

**2009 National Federation Starting the Clock**  
**Rules 3-4-3 and 3-4-4**  
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Starting the clock on the snap or on the ready-for-play signal depends upon how the clock was stopped.

**1. Major Clock Stoppers**

- 1.1 The ball goes out of bounds.
- 1.2 Team B is awarded a first down.
- 1.3 Either team is awarded a first down following a **legal** kick.  
(Free kick, punt, field-goal attempt, kick after a safety)
- 1.4. The ball becomes dead behind a goal line.
  - 1.4.1 Touchdown.
  - 1.4.2 Touchback.
  - 1.4.3 Safety.
- 1.5 A **legal** or **illegal** forward pass is incomplete.
- 1.6 A request for a charged (team) time out is granted.
- 1.7 A request for a TV/radio time out is granted.
- 1.8 A period ends.
- 1.9 A team attempts to consume time illegally.
- 1.10 The penalty for a delay of game foul is accepted.

After a **Major Clock Stopper** the game clock will start on the snap.

Note that “change of possession” is not a criterion for starting the clock on the snap. The clock does not run during a try or during the extension of a period (for a down or for overtime play. On a free kick the clock starts when the ball is legally touched in the field of play (between the goal lines) other than first touching by K. The game clock does not start if the free kick breaks the plane of R’s goal line or if the ball is kicked out-of-bounds.

**2. Minor Clock Stoppers.**

- 2.1 First down awarded to Team A.  
(Except following a legal kick.)
- 2.2 Penalty administration.
- 2.3 Referee’s time out for an injury (player or official).
- 2.4 Referee’s time out for equipment problems.
- 2.5 Referee’s discretionary time out.
- 2.6 Inadvertent whistle.
- 2.7 Coach’s conference.
- 2.8 Sideline warning.
- 2.9 Measurement for a first down.
- 2.10 When a team attempts to conserve time illegally. (3-6-3)

After a **Minor Clock Stopper** the clock will start on the ready-for-play signal unless a **Major Clock Stopper** is involved.

# **National Federation 2009 Starting the Clock Examples**

## ***Compiled by Dick Fredricks***

**1.1A COMMENT:** When any player fumbles and the ball goes out of bounds in advance of the spot of the fumble, the clock stops and next starts on the snap. Also, the ball is placed at the inbounds line on the yard line where the ball went out of bounds.

**1.1B PLAY:** Receiver A1 controls a pass while airborne near A's sideline. B1 contacts A1 who then lands out of bounds while still possession the ball. The covering official rules a completed pass because B1's contact caused A1 to land out of bounds. **RULING:** The clock is stopped because the ball went out of bounds and will start with the snap.

**1.2A COMMENT:** The game clock starts on the snap whenever Team B is awarded a new series. However, a new series is not awarded to Team B until all acts which occurred during the down, including penalties other than non-player or unsportsmanlike, are considered.

**1.2B PLAY:** With third and 10: (a) A1 fumbles the ball and Team B recovers, or (b) A1's pass is intercepted by Team B. When will the clock be restarted? **RULING:** Since Team B is awarded a first down in both (a) and (b) the clock will start on the snap.

**1.2C. PLAY:** Second and 5 on A's 35. B2 intercepts A1's forward pass and is tackled inbounds on B's 42. While the pass was in flight, B2 committed pass interference and the penalty is accepted. **RULING:** The game clock starts on the "ready." Team B was not awarded a new series because of the penalty.

**1.2D PLAY:** Fourth and 10 on B's 30. A2 catches A1's forward pass and is tackled inbounds on B's (a) 22, short of a first down, or (b) B's 17, beyond the line to gain.. While the pass was in flight, B2 committed pass interference and the penalty is accepted. **RULING:** In (a) and (b) the game clock starts on the "ready." In (a) Team B was not awarded a new series because of the penalty. In (b) Team A is awarded a new series regardless of whether or not the penalty is accepted.

**1.3A COMMENT:** For downs following a legal kick (kickoff, punt, place-kick from scrimmage), the game clock starts on the snap when a new series is awarded to either team.

**1.3B PLAY:** R1 catches the kickoff on his 10 and (a) is tackled inbounds on his 25; or (b) fumbles on his 25, with prone R5 recovering. **RULING:** In (a) or (b) the game clock starts on the snap.

**1.3C PLAY:** Third and 15 on K's 20. K1 tries a quick kick, which is blocked by R2 and recovered on K's 12 by prone: (a) R5, or (b) K7. **RULING:** In (a) the game clock starts on the snap. In (b) the game clock should not have been stopped at any point during or after the down. While K1's kick was legal, a new series was not awarded to either team at the end of the down and Team B was not awarded a first down.

**1.3D PLAY:** K1's punt is blocked by R1 behind the neutral zone where K2 recovers and advances beyond the line to gain. **RULING:** The clock will start on the snap as a new series has been awarded following a legal kick.

**1.3E PLAY:** Fourth and 10 on K's 20. K1 punts, but K2 is flagged for illegal motion or Team K is in an illegal formation and the penalty is accepted. **RULING:** If the game clock was running before the snap, it should be restarted on the "ready." If not, the clock starts on the snap.

**1.3F PLAY:** K1's kickoff is caught by R1 and returned to R's 30. While the kick is in flight, R2 blocks K2 below the waist on R's 40. **RULING:** If the penalty is declined, R will have the ball first down and 10 on R's 30. Since the clock stopped for a new series following a legal kick, the clock will start with the snap. If the penalty is accepted, K will rekick from R's 45. The clock will start when the kick is touched other than first touching by K. When a free kick down is replayed, the clock will start the same as it does on the original free kick.

**1.3G PLAY:** During a scrimmage kick R1 signals for and makes a fair catch. **RULING:** The clock was stopped because of the fair catch. It will start when the ball is snapped or, if put in play by a free kick, when the ball is touched other than first touching by K.

### **1.3H (See 2.2B)**

**1.6 PLAY:** Near the end of the second period, Team A requests and is granted a charged time out. After both teams are ready to play, Team A comes to the line of scrimmage in an unusual formation. The captain of Team B immediately requests a time out that is granted. At the end of this time out period, when Team A comes to the line of scrimmage again, A1 notices that Team B has adjusted its defense. A1 then requests a second charged time out during the same dead ball period. **RULING:** If Team A has time outs remaining, the referee will grant the request for the charged time out. Successive time outs by the same team, or by one team followed by the other team, are permissible. The game clock starts on the snap.

**1.9 PLAY:** With no time outs remaining and fourth down with 40 seconds to go in the third period, K is preparing to punt into a strong wind. With 20 seconds remaining, K1 commits a false start. **RULING:** Penalize Team K 5 yards and start the clock with the snap. Under normal circumstances, the clock would start with the ready-for-play signal, but this would permit the period to end and K could then punt with the wind. K will not be permitted to gain this advantage by committing a foul to consume time.

**1.10A COMMENT:** When a delay of game penalty is accepted, the game clock starts on the snap.

**1.10B COMMENT:** Consuming time in failing to unpile after a down brings a five-yard penalty for delay. The game clock starts on the “ready” or on the snap – referee’s discretion.

**1.10C PLAY:** First down for Team A with eight minutes left in the second period and the game clock running. Team A, in a non-scrimmage kick formation, is then flagged for delay of game when it does not snap the ball within 25 seconds. The penalty is: (a) accepted, or (b) declined. **RULING:** In (a) the game clock starts on the snap. In (b) the game clock starts on the “ready.”

**1.10D PLAY:** There are 40 seconds to go in the first period when Team A is faced with a punting situation against a strong wind while deep in its own territory. After running 25 seconds off the clock, Team A is called for delay of game. **RULING:** If Team B accepts the penalty, Team A will be penalized 5 yards and the clock will not start until the snap.

**1.10E PLAY:** During the down there is a foul by A1 and the penalty is enforced. The captain of Team A requests a time out for a coach-official conference regarding the misapplication of a rule even though Team A has no time outs remaining. The referee confers with the coach and there is no change of decision. **RULING:** Team A will be penalized 5 yards for delay of game and the clock will be started with the snap because of the “delay of game” rule.

**1.10F PLAY:** (a) A1’s forward progress is stopped, but he continues to struggle forward despite repeated blasts of the whistle by the covering officials; or (b) B1 intercepts and, in exuberance, runs off the field with the ball. **RULING:** Delay of game in (a) and unsportsmanlike conduct in (b). The game clock starts with the snap in (a) because of the “delay of game” provision in the rules and the game clock starts with the snap in (b) because Team B is awarded a first down.

**1.10G PLAY:** With less than a minute remaining in the game, the score is 21-20 in favor of Team B. The clock is running and the ball is on B’s 10 yard line. An option play on third down gains 5 yards, but is short of the line to gain. Following the tackle: (a) Team B players are slow unpiling and a penalty marker is dropped; or (b) the tackler B1 holds A1 down for a few moments, but the covering official does not judge the action to be illegal. **RULING:** In (a) the delay penalty is a situation which automatically dictates the clock will not be started until the snap. In (b) even though B1 held A1 down momentarily, the clock will continue to run as no foul was called. **COMMENT:** In some situations there is a delay in unpiling and no individual player or team is to blame. In such situations the referee is authorized to stop the clock momentarily so no more clock time than normal is used in getting the ball ready for play.

**2.2A COMMENT:** If the clock was stopped when the ball became dead following a foul and this was the only reason for stopping the clock, it will be started when the referee declares the ball ready for play immediately following the declination or administration of the penalty

**2.2B** PLAY: During a scrimmage kick R2 is contacted by K1 before he can attempt to catch the kick. RULING: The action which caused the clock to be stopped was the foul by K1. When there is kick-catching interference, the offended team has a number of choices. R may: (a) decline the penalty and take the results of the play; (b) accept the penalty by taking an awarded fair catch at the spot of the foul and may, then, snap or free kick; or (c) accept the distance penalty from the previous spot with a replay of the down by K. In (a) the clock starts with the snap because Team B is awarded a first down. In (b) the clock starts with the snap or when the free kick is touched legally (other than first touching). In (c) the clock starts on the "ready" because the only reason the clock was stopped was to administer the penalty. [Applies, in part, to **1.3H**]

**2.2C** PLAY: With time expiring in the second or fourth period and Team A behind in the score, A1 intentionally throws the ball forward to the ground in order to stop the clock. A1's action took place: (a) immediately after receiving a direct hand-to-hand snap; (b) immediately after receiving the snap while A1 was lined up 3 yards deep; or (c) after A1 delayed and took more than one step after receiving a direct hand-to-hand snap. RULING: In (a) the grounding is legal; the clock remains stopped until the subsequent snap. Illegal forward pass in (b) and (c); the clock shall be started on the "ready" signal.

**2.4A** COMMENT: When a player is in need of equipment repair an officials' timeout is taken and the game clock is stopped or remains stopped if the repair can be made within 25 seconds and without the assistance of a team attendant; it remains an officials' timeout. If the repair takes more than 25 seconds or if assistance is given by any nonplayer, the team is charged with a timeout. If the team's timeouts are exhausted, the player with the equipment problem must leave the game for at least one timed down. (When it becomes apparent the repair will take more than 25 seconds, allow the player to leave the game; do not charge a timeout.) The game clock starts with the "ready" if the official's time out was taken while the clock was running.

**2.4B** PLAY: After B1 makes a tackle inbounds and with the clock correctly running, he asks for an officials' timeout to repair a strap that became detached during the play. RULING: An officials' timeout should be granted. The clock starts on the "ready" signal.

**2.4C** PLAY: With the game clock running or stopped, A2 has an equipment problem which: (a) requires the help of a team attendant, or (b) still exists more than 25 seconds after the problem was acknowledged by an official. Must A2 leave the game? RULING: In (a) or (b), Team A is charged with a timeout and the game clock starts at the snap. If A's timeouts are exhausted, A2 must leave the game for at least one timed down.

**2.5A** COMMENT: If, for whatever reason, the ball becomes illegal (e.g., becomes deflated or otherwise damaged) while in play there is no rules provision. The referee decides on a course of action.

**2.5B.** PLAY. The ball carrier is tackled near the sideline and the ball come loose (is fumbled inbounds). However, players' momentum carries them out of bounds (legally) and they hit the ball boy who is standing nearby. The ball he is holding bounds from his hands onto the playing field. A defensive team player picks up one football and runs for an apparent touchdown, while an offensive team player picks up the other football and runs for an apparent touchdown. RULING. The Referee will invoke the "inadvertent whistle rule (4-2-3-b), give Team A the option to replay the down or give Team A the ball where the fumble occurred. The game clock starts on the "ready."

**2.5C** PLAY: K1 punts and while the kick is airborne beyond the neutral zone, the ball suddenly deflates. RULING: Common sense would dictate that the down be replayed from the previous spot; however, no specific rules provision exists. (NCAA rules state that inadvertent-whistle provisions apply.)

**2.5D** PLAY: During the second down of a series, the field clock goes directly from 1:45 to 0:44 and it is not detected. Following third down, time expires for the first or second period: (a) before, or (b) after the referee has indicated the period has officially ended, the error is discovered. RULING: In (a) the timing error is correctable as it was discovered prior to the second live ball and before the period officially had ended. However, in (b), the timing error cannot be corrected whether it is the first or second period.

**2.6A** COMMENT: Following a down in which an inadvertent whistle was sounded the game clock starts on the referee's "ready" without exception.

**2.6B** PLAY: Fourth and five from A's 30. An official sounds an inadvertent whistle when: (a) A1's forward pass is in flight, or (b) A1's punt is in flight. RULING: In each case the down is replayed from A's 30 and in both cases the game clock starts on the "ready."

**2.6C** PLAY: Near the end of a period with 28 seconds left, K1 punts on fourth down. During the kick an official inadvertently sounds his whistle. The clock stopped with 23 seconds remaining. RULING: The clock will be started with the ready-for-play signal. The down must be replayed as part of that period.

**2.7A** PLAY: It is third and 8 from R's 50 when A1 throws an incomplete forward pass. Erroneously the ball is spotted on R's 45 and K1 punts the ball into R's end zone. Following the down, the R captain asks for a time out so the coach may discuss the misapplication of the rules with the referee. RULING: Since the spotting of the ball was part of the previous play, it is too late to make any correction. The error had to be recognized and correction made before the ball was snapped on fourth down.

**2.7B** PLAY: Following a fourth down incomplete forward pass late in the fourth period, a time out is properly requested for a coach-referee conference regarding possible misapplication of a rule. (a) The Team B coach questions a pass interference call on B1 on the second forward pass by A1; or (b) the Team A coach questions why there was no pass interference by the defense and why the covering official signaled that the pass was not catchable. In either case, the referee determines that the coach was correct and the rules had been misapplied. RULING: In (a) the penalty marker is picked up. In (b), a penalty marker is dropped and the interference is penalized. Misapplication of a rule may result in picking up a flag or dropping a marker to indicate a foul did occur.

**2.10A** COMMENT: Whenever a team fouls by illegally consuming or conserving time, the referee shall alter the regular timing and order the clock stopped or started according to the situation. The rule (3-4-3-h; 3-6-2-b) directs the referee to stop the clock until the snap instead of letting it run, or to start it on the "ready" when normal timing dictates it start on the snap.

**2.10B** PLAY: Near the end of the second period, there is a false start by A1 clearly for the purpose of stopping the clock. When will the clock be restarted? RULING: Because the foul was the only reason for stopping the clock, it will be restarted on the ready-for-play signal following enforcement of the penalty.