

27. SUPPLEMENTARY SIGNALS

The official football signals (S1 to S47) are described in the rulebook, but in practice officials supplement these with signals of their own or other people's invention in order to aid communication in situations where verbal communication is either impossible or undesirable.

All signals are means of visually communicating a message. The source of the message is the official who gives the signal. The destination of the message may be, in different cases, other officials, players, coaches or spectators. Visual signals may have to be used where either distance or noise prevent audible signals from being heard, or where an audible signal is inappropriate.

No.	Message	Signal
Sup1	the Team A player nearest me is off the line of scrimmage	arm outstretched (with hand open) approximately 90° to the ground, pointing into Team A backfield
Sup3	the team I am responsible for counting has 11 players on the field	clenched fist between waist and shoulder height with upward pointing thumb); arm outstretched to side (see also Sup24)
Sup4	the team I am responsible for counting has more than 11 players on the field	hand on top of head
Sup5	the last pass was a backward pass	punch arm into backfield
Sup6	Team A have more than 10 yards to go to the line to gain (2-stakes)	wagging index fingers discretely at chest height
Sup8	the game clock stops after the next play	crossed wrists in front of chest
Sup9	Team A is attempting a kick at goal	form hands into A shape with fingertips touching
Sup10	Team A is "going for it" – they are not attempting a kick in a 4th down or PAT situation	roll hands (like S19) above head
Sup11	the game clock starts on the snap	click fingers
Sup12	the game clock starts on the ready or is running	circular motion of finger from wrist
Sup13	the catch was complete	clutch hands to chest in catching motion
Sup14	the pass was caught out of bounds (incomplete)	throw arms to out of bounds side
Sup15	the field goal attempt was no good (wide)	as Sup14
Sup16	please guide me to the out of bounds spot	one hand in air
Sup17	come up the sideline towards me	beckon with palm of hand towards self
Sup18	move down the sideline away from me	gesture with palm of hand away from self
Sup19	stop, you are at the out of bounds spot	hack down
Sup20	advance the stadium clock (i.e. it is slow with respect to the on-field clock)	signal S2 until the clock shows the correct time, then give signal S3
Sup21	delay the stadium clock (i.e. it is fast with respect to the on-field clock)	signal S21 to hold (delay) the stadium clock, then give signal S2 to restart it when the on-field clock catches up

No.	Message	Signal
Sup22	turn the stadium clock off	tap watch then give uncatchable pass signal (S17)
Sup23	take a knee play notification	tap raised knee
Sup24	the team I am responsible for counting has 10 (or fewer) players on the field	clenched fist with downward pointing thumb; arm outstretched to side (see also Sup3)
Sup25	I believe all the conditions for a touch-down are met	fists together (in front of chest) with thumbs up
Sup26	the receiver touched the ball inbounds but did not have control of it until he was out of bounds	move hands (palms up) alternately up and down in front of chest
Sup27	the down box is displaying the wrong number	give signal S17 (uncatchable forward pass) before the snap
Sup28	I have responsibility for the kick returner/ball	punch in the direction of the receiving team's end line
Sup29	reset play clock to 25 seconds	pump one arm vertically with palm of hand facing upwards
Sup30	reset play clock to 40 seconds	pump two arms vertically with palms of hands facing upwards
Sup31	fourth down fumble rule is in effect	roll hands (like S19) in front of chest
Sup32	nose of ball is on yard line	tap nose with fingers
Sup33	middle of ball is midway between two yard lines	tap belt buckle with fingers
Sup34	tail of ball is on yard line	tap hip with fingers
Sup35	Team A has made the line to gain (first down)	point with index finger in front of chest in direction of Team B's end line
Sup36	substitution disadvantage: Team A is making a last second substitution	two closed fists with arms spread wide
Sup37	team wishes 10-second subtraction	tap watch then point down
Sup38	team wishes NO 10-second subtraction	tap watch then signal incomplete (S10)
Sup39	reminder that the umpire has primary responsibility for retrieving and spotting the ball (e.g. in the last 2 minutes of a half)	make a U shape with the thumbs and index fingers of both hands
Sup40	please tell me how much time is remaining in the period	tap watch or wrist
Sup41	there is less than one minute remaining in the period	point down with both index fingers
Sup42	the ball/ball carrier did/did not cross the neutral zone	point at the ground on the appropriate side of the neutral zone (behind if it did not cross; beyond if it did)
Sup43	five yards will give a first down	open hand with fingers spread held up against chest

Signals Sup11 and Sup12 are intended primarily for communication between the Referee and the on-field timekeeper.

Signals Sup16 to Sup19 are intended for kick out of bounds situations.

Signals Sup20 to Sup22 are intended for communication with the stadium clock operator.

Signals Sup2 and Sup7 are no longer used.