



WISCONSIN INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

WIAA Football Referee PA Announcement Best Practices

Communicating penalties clearly and professionally is a critical part of a high school football referee's job. This document provides guidelines for Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) football officials using a PA microphone on the field. The goal is to ensure announcements are accurate, consistent, and easy for players, coaches, and fans to understand, while maintaining the flow of the game.

1. Pre-Game Preparation

- **Test the Equipment:** Before the game, always test the microphone to ensure it's working properly and the volume is set at an appropriate level. Confirm with game management that the batteries are new and if extra are available.
- **Be Prepared:** Know the proper signals and announcement wording for all NFHS penalties. Having a mental checklist of the key components of an announcement will prevent you from fumbling your words.
- **Coordinate with the PA Announcer:** Meet with the stadium's PA announcer to clarify that you will be making all penalty announcements and that they should not "jump the gun" by making their own preliminary announcement. They should wait for your signal and announcement. Same to be said with end of quarters and end of game announcements.
- **Crew bag additions:** It is a good idea to carry additional batteries and black electrical tape to perform any repairs or modifications to the equipment as needed.

2. General Best Practices

- **Be a "Source of Information, Not a Source of Entertainment."** Your role is to provide clear, factual information. Avoid commentary, humor, or showing any emotion. Educate the audience of players, coaches, and spectators. Friday night rules are different from what many see on Sundays from their couch.
- **Positioning is Key:** After a penalty is called, move to a position on the field where you are visible and audible to the entire stadium. This is typically near the offended team's sideline, but don't announce if you're obscured by players.
- **Use a Toggle Switch or Push-to-talk:** If your microphone has a toggle switch or push-to-talk, use it. This prevents any unintended conversations or sounds from being broadcast over the PA system. Practice with the microphone and its switch so you can use it with confidence. Also confirm who controls the microphone, is it the official on the field or someone in the pressbox.
- **Wait for the Crew:** Don't make an announcement until you have conferred with the other officials and the penalty has been confirmed. The referee's final decision is the only information that should be announced.
- **Be Stationary:** Stand still and upright when making the announcement. Avoid leaning, swaying, or making unnecessary movements.
- **Stay in the "Box":** When giving hand signals, keep them within a comfortable "box" at chest level. Don't flail your arms or make excessive gestures.

3. Making the Announcement

Follow a consistent, logical order for every announcement. This helps the audience follow along and minimizes confusion. A good sequence is:

1. **Foul:** State the specific penalty (e.g., "Holding").
2. **Team:** Identify the team that committed the foul (e.g., "on the offense").
3. **Enforcement:** Explain the result of the penalty (e.g., "a 10-yard penalty from the previous spot").
4. **Down:** State the resulting down and distance (e.g., "replay second down" or "first down").
5. **Multiple Fouls:** Have another crew member stand near you to help provide information about the multiple fouls.

**Although NFHS Football Official's Manual allows you to announce the number/s of the offending players, it is preferred that you do not individually point out the individual.*

4. Sample Announcements

- **Holding:** "Holding, on the offense. A 10-yard penalty from the previous spot. Replay third down."
- **False Start:** "False start, on the offense. A 5-yard penalty. Remains first down."
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** "Unsportsmanlike conduct, on the defense. A 15-yard penalty. The penalty is enforced on the succeeding spot, the kickoff."
- **Roughing the Passer (Automatic First Down):** "Roughing the passer, on the defense. A 15-yard penalty from the previous spot. Automatic first down."

5. Final Reminders

- **Speak Clearly:** Speak in a normal, deliberate tempo. Do not rush your words or raise your voice at the end of a sentence as if you are asking a question.
- **Be Concise:** Avoid saying "we have a foul" or "we have a flag." Simply state the penalty directly.
- **No Names:** Refer to teams as "offense," "defense," "kicking team," or "receiving team" rather than by their mascots or names.
- **Be Confident:** The goal is to project confidence and control. Your demeanor and tone should convey authority and professionalism.
- **Personality:** It's ok to have a personality. Let it come through when making your announcements. Talk as if you are speaking to another official, friend, or family member.

[Holding Clip Example](#)

[Pre-snap Penalty Example](#)

[Illegal Formation- Educate Example](#)

[Illegal Blindside Block - Educate Example](#)