



2020-21 Football Requirements, Rule Modifications and General Recommendations

Below are the NFHS Rule modifications for the 2020 football season as well as some OHSAA procedural changes. These are followed by some Recommendations. The last item of the document is a link to some recommendations from the Coaches Association (OHSFCA).

Note: This is not an exhaustive list and there might be additional steps in each school, city, and state to help prevent the spread of virus. Ohio schools are required to follow state COVID-19 general guidance for “Youth, Collegiate, Amateur and Professional Sports”

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Youth-Collegiate-Amateur-Club-Pro-Sports.pdf>

Even when taking all precautions, there will still be risk of transmitting illnesses. Everyone should stay vigilant about the health of members of their teams. Lastly, the situation with COVID-19 is rapidly changing. These considerations may quickly become outdated. Please keep up with the latest from the CDC and other health officials in your area.

Visit the COVID-19 General Guidance Document for further requirements and recommendations that apply to all sports, including football. Please know that some of the requirements and recommendations in this sport-specific document duplicate state guidance.

*A **rule modification** is a modification to a playing rule from the governing body of the sport and is a **requirement** to adhere to and follow. A requirement must be adhered to and followed. A **recommendation** is a consideration to the sport and allows for optional guidelines. Recommendations are not required but are permitted.*

REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for Schools:

- Limit marching bands/pep bands to performing at home contests only.
- Bands, cheer squads and dance teams must follow state guidance for Youth and Collegiate Band, Choir, Cheer, Dance Teams and Other Similar Performance Activities (INSERT LINK).

Requirements for Coaches:

- Coaches must wear face masks at all times, including arriving and departing the facility and during active play.
- Limit day-of roster to 60 dressed players.

Requirements for Facility Hosts

- Inform the local health district when events are scheduled and establish a plan to handle those persons who fail a symptom assessment or temperature check or exhibit signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- Predetermine areas for all participants, coaches, contest officials and game-day personnel to shelter in the event there is lightning and/or thunder.
- Limit sideline personnel to participants, coaches, medical staff and game-day staff.

- If possible, provide designated space (locker room, classroom, etc.) for officials' pregame, halftime and post-game activities. If the designated space cannot accommodate six-foot social distancing of all officials, then a separate space should be provided where officials can observe six-foot social distancing and be removed from spectator/team interaction.
- Clearly review prior to the contest mandates, best practices and school/host facility policies with visiting team administrators and/or coaches and officials as they relate to, but are not limited to, parking; entrances and exits; medical care; spectators; ticketing; locker rooms/showers; athletic training rooms and restrooms; water; towels; equipment, and shelters in the event there is inclement weather.

2020 NFHS RULE MODIFICATIONS

Team Box Rule (NFHS Rule 1-2-3g)

- The team box will be extended on both sides of the field to the 10-yard lines (for players only) in order for more social-distancing space for the teams.
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times while in the team box and on the sidelines.
- Do not share uniforms, towels and other apparel and equipment.

BALL (NFHS Rule 1-3-2)

- The ball should be cleaned and disinfected throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer with EPA approved sanitizer for emerging pathogens.
- The ball holders should maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times during the contest.
- **The officials will have limited contact with the ball. The players of the offensive team will handle the ball and take it with them to the huddle. The Umpire will place a bean bag at the spot where the ball will be snapped.**

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

- Cloth face coverings are permissible while engaged in active play.
- Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint) shall not be allowed during the contest.
- Two products we know that comply are:
 1. Schutt Sports – Flexible 2-piece “Splash Shield” (Clear).
 2. Actuated Medical, Inc. – Polycarbonate 2-piece face shield (clear).

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

- The best evidence to date shows us that the coronavirus is spread through respiratory droplets. Saliva from mouthguards is unlikely to be a significant source of infection transmission. However, we recognize that parents and others may find the prospect of athletes frequently placing and removing a mouthguard concerning. Given this reality, the NFHS SMAC suggests that state associations develop statements instructing athletes to refrain from the removal of mouthguards while on the playing field, court, rink or mat. If mouthguards are removed on the sidelines or bench area, the athlete should use hand sanitizer each time after touching the mouthguard. A properly fitted mouthguard is required by rule in the following NFHS Sports: Football, Field Hockey, Boys and Girls Lacrosse, Ice Hockey and Wrestling (for wrestlers wearing braces).

GLOVES (Rule 1-5-2b)

- Gloves are permissible but still must comply with Rule 1-5-2b by meeting either the

NOCSAE Standard or the SFIA Specification.

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

- A single 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 at the bottom of the numbers. Players will social distance during timeouts.
- Each game official and player should have their own beverage container brought out to them on the field.

PREGAME CONFERENCE, COIN TOSS AND OVERTIME PROCEDURES

- For the coin toss, limit attendees to the referee, umpire and one designated representative from each team.
- Coin toss will take place in the center of the field with designated individuals maintaining social distancing of 6 feet.
- No handshakes prior to and following the coin toss.
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet while performing the pregame meeting between officials and coaches.
- For the overtime procedure, please use the same procedure as used at the start of the contest for the coin toss.

NECK GAITERS OR BUFF

- Legal, but they will be interpreted as part of the jersey and subject to Rule 9-4-3k (Horse Collar Tackle).

NFHS RULE RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERMISSION BETWEEN PERIODS AND AFTER SCORING (NFHS 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.

HALFTIME

- It is recommended that the halftime be shortened to the NFHS minimum of 10 minutes and that teams social distance outside of the locker rooms.

PRE AND POST GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

- Suspend pregame protocol of shaking hands during introductions.
- Suspend postgame protocol of shaking hands.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOOTBALL

- 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.
- Consideration should be considered to limiting contests against only teams in your local area or, if out-of-state, against teams located in counties that are contiguous to Ohio.
- Contest officials should not share whistles or any other equipment used for officiating purposes.
- When conducting temperature checks, take into account the potential for environmental factors causing an elevated temperature. Should the temperature be elevated, it is appropriate to isolate the individual and recheck the temperature after 5-to-10 minutes of sitting in a cool environment.

- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times while on the sidelines and on the field of play when possible.
- Everyone should have their own beverage container that is not shared.
- Cloth face coverings are permissible for all coaches, team staff and for all game administration officials. **THIS IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED! State orders and local guidance may be more stringent. Follow state orders and local guidance for arrival and departures and mask utilization.**
- Gloves are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration officials.
- Try and limit the number of non-essential personnel who are on the field level throughout the contest.
- Participants and coaches from visiting teams and officials should arrive at the contest facility dressed in partial or full uniforms or coaching/officiating gear and should plan to leave the contest facility in partial or full uniforms or coaching/officiating gear (e.g. not dress or change in visiting locker rooms).
- If available, dressing facilities for game officials and teams should be large enough for them to use social-distancing protocols and should be properly cleaned and sanitized prior to their arrival. **You are strongly encouraged to NOT use communal bathing facilities.**

OHSFCA Recommendations:

https://ohsaa-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/tbrooks_ohsaa_org/EX3DIbauyMRKiO_R2Y8QjFABnCHA4yul8-uuyciJVm_Lyg?e=jEQlhH

COVID-19 Resources:

- Ohio Department of Health Coronavirus Website (coronavirus.ohio.gov)
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov/coronavirus)