

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

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COMMUNICATIONS

FACT SHEET

USE OF THE HELMET – RULE 12, SECTION 2, ARTICLE 8

The Rule: As [approved](#) by NFL clubs in March, it is a foul if a player lowers his head to initiate and make contact with his helmet against an opponent. Contact does not have to be to an opponent's head or neck area – lowering the head and initiating contact to an opponent's torso, hips, and lower body, is also a foul. Violations of the rule will be easier to see and officiate when they occur in open space – as opposed to close line play – but this rule applies anywhere on the field at any time.

Penalties for Violation: Loss of 15 yards. If the foul is by the defense, it is also an automatic first down. The player may also be ejected. Ejection standards:

1. Player lowers his helmet to establish a linear body posture prior to initiating and making contact with the helmet
2. Unobstructed path to his opponent
3. Contact clearly avoidable and player delivering the blow had other options

NFL WAY TO PLAY

NFL Way to Play is an educational series about proper use of the helmet to protect players from unnecessary risk and to foster culture change across all levels of football.

- **Emphasis on Stance, Posture, and Technique**
 - Knees Bent
 - Pads Down
 - Hands First
 - Head Up and Out of the Way
- **Coaches/Players/Legends speak to technique and fundamentals**
 - Head Coach Videos: Todd Bowles, Anthony Lynn, Doug Marrone, Dan Quinn, and Mike Vrabel volunteered to create position-specific videos to assist in educating coaches and players on position-based applications of the new rule. The videos provide coaching points of emphasis to execute proper technique:
 - [Ball Carriers Video](#): Head Coach Anthony Lynn, Los Angeles Chargers
 - [Offensive Line Video](#): Head Coach Doug Marrone, Jacksonville Jaguars
 - [Defensive Line Video](#): Head Coach Dan Quinn, Atlanta Falcons
 - [Linebackers Video](#): Head Coach Mike Vrabel, Tennessee Titans
 - [Defensive Backs Video](#): Head Coach Todd Bowles, New York Jets
 - Former Player Videos: Additionally, several former players have also created videos on the new rule:
 - [Willie Lanier Video](#)
 - [Curtis Martin Video](#)
 - [Willie McGinest Video](#)

Educational sessions were held with coaches May 1-2 in New York. Webinars and conference calls with all 32 coaching staffs were held May 16-17. Officiating sessions with players are occurring during training camps.

A PROCESS DRIVEN BY SCIENCE, DATA, AND EXPERIENCE

A comprehensive review of data and video demonstrated the increased risk associated with lowering the head to align the neck and spine before initiating contact. This behavior puts both the player making the contact and the player being struck at greater risk of injury.

Why the Rule?

- Conforms to modern coaching methods and reflects the most up-to-date science and medical knowledge
- Protects players from unnecessary risk and reduces injuries
 - Proper use of helmets has long been a part of NFL [rules](#)
- Intent is for the helmet to be used strictly as a protective piece of equipment
 - Works hand-in-hand with [efforts](#) to improve the protective quality of helmets
- Promotes culture change across all levels of football to remove the head from the game

How – Our Process

- Research/Science/Data ([Science and Data Video](#))
- Engineering
- Input from Players/Legends, Coaches, Officials, GMs, and Owners
- College football analytics

For more information, please review the complete 2018 Rules Changes and Points of Emphasis [video](#) or visit [operations.nfl.com](#) or [www.playsmartplaysafe.com](#).

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