

## NFHS Football Rule 1: The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment

### Sections of Rule 1

#### ARTICLE 1: THE GAME

This article establishes the basic structure of a football game.

- **Duration:** A game consists of four 12-minute quarters.
- **Overtime:** Procedures for breaking a tie are outlined (often referred to as the "Kansas Plan").
- **The Coin Toss:** Specifies the timing, location, and options for the coin toss to start the game and any overtime periods.

#### ARTICLE 2: THE FIELD

This defines the dimensions and markings of the field of play.

- **Dimensions:** The field is 360 feet long and 160 feet wide (120 yards x 53 1/3 yards), including end zones.
- **Hash Marks:** NFHS hash marks are 53 feet, 4 inches apart, which is significantly wider than in college or the NFL. This has a major strategic impact on play calling.
- **Markings:** Specifies all required field markings, including yard lines, inbound lines (hash marks), team boxes, and the mandatory "No-Contact Zone" around the field (a 2-yard white border).

#### ARTICLE 3: THE BALL

This covers the specifications and requirements for the football itself.

- **Size:** The ball must meet specific size and weight standards. NFHS allows for both Wilson and Rawlings as official suppliers.
- **Game Management:** Rules for providing game balls, home team responsibilities, and the requirement for new balls to be broken in.

## **ARTICLE 4: PLAYERS AND PLAYING EQUIPMENT**

This is a critical and detailed section covering player safety and uniform requirements.

### **a) Number of Players:**

- The game is played between two teams of 11 players each.
- A team must have at least **7 players** to start or continue a game.

### **b) Player Equipment:**

This is a major point of emphasis for NFHS officials. All equipment must be:

- **NFHS Approved:** Bear the NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) seal.
- **Mandatory Equipment:**
  - **Helmet** (with a properly fitted facemask and chin strap)
  - **Shoulder Pads**
  - **Jersey** (must be long enough to be tucked in)
  - **Pants** (must cover the knees and all pads)
  - **Knee Pads, Hip Pads, Tail Pads, and Thigh Guards** (All must be worn and be visible. This is a strictly enforced NFHS rule).
  - **Shoes**
  - **Mouthguard:** Must be a non-clear or non-white material, have an occlusal (grinding) surface, and cover all upper teeth. It cannot be attached to the facemask.

### **c) Illegal Equipment:**

This includes anything deemed dangerous or unapproved, such as:

- Headwear, jewelry, or exposed hard objects.
- Equipment that does not meet the above standards.
- Towels that are not solid white or a single color consistent with the school's colors.

## ARTICLE 5: THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT AND UNIFORM

This article expands on the equipment rules, focusing on the uniform's appearance.

- **Jersey Requirements:** Must have visible, permanent numbers on the front and back. Specific number ranges are recommended for different positions.
  - **Pants Requirements:** Must completely cover the knee, and all mandatory pads (knee, thigh, hip, tail) must be visible and not altered.
  - **Shoe Requirements:** Cleats must be made of a non-abrasive material and cannot have a toe cleat at the tip of the shoe.
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### Key Points of Emphasis for Coaches, Players, and Officials

1. **Player Safety is Paramount:** Rule 1 heavily emphasizes the proper use of certified and mandatory protective equipment. An official is required to send a player off the field to correct any illegal or missing equipment.
2. **The "No-Contact Zone":** This 2-yard white border around the field is unique to NFHS rules. No player, coach, or substitute is allowed in this area during live play, which helps ensure safety on the sidelines.
3. **Wider Hash Marks:** The 53'4" hash marks make the field "wider" from a strategic standpoint, affecting field goal attempts and offensive play calling near the sideline.
4. **Strict Uniform Enforcement:** NFHS officials are trained to be strict on uniform and equipment violations (e.g., pants covering knees, all pads visible, correct mouthguard) as a matter of both safety and sportsmanship.

### Penalties for Rule 1 Violations

Most violations of Rule 1 (especially equipment and uniform infractions) are penalized as **dead-ball fouls**. The penalty is typically:

- **5 yards** from the subsequent spot (e.g., the start of the next play).
- The player is removed from the game until the equipment issue is corrected.