

RULE 4. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out of Bounds

SECTION 1. Ball in Play – Dead Ball

Dead Ball Becomes Alive

ARTICLE 1. After a dead ball has been declared ready for play, it becomes a live ball when it is legally snapped or legally free-kicked. A ball snapped or free-kicked before the ready for play remains dead (A.R. 2-15-4-I, A.R. 3-2-6-I, A.R. 4-1-4-I and II, A.R. 7-1-3-VI, and A.R. 7-1-5-I and II).

Live Ball Becomes Dead

ARTICLE 2.

- a. A live ball becomes a dead ball as provided in the rules or when an official sounds his whistle (even though inadvertently) or otherwise signals the ball dead (A.R. 4-2-1-II and A.R. 4-2-4-I).
- b. If an official sounds his whistle inadvertently or otherwise signals the ball dead during a down (Rules 4-1-3-k and m):
 1. When the ball is in player possession, then the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or replay the down.
 2. When the ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass or illegal pass, then the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
 3. During a legal forward pass or a free or scrimmage kick, then the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.
 4. After Team B gains possession on the try or during an extra period, then the try is over or the extra-period series is ended.
- c. If a foul occurs during any of the above downs, the penalty shall be administered as in any other play situation if not in conflict with other rules (A.R. 4-1-2-I and II).

Ball Declared Dead

ARTICLE 3. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound his whistle or declare it dead:

- a. When it goes out of bounds other than a kick that scores a field goal after touching the uprights or crossbar, when a runner is out of bounds, or when a runner is so held that his forward progress is stopped. When in question, the ball is dead (A.R. 4-2-1-II).
- b. When any part of the runner's body, except his hand or foot, touches the ground or when the runner is tackled or otherwise falls and loses possession of the ball as he contacts the ground with any part of his body, except his hand or foot. (**Exception:** The ball remains alive when an offensive player has simulated a kick or is in position to kick the ball held for a place kick by a teammate. The ball may be kicked, passed or advanced by rule) (A.R. 4-1-3-I).
- c. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, field goal or successful try occurs; when Team A completes an illegal forward pass in Team B's end zone; when Team A completes a forward pass to an ineligible player in Team B's end zone; or when an unsuccessful field goal attempt that has crossed the neutral zone and is then untouched by Team B, lands in Team B's end zone or out of bounds (A.R. 6-3-9-I).
- d. When, during a try, a dead-ball rule applies.
- e. When a player of the kicking team catches or recovers any free kick or a scrimmage kick that has crossed the neutral zone (A.R. 4-1-3-II).
- f. When a free kick, scrimmage kick or any other loose ball comes to rest and no player attempts to secure it.
- g. When a free kick or scrimmage kick (beyond the neutral zone) is caught or recovered by any player after a valid or invalid fair-catch signal; or when an invalid fair-catch signal is made after a catch or recovery by Team B (Rules 2-7-1, 2-7-2 and 2-7-3).
- h. When a return kick or scrimmage kick beyond the neutral zone is made.
- i. When a forward pass strikes the ground.
- j. When, on fourth down before a change of team possession, a Team A fumble is caught or recovered by a Team A player other than the fumbler (Rules 7-2-2-a and b).

- k. When a live ball not in player possession touches anything inbounds other than a player, a player's equipment, an official, an official's equipment or the ground (inadvertent-whistle provisions apply).
- l. When a simultaneous catch or recovery of a live ball occurs.
- m. When the ball becomes illegal while in play (inadvertent-whistle provisions apply).
- n. When the ball is in possession of an official.
- o. When a runner simulates placing his knee on the ground.
- p. When an airborne pass receiver from either team is so held and subsequently carried that he is prevented from immediately returning to the ground (A.R. 7-3-6-IV).
- q. When a runner's helmet comes completely off. The ball belongs to the runner's team at that spot.

Ball Ready for Play

ARTICLE 4. No player shall put the ball in play until it is declared ready for play (A.R. 4-1-4-I and II).

PENALTY -Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S21].

25-Second Count

ARTICLE 5. The ball shall be put in play within 25 seconds after it is declared ready for play, unless, during that interval, play is suspended. If play is suspended, the 25-second count will start again (*Exception:* Unfair crowd-noise situations).

PENALTY -Dead-ball foul. Five yards from the succeeding spot [S7 and S21].

SECTION 2. Out of Bounds

Player Out of Bounds

ARTICLE 1.

- a. A player or an airborne player is out of bounds when any part of his person touches anything, other than another player or game official, on or outside a boundary line (A.R. 4-2-1-I and II).
- b. A player or an airborne player who touches a pylon is out of bounds.

Held Ball Out of Bounds

ARTICLE 2. A ball in player possession is out of bounds when either the ball or any part of the runner touches the ground or anything else that is on or outside a boundary line except another player or game official.

Ball Out of Bounds

ARTICLE 3.

- a. A ball not in player possession, other than a kick that scores a field goal, is out of bounds when it touches the ground, a player, a game official or anything else that is on or outside a boundary line.
- b. A ball that touches a pylon is out of bounds behind the goal line.
- c. If a live ball not in player possession crosses a boundary line and then is declared out of bounds, it is out of bounds at the crossing point.

Out of Bounds at Forward Point

ARTICLE 4.

- a. If a live ball is declared out of bounds and the ball does not cross a boundary line, it is out of bounds at the ball's most forward point when it was declared dead (A.R. 4-2-4-I).
- b. A touchdown may be scored if the ball is inbounds and has broken the plane of the goal line before or simultaneous to the runner going out of bounds.
- c. A receiver who is in the opponent's end zone and contacting the ground is credited with a completion if he reaches over the sideline or end line and catches a legal pass.
- d. The most forward point of the ball when declared out of bounds between the end lines is the point of forward progress (A.R. 8-2-1-II and A.R. 8-5-1-X).
- e. When a runner dives or jumps toward the sideline and is airborne as he crosses the sideline, forward progress is determined by the position of the ball as it crosses the sideline (A.R. 8-2-1-III and IV).