

# GAME CLOCK MANAGEMENT NOTES

## A. OVERALL

- 1. Normal Situations.** Play clock for high school and college 25 seconds. Overall time includes time of the play, official's (referee) time to reset the ball and play-clock time. Minimum time is usually 31 seconds but often is 40-45 seconds or more (booth coaches should record the average time between plays at the beginning of the game — it could save a close game for you). Pro time is 40 seconds running clock.
- 2. Controlling Tempo.** Every team should be able to switch gears to slow down or speed up game tempo.

## B. TEMPO IDEAS

- 1. Normal Tempo.** Coaches need to establish these items:
  - ✓ Huddle procedures, alignment and distance from L.O.S
  - ✓ How play or defense will be communicated to players on the field.
  - ✓ How players will arrive at the L.O.S.
- 2. Up-Tempo.** An accelerated game pace tempo has the following elements:
  - ✓ All players hustle to the point of the ball.
  - ✓ Huddle is at or near L.O.S.
  - ✓ Play is communicated by the audible system or wristbands.
  - ✓ Ball is snapped on a pre-determined snap count.
  - ✓ A great technique to further disguise the play formation with this up-tempo pace is to break from the huddle at L.O.S. since the defense will have little or no time to adjust to the formation.
- 3. 2-Minute Offense/Defense.** The purpose is to score and/or prevent a score in the final 2 minutes of the half or game. There are 3 key elements for the offense
  - ✓ There is limited time in calling and executing the plays.
  - ✓ Dual goals are to advance the ball as quickly as possible and stop the clock if possible.
  - ✓ All concerned must know the precise time remaining and the number of timeouts remaining for both teams (and be able to communicate with game officials to use or conserve those available assets).

## C. WHAT STARTS AND STOPS THE GAME CLOCK:

### 1. The game clocks stops:

- When a timeout (charged or TV/radio) is called by an official.
- At the end of a period.
- After an incomplete pass.
- When a ball carrier goes out of bounds.
- During an administration of a penalty.
- When there is a measurement for a 1st down.
- When a live ball goes out of bounds (such as a punt out of bounds).
- When a coach requests to confer with an official and the official agrees to the conference.
- When a fair catch is made.
- When the ball is illegally touched (such as when an ineligible lineman behind the line of scrimmage catches a live ball).
- For an injury timeout.
- For an inadvertent whistle.
- For a score or touchback.
- For an official's timeout.

### 2. The game clock starts:

- When the ball is legally touched on a kickoff.
- When the official gives the "ready-to-play" signal.
- With the snap of the ball for the following conditions:
  - ✗ If the play of a new period starts with a play from scrimmage.
  - ✗ After a timeout.
  - ✗ After an incomplete pass.
  - ✗ After a ball carrier goes out of bounds.
  - ✗ After a touchback.
  - ✗ After the administration of a penalty.
  - ✗ After a team attempts to consume time illegally.
  - ✗ After a delay-of-game penalty is granted.

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**3. Ways To Conserve The Game Clock:**

- a. Hustle by all players everywhere.
- b. Use the preplanned 2-minute script.
- c. Punt the ball out of bounds.
- d. Down rolling punts quickly.
- e. Eliminate the huddle, if possible.
- f. Call two plays in the huddle on a clock stoppage.
- g. Request measurements when the ball is close to a first down.
- h. Space your time outs intelligently (have a plan).
- i. Hustle to the line of scrimmage after a tackle has been made.
- j. Use quick snap counts (rehearse your plan).
- k. Throw sideline or out-of-bounds passes.
- l. Rehearse a ball-grounding pass play.

**4. Ways To Waste The Game Clock:**

- a. Break the huddle slowly.
- b. Use a long signal count.
- c. Get back to the huddle slowly when on offense.
- d. Run wide but stay in bounds.
- e. Eliminate passes.
- f. Never call timeout.
- g. Take the full-allotted time to place the ball in play. Watch the clock. Rehearse your slow-down offense.
- h. Eliminate penalties which may stop the clock.
- i. Keep the ball in-bounds.

**5. Reminders And Rules For Your Players:**

- a. The ball cannot be snapped until the referee has signaled the ball ready for play.
- b. If time has run out and there is a defensive penalty, the offense gets another play.
- c. You can fair catch a kickoff without a loss of time on the clock.
- d. No timeout is charged for an injured player.
- e. If a player runs off the field opposite his bench, it is a 5-yard penalty.
- f. You can not run off the field through the end zone. It is a 5-yard penalty.
- g. The kick return clock starts after the ball is touched.
- h. QB can ground the ball to stop the clock.
- i. A little-known rule allows a free kick after a successful fair catch. The free kick may be a field-goal attempt without any rush (the other team must be 10 yards back) by either a place-kick off the ground or from a tee.

**D. 2-MINUTE OFFENSE:**

1. Keep your poise and remain confident.
2. Make critical runs and pass completions to keep the chains moving.
3. Get as many yards as possible and then get out of bounds unless it is 4th down.
4. Always go on the first count on the 2-minute offense, but use a long count after an out of bounds, timeout, incomplete pass or any other clock stoppage type situation.
5. Always call two plays if you get the chance to huddle.
6. If you get a first down, be on the ball and ready to go when the official signals the ball ready to play.
7. Have an 8-play, 2-minute offense scripted and an end-of-game script of 8 plays. In our program, we practice both scripts with every offensive practice, and we run these plays at the end or late in practices to add realism and fatigue to the sessions. All sessions will be under the clock. No on-field coaching is allowed and all plays must be signaled under game-like conditions.
8. Have a code signal for several game situations. For example, our system call of "Mayday" means "no huddle." "Deuce" means we are calling two plays in a row. Our normal audible system is in effect (color and number changes play). We will have our favorite (most successful) short-yardage play by calling "Turtle." We have our long-yardage play call of "Big Mama." "Junkyard" is grounding the ball to stop the clock. "Special Delivery" means one play to win.

**9. 2-Minutes To 1-Minute Remaining:**

- Emphasis must be on hustle, poise and proper execution.
- Do not call timeout (unless absolutely necessary).
- When possible, use an audible if you see a defensive weakness and can take advantage of that weakness.
- All plays must be off in 15 seconds or less. Coaches must manage this. Use quick cadence calls.

**10. 1-Minute To Go And No Timeout Remaining:**

- Utilize timeouts (huddle only when clock is stopped).
- Understand what stops the clock and use plays that will help you stop the clock if possible.
- Use quick passes; throw out of bounds if covered.
- Practice one play to win repeatedly so that your players believe it will work.

**E. WASTE-TIME OFFENSE:**

- All players must know we are in a waste-time offense.
- QB will watch for the coach's signal to start the huddle (no sooner than 11 seconds).
- Play clock should be at 3-4 seconds at the snap of ball.
- Avoid motion or shifts that may cause delay of game penalties
- All backs must keep the ball in bounds and do not fumble. Two hands on the ball.
- No mistakes — think QB runs or hand-offs to your RB with the best ball security to avoid fumbles.

**F. INTENTIONAL SAFETY:**

- Slow Safety** — QB or punter, on instruction from the coaching staff, will take the ball and retreat to the end line and wait as long as possible until the defense approaches and then steps out of bounds. Do not get tackled in the end zone (could fumble and give up TD). Use as much time as possible.
- Fast Safety** — QB or punter, on instruction from the coaching staff, will sprint with the ball into the end zone and down the ball (take a knee) or run out of the end zone giving up the safety.

**G. TAKE A KNEE/QB SWEEP (KEEP) CLOCK-KILLING TABLE:**

- These tables tell you exactly how much time you can afford to waste without having the ball go back to your opponent.

HIGH SCHOOL / COLLEGE OPPONENT TIMEOUTS LEFT				
Down	0	1	2	3
1	1:35	1:06	:37	:08
2	1:04	:35	:06	:06
3	:33	:04	:04	:04
4	:02	:02	:02	:02

HIGH SCHOOL / COLLEGE OPPONENT TIMEOUTS LEFT				
Down	0	1	2	3
1	2:10	1:39	1:08	:37
2	1:29	:58	:27	:27
3	:48	:17	:17	:17
4	:07	:07	:07	:07