Line Judge is in position and facing infield.
 - (d) Check that the [Down Judge](#) is in position and facing infield.
 - (e) Check that the down box is at least moving into position and showing the correct down. (It is also a good time to check where the line to gain is and if you need to give signal [Sup6].)
 - (f) Finally, look at the Referee who may be signalling [Sup36] to keep you over the ball.
14. If you spotted the ball, move away from it to your pre-snap position unless:
 - (a) The down box is not yet at or near the succeeding spot.
 - (b) After a stoppage (e.g. change of possession, timeout or change of quarter), the defense is clearly not ready (i.e. not roughly in a formation).
 - (c) Defensive substitutions (in response to Team A substitutions) are still in progress (that ends when the last substitute gets to their place in the formation, or gives up doing so).
 - (d) Other officials are not in or near position for the next down and facing or clearly about to face the ball.
 - (e) In a situation where the Referee must declare the ready for play, they do not look ready to do so. (If they are not but should be, make eye contact and/or say "we're ready".)
15. If the 40-second play clock is already running, step away from the ball [to your position.](#)[®] If the 40-second play clock is not running, wait over the ball until the Referee indicates [that you should step away to your position.](#)[®]
16. If you did not spot the ball, there is no need to go to stand over it unless there is a problem. However, if there is a problem, move to stand over the ball until it is resolved.
17. [IN 3xx FORMATION (CREW OF 6C/8)] Whether you or the Centre Judge spotted the ball, if someone needs to return to stand over it to prevent play, normally this would be the Centre Judge.
18. If there is a stoppage in play, stand over the ball (facing the offense) until the reason for the stoppage has ended, e.g.:
 - (a) the one minute of the timeout has ended (or both teams are obviously ready);

- (b) the Referee has completed their penalty announcements;
 - (c) the injured player is clear of the field;
 - (d) the chains are back at the sideline after a measurement;
 - (e) any other stoppage in play has ended.
19. If Team A is in or approaching its formation, do not turn your back to the ball in case the play starts while you are not looking.
 20. Make sure you know the status of the game clock and make sure the Referee does too. If the previous play was an incomplete pass, confirm this to the Referee in case they did not see the outcome of the play.
 21. There is no need to stand holding the ball to keep it dry in wet or muddy conditions. Placing it with the lace down hill or down wind should normally be enough to prevent it blowing or rolling away.
 22. Verify that players' equipment complies with the rules. Visually check players entering the game.

10.9.d – Advanced techniques

1. The priority at the end of a play is to get into position ready for the next one. Only if a serious incident occurs (such as a foul or misconduct, an injury, or a breakage of the chain) should your routine be interrupted.
2. [IN 2xx FORMATION (NO C)] If Team A makes substitutions **while the snapper is at, near or moving towards** their position at the line of scrimmage:
 - (a) Any official should be prepared to step in and shut down a play that violates the substitution rule.
 - (b) Anticipate that the Referee may give the matching substitutes signal [Sup36] by moving to a position where you can get to the ball before the snapper can. [◇]
 - (c) If the Referee gives the matching substitutes signal (or forgets to do so when Team B is responding to Team A substitutes), [◇] take a position over the ball to prevent Team A from snapping it until Team B has had an opportunity to place its substitutes into position and its replaced players have left the field of play.
 - (d) While standing over the ball, plan the route you will take to get away from the players before the ball is snapped.
 - (e) When Team B has completed its substitutions (or does not make any), inform the snapper/QB not to snap the ball until they receive verbal approval from you. If they snap the ball before they are given verbal approval, Team A will be assessed a Delay of Game foul after a warning for the first offence (MOFO 3.4.1.f). (Warn for first offence and penalise second and subsequent.) ^λ
3. [IN 2xx FORMATION (NO C)] If Team A attempts a hurry-up play, leave the ball as soon as you have spotted it, unless there is a matching substitutes situation (MOFO 6.2.10).
4. [IN 3xx FORMATION (CREW OF 6C/8)] Remain in your normal position unless the Centre Judge does not react, in which case do as you would on a smaller crew.
5. If the Referee does not signal the ready for play when they should do so, remind them immediately.
6. If the Referee declares the ball ready for play while Team A is at the line of scrimmage and you are still standing over it, remind them discretely to give you time to get into your proper position before they do so.
7. [IN xx0 FORMATION (CREW OF 4)] If there are stadium game and/or play clocks, check to see that they have started correctly.
8. Procedures intended to allow the defense to match up must not be used for a substitution for a last-second field goal. In that situation, Team A is making a normal and expected personnel change and Team B should be prepared to respond appropriately. In no case should an official be standing over the ball to prevent the snap as the clock runs out. [§]
9. If you want to speak to a player on the field (e.g. to warn them that they are close to fouling), it often saves time to relay the message via the Referee or Centre Judge (for a Team A player). Don't delay the game unnecessarily by entering either team's huddle, unless a timeout is still in progress. Never attempt to speak to a player during a hurry-up or no-huddle offense.
10. Maintain your concentration, and think about the next play.