

NEW NFL RULES FOR 2014

The 2014 rules changes and points of emphasis:

- **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS:** In the interest of player safety, the prohibition on offensive blockers rolling up on the back of the legs of a defender has been extended to include the side of the legs. It is still legal to cut block a player from the front or side, but once a blocker rolls up on either the back or side of the legs, it is now a foul. All unnecessary roughness violations result in a 15-yard penalty and may warrant potential discipline.
- **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT:** The rule prohibiting players from using the ball, pylon or other objects as props as part of a demonstration has been expanded to include the crossbar and goalpost. All unsportsmanlike conduct violations result in a 15-yard penalty and may warrant potential discipline.
- **INSTANT REPLAY:** The referee will now be able to consult with senior members of the officiating department during replay reviews. In addition, the recovery of a loose ball in the field of play will now be reviewable. This includes fumbles, backward passes and kicks. For a comprehensive list of reviewable plays, please see page 18.
- **GOAL POSTS:** The uprights will now extend to 35 feet above the crossbar, up from 30 feet in previous seasons, to help officials make definitive rulings on field-goal attempts that previously crossed above the top of the uprights.
- **GAME CLOCK:** The clock will no longer be stopped after a quarterback sack outside two minutes of either half. If the player who originally takes the snap is tackled behind the line of scrimmage, the game clock will remain running. Going forward, the clock will continue to run unless it is stopped for a different reason, such as a penalty or team timeout.

There will also be **points of emphasis** on several existing rules this season (although the rules themselves have not changed):

- All rules that encourage **player safety** will continue to be strictly enforced. The focus is on eliminating these tactics from the game. Players must avoid hitting or blocking opponents in the head or neck area, or using the crown or hairline parts of the helmet to make forcible contact anywhere on the body. Both offensive and defensive players receive defenseless player protections in certain situations, including when a blocker approaches a defender from the side or from behind.
- **Sportsmanship** is always a point of emphasis. The use of abusive, threatening or insulting language directed at opponents, teammates, coaches, officials or representatives of the league is covered under unsportsmanlike conduct playing rules. This includes racial slurs, comments regarding sexual orientation or other verbal abuse. Coaches, officials and other league personnel will be held to the same high standard.
- Rules relating to illegal hands to the face have also been clarified. It is a foul if direct and forcible contact to the head, neck or face of an opponent, regardless of whether or not it pins the opponent's head back or is prolonged. This standard applies to players on both sides of the ball.

- Contact between receivers and defensive players prior to a pass will be a major point of emphasis. Defenders cannot initiate contact with eligible receivers more than five yards from the line of scrimmage when the quarterback is in the Grabbing a jersey or any other part of a receiver's uniform prior to a pass is defensive holding and will be penalized regardless of whether or not the official deems the grab to have impeded or restricted the receiver. Receivers can use their hands or arms to ward off contact initiated by a defender, but cannot push off to gain separation. Officials will also pay close attention to actions by the receiver at the top of the route.

- Movement on the offensive line will continue to be a point of emphasis. Prior to the snap, any quick or abrupt movement by an offensive player or players in unison that simulates the start of a play is prohibited. These actions will result in a five-yard false start penalty regardless of whether or not the defense reacts.

The rules governing extra point attempts did not change, but will result in an experiment during the preseason:

- For the NFL/Hall of Fame Game and the first two weeks of the preseason, the ball will be spotted at the 15-yard line for extra point kick attempts. This will be done to gather information regarding possible future changes to make these plays more competitive and exciting for fans. The two-point try will remain at the two-yard line during this experiment.