



# Free Kicks

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# Basic Understanding

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- Kicking is *intentionally* striking the ball with the knee, lower leg or foot. There is no such thing as an accidental kick.
- Once kicked, the ball remains a kick until caught, recovered, or is blown dead.
- If a kick is muffed, it remains a kick. We must know the difference between a kick (loose ball play) and a return (running play).
- There are two types of kicks: free and scrimmage.



# Free Kicks

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- Free kicks are at the K40 yard line.
- A free kick after a safety is from the K20.
- All K players must be within 5 yards (this means both feet) of K's restraining line at the RFP. Only the player who kicks the ball and a holder may be outside this 5 yard belt. There must be at least 4 players on each side of the ball when kicked.
- R can not be within 10 yards of K's restraining line until the ball is kicked. Other than this, there is no restriction where R may be on the field.
- Before the ready for play, let's make sure there are no more than 11 players on each team.

# Dead Ball Fouls During Free Kicks

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- The following are fouls that cause the ball to become dead. These are blow and throw:
  - Encroachment by either team. Review philosophy of encroachment.
  - K does not have 4 on each side of the ball when kicked.
  - The player who lines up more than 5 yards behind K's restraining line does not kick the ball.
  - K initiates a "pop up" kick. A pop-up kick is a free kick in which the kicker drives the ball immediately to the ground, the ball strikes the ground once and goes into the air in the manner of a ball kicked directly off the tee. Such kicks will be penalized as a dead-ball foul.

# Live Ball Fouls During Free Kicks

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- Any free kick that is untouched by Team R in the field of play, and subsequently touches a player, official or the ground OOB is a free kick OOB. Remember: If Team K first touches a kick in bounds, and the ball goes OOB untouched by Team R, there is still a foul.
- A free kick out of bounds, untouched by R has 4 options. It is important to know the out of bounds spot in order to determine which option is best for R. *Keep in mind the R30 yard line when kicking from the K40.* If a rekick is not selected, the ball will be snapped from the hash mark closest to the OOB sideline.
- No player from K can go OOB (prior to change of possession) on their own and return inbounds for the remainder of the down. R cannot intentionally go OOB and return or touch the ball. *There is no foul if R unintentionally goes OOB and returns or touches the ball.*
- A live ball foul by K (except KCI) may be enforced at the previous spot and rekicked or at the succeeding spot so long as Team K will not next snap the ball.

# Violations

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- A Team K player who touches a kick before it crosses Team R's free kick restraining line and before it is touched by Team R, has committed a violation for first touching. A team R player blocked into the ball by Team K, or vice-versa is not considered to have touched the ball. The clock does not start nor does the ball become dead when Team K commits a first touching violation.
- *Beanbag mechanics need to be used for first touching.* Team R may have the ball at the spot of first touching, so long as they have not touched the kick and thereafter commits a foul or there is an accepted penalty for any foul committed during the down. A first touching spot can never be used as a penalty enforcement spot, unless it is the same spot where the ball becomes dead.

# Touchbacks

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- Any kick that breaks the plane of the goal line, or strikes a pylon is a touchback.
- The ball will be snapped at the R20 yard line (not the R25 as in NCAA).
- Team R can choose to have the ball placed anywhere between the hashmarks.
- Pop Quiz - True or False: Team K can never score a touchdown on a kick play.

# Touchbacks

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- Answer: True. As soon as a kick breaks the goal line plane, we have a dead ball for a touchback. Remember – the ball does not need to touch the ground in the EZ; it just needs to break the plane. So if Team R muffs a kick from the field of play and into the EZ, the play is dead as soon as the ball breaks the plane. If Team K recovers a free kick in the field of play, the ball is also dead. Team K can never advance a kick.
- However, what if Team R bats a loose ball during a kick backward into the EZ, and it is recovered by Team K? Do we have a touchdown? What if R muffs and kicks a loose ball into the EZ? What if Team R bats a fumble from the field of play into the EZ?



# Onside Kicks

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- A higher degree of scrutiny is required when officiating onside kicks. The restraining line for Team K needs to be officiated like a plane of glass. No part of Team K can be in or beyond the neutral zone when the ball is kicked.
- Team K is prohibited from blocking Team R until they are eligible to recover the ball, the ball has gone 10 yards, or Team R initiates a block in the neutral zone.
- All officials (whether 2 or 4) need to be ready to use a beanbag for first touching violations.
- The offside officials may be in best position to start the game clock (if warranted).
- At the end of the play, stop the clock and digest the play before signaling possession.

# Opportunity to Catch a Free Kick

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- During a free kick, players on Team R must have an unhindered opportunity to catch the ball. Team K players cannot obstruct a Team R player's path to the ball. The Team R player does not have to signal for a fair catch to have protection.
- If a Team K player touches the ball before it hits the ground (even if there are no Team R players anywhere near the spot), obstructs the receiver or contacts the receiver, he has committed kick catch interference. Team R can accept a 15 yard penalty from the previous spot or be given an awarded fair catch and penalize from the spot of the foul.
- There is no foul for KCI if a Team K player is blocked by a Team R player into the receiver.

# Fair Catch

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- Only permitted for players from Team R.
- Must be signaled while the kick is in flight.
- The ball becomes dead after Team R possession no matter who gives the signal. Be ready to call out the player who signaled.
- There are three kinds of signals: valid, invalid, and illegal. Valid and invalid occur while the kick is in flight. Illegal signals occur after the ball has touched a receiver or the ground.
- Pointing down at a loose ball does not constitute an invalid or illegal signal.

# Fair Catch

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- Only the receiver who signals the fair catch is awarded protection. *Protection does not continue if the receiver muffs the ball.*
- After a fair catch or awarded fair catch, Team R can have the ball placed anywhere between the hashmarks.
- Team R can choose to put the ball in play by either a snap or a free kick for a field goal attempt. The formation is the same as a regular free kick.



**Thank you**

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**Any Questions?**