



2020-21 Football Guidance

Practice may begin: March 3

First contest: March 19

Season ends: April 24

The NFHS and the IHSA offer this football guidance for the 2020-21 school year to help schools play football while managing the concerns associated with COVID-19.

The guidance outlined in this document is meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel, and allowing for appropriate protective equipment. This guidance is intended for all levels of high school football.

The IDPH requires all players, coaches, sideline personnel, and officials to wear a cloth face covering over their nose and mouth during football games in the spring of 2021.

1. Football Rules Considerations

TEAM BOX (Rule 1-2-3g)

- The team box may be extended on both sides of the field to the 10-yard lines to allow for more social distancing space for the teams.
- Players and coaches should maintain recommended social distancing guidelines at all times while in the team box.
- Players and coaches should not share uniforms, towels and other apparel or equipment.

BALL (Rule 1-3-2)

- The ball should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer.
- Ball holders should maintain recommended social distancing at all times during the game.

FACE MASKS [Rules 1-5-1a, 1-5-3c(4)]

- Players are required to wear cloth face coverings under their helmets.
- Plastic shields that cover the entire face shall not be allowed (unless they are integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and are clear without the presence of any tint).

TOOTH AND MOUTH PROTECTORS [Rule 1-5-1d(5)]

- Players must wear tooth and mouth protectors according to rule 1-5-1d(5).

GLOVES (Rule 1-5-2b)

- Players are allowed to wear gloves that comply with Rule 1-5-2b by meeting either the NOCSAE standard or the SFIA specification.

CHARGED TIME-OUTS AND AUTHORIZED CONFERENCES (Rules 2-6-2, 3-5-3, 3-5-8)

- A charged time-out may be extended to a maximum of two minutes in length.
- The authorized conference for the charged time-out should take place between the 9-yard marks and not at the sideline for social distancing purposes. More than one coach can be involved in this conference, and coaches may use technology during the conference.
- Each player, coach, and official should have their own beverage container brought out to them on the field.

INTERMISSION BETWEEN PERIODS AND AFTER SCORES (Rule 3-5-7I)

- The intermission may be extended to a maximum of two minutes between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety, and prior to the succeeding free kick.

2. Football Officials Considerations

OFFICIALS UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

Officials in all sports are **REQUIRED** to wear a face covering at all times when they are at a contest site; before, during, and after the contest.

- The IHSA prefers that officials wear solid black face coverings with no lettering or logos.
- Officials may remove their face coverings during timeouts, between quarters, after scores, etc. if they remain socially distant from others.
- Officials may wear gloves and long sleeves. Officials who choose to wear gloves must wear clear or black gloves. If officials wear long sleeves under a short-sleeved official's shirt, the long sleeves must be black.

Officials are **REQUIRED** to use regular whistles (with a cover) or electronic whistles.

- An official's face covering acts as a whistle cover. An official is not required to use a whistle cover when he/she wears a mask over his/her whistle.
- The whistle cover must be solid black with no lettering or logos. The color of an electronic whistle doesn't matter. Officials can use an electronic whistle in any color.

PREGAME CONFERENCE, COIN TOSS, OVERTIME and POSTGAME PROCEDURES

- For the coin toss, limit attendees to the referee, umpire, and the head coach from each team. Use headsets with other crew members if necessary.
- The coin toss should take place in the center of the field with designated individuals maintaining recommended social distancing guidelines.
- Coaches and officials should not shake hands or bump fists prior to or after the coin toss.
- Maintain recommended social distancing guidelines while performing all pregame responsibilities with all officiating crew members, game administration staff, line-to-gain crew, clock operators, individuals handling the balls during the game and team personnel.
- For the overtime procedure, use the same procedures as the start of the contest for the coin toss.
- Coaches, captains, and officials should not shake hands or bump fists after the game.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Officials who do not feel well and have COVID-19 symptoms, should notify their assignor, the host school, and crew members. Officials with COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and not officiate.
- Officials can take their temperature in the morning and then again prior to leaving home/work for a contest.
- Officials should notify the site administrator immediately if their temperature is elevated above 100.3 or a level recommended by your local or state health department.
- "Vulnerable individuals" are defined by CDC as people 65 years and older and others with serious underlying health conditions. Officials fitting this description may wish to seek medical advice prior to returning to officiating.
- Schools will likely have different local rules regarding COVID-19. Officials should communicate with school athletic administrators about contest expectations.
- Officials should consider travel arrangements to contest sites with officiating partners.
- Upon arrival at the contest site and throughout the contest, officials should wash and sanitize their hands frequently.
- Officials should maintain recommended social distancing while in the locker room and/or on the field.
- Officials should not share uniforms, towels, apparel, and equipment.
- Officials should bring their own water bottles and/or sports drinks.

MONITORING

- Officials **ARE NOT** responsible for monitoring social distancing guidelines on the sidelines, in the bleachers, or anywhere outside the boundaries of the field. Coaches and school personnel are responsible for monitoring their own teams.

3. Additional Football Considerations

- Before, during and after the contest, players, coaches, game officials, team personnel and game administration officials should wash and sanitize their hands as often as possible.
- All who are involved in the game should always maintain recommended social distancing guidelines.
- Everyone should have their own personal beverage container. Players, coaches, and officials should not share their beverages with others.
- Cloth face coverings are **REQUIRED** for all players, coaches, and sideline personnel (statisticians, chain crews, team managers, videographers, etc.).
- Gloves are permissible for all coaches and sideline personnel.
- Teams should try their best to limit the number of non-essential personnel who are on field level throughout the contest.
- If available, dressing facilities for game officials and teams should be large enough for them to use recommended social distancing guidelines and should be properly cleaned and sanitized prior to and after the game.
- **Press Box:** Understanding that each press box is different and can accommodate a different number of game staff members and coaches, schools should limit individuals in the press box to essential personnel, including game clock operator, play clock operator, PA announcer, spotter, and radio/TV broadcasters while maintaining recommended social distancing guidelines. Visiting team personnel (statisticians, etc.) are not deemed essential and will need to find an alternative location.
- **Coaches Booth/Box:** When coaches booths/boxes are separate areas from the press box, schools should monitor the space available for coaches to ensure that coaches are able to follow recommended social distancing guidelines.