

13. LINESMAN AND LINE JUDGE (6 AND 7-MAN CREWS)

13.1 – Free kicks

13.1.a – Priorities

Prior to the kick:

1. Being aware of whether the Referee has instructed the crew to switch to onside-kick positions, and moving position (if appropriate) if he has.
2. Counting Team B players and signalling the count (one of signals Sup3, Sup4 or Sup24) to colleagues. Noting count signals from colleagues. Recounting if your count differs from that of colleagues.
3. Checking side and end zone areas to ensure that all non-players are out of the restricted areas, that non-participants are off the field of play, and that all team personnel are within the team area.
4. Ensuring that the chain crew (and the alternate down box and line-to-gain marker operators, where provided) have moved themselves and their equipment well out of the way and that the equipment has been placed on the ground outside the team areas and behind the limit lines. Checking that the ball persons are in position.
5. Only when satisfied that all is ready, and that your colleagues (particularly the Umpire) are in position, holding your arm aloft until your readiness is acknowledged by the Referee (or Umpire if you are on a restraining line).
6. Being alert always for short kicks.

During the kick play:

7. Observing whether a free kick goes out of bounds nearest you without being touched by the receiving team. Ruling whether a Team B player near the sideline touches the ball while out of bounds.
8. Watching players for a fair catch signal, and being prepared to rule on any interference with the opportunity to catch the kick.
9. If you are on a restraining line and the kick is short:
 - (a) Knowing where and by whom the ball was first touched.
 - (b) Observing illegal blocks by Team A.
 - (c) Marking any spot of illegal touching with a bean bag.
 - (d) Marking the dead-ball spot if you are the nearest official and there is little or no return run.
10. Giving the start the clock signal (S2) only if the ball is first legally touched in the field of play in your area of responsibility.
11. Ruling whether the ball becomes dead in the end zone or not.
12. Marking the forward progress or out of bounds spot if the ball becomes dead on your side of the field. This responsibility extends up to Team A's 2-yard line.
13. Marking the spot with a bean bag of any backward pass, handing[§] or fumble in your area.
14. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) illegal touching of a short kick
 - (b) illegal use of the hands and holding fouls at the point of attack
 - (c) blocks below the waist
 - (d) illegal wedge formations
 - (e) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (f) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (g) any player of the kicking team who enters the field of play after the kick or who voluntarily goes out of bounds during the kick

13.1.b – Initial positioning

Normal kicks:

1. [LINESMAN] Be in position C (see 26.1) on Team B's goal line outside the sideline opposite the press box side of the field.
2. [LINE JUDGE] Be in position B (see 26.1) on Team B's goal line outside the sideline on the press box side of the field.

Onside-kicks:

3. [LINE JUDGE]
 - (a) [ON A 6-MAN CREW] Move to position D (see 26.1) outside the press box side-line on Team B's restraining line.
 - (b) [ON A 7-MAN CREW] Remain in the normal position.
4. [LINESMAN] Move to position E (see 26.1) outside the sideline opposite the press box on Team B's restraining line.

Free kicks after a penalty or safety:

5. When a free kick is taken following a penalty or a safety, the same relative positions should be taken, moving up or down the field as appropriate.

13.1.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

Prior to the kick:

1. If anything happens that should prevent the kick taking place (e.g. a non-participant enters or approaches the field of play), toot your whistle, give the timeout signal (S3) and deal with the problem.

During any kick play:

2. If you see any player of the kicking team voluntarily go out of bounds during the kick, drop your bean bag or hat to mark his exit, and your flag if he returns.
3. If the clock should start when the ball is first legally touched in the field of play, give the start clock signal (S2) if you are the nearest official or the one with the best view.

During a kick play that goes deep:

4. After the ball is kicked, observe the players in your area of responsibility (see 26.1).^λ After checking its initial trajectory, do not watch the flight of the ball.
5. If the kick threatens to go into the end zone, stay on the goal line (out of the way of all players) to rule on a touchback. If the ball threatens the pylon, be there to be able to rule on whether the ball goes out of bounds in the field of play or the end zone.
6. If the ball and at least one player go deep into the end zone, move to cover the end line.
7. If the ball clearly goes to the opposite side of the field to you, move upfield about 10 yards to get a better/different angle on lead blocks and any illegal wedges.
8. If a touchback occurs, move infield ahead of any receiver who has the ball, give the touchback signal (S7) and sound your whistle to prevent further action.
9. On a deep kickoff, follow the ball carrier and keep him bracketed between you and the upfield officials.
10. If the ball goes out of bounds in your area go to and hold the spot, dropping your flag if appropriate. Place a ball or flag at the spot and ensure that another official relays a ball to the Spotter.

During a kick play where the kick is short:

11. Maintain a position where you can see the ball and the blocks by Team A players.
12. Know where and by whom the ball was first touched. Mark any spot of illegal touching with your bean bag (Rule 6-1-3).
13. If you are the nearest official when the ball becomes dead, signal timeout (S3) and mark the dead-ball spot.

13.1.d – Advanced techniques

1. If there is a touchback, continue to watch the receiver in case he is fouled.
2. The deep officials may adjust their position according to such factors as the wind and the known strength of the kicker's foot. However, it is important to be on the goal line (and particularly, at the pylon) before the ball gets there in crucial situations.

13.2 – Basic scrimmage plays

13.2.a – Priorities

1. Knowing the down and distance, and signalling the down to your colleagues. Noting the down signals given by colleagues. Checking that the down box displays the correct number. Not allowing play to start if there is a dispute about the down number.
2. Observing false starts in general and by linemen and backs on your side of the formation in particular.
3. Observing offside (and other line of scrimmage infractions) by Team B players (especially those between you and the ball).
4. Observing illegal motion by Team A players on your side of the formation.
5. Observing illegal shifts (Team A never set, or no 1-second pause after simultaneous movement by more than one Team A player).
6. Observing the legality of the snap.
7. If there is a pre-snap foul, stopping all action by tooting on your whistle and giving the timeout signal (S3).
8. Determining whether the play is a run or a pass by reading the initial action of the interior linemen. If they move backwards it is likely that a passing play will develop. If they charge forwards or pull, it is likely that a running play will develop.
9. Identifying your key player(s) (see section 16.4). If the formation is new or unusual, verbally or visually confirming this with the other officials.
10. Noting eligible receivers and those players who would normally be eligible by position but who are ineligible by number. In addition, noting players (usually tight ends) who would normally be eligible by number but who are not eligible because a player is lined up outside them on the line of scrimmage.
11. [ON A 7-MAN CREW] Watching the tackle on your side of the formation. [ON A 6-MAN CREW] Watching the tackle if there is no tight end on your side.
12. Being aware of where the line to gain is in relation to the line of scrimmage so that you don't have to look at the chain to know if the dead-ball spot is close to the line to gain.
13. Observing substitution infractions by Team A, for example:
 - (a) replaced players not leaving the huddle within 3 seconds of an incoming substitute entering it
 - (b) substitutes coming on to the field, communicating, and then leaving the field
14. Ensuring that coaches and substitutes are behind the coaching box line and that your sideline is clear of any obstructions. [LINESMAN] Noting whether the chains and down box are in their proper position, but only interrupting play if there is a serious problem.
15. Observing the legality of the formation, in particular that there are no more than 4 players in the backfield.
16. Indicating Team A's scrimmage line using your foot that is nearest their goal line.
17. Indicating, using the off-the-line signal (Sup1), when the Team A player closest to you is off the line of scrimmage.
18. Observing whether all Team A players have met the requirement for being within the 9-yard marks.

13.2.b – Initial positioning

1. Be where you can see the entire neutral zone, and the ball at the snap.
2. Normal scrimmage down position is in the neutral zone, on or outside the sideline.
3. [LINESMAN] Be on the side of the field opposite the press box.
4. [LINE JUDGE] Be on the press box side of the field.
5. Never adopt a position that restricts the positioning or movement of players.

13.2.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. In the event of sudden movement by Team A players, come in quickly and confer with the Umpire to determine which team was responsible.
2. If one or more Team B players enter the neutral zone, watch the reaction by Team A players who may be threatened. Watch for when the Team B players get back to their own side of the neutral zone.
3. If there is a foul before the snap, blow your whistle, throw your flag and signal timeout (S3). Come in quickly to the succeeding spot to prevent any play and to confer with the Umpire and the other wing official about the call. However, if there is no possibility of doubt about what the foul is, you may give a miniature penalty signal (e.g. S18 or S19) to the Referee without coming in all the way.

13.2.d – Advanced techniques

Reasons for varying (or not) your initial position:

1. You get a much better view of everything from a wide position. It also prevents you being caught inside on a sweep play or out-pattern pass.
2. It is entirely appropriate to be six feet out of bounds, particularly if players are lined up close to the sideline. In goal line situations, you may want to be even wider.
3. If a Team A player asks you whether he is on or off the line of scrimmage, inform him how he can use your signals to tell for himself. Do not say anything to the player that might cause him to move immediately prior to the snap. The fact that you are indicating the line with your foot and not using the off-the-line signal is sufficient to indicate to all concerned that the player nearest you is *on* the line. No separate signal is necessary or desirable.

13.3 – Running plays**13.3.a – Priorities**

1. Observing the ball carrier and action around him.
2. Blowing your whistle and marking the forward progress or out of bounds spot if the ball becomes dead in the middle or on your side of the field. This responsibility extends up to Team B's 2-yard line. If the ball goes to the other side of the field, backing up your colleague on the other side of the field by either estimating the dead-ball spot or mirroring his spot.
3. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
4. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) illegal use of the hands and holding fouls at the point of attack, especially those made by a wide receiver, tight end, lead back or pulling lineman
 - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls by players on your side of the formation
 - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (d) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (e) unnecessary roughness against the quarterback after he has handed off or pitched the ball on a play away from you

5. Ruling (with help from the Referee on passes from deep in the backfield) whether a pass is backward or forward, and signalling a backward pass (Sup5) immediately if the pass is clearly backward. Noting any backward pass signal from the Referee.

13.3.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If the run comes to your side of the field:
 - (a) Retreat at an angle out of bounds and towards Team A's end line if necessary.
 - (b) Pick up coverage of the ball carrier as he approaches the neutral zone in your area.
 - (c) Let the ball carrier get ahead of you, then follow him downfield until the ball becomes dead, keeping out of the way of all the other players.
 - (d) Once the ball becomes dead, blow your whistle and move to a point level with the forward progress spot.
 - (e) If the ball becomes dead inbounds and near the sideline, be prepared to take forward progress from your colleague using cross-field mechanics if the ball carrier is driven back towards you.
2. If the run goes up the middle:
 - (a) Stay wide but approximately level with the ball carrier's progress.
 - (b) Come in when the play is dead to rule on forward progress. Come in until you meet resistance (do not leap over players). Exception: Don't come in if Team A is in a hurry-up offense (or should be) and the clock is still running.
 - (c) Only blow the whistle if you can clearly see the ball and the player in possession.
3. If the run goes to the opposite side of the field:
 - (a) Stay wide but approximately level with the ball carrier's progress.
 - (b) Keep your eyes open for cheap shots behind the play.
 - (c) Don't relax – be alert for reverses.
 - (d) When the ball becomes dead, move level with the dead-ball spot. Do not blow your whistle.
 - (e) If your colleague on the opposite side of the field is unable to get to the dead-ball spot quickly (e.g. because the ball becomes dead close to the sideline or the ball carrier is thrown back):
 - (i) Assist him by staying in position level with your best judgement of the forward progress spot ("cross-field" mechanics), but do not be obtrusive about this.
 - (ii) Hold this position long enough to allow him an opportunity to mirror your spot if he is unable to judge it himself, but give it up when the Coverer obviously indicates a forward progress spot of his own.
 - (iii) If the Coverer marks a very inaccurate spot, unobtrusively attract his attention to your spot.
4. On a long run:
 - (a) Follow the play, maintaining as good a view as possible of the ball carrier and the players near him. Be prepared to close in when the ball becomes dead and mark the forward progress spot.
 - (b) Occasionally, the deep official may be in a better position than you to cover the ball carrier, in which case he may be the one to declare the ball dead and mark the forward progress. However, this should not be normal practice – keep up with the play!
5. If the run ends behind the line of scrimmage:
 - (a) Assist the Referee in determining forward progress.
6. Remain out of bounds until you are certain the ball is becoming dead. Never turn your back on the ball.

Covering the dead-ball spot:

7. When marking forward progress, converge to the dead-ball spot when play in your area permits. Square off, i.e. move parallel to the sideline then in, rather than diagonally.
8. Be alert to cover the forward progress spot when the ball carrier has been thrown back, but watch the ball carrier (and action against him), not the spot. Do not leap over or pass players to reach the forward progress spot: keep them in front of you. Drop your bean bag *only* if you are forced to leave your spot.
9. If the ball goes out of bounds on your side of the field, signal timeout (S3). Normally, you have forward progress all the way up to Team B's 2-yard line. Unless the deep official is much closer than you, move to the dead-ball spot once players have cleared the immediate area. Stop on the sideline and watch any continuing action in the out-of-bounds area. If absolutely necessary, mark the dead-ball spot with your bean bag and go out-of-bounds to prevent/stop continuing action. Once all action has ceased, obtain a ball and place it at the spot where the live ball crossed the sideline, then help (if needed) to retrieve/relay another ball to the Spotter (Mechanic 5.8).
10. If the ball becomes dead within approximately 10 feet of the sideline and the clock should not stop for any other reason, give the wind the clock signal (S2).
11. If the ball goes out of bounds in the deep official's area, go into the team area as far as the ball carrier and observe any actions against him.

13.3.c – Advanced techniques

1. Don't blow your whistle when the ball carrier's back is toward you or you are obscured by other players (or officials) – he may have fumbled the ball without you seeing it. See leather! Be certain that the ball is dead.
2. If a pile-up of players forms, give the timeout signal (S3), converge on the pile and determine who has possession (Mechanic 5.11).
3. If you're not the nearest official to the dead-ball spot, observe for late hits and other illegal acts.

Particular types of run play:

4. On a pitchout option play to your side of the field:[§]
 - (a) Move into the backfield to observe action against the trailing back (any offensive player in a position to receive a backward pass), until the ball is pitched or the quarterback turns upfield.
 - (b) If the ball is pitched, you are responsible for the loose ball and for action by and against the trailing back.
 - (c) If the ball is not pitched, once the quarterback turns upfield he is your responsibility as on any other running play, and the Referee will take over responsibility for the trailing back.

General tips:

5. It is better to pick up the ball carrier too soon than not soon enough. You may be forgiven for missing a hold, but you will never be forgiven for missing a fumble.
6. Even though the ball may be on the other side of the field, you may have a better view of the end of the run than the nearest official. If the ball carrier is facing you, or has the ball in the hand nearest you, or is spun round towards you in the tackle, you may need to help out your colleague.
7. If you are the Coverer and the run ends near to the line to gain, you must come in all the way and place a ball at the *exact* dead-ball spot.

13.4 – Passing plays

13.4.a – Priorities

1. Ruling whether the pass is complete or incomplete. While primarily this will be for passes to your side of the field, in practice you may need to rule on any pass where the receiver is facing or at right angles to you, regardless of his position. Similarly, if the receiver has his back to you, you may need to defer to another official with a better view than you.
2. Observing the initial contact by and against your key player(s).
3. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) defensive and offensive pass interference
 - (b) defensive holding and illegal use of hands against eligible receivers
 - (c) illegal block below the waist fouls by players on your side of the formation
 - (d) illegal touching of a forward pass by a player who went out of bounds voluntarily
 - (e) ineligible receivers downfield
 - (f) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (g) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (h) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
4. Ruling whether a forward pass was thrown from behind or beyond the neutral zone. Also, being prepared to assist in determining whether the ball crossed the neutral zone prior to a forward pass.
5. Ruling whether a forward pass crossed the neutral zone or not.
6. Ruling whether a quick quarterback pass went forward or backward. Use the backward pass signal (Sup5) immediately if the pass is backward.
7. Marking the forward progress or out of bounds spot (on your side of the field) if the ball becomes dead behind the neutral zone.
8. Advising the Referee if the pass was thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver, or the pass clearly did not reach the neutral zone.

Once the pass is complete, apply the same priorities as on a running play (above).

13.4.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Remain on the line of scrimmage (or take one step into the offensive backfield) to be able to rule on whether a pass was thrown from behind or beyond the neutral zone, and whether or not the pass crossed the neutral zone. Remain there until a pass is thrown that you are confident will cross the neutral zone, then move downfield to get into position to observe the likely destination of the pass.[†]
2. When moving downfield, sidestep wherever possible so that you remain facing the field at all times. Once the pass is thrown, it is appropriate to turn and move towards the destination of the pass.
3. Switch from man-to-man coverage (watching your key player) to zone coverage (watching your area of responsibility) immediately after the initial action. This is usually 2-3 seconds after the snap, once it is clear into which zones the receivers are running.
4. If a potential Team A receiver voluntarily goes out of bounds in your area, drop your bean bag or hat to indicate this, and observe him to see whether he touches a forward pass while still ineligible.[‡]
5. Once you are aware that the pass has been thrown, move into position to best be able to rule on whether the pass is complete or incomplete, and whether there is interference. While the ball is in flight, watch opposing players who are contesting for the ball, not the ball itself.
6. If the receiver is driven back, be prepared to give him his forward progress. This is especially the case when the receiver is near a sideline, and you may need to use cross-

field mechanics. If the receiver is on your side of the field, the other wing official may have the best forward progress. Take your spot from him. If the receiver is on the other side of the field, you may have the best spot. Offer a spot to your colleague.

7. If you are not the nearest official, particularly watch for defenders slightly away from the ball who come in and target the receiver with the crown of their helmet or above the shoulders.
8. Blow your whistle if you see the ball become dead in your area.
9. If the pass is thrown to the opposite side of the field from you, look across and be prepared to assist with rulings on complete/incomplete, pass interference, illegal helmet contact and forward progress, though only if you are 100% sure of what you see. Also maintain a view of action on your side of the field that may be unnecessary.
10. When ruling on pass receptions involving the sideline, give only one signal. Give the incomplete pass signal (S10) if the pass is ruled incomplete. Give the timeout signal (S3) if the pass is ruled complete and the ball carrier goes out of bounds thereafter (Mechanic 5.9). Give the start the clock signal (S2) if the pass is complete and the ball carrier is declared down inbounds. Whichever signal is given should be repeated two or three times. Remember to look at the other official on your sideline before giving any signal that indicates a completed pass. Nod your head "yes" to him to indicate a completed pass; shake it "no" if you have it incomplete.
11. When contact that would have been pass interference occurs on a pass that is uncatchable, give the uncatchable pass signal (S17).
12. If there is an issue as to whether the pass or passer crossed the neutral zone or not, give the side of the zone signal (Sup42) towards the appropriate side. Maintain/repeat the signal until relevant other members of the crew have seen it.
13. After an incompleteness, obtain a ball from the ball person and form a relay to return the ball to the Spotter (Mechanic 5.8).
14. If there is a run after the catch, respond as you would on a running play (above).
15. Maintain a position where you can see player activity in fringe areas, particularly on wide-open plays.

13.4.c – Advanced techniques

1. When an airborne player attempts to catch a pass near the sideline or end line, watch his feet first to see whether he comes down in bounds. If he does, then look to his hands to see whether he has control of the ball. If you look at his hands first, you may miss the instant when his foot touches the ground (Mechanic 5.17.8). Establish eye contact with your sideline colleague at the end of the play before giving any signal.
2. Always be prepared to come back to rule on play near the neutral zone in addition to sideline action. If the potential passer decides to run with the ball, you must cover him once he is beyond the neutral zone.
3. If the pass is incomplete having been thrown into an area not occupied by an eligible receiver, or the pass clearly does not reach the neutral zone, move quickly towards the Referee to inform him of this. If there *was* a receiver in the area, and you believe the Referee may not be aware of that fact, move towards the Referee while pointing towards the eligible receiver. Calling out "Number 34 was in the area of the pass" (for example) is also permissible.
4. If you observe the pass being tipped, give the tipped pass signal (S11). The signal should normally be used on passes tipped in the offensive backfield, but inconspicuous (to the spectators) touching downfield could be signified in this way too. It is not necessary to give it when the pass is obviously touched (e.g. when a defensive lineman bats it into the ground).
5. If the play ends near to the line to gain, you must come in all the way and place a ball at the *exact* dead-ball spot.

13.5 – Goal line plays

13.5.a – Priorities

Same priorities as on other scrimmage plays, plus:

1. [AT TEAM B'S GOAL LINE] Ruling whether a touchdown is scored or not.
2. [AT TEAM A'S GOAL LINE] Ruling whether a safety is scored or not.
3. Observing players' celebrations after a score.

13.5.b – Initial positioning

1. Take normal scrimmage down position, but very wide so that you will not be trapped by a quick wide play. (See also 13.2.d.2.)
2. You have primary responsibility for Team B's goal line if the ball is snapped from on or inside Team B's 7-yard line.
3. You have primary responsibility for Team A's goal line if the ball is snapped from on or inside Team A's [LINE JUDGE] 7-yard line [LINESMAN] 2-yard line.

13.5.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If you have responsibility for either team's goal line, *immediately* after the snap, move directly towards it to rule on the score or an accurate forward progress.

At Team B's goal line:

2. On a running play, you must be at the goal line before the ball carrier to rule on whether the ball penetrates the plane. Do *not* move towards Team A's backfield to let players pass you.
3. If you see the ball carrier is stopped short of the goal line, blow your whistle, come in and sell the dead-ball spot. If appropriate, call out "short" to tell your colleagues of that.
4. On a passing play, move immediately to the goal line then respond to the play. If the pass is thrown short of the goal line, remain on the line to rule on penetration of the plane. If the pass is thrown into the end zone, move to the best position to rule on the end of the pass.
5. Indicate a score by blowing your whistle and giving the touchdown signal (S5) only when you clearly see the ball break the plane of the goal line in player possession or if you see a pass completed in the end zone.

At Team A's goal line:

6. Indicate a safety by blowing your whistle and giving the safety signal (S6) only when you clearly see the ball carrier down or out of bounds behind the goal line.

At either goal line:

7. If a pile-up forms at the goal line, come into the field of play until you can see the ball. If you are the nearest official, you may need to dig for it. Check with other officials that they did not see the ball carrier down (or fumble the ball) before he reached the goal line.
8. If you have goal line responsibility and it is necessary to move out of the players' way as they come towards you, move wider without leaving the goal line.
9. Do not give a score signal if you have thrown a penalty flag for a foul by the scoring team. Do not blow your whistle or give any signal if you are not sure about the outcome of the play.
10. If you have goal line responsibility, straddle the goal line – don't run after the player into the end zone unless there is a threat of trouble by or against him, but do turn to keep your eyes on him to observe late hits or unsportsmanlike conduct.
11. Maintain the touchdown or safety signal until you know the Referee has seen it, but keep your eyes on the players – don't look to the Referee until all action has ceased. Don't run and signal at the same time. You should not echo the signals of other officials unless the Referee cannot see their signal.

12. It is especially important on goal line plays that all covering officials indicate the same point of forward progress. Communicate if in doubt. Signal only if sure.

13.5.d – Advanced techniques

1. [LINE JUDGE] Inform the deep officials of the number of the yard line that is the line of scrimmage. Communicate (preferably verbally) as to who has the responsibility for the goal line.
2. On a running play towards the goal line pylon, give priority to ruling on the goal line over ruling on the sideline. The deep official on your side can help with the sideline – only you can rule on the goal line.
3. In 3rd and 4th down short yardage situations, treat the line to gain as you would the goal line.
4. If the line to gain is near the goal line, your first priority is the goal line. If necessary come back from the goal line to the line to gain once it is clear that the ball carrier is unlikely to score.
5. Do not remain on the line of scrimmage as you would for a passing play elsewhere in the field. The Umpire should assist with passes crossing the neutral zone in goal line situations.

13.6 – Returns

13.6.a – Priorities

1. Observing the ball carrier and action around him while you are the nearest official.
2. Marking the forward progress or out of bounds spot if:
 - (a) the ball becomes dead on your side of the field between Team A's 2-yard line and the goal line; or
 - (b) the ball carrier is between you and Team A's goal line; or
 - (c) you are closer to the spot than the deep official.

Normally the deep official will have an easier route to the spot than you because he is following the play while you have still to avoid players running towards you.

3. Observing any fumble where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.
4. Observing any illegal forward pass, especially if you have a view that is level or nearly level with the ball carrier.
5. Observing blocks by players in your area of responsibility ahead of and around the ball carrier, particularly:
 - (a) illegal block in the back and holding fouls at the point of attack
 - (b) illegal block below the waist fouls anywhere
 - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (d) illegal forward handing
 - (e) contacting an opponent with the crown of the helmet or targeting a defenseless opponent above the shoulders
 - (f) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
6. Observing any hand-off or backward pass where you are the nearest official or have the best view, and marking the spot with a bean bag.

13.6.b – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. Keep out of the players' way.
2. Backpedal towards Team A's goal line ahead of the play. If it is no longer possible to backpedal, turn and watch the play over your shoulder.

3. If the play advances far enough to threaten Team A's goal line, be there before the ball carrier.
4. Observe the ball carrier while he remains in your area of responsibility. If the change of possession occurs deeper downfield than you are, backpedal down the sideline, always keeping the ball carrier in front of you. Try and keep him boxed in between you and the deep official. Take over responsibility for the ball carrier if he overtakes you (unless the deep official is forced to as well). Stay wide enough to be able to retreat outside the sideline ahead of the players. Never turn your back on the ball.
5. Assist the Referee on Team A's goal line. You have sideline responsibility from your position to the goal line.
6. If you are watching a block develop, stay with it before switching to the ball carrier or another block. Even if you expect another official to take responsibility for it, stay with the block until you are confident it is legal.
7. If the ball becomes dead in your area of responsibility, blow your whistle, give the time-out signal (S3), and then signal first down (S8) to show which team is in possession. Hold the signal until you know the Referee has seen it.

13.7 – Punts

13.7.a – Priorities

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. Ruling whether the kick crosses the neutral zone by knowing if it touches the ground, a player or official beyond the neutral zone.
2. If the kick is short:
 - (a) Marking the end of the kick (if inbounds) with a bean bag.
 - (b) Ruling whether players touched the ball or not.
 - (c) Observing any fair catch signals by players in your area.
 - (d) Observing kick catch interference against a player in position to catch the kick, if the kick comes down in your area.
 - (e) If the kick does not come down in your area, observing players who have *not* committed kick catch interference because they were blocked by an opponent into the returner.
 - (f) Marking all spots of illegal touching with a bean bag.
3. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) blocking below the waist, especially by players on your side of the field and [LINESMAN] the up back
 - (b) before the kick, illegal use of the hands and holding fouls by linemen and backs protecting the kicker, especially the tackle or wing back on your side
 - (c) during the kick, illegal use of the hands and holding fouls against Team A players trying to get down the field
 - (d) a Team A player returning inbounds after voluntarily going out of bounds during the down (drop your bean bag or hat to mark his exit, and your flag if he returns)
 - (e) illegal blocks made by players who have signalled for a fair catch
 - (f) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (g) unnecessary roughness fouls away from the ball
 - (h) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
4. Noting the numbers of players in eligible receiver positions on your side of the formation, and observing whether anyone else is the first to touch the ball or is ineligibly downfield if the play develops into a passing play.

5. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate.
6. Being directed by the Referee to the crossing point on your sideline if a short kick is kicked directly out of bounds.

During a punt return, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

13.7.b – Initial positioning

1. Take normal scrimmage down position.
2. The Back Judge will have responsibility for the end of the kick, unless it ends very close to a sideline.
3. The deep officials will normally be responsible for the returners, but the Line Judge and Linesman must assist on their respective sides of the field with coverage of the shallowest returners and short kicks out of bounds.

13.7.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. When the ball is kicked, observe its initial trajectory, but do not watch the flight of the ball. Observe players in your area of responsibility (defined by the diagrams in section 26.4) – their eyes will tell you where the ball is going. However, if the returner moves as a decoy, do not follow him - observe the area where the ball will come down.
2. Stay on the line of scrimmage until the ball crosses the line, then move downfield after the players until you are approximately 15-20 yards ahead of the return. Backpedal to stay ahead of the returner as he approaches your position. †
3. When it appears obvious that the kicked ball will *not* land in your area:
 - (a) Maintain a position where you can cover play in front of and around the returner. If you are the nearest official *other than* the official covering the punt returner, move to where you can observe players blocking in the vicinity of any returner who is in position to catch the kick. In particular, observe those *blocked by an opponent* into interfering and therefore immune to penalty (Rule 6-4-1-d).
 - (b) If a player in your area signals for a fair catch, watch that he does not block before he touches the ball.
 - (c) Do not hesitate to call a foul if you clearly see one occur in the area where you are the cleanup official even though you may be a considerable distance away from the action. Communicate with your colleagues to find out their view of the action.
4. When it appears obvious that the kicked ball *will* land in your area:
 - (a) If the kick is first touched by a member of the kicking team, you may give the illegal touching signal (S16) to signify that fact. If the kick is first muffed (but not possessed) by a member of the receiving team beyond the neutral zone, you may give the legal touching signal (S11) to signify a free ball.
 - (b) Use bean bags to mark any spots of illegal touching and/or the spot where the kick ends. Only one official, the Coverer in each case, should mark each spot and give each signal. If you have more than one spot and only one bean bag, prioritise the spot most advantageous to Team B.
 - (c) If the ball becomes dead because it is caught or recovered by Team B after a fair catch signal, or caught or recovered by Team A, blow your whistle and give the timeout signal (S3).
 - (d) If the kick is recovered by Team A, blow your whistle, signal timeout (S3) and give the illegal touching signal (S16) and the first down signal (S8). Momentary touching of the ball by a player of the kicking team should not be interpreted as control of the ball.
 - (e) If the kick goes out of bounds in your area, blow your whistle and signal timeout (S3) immediately. If the ball goes out of bounds in flight, signal (Sup16) to the Referee to direct you to the crossing point using signals (Sup17, Sup18 & Sup19).

Hold the spot and place a ball at it. Other officials will retrieve/relay a ball to the Spotter.

- (f) If the ball rolls to a stop in your area, ensure no player is attempting to recover it before blowing your whistle and signalling timeout (S3).
5. During the return, respond as in the section "Returns" (above).

13.7.d – Advanced techniques

1. Be alert for blocked kicks and their recovery and advance. On fake kicks switch to normal run or pass coverage.
 - (a) If the play turns into a run or pass, respond as you would do normally for that type of play.
 - (b) Cover the goal line and end line as appropriate.
 - (c) Be aware of the jersey numbers of the eligible receivers.
 - (d) While a kick[§] is loose in the backfield, assist the Referee by observing actions against the kicker, especially when the ball is on the opposite side of the field.
 - (e) If the kick is blocked or the snap is loose,[§] the wing official on the same side of the field as the Referee should hold his position on the line of scrimmage and remain responsible for ruling whether the kick crosses the line. The other wing official should move into Team A's backfield to assist the Referee.

13.8 – Field goal & try attempts

13.8.a – Priorities

Before and during the kick, applying the same priorities as on basic scrimmage plays (above), plus:

1. Ruling whether the kick crossed the neutral zone, by knowing if it touches the ground, a player or official beyond the neutral zone.
2. Observing fouls by all players generally in your area, but particularly:
 - (a) illegal use of the hands and holding fouls by linemen and backs protecting the kicker and holder, especially the end and/or wing back on your side
 - (b) blocking below the waist
 - (c) safety-related fouls such as face masking, tripping or chop blocks
 - (d) unnecessary roughness fouls away from the ball
 - (e) late hits by any player after the ball is dead
 - (f) illegal formation
3. Noting the numbers of players in eligible receiver positions on your side of the formation, and observing whether anyone else is the first to touch the ball or is ineligibly downfield if the play develops into a passing play.
4. Responding to bad snaps or blocked kicks by adopting run, pass or return priorities, as appropriate.

If the kick is returned, applying the same priorities as on returns (above).

13.8.b – Initial positioning

1. Be in normal scrimmage down position.
2. [LINESMAN] On a try down, set the down box on the three-yard line showing down 1, and instruct the chain crew to lay the chain on the ground outside the limit lines at around the 20-yard line, and to stand well back.

13.8.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. After the kick, jog in towards the pile of players in the middle of the field. This will force you to keep your eyes on the players and discourage you from looking to see if the kick is good or not. If trouble occurs, you will be in a better position to assist the Umpire in dealing with it.

13.8.d – Advanced techniques

1. Be alert for blocked kicks and their recovery and advance. On fake kicks switch to normal run or pass coverage.
 - (a) If the play turns into a run or pass, respond as you would do normally for that type of play. [LINE JUDGE] If the ball is snapped inside the 20-yard line, you need to get to your goal line pylon as quickly as possible. If the ball is snapped outside the 20-yard line, the Field Judge will get there.
 - (b) Be aware of the jersey numbers of the eligible receivers.
 - (c) While a kick[§] is loose in the backfield, assist the Referee by observing actions against the kicker and holder. The Referee will have switched his responsibilities to watching the ball.
 - (d) If the kick is blocked or the ball is loose in the backfield, the wing official on the same side of the field as the Referee should hold his position on the line of scrimmage and remain responsible for ruling whether the kick crosses the line. The other wing official should move into Team A's backfield to assist the Referee.
2. [LINE JUDGE] On a try down, instruct the alternate line-to-gain marker operators (if you have them) to lay their equipment on the ground and to stand well back.

13.9 – After each down**13.9.a – Priorities**

1. Observing dead-ball action by players of both teams.
2. Encouraging the players to unpile safely, and either return the ball to an official or leave it near the dead-ball spot, as appropriate.
3. Checking whether the line to gain has been reached or is close, and signalling appropriately.
4. Checking whether any penalty flags have been thrown, and, if so:
 - (a) Giving the timeout signal (S3).
 - (b) Reporting any fouls you have called to the Referee and Umpire.
 - (c) Covering penalty flags (and bean bags, if appropriate) thrown by colleagues.
 - (d) Ensuring that all penalties are enforced correctly.
 - (e) Keeping the Head Coach on your sideline informed of penalties, particularly against his team.
5. Checking for injured players or other occurrences that may delay play.
6. Allowing legitimate requests for timeouts. Checking that a request coming from the coaching box or team area was made by the head coach.[◇]
7. Echoing all timeout signals (S3) of your colleagues.
8. Knowing whether the play ended inbounds, and informing the Referee that the clock (if stopped) should start on the ready by giving him the clock running signal (Sup12).
9. Assisting in relaying the dead ball or a new ball to the succeeding spot.

13.9.b – Initial positioning

1. Shortly after the end of the previous down, you should be in a position level with the succeeding spot.

13.9.c – Response to what happens (movement and signals)

1. If you are the Coverer, check whether the line to gain has been reached. [LINE JUDGE] You should normally be in a particularly good position to rule on this. If you do this consistently, the Linesman will not need to turn to look at the chains to know whether the line to gain has been reached.
 - (a) If it has, give the timeout signal (S3). After all action has ceased, make eye contact with the Referee and signal first down (S8 or Sup35). Hold the signal until he acknowledges it.
 - (b) If you are not sure whether the line to gain has been reached or not, signal timeout (S3) and yell "close". Encourage the Referee to come and look for himself.
 - (c) Only place a ball on the ground at the *actual* dead-ball spot – never at a spot level with it.
 - (d) If the play ended inbounds, inform the Referee that the clock should start on the ready by giving him the clock running signal (Sup12).
2. [WHEN A 40-SECOND PLAY CLOCK IS BEING USED] If you are the Coverer, signal that the ball is dead. This will be using the dead-ball signal (S7) unless the timeout signal (S3), touchdown/field-goal signal (S5), safety signal (S6) or incomplete pass/unsuccessful field-goal signal (S10) is appropriate instead. Give only *one* signal.
3. If a penalty flag has been thrown, follow the procedure in chapter 19. If a team or injury timeout has been called, follow the procedure in chapter 17. If a period has ended, follow the procedure in chapter 20.

Moving the down box and chains:

4. [LINESMAN]
 - (a) When certain that there has been no foul on the previous play (and that there is no other reason to wait), instruct the down marker to be moved to the new position, and check that the correct down number is displayed.
 - (b) When a first down is achieved, and a new line to gain is to be established, first instruct the down marker to be moved to the new position on the sideline. The chain crew should then be instructed to move quickly to their new positions.
 - (c) Anticipate any call for a measurement and be ready to bring in the chains when signaled by Referee.
5. [LINE JUDGE]
 - (a) Anticipate any call for a measurement and be ready to come in to mark the spot for the clip when signaled by the Referee.

Relaying the ball:

6. If you have the ball, but another official has the dead-ball spot and it is close to the line to gain, hand the ball to that official and allow him to spot it at the precise location (yard line *and* lateral position) where the ball became dead.
7. Unless you are the Coverer, assist in relaying a ball to the official who will place it at the succeeding spot (Mechanic 5.8).
8. If the ball becomes dead out of bounds or closer to the sideline than to the hash marks do not move the ball at the dead-ball spot until a replacement ball has been positioned at the correct location on the inbounds line.

Getting ready for the next down:

9. Check that there is nothing untoward going on outside your sideline or in your team area, but don't allow this duty to detract from your primary responsibilities within the field of play.

10. Verbally or visually (using signals Sup11 or Sup12) inform the Referee of the correct down and clock status (if you are the Coverer), and check that the Referee indicates it correctly. Inform him immediately if an incorrect signal is given. Be aware of the new distance to the line to gain.
11. If substitutions are made from your side of the field, check that Team A players fulfil the 9-yard line requirements (Rule 7-1-3-b).
12. Move into position for the next down. If the ready-for-play has been given (or is imminent), backpedal to keep your eyes on the ball. Do not take your eyes off it for long[§] in case the play starts while you are not looking.

13.9.d – Advanced techniques

1. The priority at the end of a play is to get into position ready for the next one. Only if a serious incident occurs (such as a foul or misconduct, an injury, or a breakage of the chain) should your routine be interrupted.
2. If Team A makes substitutions while the snapper is at, near or moving towards his position at the line of scrimmage:[§]
 - (a) Check whether Team B responds to Team A's substitutions.[†]
 - (b) If so (or if in doubt for up to 3 seconds after a Team A incoming substitute enters the field of play or end zones),[†] signal (Sup36) to the Referee and shout "subs on".[§]
 - (c) Drop the signal (Sup36) once it is clear that Team B has completed its substitutions (or does not make any).
3. If you want to speak to a player on the field (e.g. to warn him that he was close to fouling), it often saves time to relay the message via the Referee (for a Team A player) or the Umpire or Back Judge (for a Team B player). Don't delay the game unnecessarily by entering either team's huddle, unless a timeout is still in progress.
4. Maintain your concentration, and think about the next play.
5. [LINE JUDGE WHEN THERE IS AN ALTERNATE CREW]
 - (a) When the ball is declared ready for play for the next down, instruct the alternate down box operator to move his box to the new position.
 - (b) When a new line to gain is established and the chain is set, instruct the alternate line-to-gain marker operator to move it to the new position.
6. [LINESMAN] Don't spend so much time interacting with the chain crew that you disregard your other duties watching players and communicating with colleagues.