

## PLAY CLOCK OPERATOR INSTRUCTIONS

**A.** The play clock operator is an integral member of the officiating crew and game administration and should be a separate individual from the game clock operator. Unfair advantages occur when the play clock is not started correctly by rule. Great care must be exercised to ensure excessive time lag does not occur in starting the clock.

**B.** The play clock operator should be in the press box at least 30 minutes before game time to meet with the official responsible for timing the game, normally the Back Judge. The following shall be discussed:

1. A complete review of the starting of the play clock in accordance with the playing rules.
2. Situations when the play clock is to be turned off.
3. The procedure for resetting the clock.

**C.** The play clock starts at 40 seconds unless there is an administrative stoppage. The play count begins when the down ends and an official (usually the official closest to the runner or dead-ball spot) raises his arm to signify the ball is dead (Signal "7"). Examples include a runner down by rule or out of bounds. An incomplete pass also starts a 40-second play clock. A complete chart of play clock settings and a list of common play clock scenarios are below.

**D.** The play clock shall be turned off whenever it would start with more time than what is remaining in any quarter and the game clock is running. The reason for this is to not confuse the quarterback over the amount of time remaining to snap the ball.

**EXAMPLE 1:** A running play ends inbounds with 12 seconds remaining in the quarter and there is a flag on the play. After disposition of the penalty, the game clock will start on the ready and the offense will have 12 seconds to put the ball in play. The quarterback should not be able to view a play clock that starts at 25 seconds.

**EXAMPLE 2:** A running play ends inbounds on first down with 38 seconds remaining in the quarter. The game clock keeps running, but a 40-second play clock does not start. The second down play is an incomplete pass which stops the game clock with 17 seconds remaining and there is a flag on the play for offensive holding. After disposition of the penalty, the game clock will start on the snap. A 25-second play clock will start because the game clock is not running.

**E.** If the play count is interrupted, whether it is because of a malfunction or for an official's discretionary timeout, it must be reset to 25 seconds. The only time the play clock is set to 40 seconds is if it is set incorrectly to 25 seconds e.g., defensive team injury. The signal for resetting the play clock to 40 seconds

is both right arms extended upwards with the palms facing up. The Referee shall pump his arms three times as if “pushing the sky” (Crew Signal “L” with both arms).

**F.** The play clock will never resume at the Interrupted count. When a malfunction occurs, the game clock must also be stopped and will restart on the snap. The signal for resetting the play clock to 25 seconds is the right arm extended upwards with the palm facing up. The Referee shall pump his arm three times as if “pushing the sky” (Crew Signal “L”).

**G.** If the play clock does not start on time, start it as soon as you are aware. The Back Judge will have a backup 25-second clock. If the play clock continues to malfunction, the Referee may direct that it be turned off. The 25-second count will then be kept on the field with the Back Judge signaling the last 10 seconds of the count.

**H.** If the play clock gets to zero prior to the snap, or free kick, it is left at zero until the penalty is enforced – then reset.

**I.** If it is close to whether the start of the play beat the expiration of the play clock, and there is no flag, reset the play clock ASAP to 40 seconds.

**J.** If the play clock is still running after the play starts, reset it to 40 seconds during the play.

**K.** The play clock is used during overtime.

**L.** When the mercy rule applies, the visible play clocks will be turned off.

## 40/25-SECOND PLAY CLOCK TABLE AND SCENARIOS

Event *	Play Clock Starts at	Game Clock Starts on	Covering Official's Signal #	Referee's Signal
Dead ball inbounds	40	Running	S7	None
Dead ball out of bounds	40	Snap	S3	None
Incomplete pass	40	Snap	S10	None
Team A awarded 1st down (no measurement or other delay)	40	Signal	S3	Wind
Penalty administration	25	Varies*^	S3	Wind
Team B foul	40	Varies*^	S3	Wind
Charged team timeout	25	Snap	S3	Chop
Helmet off/Equipment Issue/Injury – Team A	25	Ready	S3	Wind
Helmet off/Equipment Issue/Injury – Team B HEFID 40	40	Ready	S3	Wind
Measurement (or other delay in determining a first down)	25	Ready	S3	Wind
Double Change of possession (excluding kicks) - Team A snaps	40	Ready	S7	Wind
Change of possession- Team B snaps	25	Snap	S3	Chop
Touchdown	25	N/A	S5	Chop
Try, FG, Safety	25	Varies**	Varies**	Chop
Start of each period	25	Snap	N/A	Chop
Legal kick when new series is awarded	25	Snap	S3	Chop
Start of an overtime period	25	N/A	N/A	Chop
Other administrative stoppage ***	25	Ready	S3	Wind

\* If event does not occur in conjunction with any other event that stops the clock.

\*\* The game clock will start by rule on the free kick.

\*\*\* Includes inadvertent whistle and period extension.

^ Offended team option if under 2 min of either half.

# S3 is stop the clock, S7 is “dead ball - start play clock,” S10 is incomplete pass.

### SCENARIOS

For the opening kickoff, the Back Judge hands the ball to the kicker. He goes to his position and raises his arm when ready. The Referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock. The game clock starts if the ball is legally touched.

The kick is caught and returned a few yards. The ball is spotted and the Referee blows the ready-for-play with a 25-second play clock. The game clock starts on the snap.

1 & 10. The ball is run up the middle for a five-yard gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The game clock does not stop.

2 & 5. An incomplete pass is thrown. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The game clock stops and starts on the snap.

3 & 5. The ball is run for a 10-yard gain; the tackle is inbounds. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The game clock stops for the first down and starts when the Referee gives the "silent wind" (winds the clock, but does not blow his whistle).

1 & 10. A sweep play is run to the right side and the runner is forced out of bounds after a three-yard gain. A 40-second play clock starts when the ball is declared dead. The game clock stops and starts on the snap.

2 & 7. A pass is completed for a 20-yard gain; the tackle is inbounds, but A77 is flagged for holding at the line. The game clock stops to administer the penalty which is accepted. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock.

2 & 17. After a 15-yard run, A22 fumbles and a pile forms; A88 recovers. The game clock is stopped to determine who recovered the fumble. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock.

3 & 2. After either team takes a timeout, the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock. The game clock starts on the snap.

3 & 2. A22 runs for no gain, but is injured. The game clock stops and A22 must leave the game for at least one play. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock and starts the game clock.

3 & 2. B42 is injured on a running play which ends inbounds. The game clock stops and B42 must leave the game for at least one play. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 40-second play clock and starts the game clock.

4 & 2. The ball is punted and a fair catch is made. The ball is spotted and the referee blows the ready with a 25-second play clock. The game clock starts on the snap.