



# NRL Laws & Interpretations

2023

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## FROM NRL

This document is intended to provide explanatory notes relating to the most scrutinised rules in the Telstra Premiership, and the on-field interpretations to be adopted by NRL match officials. It does not deal with every aspect of the laws of the game and should not be considered a comprehensive summary of all situations match officials may be confronted with during the 2023 season.

Telstra Premiership match officials have a responsibility to contribute to the game as a spectacle for the benefit of all stakeholders. To achieve this requires not only a complete knowledge of the laws of the game and many years of practical experience, it also requires the application of sound judgement, discretion, effective people management, and a fair degree of good old-fashioned common sense.

The hundreds of decisions made by match officials during 80 minutes of intense NRL pressure can obviously have a significant bearing on each game during the season. This carries enormous responsibility and public scrutiny. Match officials are not only required to adjudicate on the laws of the game, they must also ensure each

participating team is provided with equal opportunity to determine the outcome by finding the right balance between enforcement of the rules and contributing to the game as a spectacle without unwarranted intervention. However, it is important to acknowledge the ability of the match officials to meet this objective will vary depending on the approach taken by players in complying with the rules and interpretations as set out in this document.

In 2023, match officials have been directed by the NRL to allow games to flow where possible, at least to the extent the actions of the players permit that to occur. Match officials have not been instructed to minimise penalty counts by ignoring deliberate breaches of the rules, nor have they been instructed to enforce unrealistically elevated standards of compliance. They have simply been directed to judge each game and each team on merit, and respond accordingly, while always bearing in mind the broader game objectives referred to above.

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## TACKLE AND PLAY THE BALL

A player in possession is tackled:

### Grounded

- a. *'when he is held by one or more opposing players and the ball or the hand or arm holding the ball comes into contact with the ground.'*

### Upright

- b. *'when he is held by one or more opposing players in such a manner that he can make no further progress and cannot part with the ball.'*

### Succumbing

- c. *'when, being held by an opponent, the tackled player makes it evident that he has succumbed\* to the tackle and wishes to be released in order to play-the-ball.'*

*\*succumb includes a player in possession being lifted off the ground and resulting in the calling of held by the Referee*

### Hand on player

- d. *'when he is lying on the ground and an opponent places a hand on him.'*

Section 11 (2) (a-d)

### At the completion of the tackle

The player in possession:

*'shall be immediately released' by the defender and/or defenders.*

Section 11 (10) (a)

### Methods that impede the immediate release of the player in possession

- a. Flop onto the player in possession who is grounded
- b. Working the player in possession
- c. Leg pulls
- d. Leaving or placing the hands or arms on the ball or the arms of the player in possession once the tackle is complete
- e. Spinning on the player in possession once the tackle is complete
- f. Defenders 'peeling off' the player in possession<sup>^</sup>
- g. Climbing over the player in possession once the tackle is complete
- h. Crowding the player in possession once the tackle is complete using their knees, arms or body
- i. Pulls the player in possession to the ground once the tackle is complete.

*<sup>^</sup>In a tackle involving two or more defenders, after the tackle is complete, all defenders must release simultaneously.*

## Defenders Responsibilities

- » At the completion of the tackle the defenders must take up a position as a Marker or retire the 10 metres
- » A Marker must take up a position immediately and directly in front of the tackled player
- » The second marker, if present, must take up a position immediately behind the first marker
- » Markers must be stationary, close to the play the ball and each other, not float back or drift to the side, until the ball has cleared the ruck
- » Players assuming the position of marker who are not stationary, close to the play-the-ball or each other, or who float back or drift to the side, will be considered offside. As such they should not become involved in, interfere with, or otherwise disrupt play, and shall retire 10m from the play-the-ball.
- » Markers who are onside may move from their position when the ball has cleared the ruck and the referee calls "go".
- » The Marker 'must not kick the ball' whilst it is being played

Section 11 (10) (c) (f)

## Surrender Tackle

Occurs when the player in possession surrenders his run in or at the line.

Defender[s] are permitted to work the player on the ground, move to a bear hug position, lay on the player in possession or spin to the front of the tackle.

It is the sole responsibility of the Referee to identify this tackle.

If a player surrenders, he cannot be lifted or dragged into touch or in-goal.

## Shoulder Charge

A shoulder charge is made when the tackling player uses his shoulder and/or upper arm without, at the same time, using his arms to tackle or otherwise take hold of the opposing player. The term "arms" obviously includes hands. The requirement to use "the arms" means that both arms must be used.

Unless both arms are used, then providing the actions of the player are at least careless, any case involving forceful contact that has been primarily generated by the shoulder and/or upper arm of the tackling player, will be a shoulder charge.

It will be considered misconduct, if any player effects a tackle in the manner as defined.

## Third Man In

When a player in possession is held in an upright/standing position by two defenders, any other defender[s] must make initial contact to the player in possession above the knees/knee joint.

Regardless of the point of impact, a player can still be penalised for any 'forceful, dangerous or unnecessary contact' at the legs that involves an unacceptable risk of injury to the player in possession.

In relation to this type of tackle, the Referees will issue a single call of 'held' and 'release'.

## Mid-Air Tackle

It is illegal to tackle an opposing player attempting to field a kick on the full whilst the player is in mid-air. The catcher must have returned to the ground before being tackled (See *Section 17*).





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## Tackling a Kicker

When affecting a tackle on a kicker, the defender must make a genuine attempt to tackle which is not:

- 1 . Late
- 2 . High or
- 3 . Dangerous. Contact where the kicking payer is in a position of vulnerability

## Responsibilities of the player in possession

The tackled player shall:

- a . *without delay regain his feet where he is tackled,*
- b . *lift the ball clear of the ground,*
- c . *face his opponent's goal line,*
- d . *place the ball on the ground,*

and make a genuine attempt to play the ball with the foot while maintaining balance.

Section 11 (10) (b)

## Roll Ball

Where a player in possession does not make a genuine attempt at playing the ball with his/her foot, the referee should award a changeover to the non-offending team at the point of the incorrect play-the-ball, but no closer than 10m from goal line or touchline.

## Player in possession returning to the mark

If the player in possession simultaneously offloads the ball or continues to run after the tackle is complete, the Referee will direct that player back to the original position to play the ball.

Section 11 (6) notes

## Stealing the Ball

- a . *The ball can be stolen from the player in possession at any stage prior to a tackle being complete when there is only one defender effecting the tackle,*
- b . *If there are two or more defender[s] effecting the tackle and the ball is stolen a penalty should be awarded, except if the player in possession is attempting to ground the ball for a try.*

Section 11 (9) notes

## Dummy Half Passing Ball into Defending Player at Ruck

Where a dummy half deliberately passes the ball into a defending player caught in and around the ruck who is not actively taking part in the play, such an act will be deemed to be contrary to the true spirit of the game and constitute misconduct under section 15(1)(i) of the Laws of the Game, and a penalty will be awarded against the attacking team.

Section 15 (1) notes

This does not in any way absolve a defender of his responsibilities to clear the ruck and the defending team will still be penalised if it is deemed that they are interfering with play.

## 10 METRES

All defending players except those who have taken up a position as Marker[s] must *'retire 10 metres from the point at which the ball is played or to their own goal line'*.

Section 11 (10) (g)

To comply with the above requirement, all defending players are required to have both feet 'in line' with or behind the Referee marking the 10 metres. The Referee will call "go" when the ball has been played backwards and then the defensive line is entitled to move forward.

If the defensive line is within 10 metres of their own goal line, the players:

- 1 . Must be touching the goal line with a foot; and
- 2 . The defenders cannot place their front foot past the centre of the ruck.

### Restarting the Tackle Count – 10 Metres

Where the ball carrier places the ball on or **beyond** his own 40m line to begin the play-the-ball process, and the referee decides action is required for 10 metre defensive infringements, the referee will restart the tackle count by signalling "six again" and verbally indicating the tackle count has been restarted for a 10 metre infringement.

This applies to players who do not retire 10m from the centre of the ruck, retire 10 metres from a Penalty/Free Kick, or those who do retire 10m but move forward before the ball clears the ruck or before the Penalty or Free Kick has been taken.

A full penalty will still be awarded in the following circumstances:

- The ball carrier places the ball on the ground to begin the play-the-ball process, **within** 40m from his own goal line and the referee decides action is required for 10 metres defensive infringement
- Professional fouls
- Repeated infringements
- 20 metre Optional Restart
- Where play cannot continue (e.g. the infringement has resulted in the ball being lost)

Referees will have the option of awarding a full penalty for multiple 10m breaches without requiring the mandatory use of the sin bin.

A full penalty for a professional foul or repeated infringements, may result in the offending player being sent to the sin bin.

If the team in possession deliberately breaks down play in an attempt to convert the "six again" into a full penalty, the Referee will order a scrum with the loose head and feed to the opposition.

The tackle following defenders being offside will be tackle one, unless the offside occurs on a zero tackle, which will result in another zero tackle.

Where a "six again" has been awarded for a previous breach, and the referee deems a "six again" should be awarded for a 10m infringement prior to the completion of the next tackle, that tackle will be counted as zero.

The mark for the 10 metre full penalty will be awarded 10 metres from the play the ball where



the referee has deemed the defensive players are offside – this at times, will be beyond the 40 metre line.

## Offside

A player is offside if he has one foot (either on or off the ground) in front of a teammate who *'last touches, is touched by, held or kicked the ball'*.

Section 14 (1)

In relation to a kick, an active offside player shall not encroach within ten metres of an opponent who is waiting for the ball and shall immediately retire ten metres from any opponent who first secures possession of the ball.

### ACTIVE OR PASSIVE:

Active is:

An offside player who takes part in and/or influences the course of the game.

Passive is:

An offside player who does not influence the course of the game.

### WAITING FOR THE BALL

A player from the non kicking team who is moving in the direction of the ball and who can actively participate in play.

Where an onside player takes possession of the ball, an offside team mate who is within 10 metres of an opponent 'waiting for the ball' may participate in the play when the onside player and/or the ball itself travels 10 metres or more (this includes if the ball is kicked a second time).

### KICK

Making an intentional motion to kick the ball with any part of the leg (except the heel) from knee to toe inclusive'. An indicator is a change to the normal running gait.

## Out of Play

A player from the team in possession is out of play if he does not *"retire behind his own players involved in the play the ball or to their own goal line."*

Section 11 (10) (g)

An 'out of play' player may again participate in the play if he retreats to a position where he has both feet behind the point where the ball was placed on the ground in the prior play the ball.

Where an 'out of play' player becomes involved in the ensuing play, he is to be penalised with the penalty being awarded in line with the previous play the ball, at the point where the player became out of play.

## Downtown Chasers

A player is considered 'downtown' when:

A player who is in front of the kicker in general play who intentionally advances beyond the point of the previous play the ball before the ball has gone past the advancing player will be penalised if this player, in the opinion of the referee, negatively influences play.

Section 14 (3) notes

## SCRUMS

A scrum is to be formed and decided by:

1. The front row *'interlock[ing] arms and heads and creating a tunnel'*
2. The second row forwards *'interlock[ing] arms and placing their heads in the two spaces between the hooker and his front row forwards'*
3. The loose forward (lock) *'shall pack behind his second row forwards by placing his head in the space between them' and wrap their arms around the second row forwards'*
4. All players outside the scrum, other than the scrum halves shall retire 10 metres or more behind the mark where the scrum is formed and shall remain until the ball has emerged correctly from the scrum.
5. The ball is to be fed on the same side as the Referee into the tunnel by the scrum half who must stand square with both hands on the ball
6. *'The ball must emerge from the scrum after first emerging from between and behind the inner feet of the second-row forwards'. This will be indicated by the Referee calling 'break'.*

Section 12 (2-9)

### Prematurely Breaking from the Scrum

Where a player(s) break from the scrum before the referee's call of "BREAK", a full penalty will be awarded to the non-offending team, at the mark of the scrum.

The team receiving the penalty will have the option of re-packing the scrum. If the scrum is re-packed and players again break before the referee is satisfied the ball has emerged correctly from the scrum, a further penalty will be awarded and one of the offending players will be sent to the sin-bin.

### Backs Offside at Scrum

If a scrum is packed and fed and the defensive backline has encroached on the required distance, a full penalty will be awarded. The mark for this penalty will be in line of where the offside players become involved and 10 metres from the centre of the scrum.

The team receiving the penalty will have the option of re-packing the scrum. If the scrum is re-packed and the defensive team commits another breach, a further penalty will be awarded and one of the offending players will be sent to the sin-bin.

### Locking the ball in the Scrum

If, in the opinion of the referee, a team deliberately locks the ball in the scrum, a full penalty will be awarded to the non-offending team at the mark.

### Scrum Clock and Position of Scrums

1. Where play is recommenced by a scrum, both teams must be Properly Bound and Packed within 30 seconds from the time the Referee has verbally indicated that the "scrum clock" has started.
2. The team with the loose head and feed may elect, within 5 seconds of the Referee verbally indicating that the scrum clock has started, to move the scrum to:
  - (a) 10m in from touch
  - (b) 20m in from touch



(c) Centre field (in line with the black dots marked on the cross bar)

3. Each team must nominate two players on the team sheet prior to the match as able to inform the referee where the scrum should be set. If both nominated players are off the field, one additional Player may be nominated to the Touch Judge by the Head Trainer during the match.
4. If the team does not elect to move the scrum, or 5 seconds elapses prior to the team with the loose head and feed nominating where the scrum shall be moved to, or there is confusion as to where they would like the scrum moved to, the scrum will be formed:
  - (a) In the case of an infringement, at the point of the infringement, but not closer than 20m from the touch line or 10m from a goal line; or
  - (b) In the case of the ball going into touch, 20m from the touch line, but not closer than 10m from a goal line.\*
5. The scrum can only be moved to one of the nominated points on the same side of the field to where the infringement occurred or where the ball went into touch.
6. If the scrum clock is not started due to an injury, or a reason outside of the team with the loose head and feeds control, they are required to advise the Referee of the nominated position as the Referee moves to check on the injured player.

\* To remove any doubt, if a team does not elect to move the scrum, or 5 seconds elapses prior to the team with the loose head and feed nominating where the scrum shall be moved to, or there is confusion as to where they would like the scrum moved to, the scrum will be formed per the 2019 rules.

7. If one team is properly bound and packed then the Referee will call "time off", at which time the "game clock" will stop, but the "scrum clock" will continue to run. This team will be obliged to hold this formation until such time as:
  - (a) The Referee indicates that they may stand; or
  - (b) The opposing team packs and the scrum is formed.
8. If the "scrum clock" has counted down to zero seconds (indicated by a siren sounding) and one team is not properly bound and packed, the Referee shall award a penalty to the non-offending team.  
This will not be a differential penalty.
9. If the "scrum clock" has counted down to zero seconds (indicated by a siren sounding) and both teams are not properly bound and packed, the Referee shall award a penalty to the team which has the feed. This will not be a differential penalty.
10. If, in the opinion of the Referee, the scrum is being delayed by factors outside of a team's control, the Referee may call "time off" on the "game clock". If "time off" is called, the "scrum clock" will also be stopped and only re-started once the Referee has called "time on".
11. In the event of a player suffering an injury after the "scrum clock" has commenced and the player is unable to re-join play or is preventing play from restarting after the "scrum clock" has counted down to zero seconds (indicated by a siren sounding), the player will be required to leave the field of play and either:
  - (a) Be interchanged; or
  - (b) Not return to the field of play until the earlier of the next stoppage or when their team regains possession.
12. If, in the opinion of the Referee, a team deliberately does not attempt to pack a scrum, a penalty will be awarded to the non-offending team at the mark. This will not be a differential penalty.

\* "Properly Bound and Packed" means all players in the scrum bound together, both teams packed together and the half back ready to feed the ball into the scrum.

\* "Stoppage", for the purposes of the "scrum clock", means a scrum, drop out, 20 metre restart or a handover.

## PLAYER MISCONDUCT

A player is guilty of misconduct if he:

1. *'Trips, kicks or strikes another player'*
2. *'When affecting or attempting to affect a tackle makes contact with the head or neck of an opponent intentionally, recklessly or carelessly'*
3. *'Uses any dangerous throw when effecting a tackle'*
4. Applies any unnecessary pressure or twists including grapples, crushers or performs a chicken wing on a player in possession
5. Unnecessarily contacts a player not in possession or a kicker (see Tackle and Play the ball)
6. When a defender forcefully spears at the legs of a player in possession exposing him to unnecessary risk of injury
7. Shoulder Charge (see Tackle and Play the ball)
8. *'Disputes a decision of the Referee or Touch Judge'*.

In these circumstances:

*'A penalty kick shall be awarded against any player who is guilty of misconduct (Section 15) provided that this is not to the disadvantage of the non-offending team.'*

Section 13 (1) (a)

Additionally a Referee or Review Officials may:

*'In the event of misconduct by a player at his discretion, caution, temporarily suspend for 10 minutes (Sin Bin), or dismiss the player'*

Section 16 (6)

If an incident is significant enough a Referee will also place the player(s) or incident on report.



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## Sin Bin

The six main reasons for a player to be temporarily suspended for ten minutes are:

- 1 . Repeated infringements
- 2 . Professional Foul
- 3 . Cooling off period for a player
- 4 . Dissent
- 5 . Striking
- 6 . Foul Play\*

\* Foul Play - A player will be sin binned for foul play in circumstances where, in the opinion of the referee, the act of foul play is of a serious nature, but does not warrant sending off. Acts of foul play of a serious nature include:

- » High Tackles with direct contact with the head or neck which are deemed forceful
- » Dangerous Throws in which the head or neck of the attacking player make forceful contact with the ground
- » Shoulder charges which make forceful contact with the head or neck of the attacking player or make forceful movement of the head or neck of the attacking player (whiplash)
- » Crusher tackles in which a defending player has a grip/hold of the attacking player with both arms and applies unnecessary pressure or force to the head/neck/spinal column of the player
- » Any other act of foul play which the referee deems to be of a serious nature, but does not warrant sending off.

## Captains Communication

- 1 . A Captain may only approach the Referee at a "stoppage of play"
- 2 . In speaking to the Referee, a player must not question or refer to the Referee's ability or integrity
- 3 . The Referee will not debate decisions with the Captain
- 4 . The Captain of a team is entitled to speak to a Referee to clarify a ruling at any stoppage including tries, injuries or goal-line dropout (within the 25 seconds, however this does not stop the drop-out clock) and at half time, siren prior to leaving the field.

A penalty or a scrum is not considered a stoppage for the purpose of Captains Communication with the Referee. In relation to the communication at half time this is optional for either team captain.

If required, it will occur in the following manner:

- » The home team captain will speak to the Referee first
- » The away team captain will speak to the Referee second
- » The maximum time allocated to a team is 1 minute.

## RESTARTS OF PLAY

### Restarts of Play – Ball Touched in Flight

From a restart of Play (Kick-off, Goal line drop out, 20m drop out, 20m Optional kick, Penalty kick or free kick) where the ball is touched in flight, play shall have been deemed to have been restarted once the ball had been kicked. As the ball is “in play” any further actions are to be considered part of General Play. For the purposes of the ball entering touch from these kicks, after being touched in flight, a handover should be ruled to the non-offending team, with that team having the choice of 10m, 20m, or centre field for the ensuing play-the-ball.

### Penalty or Free Kick

A Penalty or Free Kick is to be taken in compliance with Section 13 (1) (a) and Section 13 (4) (a) of ‘The Australian Rugby League Laws of the Game and notes on the laws’.

A quick penalty restart is permitted on any infringement against the team not in possession, except:

- » 10 metre penalties
- » Within 10 metres of the opposition goal line
- » Penalties resulting from kicks in general play
- » Where the Referee is required to take any further action
- » Where the mark has been advanced.
- » Where the penalty results in a change of possession.

The Referee will give the team the ‘mark’ and all players from the team awarded the penalty must be onside.

Section 12 (5)(d)

### Goal Line Drop Out

#### TOUCH IN GOAL

*‘The ball is touch in-goal when it touches the corner post, in-goal line or any object on or outside the touch in-goal line.’*

Section 9 (2)

*A player is NOT considered to be an ‘object’.*

Section 9 notes

*‘Where the ball which is stationary in the in goal area comes into contact with a player in touch in-goal or over the dead ball line, the ball is deemed to have been made dead by that player’*

Section 9.1 notes

*‘a kick in general play is made dead by a defending player straddling the dead ball line or touch in-goal line, other than being caught on the full’.*

Section 8 (4) (i)

The non-kicking team must allow the ball to bounce on the ground on or outside of the dead ball line and/or touch in goal lines for it to be made dead by the kicking team, otherwise play will be restarted with a goal line drop out.

#### DROP OUT CLOCK

1. Where a team is required to recommence play with a goal line or 20 metre drop-out, they must do so within 25 seconds from the time the Referee has ruled the goal line or 20 metre drop-out and verbally indicated that the “drop-out clock” has started.
2. The kick will deemed to be completed when the kicker’s foot has struck the ball.
3. If the “drop-out clock” has counted down to zero seconds (indicated by a siren sounding) without the drop-out having been taken, the Referee shall award a penalty to the non-kicking team:
  - (a) In the case of a goal line drop-out –at the centre of the 10 metre line; or
  - (b) In the case of a 20 metre drop-out –at the centre of the 20 metre line.





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4. If, in the opinion of the Referee, the drop-out is being delayed by factors outside of a team's control, the Referee may call "time off" on the "game clock". If "time off" is called, the "drop-out clock" will also be stopped and only re-started once the Referee has called "time on".
  5. In the event of a player suffering an injury after the "drop-out clock" has commenced and the player is unable to re-join play or is preventing play from restarting after the "drop-out clock" has counted down to zero seconds (indicated by a siren sounding), the player will be required to leave the field of play and either:
    - (a) Be interchanged; or
    - (b) Not return to the field of play until the earlier of the next stoppage or when their team regains possession.
  6. If, in the opinion of the Referee, a team deliberately does not attempt to take a drop-out, a penalty will be awarded to the non-kicking team:
    - (a) In the case of a goal line drop-out –at the centre of the 10 metre line; or
    - (b) In the case of a 20 metre drop-out –at the centre of the 20 metre line.

\*"Stoppage", for the purposes of the "drop-out clock", means a scrum, drop-out, 20 metre restart or a handover.

A drop-out may be taken quicker if:

1. All officials are in position; and
2. It is taken in compliance with Section 2 and Section 8 (a-h) of 'The Australian Rugby League Laws of the Game and notes on the laws'.

## 20 Metre Restart

A 20 metre optional kick is to be taken in compliance with Section 2 and Section 8 (2) (a-b) of 'The Australian Rugby League Laws of the Game and notes on the laws'.

The 20 metre optional kick must only be taken when all officials are in position and the whistle is blown. The initial tackle effected on the team taking the 20 metre optional re-start shall be a zero tackle.

A "quick tap" will not be permitted where the ball has been returned to the 20 metre line by a pass greater than 10 metres, has been passed more than once, or has been kicked.

## Kick Off

A kick off is to be taken in compliance with Section 8 (1) of 'The Australian Rugby League Laws of the Game and notes on the laws'.

A kick off may only be taken when all officials are in position.



### **40/20 Kick**

Where a player kicks the ball in general play bounded by their own dead ball line, 40 metre lines and touchlines and the ball finds touch, otherwise than on the full, at a point on the touchline between the opponents 20 metre line and the goal line, the kickers team shall recommence play with a tap kick.

The tap kick will be taken 20 metres in from the touchline and in line with where the ball first crossed the touchline but no closer than 10 metres from the goal line.

Prior to blowing the whistle, the Referees will give the defending team 'reasonable time' to get into position.

The tap kick may only be taken when the Referee blows his whistle to restart play. This will only occur when all match officials are in position and ready to officiate.

Section 12 (5)(d)

### **20/40 Kick**

Where a player kicks the ball in general play bounded by their own dead ball line, 20 metre lines and touchlines and the ball finds touch, otherwise than on the full, at a point on the touchline between the opponents 40 metre line and the goal line, the kicking team shall recommence play with a tap kick.

The tap kick will be taken 20 metres in from the touchline and in line with where the ball first crossed the touchline but no closer than 10 metres from the goal line.

Prior to blowing the whistle, the Referee will give the defending team 'reasonable time' to get into position.

The tap kick may only be taken when the Referee blows his whistle to restart play. This will only occur when all match officials are in position and ready to officiate.

### **Kick Out on the Full**

A handover shall occur when the ball is kicked directly into touch on the full.

The handover will occur at the point where the ball was kicked, but no closer than 10 metres from the goal line and no closer than 10 metres from the touchline.

In the event that the ball goes into touch on the full behind the point at which it was kicked, play will recommence with a handover in line with where it crossed the touchline, no closer than 10 metres from the touchline or goal line.

The play-the-ball to recommence play shall not be counted for the purposes of the tackle count.



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## Play the Ball Restart after ball or player finds touch

Where play is stopped because the ball, or a player in possession of the ball has entered touch in general play, other than all restarts (Half Way kick off, Goal line drop out and 20m Optional and 20m drop out) a 40/20 or 20/40 kick, play will be restarted with a play the ball by the non-offending team, within ten seconds of the whistle being blown to indicate the handover, the non-offending team may elect a position to play the ball:

- a) 10 metres in from touch
- b) 20 metres in from touch
- c) Centre Field (in line with the black dots marked on the cross bar.

opposite where the ball entered touch, but no closer than 10 metres from a goal line.

If the team does not inform the referee of their restart position, or ten seconds elapses from the whistle being blown, the handover will take place 20m in from touch.

For successful 40/20 and 20/40 kicks, the game will continue to be restarted by way of a tap kick, 20 metres in from where the ball entered touch, but not closer than 10 metres from a goal line.

In the case of the ball being kicked into touch on the full, the handover will occur at the point the ball was kicked, but no closer than 10 metres from touch, or 10 metres from a goal line.

Where a breach such as a knock on or forward pass occurs, and the ball subsequently enters touch, a handover should be ruled, regardless of the tackle count.

The referee will give a 'reasonable time' for the game to be restarted.

## Breach After Fifth and Last Play-the Ball

Where a knock on or forward pass occurs after the fifth and last play-the-ball, a handover shall be awarded to the non-offending team at the point of the infringement, however no closer than 10m to the goal line or touchline.

## Mutual Infringement

Where play is irregularly affected by a mutual infringement:

- (a) Following a play-the-ball, the Referee shall re-start play by returning to the point of the previous play the ball and allowing the team which was in possession at that point to play the ball again. The play-the-ball to restart the game is not counted as an additional tackle and the player who was previously tackled with the ball immediately prior to the mutual infringement is to play the ball to restart the game.
  - (b) Following a scrum, the Referee shall re-start play by returning to the point where the scrum was set and giving the team in possession at that point the loose head and feed.
  - (c) Following a penalty restart, the Referee shall re-start play by returning to the point where the penalty was awarded and ruling that the penalty restart be retaken.
  - (d) Following a goal line or 20m drop-out, the Referee shall re-start play by returning to the point where the drop out was taken and ruling that the drop out be retaken.
  - (e) Following a 20m optional kick, the Referee shall re-start play by returning to the point where the 20m optional kick was taken and ruling that the 20m optional kick be retaken.
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(f) Following a kick off, the Referee shall re-start play by returning to the point where the kick off was taken and ruling that the kick off be retaken.

If, in any of the above circumstances, there is a turnover in possession prior to the mutual infringement occurring, the Referee shall re-start play by awarding a zero tackle restart where the mutual infringement occurred (or 10m out from the goal line if the mutual infringement occurred in the in-goal) to the team in possession at that time.

The referee is the sole judge of what constitutes a mutual infringement and whether or not play has been irregularly affected. Contact between a defender and Referee or the ball making contact with the referee, may not constitute a mutual infringement unless the referee deems that play has been irregularly affected.



## SCORING A TRY

### Scoring a Try

A try is scored when:

- a . A player first grounds the ball in his opponents in goal
- b . Opposing players simultaneously grounds the ball in the in goal area
- c . A tackled player's momentum carries him into the opponents in goal where he grounds the ball.

Section 6 (3)

### Grounding

Grounding the Ball includes:

- a . Placing the ball on the ground with hand or hands, wrist or forearm
- b . Exerting a downward pressure on the ball in contact with the ground
- c . Dropping on the ball and covering it with the front part of the body above the waist and below the neck.

Section 2

A player who has had possession or touches/touched the ball and knocks the ball forward must regain possession (catch, hold or grip) prior to the ball hitting the ground, another player, goal post or cross bar.

A try will be awarded if the ball rotates from the hand to the wrist or forearm provided there is no obvious separation between the ball and the hand or arm.

For the ball to be deemed grounded, pressure must be applied by the player's fingers, hand, wrist, forearm or torso so as to create a reasonable influence on the plane of the ball including the spin, rotation, momentum or bounce.

### Double Movement

A try will be awarded if:

*'a tackled player's momentum carries him into the opponents' in-goal where he grounds the ball even if the ball has first touched the ground in the field of play'.*

Section 6 (3) (c)

In the process of scoring a try, a player in possession must not promote the ball from the position the ball has been grounded.

If the momentum of the player in possession carries him into the opponents in goal area, it will not be a double movement if the ball would have finished over the goal line regardless of any subsequent movement of the ball or the arm carrying the ball.

### Penalty Try

Further, if circumstances warrant it:

*'The Referee (or Review Officials) may award a penalty try if, in his opinion, a try would have been scored but for the unfair play of the defending team. A penalty try is awarded between the goal posts irrespective of where the offence occurred.'*

Section 6 (3) (d)

### **Possible Eight Point Try**

*If a player fouls an opponent who is touching down for a try, a penalty kick at goal shall be taken from in front of the goal posts after the attempt to convert the try.*

Touching down includes:

- a** . In the act of scoring; and
- b** . Until the try scorer regains his feet.

Section 13 (9)

### **Grounding the Ball in own In Goal**

For the ball to be deemed dead the player in possession must intentionally ground the ball in his own in-goal.

### **Corner Post**

If a player makes contact with a corner post he will not be deemed to be out of play unless any part of his body made contact with either the touch-in-goal line or the touch line or the ground beyond.

If the ball is not in possession of a player and it makes contact with the corner post (e.g. from a kick) the ball will be deemed to be touch-in-goal as per section 9(2).

### **Two Point Field Goal**

Two points will be awarded for a successful field goal kicked during general play from outside the opposition's 40 metre line.



## OBSTRUCTION

### Obstruction

The indicators for an obstruction include:

- 1 . (a) 'Block'\* or 'Flat' runner[s] (who do not receive the ball) must not stop in the middle of the defensive line  
(b) 'Block' or 'Flat' runner[s] (who do not receive the ball) must not run at (chest or outside shoulder of) defender[s] and initiate contact  
(c) The Referee or Review Officials can determine the significance of contact initiated by the 'Block' or 'Flat' runner[s] (who does not receive the ball) in impeding a defender's involvement in a try scoring play
- 2 . Ball Carriers must not run behind an active 'Block' or 'Flat' runner[s] and disadvantage the defensive line
- 3 . It will be deemed obstruction if the attacking players who run a 'Sweep'^ line clearly receive the ball on the inside of the 'Block' or 'Flat' runner[s]
- 4 . Defensive decisions that commit defender[s] to initiating contact with an attacking player(s) will not be deemed obstruction
- 5 . Defensive decisions that commit defender[s] to change their defensive line will not be deemed obstruction.

*\*Block runners run lines towards an opposition goal line and are committed to receiving the ball close to the defensive line*

*^Sweep runners run lines in an arc across the field behind a block runner*

### Obstruction at the Play-the-Ball (e.g. Sleeper, Wall, etc.)

Attacking players who loiter in and around the play the ball to block the path of defenders are to be penalised for obstruction if, in the opinion of the referee or video referee, these players are deemed to in any way obstruct defenders.

### Escorts

A player is not to *'deliberately obstruct an opponent who is not in possession'*

Section 15 (j)

It will be interpreted to be an obstruction in regards to a player catching the ball from a kick if:

- 1 . A player arrives at the same time as an opponent and obstructs him deliberately; or
- 2 . Deliberately runs an opponent off the ball.

This applies to both the kicking and non-kicking teams.

It will NOT be considered an obstruction in regards to a player catching the ball from a kick if:

- 1 . A defending player moves directly towards the ball; and
- 2 . Takes up a position prior to the ball being caught.

## Diving Through the Ruck

If, in the process of scoring a try an attacking player dives through the ruck or into a teammate including the player who played the ball and impacts on the defence, he will be penalised for an obstruction.

## Lending Weight

It is permissible for a player to 'lend weight to a teammate in possession in order to avoid losing ground'.

Section 11 (2) (a) notes

1. It is not permissible for the player lending weight to impede a defender from making the tackle
2. The Referee will take into account any momentum the tackle has already generated.

## TIME OFF

Time should be taken off by the Referee:

1. (a) After 1 minute and 20 seconds from the time which any try has been awarded up until the time the conversion is taken, or
  - (b) After 1 minute and 20 seconds from the time which a penalty has been awarded up until the penalty kick for goal is being attempted, and
  - (c) Following an attempted conversion for a minimum of 30 seconds before play is restarted at the centre of half way.
2. In the last five minutes of the second half:
  - (a) Following a conversion, a successful penalty kick at goal or field goal until the play is restarted at the centre of the half way or
  - (b) Following a unsuccessful penalty kick at goal or field goal that goes touch in-goal or over the dead ball line.
  - (c) Following a try being awarded until the time the Bunker is satisfied that the decision of try should not be overturned.
3. The referee may call time out at their discretion, if they believe a team would be unfairly disadvantaged (e.g. delaying restart, time wasting etc.) by allowing time to continue to expire.

## Restart Clock

- a. Following the completion of each attempted conversion kick at goal during NRL matches, the Referee shall immediately call time out,
- b. The NRL Timekeeper will immediately start a 30 second restart clock when time is called out by the Referee,
- c. The 30 second restart clock will indicate to all players and officials that play will only recommence at the halfway line once the clock has counted down to zero,
- d. When the clock has counted down to zero, the Referee will immediately call time back on with all players to be ready to restart the match with a place kick from the halfway mark,
- e. Players will not be permitted to restart play until such time as the restart clock has counted down to zero and the Referee has called time back on,
- f. In the event that a referee believes a team is intentionally wasting time by not restarting play after the restart clock has counted down to zero, the Referee may again call time out at his discretion,
- g. In the event that a team declines the opportunity to attempt a conversion kick at goal following a try, the Referee will immediately call time out following this request of the team captain. The restart clock shall immediately begin following the time out call from the Referee,





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- h.** *In the event of a possible 8 point try, time off and the restart clock will commence at the completion of the second attempted kick at goal.*

## RESTARTING THE TACKLE COUNT

### Ruck Infringements

Section 11 (10)(a) of the International Laws of the Game states:

*“The tackled player shall be immediately released and shall not be touched until the ball is in play.”*

**Infringements of the Rule:**

Where an infringement of the above rule is committed by the defending team, the referee will restart the tackle count by signalling “six again” and verbally indicating the tackle count has been restarted for a ruck infringement, except for the following incidences, where a full penalty will be awarded:

- Where the tackle is affected within the 40 metre zone from the goal line and the referee detects an infringement
- Professional fouls
- Repeated infringements
- Where play has broken down (e.g. the infringement by the team not in possession results in a lost ball, an unacceptable play the ball, or another incident necessitating a stoppage)

Where the referee awards a full penalty for a professional foul or repeated infringements, the offending player will be sent to the sin-bin. Teams do not have to be warned about repeated infringements before the referee uses the sin-bin.

**Notes:**

- *“Six again” will be ruled for any ruck infringement where the tackle is on or beyond the 40m line by the team not in possession, where the infringement does not break down play (e.g. holding down, hand on the ball, crowding, leg pull).*
- *If, in the opinion of the referee, the team in possession deliberately breaks down play in an attempt to convert “six again” to a full penalty, the referee will order a scrum with the loose head and feed given to the opposition.*
- *If a defender still refuses to release after the referee has awarded “six again”, the referee may determine this action to be a professional foul, award a full penalty, and place the offender, or offenders, in the sin-bin*
- *In the case of “six again” being conceded on a zero tackle, the following tackle after the “six again” ruling will also be a zero tackle.*



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## Markers

1. Where the referee decides action is required for marker infringements, and the play-the ball is on or beyond their opponents 40 metre line, the referee will restart the tackle count by signalling “six again” and verbally indicating the tackle count has been restarted for a marker infringement.
2. This applies to players who do not correctly take up a marker position at the ruck, or those who do take up a correct marker position but move before the ball clears the ruck.
3. A full penalty will still be awarded in the following circumstances:
  - a. The ball carrier places the **ball** on the ground to **begin the play the ball process**, **within 40m** from his own goal line
  - b. Professional fouls
  - c. Repeated infringements
  - d. Where play cannot continue (e.g. the infringement has resulted in the ball being lost)
4. A full penalty for a professional foul or repeated infringements, will result in the offending player being sent to the sin bin.
5. If the team in possession deliberately breaks down play in an attempt to convert the “six again” into a full penalty, the Referee will order a scrum with the loose head and feed to the opposition.
6. The tackle following defenders being offside will be tackle one, unless the offside occurs on a zero tackle, which will result in another zero tackle.
7. Where a “six again” has been awarded, and the referee deems a “six again” should be awarded for a marker infringement prior to the completion of the next tackle, that tackle will be counted as zero.



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## NRL BUNKER – OFFICIAL REVIEW ROOM

### Captain's Challenge

#### 1. Challenges may be only initiated by the captain or a nominated replacement player in their absence

##### Process

- Only the captain can initiate a challenge. If the captain is off the field, an additional player may be nominated to the Referee, or to the Touch Judge by the Head Trainer during the match.
- The captain (or nominated replacement player) must inform the referee of which element of the decision they are challenging. If the Bunker determines that an infringement occurs prior to the element of the incident that is being challenged, the first identified infringement will supersede the challenge.
- The captain can challenge decisions by the Referee from the point of the stoppage, back to the previous play-the-ball (or restart of play).
- The captain can only challenge decisions by the Referee which cause play to stop (i.e any decision by the referee to 'play on' cannot be challenged).
- Teams with multiple captains, must advise the referee at the coin toss which captain will be communicating with the referee during the game.

#### 2. A challenge is only permissible in instances where the referee blows their whistle to stop play (except for stoppages for injury or suspected injury)

##### Process

- For clarity, as detailed in point 1 above, a challenge cannot be requested during general play if a whistle has not already been blown to stop play e.g. a defending captain/player who suspects that the referee has missed a knock-on from an attacking player may not stop general play by requesting a challenge.
- Decisions that cannot be challenged are set out below:
- Forward pass
- Roll ball
- The following discretionary penalties:
  - 10m/marker offside
  - Ruck Infringements relating to the speed of the play-the-ball
  - Tackled into touch or in-goal after the held call
  - The mark of a penalty
  - Time-wasting
  - Dissent
  - Deliberate forward pass
  - Scrum penalties

- If a captain is in any doubt about whether a particular decision can be challenged, he may ask the referee if the decision is challengeable. Such question will not extend the 10 second time limit to confirm a challenge.
- A challenge can be made following the final play in each half provided the referee has not already called half-time or full-time

### **3 . Each team will be entitled to one unsuccessful challenge per match**

#### **Process**

- Each team will be allowed to make a maximum of one unsuccessful challenge per game, inclusive of “Golden Point” or “Extra Time”.
- If, based on the available technology:
  - (a) The Bunker determines that the original on-field decision should be changed, the challenge will be successful, and the team will retain their opportunity to challenge.
  - (b) The Bunker determines the that the original on-field decision is correct, the decision will remain unchanged and the challenge will be unsuccessful, and that team will not have the opportunity to challenge any other decisions for the remainder of the match.
  - (c) The Bunker determines the review is inconclusive, the on-field decision will remain unchanged and the team will retain their challenge.
  - (d) The Bunker determines a prior breach and the on-field decision will be altered; the team will retain their challenge.

### **4 . Time Limit**

A time limit of ten seconds will apply to initiate a challenge from the point that the referee has signalled and verbalised the decision made.

#### **Process**

- A captain has until the earlier of the following two events to initiate a challenge:
  - When the referee is ready to recommence play, the challenge timeframe will lapse. The referee will not unduly delay the restart of play.
  - Ten seconds from the referee communicating the decision (by signal and verbally)
- A captain can verbally indicate to any of the three on-field Officials (Referee or Touch Judges) that they wish to challenge the decision
- If a Touch judge receives the indication, they will communicate this to the Referee so that play is not restarted.
- Once the captain has indicated within the required timeframe that they wish to challenge, they are required to advise the Referee the specific aspect of the decision to be challenged.
- The Referee will then use the existing Bunker referral signal and verbally confirm the decision that is being challenged.

### **5 . The following restart procedures will apply following a challenge:**

#### **Process**

- If a challenge is successful, the match will recommence with the referee overturning his original decision in the correct manner.
- If a challenge is successful and there is no formal restart, it will be treated as a mutual infringement.
- If the challenge is unsuccessful, the match will recommence as originally determined by the



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referee.

- If the challenge has been deemed inconclusive, the match will recommence as originally determined by the referee with the challenge being retained by that team.

## Try Scoring Process

### In the case of a “TRY”

Where the referee believes a ‘TRY’ has been scored, the referee will award the try.

The Bunker will review the decision prior to the conversion taking place without stopping the game. The conversion attempt will not be permitted until the Bunker is satisfied that the on-field decision of “try” should not be overturned. This confirmation will be communicated to the referee from the Bunker.

If the conversion is declined, the game will not be restarted until the Bunker is satisfied that the on-field decision of “try” should not be overturned.

On any occasion where the Bunker has not finalised their review of the decision within 1 minute 20 seconds of the try being awarded or before the kicker attempts the conversion, the referee will call time-off.

If the Bunker finds the on-field decision of ‘TRY’ is incorrect, the Bunker will advise the referee to call time-off and overturn the decision. Prior to restarting play, the referee will confirm with the timekeeper that the game clock has been reset to the point in time where the referee blew their whistle to award the try.

### In the case of a “NO TRY”

In the event that the on-field officials indicates ‘NO TRY’ and require a decision to be reviewed, the following procedure will occur:

- 1 The referee will call time off and physically signal for a referral to the Bunker
2. The Review Officials will then assess the play and make a decision
3. If the decision is incorrect, the correct decision will be indicated to the Referee, players and spectators via the screen
4. The Referee will communicate briefly to the players the reason for the decision after it has appeared on the screen.

The Review Officials may review any potential point-scoring play. In relation to a field goal, the Referee may only review that the ball has gone between the uprights and over the cross bar, whether the kick was taken from outside the opposition’s 40m line, or any aspects of foul play.

## Foul Play

A Review Official possesses a similar power in reporting foul play to that of a Touch Judge.

*‘He may cancel any decision made if prior foul play of which he had no knowledge is reported to him by a Touch Judge or Review Official.’*

As a result of the advice of the Review Officials, the Referee may take any necessary action except to the extent where play has extended beyond the first play the ball of the next set or in the event of a scrum has been formed and decided.

Section 16 (9)



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In circumstances where the play has extended beyond those points, the Referee can still place the player(s) or incident on report.

The Review Officials only have power to advise the Referee of an act of foul play (other than in point-scoring referrals) when the incident is required to be placed 'on report' or the offending player is to be dismissed.

### **Restarts**

In the event of the Review Officials reviewing a replay prior to the completion of a goal line drop-out, or 20 metre optional kick being taken and there is sufficient evidence to overturn the original on-field decision, the Review Officials will instruct the Referee to recommence the game with the correct restart.



## Further Guidelines on High Tackles

The following table is intended as guidance for match officials and clubs in relation to high tackles. It is important to note the table is for guidance only as individual incidents are rarely exactly the same. The final decision will rely on the judgement of match officials using the indicators as a guide in each case.

Category	Action	Indicators
1	No Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Force – Low</u></li> <li>• <u>Contact – No direct contact with the head/neck (Initial Contact with the ball or chest/shoulder)</u></li> <li>• <u>Risk of Injury - Low</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Contact is deemed accidental or careless.</u>  <u>The player has made a genuine attempt to make a wrapping tackle.</u>  <u>Other factors may have affected the outcome, such as the ball carrier dropping or another defender contributing to the outcome.</u></p> <p>Some examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sudden or significant drop or movement by ball-carrier presenting no time to adjust</li> <li>• attempted to change height or technique to avoid contact</li> <li>• involuntary collision</li> <li>• passive action</li> <li>• initial aim of tackler below neck</li> <li>• no line of sight</li> </ul>
2	Penalty and Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Force – Low/Moderate</u></li> <li>• <u>Contact – May not be direct with the head/neck (Initial contact with ball or chest/shoulder)</u></li> <li>• <u>Risk of Injury – Low/Moderate</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Conduct is deemed as careless.</u>  <u>The player has made a genuine attempt to make a wrapping tackle.</u>  <u>Other factors may have affected the outcome, such as the ball carrier dropping or another defender contributing to the outcome.</u></p>
3	Penalty and Sin Bin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Force – High</u></li> <li>• <u>Contact – Direct to the Head/Neck</u></li> <li>• <u>Risk of Injury – Moderate/High</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Conduct is deemed as careless</u>  <u>The player has made a genuine attempt to make a wrapping tackle.</u>  <u>Minor or no mitigating factors may have affected the outcome. The contact could have been avoided.</u></p>

		<p>Some examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• swinging arm</li> <li>• clenched fist</li> <li>• initial aim of tackler above neck</li> <li>• tackler upright</li> </ul>
4	Penalty and Send-off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Force – Very High</u></li> <li>• <u>Contact – Direct to the Head/Neck</u></li> <li>• <u>Risk of Injury – High</u></li> </ul> <p><u>Conduct is deemed reckless.</u>  <u>The player is not making a genuine attempt to make a conventional wrapping style tackle.</u>  <u>No other mitigating factors have affected the outcome. The contact could and should have been avoided.</u></p> <p>Some examples could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• swinging arm</li> <li>• clenched fist</li> <li>• initial aim of tackler above neck</li> <li>• tackler upright</li> </ul>
Utilisation of the Bunker for Foul Play		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bunker official to review real time wherever possible and ask on field Match Official to pause play if they identify a potential serious act of foul play resulting in a sin bin or send-off.</li> <li>• Where an incident is not identified in real-time, the Bunker official can only stop play if a serious act of foul play has occurred, resulting in a sin bin or send off. The stoppage of play must occur within a short space of time and will result in a penalty at the point of the offence, or play will continue from where the team in possession is located, whichever is the greatest advantage to the non-offending team.</li> </ul>



