



## NEW RULES FOR 2005

There are several new rules in the NFL in 2005.

The NFL Competition Committee spends the early part of the offseason examining existing rules, and suggesting possible changes to the rules. Rules changes are then voted upon by the teams at the NFL Annual Meeting in the spring.

No matter what the changes, NFL players and coaches know they have to be cognizant of them.

“Our approach to the game is the same as it always is: To know the rules and to play within them,” says New England Patriots head coach **BILL BELICHICK**.

### New NFL rules for 2005:

- **Players are prohibited from grabbing the inside collar of the back or side of the shoulder pads and immediately pulling down the runner.** This rule does not apply to a quarterback in the pocket or a runner in the tackle box. Previously, there was no regulation about the “horse-collar” tackle. This rule does not apply to the quarterback in the pocket. **Penalty: loss of 15 yards.** **Reason for the change:** Will prevent injury that can result from this tackling technique.
- **An offensive player who is aligned in the tackle box at the snap and moves to a position outside the box cannot initiate contact on the side and below the waist of an opponent if the player is moving back toward the direction of his own end line.** If the near shoulder of the blocker contacts the front of his opponent’s body, the “peel back” block is legal. Previously, a player aligned in the tackle box could hit an opponent on the side and below the waist from any direction. **Penalty: loss of 15 yards.** **Reason for the change:** Player safety.
- **There shall be no unnecessary roughness, including unnecessarily running, diving into, cutting, or throwing the body against or on a player who is out of the play before or after the ball is dead.** Previously, the policy on unnecessary roughness was less specific. **Reason for the change:** Player safety.
- **A kicker/punter standing still or fading backwards after the ball has been kicked is out of the play and must not be unnecessarily contacted by the receiving team until he assumes a distinctly defensive position. An opponent may not unnecessarily initiate helmet-to-helmet contact to the kicker/punter at anytime during the kick or during the return.** Previously, there was no regulation about contact with a kicker/punter after he kicked the ball, nor was there any regulation about helmet-to-helmet contact with the kicker. **Reason for the change:** Prevents teams from gaining an unfair advantage as a result of injury to a punter/kicker, a position at which there is little to no depth.
- **If, during a scrimmage kick, a player is called for illegal touching inside the receiver’s 5-yard line, the receiving team may elect to take a touchback.** Previously, the receiving team could choose to take the ball at the spot of the foul or elect for the kicking team to lose five yards and re-kick. **Reason for the change:** Prevents an ineligible player from keeping a kick from entering the end zone and becoming a touchback.
- **If, at the end of a half, the defense commits a dead-ball personal foul, the offense may choose to extend the period for one untimed down and move 15 yards forward.** Previously, a dead-ball foul was unenforceable after time had expired. **Reason for the change:** Ensures unsafe act committed by defense after time expires does not go unpunished.
- **The “pocket area” is now defined as spanning the normal tackle position on each side of the center and extends backwards to the offense’s own end line.** Previously, there were two defined pocket areas. The first spanned from tackle to tackle and was considered only for intentional grounding. The second spanned from tight end to tight end and was considered for illegal contact. **Reason for the change:** Without two tight ends on opposite sides of the center, the pocket area definition is inconsistent. Narrowing it to the tackles makes the definition more concrete and easier for officials to monitor.
- **If, for any reason, the play clock is stopped with fewer than 10 seconds remaining, it is re-set to 10 seconds.** Previously, if the play clock stopped prior to the snap, it was automatically re-set to 25 seconds. **Reason for the change:** More specific regulation of the play clock prevents putting teams at a disadvantage for certain stoppages of the game. If the play clock is stopped with fewer than 10 seconds left, it is exceedingly difficult for teams to line up and execute a play.
- **For the following fouls called during a kick play, the offended team will have the option of accepting the penalty at the previous spot and replaying the down or adding the penalty yardage (five yards) onto the end of the play: ineligible player down field; member of the punting team voluntarily out of bounds; illegal formation; illegal motion; player not reporting change in eligibility; offensive offside; illegal shift.** Previously, the offended team could decline the penalty or accept a re-kick and a loss of five yards. **Reason for the change:** The added option of assessing a penalty at the end of a return is expected to reduce the number of re-kicks.
- **An attempt to call an excess or illegal time-out to “freeze” a kicker prior to a field goal attempt or a PAT will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct.** Previously, officials were instructed to ignore the attempt and assess no penalty. **Penalty: loss of 15 yards.** **Reason for the change:** Will eliminate a team’s attempt to distract the kicker by an illegal request. Officials are instructed to assess the penalty at the end of the play. If the timeout is inadvertently granted, the penalty also will be enforced.
- **A team that is out of timeouts or has used all of its available challenges may not attempt to initiate an additional challenge.** **Penalty: loss of 15 yards.** Previously, there was no penalty for attempting to initiate an excess challenge. **Reason for the change:** Prevents a team that has exhausted all of its challenges or timeouts from stopping the game and protects the competitive integrity of replay procedures. This also applies inside of 2:00 minutes of either half.
- **A player or an official is out of bounds when he touches anything other than a player, an official or a pylon on or outside a boundary line.** Previously, officials outside a boundary were considered out of bounds. This change pertains mostly to cases where players running along the sideline contact officials standing on the boundary line. **Reason for the change:** Helps with officiating consistency.

