

Rule 7 - Snapping and Passing the Ball

Section 1. The Scrimmage

Starting With a Snap

7-1-1-a; The ball shall be put in play by a legal **snap** unless the rules provide for a legal **free kick**.

7-1-1-b; If the starting point for any **scrimmage down** is in a **side zone**, the ball shall be transferred to the hash mark.

Shift and False Start

7-1-2-a; After a **huddle** or **shift** and before the **snap**, all **team a** players must come to an absolute stop and remain stationary in their positions for at least one full second before the ball is snapped. .

7-1-2-b; *False Start*. Each of the following is a false start by **team a** if it occurs prior to the **snap** after the ball is ready for play and all players are in scrimmage formation:

- Any movement by one or more players that simulates the start of a play.
- The **snapper** moving to another position.
- A **restricted lineman** moving his hand(s) or making any quick movement. [**Exception:** 1. It is not a false start if a **team a lineman** immediately reacts when threatened by a **team b player** in the **neutral zone**.
- An **offensive player** making any quick, jerky movement before the **snap**, including but not limited to:
 - (a) A **lineman** moving his foot, shoulder, arm, body or head in a quick, jerky motion in any direction.
 - (b) The **snapper** shifting or moving the ball, moving his thumb or fingers, flexing his elbows, jerking or dipping his shoulders or buttocks.
 - (c) The quarterback making any quick, jerky movement that simulates the beginning of a play.
 - (d) A **back** simulating receiving the ball by making any quick, jerky movement that simulates the beginning of a play.
- The **offensive** team never coming to a one-second stop prior to the **snap** after the ball is ready for play

Offensive Team Requirements - Prior to the Snap

7-1-3-a

Snapper. The **snapper** (Rule **2-27-8**):

- May not move to a different position nor have any part of his body **beyond the neutral zone**;
- May not lift the ball, move it **beyond the neutral zone** or simulate the start of a play;
- May take his hand(s) off the ball, but only if this does not simulate the start of a play.

7-1-3-b

nine-yard marks.

- Each **team a substitute** must have been between the **nine-yard marks**. **team a** players who participated in the previous **down** must have been between the **nine-yard marks** after the previous **down** and before the next **snap** (A.R. 3-3-4-I).
- All **team a** players must have been between the **nine-yard marks** after a charged team timeout, an injury timeout, a media timeout or the end of a period.

7-1-3-c

Encroachment. Once the **snapper** is established no other **team a player** may be in or **beyond** the **neutral zone** [**Exceptions:** (1) Substitutes and departing players; and (2) **offensive** players in a **scrimmage kick formation** who break the **neutral zone** with their hand(s) to point at opponents].

7-1-3-d

False Start. No **team a player** may commit a false start (Rule **7-1-2-b**) or contact an opponent (A.R. 7-1-3-III).

Offensive Team Requirements - At the Snap

7-1-4-a

Formation. At the **snap** **team a** must be in a formation that meets these requirements:

- All players must be inbounds.
- All players must be either linemen or backs
- At least five linemen must wear jerseys numbered 50 through 79 (**Exception:** When the **snap** is from **ascrimmage kick formation**, par. 5 below.)
- No more than four players may be backs.
- In a **scrimmage kick formation** at the **snap** **team a** may have fewer than five linemen numbered 50-79, subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) Any and all linemen not numbered 50-79 who are ineligible receiver(s) by position become exceptions to the numbering rule when the **snapper** is established.
 - (b) Any and all such numbering-exception players must be on the line and may not be on the end of the line. Otherwise, **team a** commits a **foul** for an illegal formation.
 - (c) Any and all such players are exceptions to the numbering rule throughout the **down** and remain ineligible receivers unless they become eligible under Rule **7-3-5** (**forward pass** touched by an official or a **team b player**). The conditions in 5(a) – 5(c) are no longer in effect if prior to the **snap** a period ends or there is a timeout charged to the referee or one of the teams.

7-1-4-b

Man in Motion.

- One **back** may be in motion, but he may not be moving toward his opponent's **goal line**.
- The **player** who goes in motion may not start from the line of scrimmage unless he first becomes **aback** and comes to a complete stop.
- A **player** in motion at the **snap** must have satisfied the one-second rule—i.e., he may not start his motion before any **shift** has ended.

7-1-4-c

Illegal Shift. At the **snap**, **team a** may not execute an illegal **shift**.

Defensive Team Requirements

7-1-5

The **defensive** team requirements are as follows:

7-1-5-a

Each of the following (1-5) is a **dead ball foul**. Officials should blow the whistle and not allow the play to continue. After the ball is ready for play and before the ball is snapped:

- No **player** may touch the ball except when moved illegally, nor may any **player** contact an opponent or in any other way interfere with him.
 - No **player** may enter the **neutral zone** causing an **offensive lineman** to react immediately or commit any other dead-ball **offside foul**
 - No **player** shall use words or signals that disconcert opponents when they are preparing to put the ball in play. No **player** may call **defensive** signals that simulate the sound or cadence of (or otherwise interfere with) **offensive** starting signals.
 - **Player(s)** aligned in a stationary position within one yard of the line of scrimmage may not make quick, abrupt or **exaggerated** actions that are not part of normal **defensive player** movement .
 - No **player** may cross the **neutral zone** and without making contact continue his charge toward any **back**.
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7-1-5-b

When the **snap** starts:

- No **player** may be in or **beyond** the **neutral zone** at the **snap**.
 - All players must be inbounds.
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Handing the Ball Forward

7-1-6

No **player** may hand the ball **forward** except during a **scrimmage down** as follows:

7-1-6-a

A **team a back** may hand the ball **forward** to another **back** only if both are **behind** their **scrimmage line**.

7-1-6-b

A **team a back behind** his **scrimmage line** may hand the ball **forward** to a teammate who is on his **scrimmage line** at the **snap**, provided that teammate leaves his line position by a movement of both feet that faces him toward his own **end line** and is at least two yards **behind** his **scrimmage line** when he receives the ball (A.R. 7-1-6-l).

Planned Loose Ball

7-1-7

A **team a player** may not advance a planned **loose ball** in the vicinity of the **snapper**.

Section 2. Backward Pass and Fumble

During Live Ball

7-2-1

A **ball carrier** may hand or **pass** the ball **backward** at any time, except to throw the ball intentionally out of bounds to conserve time.

Caught or Recovered

7-2-2-a

When a **backward pass** or **fumble** is caught or recovered by any inbounds **player**, the ball continues in play).

Exceptions:

- Rule **8-3-2-d-5** (**team a fumble** on the try).
- On fourth **down** before a change of team possession, when a **team a fumble** is caught or recovered by a **team a player** other than the fumbler, the ball is dead. If the **catch** or recovery is **beyond** the spot of the **fumble**, the ball is returned to the spot of the **fumble**. If the **catch** or recovery is **behind** the spot of the **fumble**, the ball remains at the spot of the **catch** or recovery.

7-2-2-b

When a **backward pass** or **fumble** is caught or recovered simultaneously by opposing players, the ball becomes dead and **belongs to** the team last in possession (**Exception:** Rule **7-2-2-a** Exceptions).

After the Ball is Snapped

7-2-3

No **offensive lineman** may receive a hand-to-hand **snap**.

Out of Bounds

7-2-4-a

Backward pass. When a **backward pass** goes out of bounds between the goal lines, the ball **belongs to** the passing team at the **out-of-bounds spot**.

7-2-4-b

Fumble. When a **fumble** goes out of bounds between the goal lines:

- **In advance** of the spot of the **fumble**, the ball **belongs to** the fumbling team at the spot of the **fumble**.
- **Behind** the spot of the **fumble**, the ball **belongs to** the fumbling team at the **out-of-bounds spot**.

7-2-4-c

Behind or Beyond goal line. When a **fumble** or **backward pass** goes out of bounds **behind** or **beyond** a **goal line**, it is a safety or touchback depending on impetus and responsibility..

At Rest

7-2-5

When a **backward pass** or **fumble** comes to rest inbounds and no **player** attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and **belongs to** the passing or fumbling team at the **dead-ball spot**.

Section 3. Forward Pass

Legal Forward Pass

7-3-1

team a may make one **forward pass** during each **scrimmage down** before team possession changes, provided the **pass** is thrown from a point in or **behind** the **neutral zone**.

Illegal Forward Pass

7-3-2

A **forward pass** is illegal if:

- It is thrown by a **team a player** whose entire body is **beyond** the **neutral zone** when he releases the ball.
- It is thrown by a **team b player**.
- It is thrown after team possession has changed during the **down**.
- It is the second **forward pass** during the same **down**.
- It is thrown from in or **behind** the **neutral zone** after a **ball carrier's** entire body and the ball have been **beyond** the **neutral zone**.
- The **passer** to conserve time throws the ball directly to the ground (1) after the ball has already touched the ground; or (2) not immediately after controlling the ball.
- The **passer** to conserve time throws the ball **forward** into an area where there is no eligible **team a** receiver.
- The **passer** to conserve yardage throws the ball **forward** into an area where there is no eligible **team a** receiver . .

[**Exception:** If the **passer** is or has been outside the **tackle box** he may throw the ball so that it crosses or lands **beyond** the **neutral zone** or **neutral zone** extended (Rule **2-19-3**) (A.R. 7-3-2-VIII-X). This applies only to the **player** who **controls** the **snap** or the resulting **backward pass**.]

Eligibility to Touch Legal Forward Pass

7-3-3-a

Eligibility rules apply during a **down** when a legal **forward pass** is thrown.

7-3-3-b

All **team b** players are eligible to touch or **catch** a **pass**.

7-3-3-c

When the ball is snapped, the following **team a** players are eligible:

- Each **lineman** who is on the end of his **scrimmage line** and who is wearing a number other than 50 through 79.
- Each **back** wearing a number other than 50 through 79.

7-3-3-d

An eligible **player** loses his eligibility when he goes out of bounds.

Eligibility Lost by Going Out of Bounds

7-3-4

No eligible **offensive** receiver who goes out of bounds and returns in bounds during a **down** shall touch a legal **forward pass** in the **field of play** or end zones or while airborne until it has been touched by an opponent or official (A.R. 7-3-4-I, II and IV). [**Exception:** This does not apply to an originally eligible **offensive player** who attempts to return inbounds immediately after going out of bounds due to contact by an opponent (A.R. 7-3-4-III)]. If he touches the **pass** before returning in bounds, it is an incomplete **pass** (Rule 7-3-7) and not a **foul** for illegal **touching**.

Eligibility Gained or Regained

7-3-5

When a **team b player** or an official touches a legal **forward pass**, all players become eligible (A.R. 7-3-5-I).

Complete Pass

7-3-6

Any **forward pass** is complete when caught by a **player** of the passing team who is inbounds, and the ball continues in play unless completed in the opponent's **end zone** or the **pass** has been caught simultaneously by opposing players. If a **forward pass** is caught simultaneously by opposing players inbounds, the ball becomes dead and **belongs to** the passing team.

Incomplete Pass

7-3-7-a

Any **forward pass** is incomplete if the ball is out of bounds by rule or if it touches the ground when not firmly controlled by a **player**. It also is incomplete when a **player** leaves his feet and receives the **pass** but first lands on or outside a **boundary line**, unless his progress has been stopped in the **field of play** or **end zone**.

7-3-7-b

When a legal **forward pass** is incomplete, the ball **belongs to** the passing team at the **previous spot**.

7-3-7-c

When an illegal **forward pass** is incomplete, the ball **belongs to** the passing team at the spot of the **pass**(**Exception:** If the offended team declines the **penalty** for an illegal **pass** thrown from the **end zone**, the ball shall next be put in play at the **previous spot**.)

Illegal Contact and Pass Interference

7-3-8-a

During a **down** in which a legal **forward pass** crosses the **neutral zone**, illegal contact by **team a** and **team b** players is prohibited from the time the ball is snapped until it is touched by any **player** or an official (A.R. 7-3-8-II).

7-3-8-b

Offensive pass interference by a **team a player beyond the neutral zone** during a legal **forward pass play** in which a **forward pass** crosses the **neutral zone** is contact that interferes with a **team b** eligible **player**. It is the responsibility of the **offensive player** to avoid the opponents. It is not **offensive pass** interference :

- When, after the **snap**, a **team a** ineligible **player** immediately charges and contacts an opponent at a point not more than one yard **beyond the neutral zone** and does not continue the contact more than three yards **beyond the neutral zone**.
- When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, **catch** or bat the **pass**. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball.
- When the **pass** is in flight and two or more eligible players are in the area where they might receive or intercept the **pass** and an **offensive player** in that area impedes an opponent, and the **pass** is not catchable.

7-3-8-c

Defensive pass interference is contact **beyond the neutral zone** by a **team b player** whose intent to impede an eligible opponent is obvious and it could prevent the opponent the opportunity of receiving a **catchable forward pass**. When in question, a legal **forward pass** is catchable. **Defensive pass** interference occurs only after a legal **forward pass** is thrown (A. R. 7-3-8-VII, VIII, XI AND XII). It is not **defensive pass** interference:

1. When, after the **snap**, opposing players immediately charge and establish contact with opponents at a point that is within one yard **beyond the neutral zone**.
2. When two or more eligible players are making a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, **catch** or bat the **pass**. Eligible players of either team have equal rights to the ball.,
3. When a **team b player** legally contacts an opponent before the **pass** is thrown.
4. When a **team a** potential **kicker**, from **scrimmage kick formation**, simulates a **scrimmage kick** by throwing the ball high and deep, and contact by a **team b player** occurs.

Contact Interference

7-3-9-a

Either **team a** or **team b** legally may interfere with opponents **behind the neutral zone**.

7-3-9-b

Players of either team legally may interfere **beyond the neutral zone** after the **pass** has been touched (A.R. 7-3-9-I).

7-3-9-c

Defensive players legally may contact opponents who have **crossed the neutral zone** if the opponents are not in a position to receive a **catchable forward pass**.

- Those infractions that occur during a **down** in which a **forward pass** crosses the **neutral zone** are **pass** interference infractions only if the receiver had the opportunity to receive a **catchable forward pass**.
- Those infractions that occur during a **down** in which a **forward pass** does not cross the **neutral zone** are Rule **9-3-4** infractions and the **penalty** is enforced from the **previous spot**.

7-3-9-d

Pass interference rules apply only during a **down** in which a legal **forward pass** crosses the **neutral zone**.

7-3-9-e

Contact by **team b** with an eligible receiver involving a personal **foul** that interferes with the reception of a catchable **pass** may be ruled either as **pass** interference or as a personal **foul** with the 15-yard **penalty** enforced from the **previous spot**. Rule **7-3-8** is specific about contact during a **pass**. However, if the interference involves an act that ordinarily would result in disqualification, the fouling **player** must leave the game.

7-3-9-f

Physical contact is required to establish interference.

7-3-9-g

Each **player** has territorial rights, and incidental contact is ruled under "attempt to reach...the **pass**" in Rule **7-3-8**. If opponents who are **beyond** the line collide while moving toward the **pass**, a **foul** by one or both players is indicated only if intent to impede the opponent is obvious. It is **pass** interference only if a **catchable forward pass** is involved.

7-3-9-h

Pass interference rules do not apply after the **pass** has been touched anywhere inbounds by an inbounds **player** or has touched an official. If an opponent is fouled, the **penalty** is for the **foul** and not **pass** interference

7-3-9-i

After the **pass** has been touched, any **player** may execute a legal block during the remaining flight of the **pass**.

7-3-9-j

Tackling or grasping a receiver or any other intentional contact before he touches the **pass** is evidence that the tackler is disregarding the ball and is therefore illegal.

7-3-9-k

Tackling or running into a receiver when a **forward pass** obviously is underthrown or overthrown is disregarding the ball and is illegal. This is not **pass** interference but a **violation** of Rule **9-1-12-a**, which carries a **penalty** of 15 yards from the **previous spot** plus a first **down**. Flagrant offenders shall be **disqualified**.

Ineligible Receiver Downfield

7-3-10

No originally ineligible receiver shall be or have been more than three yards **beyond** the **neutral zone** until a legal **forward pass** that crosses the **neutral zone** has been thrown.

Illegal Touching

7-3-11

No originally ineligible **player** while inbounds shall intentionally touch a legal **forward pass** until it has touched an opponent or an official.

Team B Personal Foul During Legal Forward Pass Play

7-3-12

Penalties for personal fouls by **team b** during a completed legal **forward pass play** are enforced at the end of the last **run** when it ends **beyond** the **neutral zone**. If the **pass** is incomplete or intercepted, or if there is a change of team possession during the **down**, the **penalty** is enforced at the **previous spot**.

You make the call:

- A is in punt formation with 10 players on the field and after the ready for play A7 runs onto the field and is in motion toward B's sideline when the ball is snapped:
 - a. Legal play
- A7 is covered by player A88:
 - a. A7 catches a downfield pass
 - b. A7 catches a downfield pass after touched by B
- On a try A12 hands the ball to A24 bobbles the hand off while moving lateral to the line of scrimmage and accidentally kicks the ball but manages to pick it up and convert the 2 point conversion.

Passing & Snapping Videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7tYn7Yv6EYo&feature=player_detailpage#t=14

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFTHTxivueE&feature=player_detailpage#t=37