

# FOOTBALL SAFETY GUIDELINES

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

When a person is involved in any athletic activity, an injury can occur—especially in a contact sport. One should be aware that the information presented in these rules and procedures is to inform the athlete of proper techniques or the inherent dangers involved with this particular activity. Not all potential injury possibilities in this sport are listed, but athletes should be aware that fundamentals, coaching, and proper fitting equipment are important to the safety and enjoyment of the sport.

If an injury occurs, an athlete should contact his/her coach immediately. Additionally, it is essential for proper warm up exercises prior to any strenuous activity.

## Tackling, Blocking, and Running the Ball

By rule, the helmet is not to be used as a “ram”. Initial contact is not to be made with the helmet. It is not possible to play the game safely or correctly without making contact with the helmet when properly blocking and tackling an opponent. Therefore, technique is most important to prevention of injuries.

Tackling and blocking techniques are basically the same. Contact is to be made above the waist, but not initially with the helmet. The player should always be in a position of balance, knees bent, back straight, body slightly bent forward, head up and the target area as near to the body as possible with the main contact being made with the hands, helmet and shoulder at the same time.

Blocking and tackling by not putting the helmet as close to the body as possible could result in shoulder injury such as a separation or a pinched nerve in the neck area. The dangers of not following the proper techniques can be from minor to disabling or even death. The reason for following the safety rules in making contact with the upper body and helmet is that improper body alignment can put the spinal column in a vulnerable position for injury. If the head is bent downward, the cervical (neck) vertebra are in a bind and contact on the top of the helmet could result in a dislocation, nerve damage, or paralysis. If the back is not straight, the thoracic (mid-back) and lumbar vertebra are also vulnerable to injury with similar results if contact again is made to the top of the helmet. Daily workout includes isometric-type exercises. The development of strength in the neck muscles is one of the best methods of preventing head injury and enabling an individual to hold his/her head up even after getting tired during a workout or contest.

## Basic Contact Position and Fundamental Technique

If the knees are not bent, the chance of a knee injury is greatly increased. Fundamentally, a player should be in the proper contact position at all times during live ball play and this point shall be repeated continually during practice. The danger is anything from strained muscles, to ankle injuries, to serious knee injuries requiring surgery. The rules have made blocking below the waist (outside a 2-yard by 4-yard area next to the football) illegal.

Cleats have been restricted to no more than one half inch to further help prevent knee injuries. A runner with the ball, however, may be tackled around the legs.

In tackling, the rules prohibit initial contact with the helmet or grabbing the facemask or edge of the helmet. These restrictions were placed in the rules because of serious injuries resulting from non-compliance to these safety precautions. Initial helmet contact could result in a bruise; dislocation, broken bone, head injury, or internal injury such as kidneys, spleen, bladder, etc. Grabbing the face mask or helmet edge could result in a neck injury which could be anything from a muscle strain to a dislocation, nerve injury, or spinal column damage which could cause paralysis or death.

## Equipment

A tooth and mouth protector (intraoral) which shall include an occlusal and a labial portion and which shall cover all upper teeth is mandatory equipment for all players. Shoulder pads, helmets, hip pads with tailbone protector, and pants (including thigh pads and knee pads) must have proper fitting and use.

(continued on reverse side)

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I also understand the necessity of using the proper techniques while participating in the **football** program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
ATHLETE’S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME

**PARENT/GUARDIAN/CUSTODIAN:** I have read the above safety guidelines.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARENT/GUARDIAN/CUSTODIAN SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



WHITE: SCHOOL COPY  
YELLOW: PARENT/GUARDIAN/CUSTODIAN COPY

Shoulder pads which are too small leave the shoulder point vulnerable to bruises or separations; it could also be too tight in the neck area, resulting in a possible pinched nerve. Shoulder pads that are too large leave the neck area poorly protected and may slide on the shoulders making them vulnerable to bruises or separations. Helmets must fit snugly at the contact points: front, back, and top of head. The helmet must be safety “NOCSAE” branded, the chinstraps must be fastened, and the cheek pads must be of the proper thickness. On contact, too tight a helmet may result in a headache; too loose a fit could result in headaches, a concussion, a face injury (e.g., broken nose, cheek bone, etc.), or a blow to the back of the neck causing a neck injury — possibly quite serious, such as paralysis or even death.

Participants are prohibited from wearing jewelry. All athletes shall read printed literature regarding safety procedures as provided by the coach. Travel to/from practice/contest shall take place in school-approved transportation vehicles only.

Each participant shall have the safety guidelines explained to them, shall sign the form that states they understand, and their parents/guardians/custodians shall sign that they have read the sport safety guidelines.

## **Helmet Safety**

The safety and welfare of students participating in football requires the following procedures for helmet safety be strictly adhered to by coaches and students.

### **I. HELMET CERTIFICATION**

All players shall be required to use helmets purchased and maintained by the Central Valley School District. Players shall not be allowed to purchase and use their own helmets. Rationale for this policy is that the district has no adequate means of documenting NOCSAE certification, player usage, etc., and cannot therefore ensure player safety.

### **II. CENTRAL VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITY**

1. The school district shall assume responsibility for recertification of helmets for all secondary schools.
2. The school district shall require a statement from the secondary school athletic director each year that verifies that the policies concerning helmet inventory and certification have been completed. This shall take place by January 1 of each year.

### **III. SECONDARY SCHOOL COACHES RESPONSIBILITY**

1. The head coach for each secondary school shall see that specific instructions are given to each participant regarding the safe use and misuse of the helmet. Documentation of these instructions is to be filed with the athletic director.

Each school’s documentation shall...

- A. Provide each player with safety guidelines on proper use of the helmet.
  - B. Publish a list of examples of helmet misuse that shall not be tolerated. Give this list to players and post it on the player bulletin board.
  - C. Give talks to the entire team on the topic of proper helmet use. Practice notes reflect presentations.
  - D. Instruct assistant coaches that any helmet misuse is to be immediately admonished and corrected.
2. Helmet is checked weekly during the season. It is also his/her responsibility to document this procedure.  
Example: On Monday of each week, each coach shall inspect the helmets of the players that s/he has during small group warm up period. This procedure shall be written into the practice schedule. Any player who is absent on Monday shall have his/her name written on the practice schedule on Tuesday and his/her helmet shall be checked at this time.
  3. It is the responsibility of the head coach to ensure that all helmets are fitted properly. All coaches shall be required to attend a presentation by one of the athletic supply representatives and/or qualified resource person annually.
  4. Each head coach assumes the responsibility for insuring that any repair, other than by a vendor, shall not affect the recertification process, i.e., cleaning, painting, etc.

## **STUDENT HELMET SAFETY INFORMATION**

Following is a list of “DOs and DO NOTs” for helmet use/misuse:

### **DO:**

- ✓ Inspect your helmet every day in order to detect cracks, loose snaps or screws, etc.
- ✓ Inspect your air liner daily
- ✓ Notify your coach immediately if you have any concern regarding your helmet.

### **DO NOT:**

- ✓ Throw or drop your helmet
- ✓ Sit on your helmet
- ✓ Exchange helmets with another player
- ✓ Change any parts on your helmet, such as face mask, cheek-pads, helmet liners
- ✓ Butt heads with other players
- ✓ Butt your head into any hard objects, such as walls, blocking sleds