



# NFHS Formation Card: the alignment rules that draw flags

High school football · NFHS rules · 2026 season · alignment at the snap

| # | DIAGRAM | THE RULE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | DIAGRAM IS | REFERENCE                                                      |
|---|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 |         | At least 5 players on the line of scrimmage and no more than 4 in the backfield. With 11 players, that means 7 on the line.                                                                                                                                            | ✓ LEGAL    | NFHS 2-14-1, 7-2-5a<br>N-01                                    |
| 2 |         | At least 5 of the players on the line wear numbers 50-79.                                                                                                                                                                                                              | ✓ LEGAL    | NFHS 7-2-5b<br>N-02                                            |
| 3 |         | Scrimmage-kick formation: nobody in position to take a hand-to-hand snap, and either a player 10+ yards deep to receive the long snap, or a holder 7+ yards deep with the kicker no more than 3 yards behind him.                                                      | ✓ LEGAL    | NFHS 2-14-2<br>N-03                                            |
| 4 |         | Numbering exception: from that kick formation on 4th down or a try, linemen may wear other numbers, and each exception player must line up between the ends. On 1st to 3rd down it covers only the snapper. (The Playbook Caller checks the kick shape, not the down.) | ✓ LEGAL    | NFHS 7-2-5<br>Exception<br>N-04 PARTIAL                        |
| 5 |         | A lineman numbered 50-79 on the end of the line is a legal formation. He is simply an ineligible receiver. High school has no reporting.                                                                                                                               | ✓ LEGAL    | NFHS 7-2-5, 7-5-6a<br>E-01                                     |
| 6 |         | No defender in the neutral zone at the snap. High school treats it as encroachment, a dead-ball foul.                                                                                                                                                                  | FLAG       | NFHS encroachment rule<br>N-13 (no article number: unverified) |
| 7 |         | Kickoff: the kicking team's restraining line is its own 40 (college: 35). At least 4 kicking-team players on each side of the kicker. The receiving team starts at least 10 yards away.                                                                                | ✓ LEGAL    | NFHS 6-1-1, 6-1-4<br>N-07, N-08, N-10                          |
| 8 |         | Kickoff: nobody but the kicker may be more than 5 yards behind the kicking team's free-kick line.                                                                                                                                                                      | FLAG       | NFHS 6-1-3b<br>N-09                                            |

○ offense ▼ defense ↻ player the check flags ○ player of interest - - - line of scrimmage / kick line Diagrams are schematic, not to scale.

## 3 SURPRISES: WHERE HIGH SCHOOL DIFFERS

- Defenders may line up over the snapper on punts and kicks. College (NCAA 6-3-14-a) and the NFL (9-1-3) keep them outside the snapper's frame.
- A tackle on the end of the line is not a formation foul. In the NFL it is, unless he reports as eligible (NFL 7-5-1, 5-3-1).
- Hash marks are wider apart: 53 ft 4 in from each sideline, splitting the field in thirds (NFHS 1-2-3(5)). College: 60 ft. NFL: 70 ft 9 in.

**Youth tackle leagues.** Many youth tackle leagues play NFHS-based rules with their own modifications. This card covers the NFHS base only. Check your league's rule book for its changes.

