



2026 Playing Rules, Bylaw and Resolution Proposals

2026 Playing Rules Proposals Summary

1. By Competition Committee; to permit the kicking team to declare an onside kick at any time during the game.
2. By Competition Committee; to eliminate the kicking team's incentive to intentionally kick the ball out of bounds when kicking off from the 50-yard line.
3. By Competition Committee; to modify the kickoff alignment requirements for the receiving team players in the setup zone.
4. By Competition Committee; to allow League personnel to consult with on-field officials when considering disqualifications for both flagrant football acts and non-football acts without being called on the field.
5. By Competition Committee; for one year only, to allow the NFL Officiating Department to correct clear and obvious misses made by on-field officials that impact the game, in the event that there is a work stoppage involving the game officials represented by the NFL Referees Association.

2026 Bylaw Proposals Summary

1. By Competition Committee; amends Article XVII, Section 17.1 of the Constitution and Bylaws to permit the League office to adjust the procedures and related dates and deadlines for the final roster reduction to accommodate an international game scheduled in the first week of the regular season.
2. By Competition Committee; amends Article XVII, Section 18.1 (B) of the Constitution and Bylaws to establish the Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day weekend as business days to provide clubs with personnel notices during the first weekend after the roster reduction.
3. By Competition Committee; to permit players on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform to begin a 21-day practice period after the club's second game of the regular season.

2026 Resolution Proposals Summary

1. By Pittsburgh; to make permanent the change implemented during the 2025 season that permits clubs to have one video or phone call with no more than five prospective Unrestricted Free Agent during the Two-Day Negotiation Period, and to permit clubs to make travel arrangements with such players upon agreeing to terms.
2. By Cleveland; to allow draft selections to be traded up to five (5) seasons in the future.

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2026 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 1

Amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 6 (pp. 23-24) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

SECTION 1 PROCEDURES FOR A FREE KICK

ARTICLE 6. ONSIDE KICK. At any time during the game, the kicking team, ~~if trailing its opponent,~~ may declare an onside kick by notifying the Referee prior to the start of the play clock (25-second play clock after the Back Judge hands the kicker the ball). The Referee will then notify the receiving team before starting the play clock and the following rules will apply:

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: Permits the kicking team to declare an onside kick at any time during the game.

Reason: Competitive Equity.

2026 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 2

Amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 5 (pg. 23) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

SECTION 1 PROCEDURES FOR A FREE KICK

ARTICLE 5. KICKOFF OR SAFETY KICK CROSSES GOAL LINE. A kickoff or safety kick into the end zone that remains inbounds is a live ball and must be returned or downed by the receiving team.

It is a touchback and the dead ball spot is the 20-yard line if a kickoff or a safety kick:

(a) touches the ground or a player in the landing zone and is downed in the end zone by the receiving team or goes out of bounds behind the receiving team's goal line;

The dead ball spot is the 35-yard line if, without first touching the ground or a player in the landing zone, a kickoff or safety kick:

(b) goes out of bounds behind the receiving team's goal line;

(c) strikes the receiving team's goal post, uprights, or cross bar; or

(d) lands at or beyond the goal line and is downed in the end zone by the receiving team.

In either case, if the kickoff is from the 50-yard line and the play results in a touchback, then the dead ball spot is the 20-yard line.

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: Eliminates the kicking team's incentive to intentionally kick the ball out of bounds when kicking off from the 50-yard line.

Reason: Competitive Equity.

2026 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 3

Amend Rule 6, Section 1, Article 3 (pg. 22) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

ARTICLE 3. KICKOFF OR SAFETY KICK FORMATION. From the time the kicker begins his approach to the ball and until the ball touches the ground or a player in the landing zone or the end zone:

(b) All receiving team players must be inbounds and on or behind their restraining line, and at least nine players must be positioned in the setup zone. The following applies to the receiving team players in the setup zone:

- (1) **Players on Restraining Line.** At least ~~six~~ five of the players must be lined up with their front foot on the receiving team's restraining line. If the receiving team elects to have more than nine players in the setup zone, then at least ~~seven~~ six players must be lined up with their front foot on the receiving team's restraining line.
 - a. At least one of the players must be lined up between the inbounds lines.
 - b. At least one of the players must be lined up between the top (inside) of the yard line number and the inbounds line on each side of the field.
 - c. At least one of the players must be lined up between the sideline and the bottom (outside) of the yard-line number on each side of the field.
- (2) **Remaining Players in the Setup Zone (Not on Restraining Line).** The receiving team may have a maximum of ~~three~~ four players in the setup zone not on the restraining line, but never more than ~~one~~ two players in each of the three areas within the setup zone bordered by the sidelines and inbounds lines; If there are four players in the setup zone not on the restraining line, there must be at least one player lined up between the sideline and inbounds line on each side of the field.
- (3) At least three players must be lined up outside the inbounds line on each side of the field.
- (4) All receiving team players lined up outside the setup zone must remain behind the receiving team's 20-yard line until the ball is kicked and behind the receiving team's 30-yard line until the ball lands or is touched by a receiving team player in the landing zone or end zone.

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: Modifies the alignment requirements for the receiving team players in the setup zone.

Reason: Player safety. Provides excitement and competition in the game.

2026 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 4

Amend Rule 19, Section 2 (pg. 70) (new language underlined, deleted language struck through):

SECTION 2 SUPPORT FROM NFL OFFICIATING STAFF

The Replay Official and designated members of the Officiating department at the League office may consult with the on-field officials to provide objective information regarding on-field rulings and the correct application of playing rules. In addition, if the designated members of the Officiating department determine that a foul for a football or non-football act called on the field is flagrant, then they can instruct the on-field officiating crew to disqualify the player(s) who committed the foul.

For actions not called on the field, if designated members of the Officiating department determine prior to the next legal snap or kick that such action is flagrant, they may consult with the on-field officials regarding a potential disqualification of the offending player.

Penalty: Disqualification from the game if actions are found to be flagrant.

Those players who were not penalized, but who engaged in football or non-football acts that were determined to be flagrant and directly related to the foul called on the field, may also be disqualified by designated members of the Officiating department. A penalty will be assessed when a player was not penalized by on-field officials but was subsequently disqualified pursuant to this Section. The determination that a foul is flagrant must be based on the available video, and the designated members of the Officiating department must instruct the officiating crew to disqualify the identified player(s) before the ball is next legally put in play.

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: Allow League personnel to consult with on-field officials when considering a disqualification for both flagrant football and non-football acts without being called on the field.

Reason: Integrity of the Game

2026 PLAYING RULE PROPOSAL NO. 5

For one year only, amend Rule 15 to include a new Section 10 (p. 64), in the event that there is a work stoppage involving the game officials represented by the NFL Referees Association and during the period that replacement game officials are utilized as the on-field officials:

SECTION 10. ADMINISTRATION, CONSULTATION, AND ASSISTANCE FROM DESIGNATED MEMBERS OF THE NFL OFFICIATING DEPARTMENT.

Designated members of the Officiating department located at the League's Officiating Command Center will be assigned to monitor each game and are authorized to provide information to the on-field officials to assist officials in specific areas when clear and obvious video evidence is present. Unless otherwise specified herein, this responsibility shall apply throughout each game and is limited to the following situations:

- a) **Fouls Not Called on the Field.** If a designated member of the Officiating department identifies clear and obvious video evidence of an act that constitutes any of the following fouls that were not called on the field, then he/she may (i) provide information regarding the correct application of the playing rules, and (ii) advise, consult with, or assist the on-field officials to administer the appropriate foul and penalty for:
 1. roughing the passer (Rule 12-2-11);
 2. intentional grounding (Rule 8-2-1); or
 3. an act that would result in the disqualification of a player had the related foul been called on the field.
- b) **Fouls Called on the Field.** If the on-field officials call any of the following fouls and a designated member of the Officiating department identifies clear and obvious video evidence that at least one element of the foul called is not present, then he/she may (i) provide information regarding the correct application of the playing rules, and (ii) advise, consult with, or assist the on-field officials to nullify the foul and penalty for:
 1. twisting, pulling, or turning the facemask or helmet opening (Rule 12-2-15);
 2. roughing the passer (Rule 12-2-11);
 3. intentional grounding (Rule 8-2-1);
 4. horse-collar tackle (Rule 12-2-16);
 5. illegal contact (Rule 8-4-3);
 6. pass interference, only if there is clear and obvious video evidence that there was inadvertent tangling of feet when both players were playing the ball or neither player was playing the ball (Rule 8-5-3(b)); or
 7. the disqualification of a player enforced as part of a penalty for a foul called on the field.

Note: In this situation, only the disqualification penalty shall be nullified, and the yardage for the original foul called on the field shall be enforced, unless

the disqualification was related to a foul that has been nullified pursuant to this Section 10(b).

- c) **Foul Assistance After the Two-Minute Warning.** In addition to the fouls listed in a) and b) above, for any of the following fouls that occur on a play that starts after the two-minute warning and throughout any overtime period, a designated member of the Officiating department may also (i) provide information regarding the correct application of the playing rules, and (ii) advise, consult with, or assist the on-field officials to administer the appropriate foul and penalty for, or nullify the foul, if clear and obvious video evidence is present:
1. Unnecessary roughness (Rule 12-2-8(a-i); 12-2-9);
 2. Unsportsmanlike conduct based on the following:
 - a. Throwing a punch, or a forearm, or kicking at an opponent, even though no contact is made (Rule 12-3-1(a));
 - b. Leverage (Rule 12-3-1(p)); or
 - c. Leaping (Rule 12-3-1(r)).
- d) **Other Corrections.** A designated member of the Officiating department may provide information to the on-field officials in the following situations:
1. **Running Into or Roughing the Kicker.** If a foul is called for either running into the kicker or roughing the kicker, and a designated member of the Officiating department identifies clear and obvious video evidence that the act constitutes a foul for the other option not called on the field (running into rather than roughing, or conversely), then he/she may provide information regarding the correct application of the playing rules, advise, consult with, or assist the on-field officials to administer the appropriate foul and penalty.
 2. Existing Authority Pursuant to Rule 15, Section 9. In addition to the authority provided pursuant to this Section 10, a designated member of the Officiating department may (i) provide information regarding the correct application of the playing rules; (ii) advise, consult with, or assist the on-field officials on specific, objective aspects of a play when clear and obvious video evidence is present; and/or (iii) address game administration issues, as outlined in Rule 15, Section 9(a-j).

Nothing in this Section shall preclude: (i) a Replay Official or a designated member of the Officiating department from providing consultation and assistance under Rule 15-9 where appropriate; or (ii) a head coach or Replay Official from initiating a challenge or review otherwise allowed under Rule 15, Section 1.

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: For one year only, allows the Officiating department to correct a clear and obvious miss made by on-field officials that impact the game in the event that there is a work stoppage involving the game officials represented by the NFL Referees Association and during the period that replacement game officials are utilized as the on-field officials.

Reason: Integrity of the Game; Competitive Equity

2026 Bylaw Proposals Summary

1. By Competition Committee; amends Article XVII, Section 17.1 of the Constitution and Bylaws to permit the League office to adjust the procedures and related dates and deadlines for the final roster reduction to accommodate an international game scheduled in the first week of the regular season.
2. By Competition Committee; amends Article XVII, Section 18.1 (B) of the Constitution and Bylaws to establish the Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day weekend as business days to provide clubs with personnel notices during the first weekend after the roster reduction.
3. By Competition Committee; to permit players on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform to begin a 21-day practice period after the club's second game of the regular season.

2026 BYLAW PROPOSAL NO. 1

Amend Article XVII, Section 17.1 of the Constitution and Bylaws (Player Limits and Eligibility) to reflect the following (new language underlined, deleted language struck through)

Cutdowns and Player Limits

17.1 (F) Subject to the provisions of Section 17.3 of this Article, clubs will be required to reduce their Active Lists to 53 players by 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the Tuesday following the final preseason week~~end~~ of games. The claiming deadline for any waiver requests beginning on the day after the first game of the final preseason week~~end~~ of games through the Tuesday after the final preseason week~~end~~ of games will expire at 12:00 noon, New York time, on the Wednesday after the final preseason week~~end~~ of games.

Notwithstanding the above, for any season in which the League office schedules an international game during the first week of the regular season, the League office may adjust the procedures and related dates for the roster reduction to 53 players to accommodate travel arrangements for the participating clubs. The League office will advise all clubs of any such changes in advance via Player Personnel memoranda.

See 2023 Resolution G-4 (preseason roster reduction deadline), App., p. 2023-6

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: Permits the League office to adjust the procedures and related dates and deadlines for the final roster reduction to accommodate an international game scheduled in the first week of the regular season.

Reason: Provides the League office flexibility to schedule international games during the first week of the regular season while preserving the roster reduction process.

2026 BYLAW PROPOSAL NO. 2

Amend Article XVII, Section 18.1 (B) of the Constitution and Bylaws (Waivers) to reflect the following (new language underlined, deleted language struck through)

Claiming Period

18.1 (B) Clubs may claim a player placed on waivers by notifying the Commissioner within the claiming period. Clubs may file claims on players for whom waivers have been requested upon receipt of the Personnel Notice sent to clubs after 4:00 p.m., New York time (or upon receipt of the Personnel Notice, whichever is later), on the day such waivers are requested and prior to 4:00 p.m., New York time, on a subsequent date, pursuant to the following:

- (1) A 24-hour claiming period shall be in effect throughout the entire year, except for waiver requests on Friday and Saturday of each week, which shall expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the following Monday.

Exceptions:

1. During the first weekend of the League Year, and during the two weekends preceding the first full weekend of preseason games, waivers requested on Friday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Saturday; waivers requested on Saturday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Sunday; and waivers requested on Sunday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Monday.
2. The procedures for the claiming period immediately prior to and during the roster reductions can be found in Article XVII, Section 17.1 (F).
3. There will be a 24-hour claiming period for any waivers requested on the Saturday, Sunday, and Monday of the weekend after the weekend of the roster reduction. Waivers requested on Friday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Saturday; waivers requested on Saturday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Sunday; and waivers requested on Sunday will expire at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on Monday.

If the claiming period is scheduled to expire on a holiday, or such other day when the ~~League office~~ Player Personnel department is not open for customary business,

the claiming deadline shall be extended until 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the next League business day.

If any waiver request has been designated as Procedural Recall, the club requesting such waivers shall thereafter have an additional 24 hours to recall such waiver request.

- (2) During the period beginning the Monday following the final regular season weekend through the conclusion of the final postseason game,:
 - (a) Assignment of player contracts will be deferred until the first business day after the Pro Bowl or the Super Bowl, whichever occurs later.
 - (b) Terminations of player contracts will occur at the expiration of the claiming period.
 - i. A club that is still participating in the playoffs may sign players whose contracts have been terminated to the club's Active/Inactive List, Practice Squad, or Reserve/Future List.
 - ii. A club that is not participating in the playoffs may sign players whose contracts have been terminated to its Reserve/Future List only.

All notices released by the Commissioner shall simultaneously be sent to all clubs by NFLNet or facsimile.

Any club within the League may, upon request, secure from the Commissioner all available salary information on any player for whom waivers have been requested, which information shall be supplied prior to the time for the filing of any claim on such player.

Submitted by Competition Committee

Effect: Establishes the Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day weekend as business days.

Reason: Provides clubs with personnel notices during the first weekend after the roster reduction.

2026 BYLAW PROPOSAL NO. 3

Amend Article XII, Section 12.3 (E) of the Constitution and Bylaws (Player Limits and Eligibility) to reflect the following (new language underlined, deleted language struck through)

Rules and Regulations

12.3 (E) (1) If a player reports to the club at its preseason training camp and is, in the opinion of the club physician, physically unable to perform his services as a player, the club will have the following options:

- (a) Place the player on waivers with the designation “Failed Physical;” or
- (b) Place him in the category of Active/Physically Unable to Perform. Players in this status count on the Active List and are allowed to attend meetings and undergo non-contact rehabilitative workouts up to the time of the ~~second~~ final roster reduction in the preseason, at which time the club must either request waivers on the player as “Failed Physical,” place him on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform (see (c) below), trade the player, or continue to count him on the Active List. If the player continues to count on the Active List, he will be considered to have passed the club’s physical examination. Any player in the status of Active/ Physically Unable to Perform who appears in contact work during practice or any preseason game will be subject to all rules applicable to players who have passed the club’s physical examination; or
- (c) Place him in the category of Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform. The following rules apply:
 - (i) Upon receiving notification that the player has been placed on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform, the League office may arrange to send the player to a neutral physician appointed by the Commissioner;
 - (ii) Players on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform are ineligible for all games of the club and for all practice sessions, subject to the conditional practice described below. All players on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform may attend meetings;
 - (iii) ~~Commencing on the sixth calendar day prior to the club’s seventh regular season game (including any bye week), and continuing through the day after the club’s eleventh regular season game (including any bye week) clubs are permitted to begin practicing players on Reserve/Physically~~

~~Unable to Perform for a period not to exceed 21 days. At any time during the 21-day practice period or not later than 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the day after the conclusion of the 21-day period, clubs are permitted to restore such players to their Active/Inactive list, provided that no player may be activated in a Week Six game. (Note: a club in the seventh week will be treated as having a Sunday game)~~

Commencing on the day after the club's second regular season game, clubs are permitted to begin practicing players on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform for a period not to exceed 21 days, provided the club's physician has cleared the player for participation. At any time during the 21-day practice period, and prior to 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the day after the conclusion of the 21-day period, clubs are permitted to restore such players to their Active/Inactive List, provided that no player may be activated earlier than the day after the club's fourth regular season game;

- (iv) A club may at any time of the season request waivers on a player who is on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform, provided, however, that if the player has not yet passed the club's physical examination, the waiver request will be marked "Failed Physical." Further, such player on waivers cannot return in the same season to the club which requested waivers;
- (v) If the player is not restored to the Active/Inactive List by 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the day after the conclusion of the 21-day period and the club elects to continue to carry the player on Reserve/ Physically Unable to Perform, the player shall not be permitted to practice during the remainder of the season, including the postseason;
- (vi) Players on Reserve/Physically Unable to Perform shall not be traded if they are placed on such list prior to the day of the roster reduction to 53 players. Players placed on such list on the day of roster reduction to 53 players may be traded, subject to other rules in the Constitution and Bylaws; and
- (vii) Clubs are required to notify the League office on the first day of the 21-day practice period, which information shall be promulgated to clubs on that day's personnel notice.

Submitted by Competition Committee

2026 Resolution Proposals Summary

1. By Pittsburgh; to make permanent the change implemented during the 2025 season that permits clubs to have one video or phone call with no more than five prospective Unrestricted Free Agent during the Two-Day Negotiation Period, and to permit clubs to make travel arrangements with such players upon agreeing to terms.
2. By Cleveland; to allow draft selections to be traded up to five (5) seasons in the future.

2026 RESOLUTION G-1

Whereas, the Two-Day Negotiation Period permits clubs to contact the certified agents of players who will be Unrestricted Free Agents at the end of the current League Year and enter into contract negotiations with them, and

Whereas, all clubs may negotiate all aspects of an NFL Player Contract with the certified agent of any prospective Unrestricted Free Agent, and

Whereas, a prospective Unrestricted Free Agent cannot visit a club (other than his current club) at its permanent facility or at any other location, and no direct contact is permitted between the player and any employee or representative of a club (other than his current club), and

Whereas, a new club may not execute an NFL Player Contract with a prospective Unrestricted Free Agent, or submit one to the League office, until 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the first day of the new League Year, when the player's current contract expires, and

Whereas, a prospective UFA who is not represented by an NFLPA Certified Contract Advisor ("Unrepresented Player") is permitted to communicate directly with a new club's front office personnel regarding the player's prospective employment with the new club upon expiration of his current contract, and

Whereas, the Unrepresented Player and the new club may enter into contract negotiations during this period, but may not execute a contract until 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the first day of the new League Year, when the player's current contract expires, and

Whereas, the Unrepresented Player is not permitted to communicate directly or indirectly with any member of the new club's coaching staff, its player personnel department, or with any club employee whose primary responsibilities do not include the negotiation of player contracts. This prohibition applies regardless of which party attempts to initiate communication -- whether in person, by email, by text, or by any other means, and

Whereas, a club (other than the player's current club) may not discuss or make any travel arrangements with a prospective Unrestricted Free Agent, his certified agent, or anyone else associated with the player until the expiration of the player's contract at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the first day of the new League Year.

Be it Resolved, that the Two-Day Negotiation Period be revised as follows:

- 1) During the two-day negotiation period, a club may conduct one video or phone call for no longer than one hour with no more than five (5) prospective unrestricted free agents. The player's agent must be a participant of the call.
- 2) During the one permitted video or phone call:
 - a. A Represented Player or Unrepresented Player is permitted to communicate with any member of the club.
 - b. For any other contact with the club, an Unrepresented Player is not permitted to communicate directly or indirectly with any member of the new club's coaching staff, its player personnel department, or with any club employee whose primary responsibilities do not include the negotiation of player contracts. This prohibition applies regardless of which party attempts to initiate communication -- whether in person, by email, by text, or by any other means.
- 3) Upon conclusion of a such a call, the club must report the following details of the call to the NFL Player Personnel Department: Date, Start Time, End Time, Call Type, Player Attended, Agent Name Attended, and Club Personnel Attended.
- 4) Although a contract has not been signed, a club (other than the player's current club) that has agreed to terms with a player, may discuss and make travel arrangements for a prospective Unrestricted Free Agent to travel to its home city. Travel arranged or paid for by the club cannot occur until the expiration of the player's contract at 4:00 p.m., New York time, on the first day of the new League Year.

Prior to making travel arrangements, the club must report to the NFL Player Personnel Department that it has agreed to terms with the player and will begin arranging travel.

Submitted by Pittsburgh

Effect: Makes permanent the change implemented during the 2025 season that permits clubs to have one video or phone call with no more than five prospective Unrestricted Free Agent during the Two-Day Negotiation Period. Permits clubs to make travel arrangements with such players upon agreeing to terms.

Reason: Competitively fairer.

2026 RESOLUTION G-2

Whereas, pursuant to Article XVI, Section 16.6, of the National Football League Constitution and Bylaws, trades for past, future, or nominal consideration are prohibited.

Whereas, among other items or devices that may cause a trade to be rejected or constituting nominal consideration are those involving draft choices in selection meetings more than three (3) seasons in the future, and

Whereas, Clubs operate under strategic plans that extend beyond three (3) seasons. These strategies are supported by access to modern data and advanced modeling tools which enable Clubs to forecast roster decisions, and

Whereas, allowing the trading of draft choices more than three (3) seasons in the future 1) would provide Clubs with greater roster-building flexibility, 2) would create more creative trade structures that better mirror the valuations of both draft selections and players, 3) would increase the liquidity of draft capital which supports league-wide parity, 4) would improve alignment with contract and salary cap cycles, and 5) would encourage a more active trade market.

Be it Resolved, that the definition of Nominal Consideration be revised in part as follows: Among other items or devices that may cause a trade to be rejected or constituting nominal consideration are those involving draft choices in selection meetings more than ~~three~~ five seasons in the future.

Submitted by Cleveland

Effect: Allows draft selections to be traded up to five (5) seasons in the future.

Reason: Provides Clubs with greater roster-building flexibility by expanding the range of future draft assets available for trade.