



UNDER THE STRIPES

SOCCKER

RULES REFERENCE

HIGH SCHOOL OFFICIALS QUICK GUIDE
2026-27 NFHS

CODE & GENDER APPLICATION

The NFHS playing code applies to boys and girls; state competition procedures may differ.

Study aid only. Always use the current official rulebook, interpretations, mechanics manual, state or conference adoptions, bulletins and assignment instructions.

THE STORIES BEHIND THE CALLS

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UNDER THE STRIPES NETWORK | VERIFIED JULY 23, 2026

Core Contest Framework

Start here before moving into situation-specific study.

Topic	Quick reference
Players / game	11 players including goalkeeper; two 40-minute halves. State associations control overtime and shortened contests.
Field / goals	Field dimensions are within NFHS ranges; goals 8 yards wide by 8 feet high.
Clock	Official clock counts down and may be kept on field if necessary; stop it for required situations and state-adopted procedures.
Substitutions	NFHS substitution opportunities are broader than FIFA/IFAB. Know when substitutes may enter and whether the clock stops.
Offside	Position alone is not an offense; penalize involvement in active play as defined.
Misconduct	Caution = yellow card; disqualification = red card. Apply state rules for player replacement and coach conduct.

Pregame Crew Checklist

- Confirm jurisdiction, start time, contest level, crew assignments and state/local modifications.
- Inspect playing area, equipment, clocks, team/bench areas and required game personnel.
- Conduct the required coaches/captains meeting; address sportsmanship and unusual ground/facility conditions.
- Review timing, substitution, timeout, penalty and end-of-period/inning procedures.
- Establish crew communication, primary coverage, rotations, help situations and emergency procedures.

Primary Coverage & Mechanics

Use the current NFHS officials manual and your state mechanics. Maintain a patient whistle/flag, officiate your primary, expand only when necessary, and communicate decisive information to the crew before enforcement.

High-Priority Rules

Area	What the official must know
Penalty-kick encroachment	2026-27 revisions penalize encroachment when it clearly affects the outcome; apply the result/enforcement table.
Home socks	Home team must wear dark socks under the clarified 2026-27 uniform rule.
Handling	Judge deliberate action, arm position, body movement, consequence and specific goalkeeper restrictions.
Challenges	Evaluate speed, force, point of contact, opportunity to play the ball and safety: careless, reckless or excessive force.
Offside involvement	Use patience. Confirm position at teammate's touch, then involvement by play, opponent interference or advantage.
Restarts	Know direct vs indirect free kicks, ceremonial management, required distance and when the ball is in play.

Gender & Competition Differences

Area	Application
Playing rules	Same NFHS rules for boys and girls.
Ball size	Size 5 for standard high-school competition for both.
Game length	Standard is two 40-minute halves for both; state/level modifications may differ.
Season / postseason	Can differ by state and gender, but those are administrative adoptions rather than separate national playing rules.

Important

A boys/girls distinction is included only where an actual equipment, dimension, adoption or competition difference exists. The absence of a separate section means the same NFHS playing rule applies.

Situations to Review

Situation	Crew response / study point
Attacker in offside position does not participate	No offense; keep the flag down unless the player becomes involved under the rule.
Reckless tackle	Stop play, caution the offender, and restart according to the foul location/type.
Penalty kick with early entry	Judge whether encroachment clearly affected the outcome, then use the 2026-27 enforcement outcome.
Goalkeeper controls ball, then challenged	Protect lawful possession; an opponent may not challenge once control is established.

Postgame Self-Review

- Which ruling required the strongest rules knowledge?
- Did the crew communicate ball status, clock status, penalty/foul details and restart correctly?
- Was any call made outside a primary without clear necessity?
- What rule, case play or mechanic should be verified before the next assignment?
- What one crew adjustment would improve consistency?

Official References

NFHS Soccer Rules

<https://nfhs.org/sports/soccer/rules>

2026-27 Rules Changes

<https://nfhs.org/sports/soccer/rules>

2026-27 Comments

<https://nfhs.org/resources/sports/soccer-comments-on-the-rules-2026-27>

RULES DISCLAIMER

This educational quick reference is not an official rules book and does not reproduce the complete NFHS code. Rules, interpretations and state adoptions change. Before every season and assignment, consult the current NFHS rules book, case book, officials manual, your state high school association and the contest administrator.