



NRL LAWS & INTERPRETATIONS 2018



FROM NRL

The 2018 NRL competition will be adjudicated in accordance with the current 'Rugby League Laws of the Game, International level, approved by the Australian Rugby League Commission' with specific interpretations for NRL.





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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[^]
- 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.

[^]*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 directly 'opposite the tackled player' and not float or be too deep from the play the ball
- » The Marker 'must not kick the ball' whilst it is being played
- » A second Marker 'must stand immediately and directly behind' the first marker.

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

Is where a defender does not use, or attempt to use, his arms (including his hands) to tackle or otherwise take hold of the opposing player and the contact is forceful.

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

Third Man In

When a player in possession is held in an upright 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 call 'held' and then 'release'.

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.



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 and maintain his balance.

Section 11 (10) (b)

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 the player in possession 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

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)

All defending players are required to be 'in line' with the Referee marking the 10 metres. The Referee will call "go" when the ball is clear of the ruck 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.

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, held or kicked the ball'*.

Section 14 (1)

In relation to kick, an active offside player shall not encroach within ten metres of the ball, when there is an opponent waiting for 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 opponent(s) 'waiting for the ball' may participate in the play when the onside player and/or the ball itself travel 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' players(s) 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 him.

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 rowers 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 ten 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 'out'.* Section 12 (2-9)

Scrum Clock

1. Where play is recommenced by a scrum, both teams must be Properly Bound and Packed within 35 seconds from the time the Referee has verbally indicated that the "scrum clock" has started.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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".
6. 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.
7. 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 affecting 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 ten minutes (Sin Bin), or dismiss the player'

Section 16 (6)

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



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 foul play does not warrant sending off, but is serious enough to place the player on report, and the player injured from the foul play is unlikely to take any further part in the game.

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 30 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

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.

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 30 seconds from the time the Referee has ruled the goal line or 20 metre dropout and verbally indicated that the "drop out clock" has started.
2. The kick will be 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.
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 affected 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 being passed greater than 10 metres, or 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. Section 12 (5)(d)

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.

The tap kick may only be taken when the Referee blows his whistle to restart play.

Prior to blowing the whistle the Referees will give the defending team a ‘reasonable time’ to get into position. 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 for this purpose shall not be counted for the purposes of the tackle count.



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.

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.

Section 13 (9)

Touching down includes:

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

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).



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. Attacking players who run a 'Sweep'^ line must receive the ball beyond the inside shoulder 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

The Wall

If two or more players form a wall (side by side) next to the play the ball and don't allow the opportunity for a defending player to move directly towards the player in possession, the referee will penalise for obstruction.

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.

Sleeper

An attacking player who loiters next to the play the ball area and who causes an obstruction will be penalised.

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:

- 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.
- In regards to (c)

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 competing players and officials that play will only recommence at the halfway line once the clock has counted down to zero (0),
- d. When the clock has counted down to zero (0), 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 (0) 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 (0), 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,
- 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.



NRL BUNKER – OFFICIAL REVIEW ROOM

Try Scoring Process

In the event that the on field officials require assistance of the Review Officials, the following procedure will occur:

1. The Referee after consultation with the other on field officials will make a ‘Live Decision’
2. In the event that the Referee requires a review, he will call time off and physically signal for a referral to the ‘Review Officials’
3. The Referee will then signal his ‘Live Decision’ (TRY OR NO TRY)
4. The Review Officials will then review the on field ‘Live Decision’
5. The Review Officials will then assess if there is ‘sufficient evidence’ to confirm or overturn the ‘Live Decision’
6. (a) If there is ‘sufficient evidence’ the Review Officials will confirm that the ‘Live Decision’ is correct and this will be indicated to the Referee, players and spectators via the screen
(b) If there is ‘sufficient evidence’ that the ‘Live decision’ is incorrect, the Review Officials will overturn the ‘Live decision’ and the new decision will be indicated to the Referee, players and spectators via the screen
(c) Where ‘insufficient evidence’ exists, the Review Officials will confirm the ‘Live Decision’ and this will be indicated to the Referee, players and spectators via the screen.
7. The Referee will communicate briefly the reason for a ‘Live Decision’ being overturned 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 confirm that the ball has gone between the uprights and over the cross bar, or in relation to 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.’

Section 16 (9)

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 1st play the ball of the next set or in the event of a scrum has been formed and decided.

In circumstances where the play has extended beyond those points the Referee can still place the player/players 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 sufficient 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.





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