

2026 Tri-County Football League Rules

Tri- County League Rules follow South Carolina High School Rules and South Carolina Athletic Program Rules. Specific rule modifications below have been made in order to adapt to league playing ages. Rules are discussed and approved by the Tri-County Board prior to each season.

Last Updated: 7/2/2026

Section 1: Player Eligibility & Team Size

1. All players must play in the division their age places them in **on** September 1st of the season year.
 - a. If players birthday day is September 1st- they must play in the division of their new age.
 - b. No player, regardless of age, height, skill or weight, may move up OR down in age divisions.
2. Each department will have a team size of 35 players per team.
 - a. Any department with team rosters greater than 35 players will have to notify the Tri County board for approval.
3. Except for discipline reasons, all players **MUST** play in EACH game. This was discussed and agreed upon by the board members. We cannot enforce this rule on other teams; however, directors should be notified if there is a problem.

Section 2: Equipment Guidelines and Start Times

1. Jersey numbers should be assigned just like high school. Every effort should be made to conform to high school rules that pertain to numbers and positions.

Addendum to Rule: Per officials, if a receiver or tight end is NOT wearing a jersey numbered 0-49 or 80-99, the coach **MUST** inform the head official in the pre-game meeting. Failure of the head coach to inform the officials will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul charged to the head coach.
2. Footballs:
 - a. 8 & Under Division uses the PeeWee size football (K2).
 - b. 10 & Under Division uses the Junior size football (TDJ).
 - c. 12 & Under Division uses the Youth size football (TDY).
3. By agreement of the Board, departments may offer summer conditioning beginning on June 8th. All departments conducting summer conditioning must comply with the Tri-County Summer Conditioning Parameters (Pages 12–13).
4. By agreement of the board, teams can condition/practice in shorts, t-shirts and helmets beginning on July 13th.
5. By agreement of the board, teams may begin to practice in full gear (helmet & shoulder pads) on July 27th.
6. Padded Guardian caps may be worn over the player's regular hard shell helmet during practice & games.

Section 3: Field Dimensions and Markings

1. Fields will be marked off at 80 yards. Kickoffs will be from the 30-yard line on an 80-yard field. All penalties will be either 5 or 10-yard penalties with the exception of fouls listed in the Tri-County Football League Rules.

Section 4: Game Rules and Management

1. The National Federation Rule Book and South Carolina Athletic Programs governs all other rules not listed in the Tri-County Football League Rules.
2. Certified rosters for each team will be located at each department's field.
 - a. All official rosters will be sent to the league president before the start of the regular season games. These are frozen rosters. No players may be added after submission.
 - i. All official rosters will have **only** the league president's signature on them.
 - ii. Official Rosters must be completed and be in the format agreed upon at the directors' meeting prior to the season.
3. Each game will have, if possible, 3 officials. We encourage departments to use all high school officials. If this is not possible, at least one official **MUST** be **CURRENTLY** high school certified.
4. A maximum of **5 coaches** are allowed on the sideline. All others must stay behind the spectator line and cannot talk to players and/or question official calls.
 - a. One or more of the 5 coaches must complete the Concussion in Sport Training Course. USA, NFHS, Heads Up, CDC, or other nationally recognized certification. Directions for completing one form of concussion in sports training can be found in **APPENDIX B – Directions for Completing the SCAP Concussion in Sports Training Course**.
 - i. All certifications must be turned into the league president when final frozen rosters are due – before league play starts. Any team that does not submit a certification will not be allowed to play until one is presented.
5. Chain Crews, regardless if volunteers or paid people, cannot talk to officials, coaches, players during games per the High School Federation Rules. They will be asked to leave their position if they are found to be a distraction to the officials, coaches or players.
6. Headsets are permitted; each team must furnish their own and cannot be on the field during play. Each department will furnish an EQUAL spot for each team that chooses to use headphones.
7. Compressed air noise devices, artificial noise makers, electric/battery operated megaphones, whistles and drones are not allowed in any facility by any spectator per game management.
 - a. First violation of this rule will result in device being put away
 - b. Second violation of this rule will result in asking spectator or coach to leave the playing field with their player.

Section 5: Game Time, Forfeits, Inclement Weather and Reschedules

1. If a team has 11 weight eligible players present, game will begin on time. A 10-minute delay only applies to EXTREME emergencies when the game management has been notified of the emergency. Field supervisor will make appropriate and reasonable decisions concerning the matter.
2. If a team forfeits the game at game time without prior notice, their department will be responsible for paying the officials or reimbursing the host department within 1 week.
 - a. Every effort should be made to get the game in for both teams
 - i. Modifications such as the following can be made
 - ii. No Kickoff- Spot the ball at the 30yrd.
3. Inclement Weather
 - a. Games that are not called off by 4pm will be a field decision governed by the refs and the Host Site Supervisors.
 - i. If a game is canceled due to weather or other unforeseeable circumstances, all efforts will be made to reschedule that game. However, due to time restraints and/or field usage conflicts, some games may not be rescheduled.
 - b. When lightning is observed, the game will be suspended and players, coaches or officials shall not return to the playing field until lightning has not been seen for 30 minutes.
 - c. Teams that have started and cannot complete their game due to weather or other unforeseeable circumstances, will be given the option of finishing the game at the next possible date for the host site.
 - i. If the losing team at the time of the suspension decides not to finish the game, then the winning team at the time of the suspension will be awarded the win.
 - ii. If the winning team at the time of the suspension decides not to finish the game, then the losing team at the time of the suspension will be awarded the win based off of a forfeit.
4. No games will be rescheduled except for conflicting school events or team sickness of 5 or more players which would result in a team having less than 14 players available. During the regular season, each department is responsible for declaring and relaying a make-up game time and date. **THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO PLAYOFF GAMES!**

Section 6: Timeouts, Timing and Overtime

1. 3 timeouts per half, unused timeouts DO NOT carry over to the second half or to overtime in playoffs.
 - a. During the 4th quarter, if a team has a 21-point lead, they CANNOT call Timeout
2. Games will consist of 4 quarters, 8 minutes in length. If at ANY TIME during the game a team has a 21 or more point lead, the clock will run continuously unless the margin drops below 21 points.
 - a. With clock, it will run by the former JV/Middle School timing rules.
 - i. See appendix A for specific JV/Middle School clock operation rules.
 - b. With a continuous clock, it will only stop for the following:
 - i. Injuries

- ii. Timeouts
 - iii. *NOT Touchdowns or 2 point conversion*
- 2. Play Clocks
 - a. In the 8U Division, it is a 35-second play clock. See Section 12
 - b. In the 10U & 12U Divisions, it is a 30-second play clock.
- 3. NO OVERTIME games during the regular season. In playoffs, the high school overtime process will be used. Each team will have 1 timeout in overtime.

Section 7: Player Weight Limit

1. Any player over the maximum weight limit must play an interior lineman position; center, guard or tackle. Tight end is not an interior lineman position. Maximum weight limits are as follows:
 - a. 6-8 year old division-120 pounds
 - i. *Note not all Departments allow 6 year olds to play in 8U.*
 - b. 9-10 year old division-135 pounds
 - c. 11-12 year old division-150 pounds
2. Players over the maximum weight limit: (These rules DO APPLY to playoffs.)
 - a. MUST wear numbers between 70-79 so they can be easily identified. NO OTHER players should wear numbers in this range, doing so limits them to the same restrictions as any other player wearing these numbers.
 - b. Offense can have a maximum of 5 overweight players on the field at one time. ALL offensive linemen can be in a 2, 3, or 4-point stance.
 - c. Defense can have a maximum of 5 overweight players on the field at one time. They must play tackle to tackle and MUST assume a 3 or 4-point stance prior to the snap of the ball. If an overweight player is not in their stance at the snap, a delay of game penalty will be enforced against the defense.
 - d. Players will weigh in before each game. If a player weighs in UNDER the weight limit, he may switch numbers so that he can legally touch the ball. If he chooses to continue to wear the 70s jersey, he will play under the same restrictions as an overweight player. If a player weighs in OVER the weight limit and does not have a 70s number jersey, he may turn his jersey inside out and play.
 - e. Overweight players CANNOT participate on kick-off or kick-off return teams. They may participate on punt or punt return teams but must meet stated conditions concerning overweight players. An overweight player CANNOT be the punter due to the fact that if/when an overweight player possesses the ball, it becomes dead.
 - f. If an overweight player is caught playing an ineligible position, a 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalty will be assessed against the head coach. A second offense will result in another 15-yard unsportsmanlike penalty and ejection of the head coach.
 - g. Overweight players CANNOT carry the ball or receive a pass. If they recover a fumble or intercept a pass, the ball becomes dead at that spot.

- h. If a team lines up in an unbalanced/tackle eligible formation, the player on each end of the line **MUST** be under the weight limit. In other words, no overweight player can be **UNCOVERED**; there must be a tight end or receiver on the line of scrimmage to **COVER** up the overweight player.
3. Every player **MUST** weigh in before participating in a game regardless of size. Weigh-ins will occur 30 minutes prior to game time. One coach from each team must be present during weigh-ins. Scales cannot be electronic/digital and have to be set at “0” for both coaches/directors to see. Scale will then be set at the appropriate weight for that age group. Each player will have 2 tries to make weight and can only strip down to their underclothes. If the bar rests against the top of the scale, player is overweight. No agreements between coaches can be made allowing an overweight player to play outside of the restricted positions. There will be **NO** weigh-ins after the **START** of the second quarter due to disruptions of the game management staff. Players arriving after the start of the second quarter will not be allowed to play. Violation for a player that did not weigh in and participates in the game is **FORFEIT OF GAME**.
4. Any department found not weighing in players before games will be placed on probation at first. The department will be kicked out of the league if this is violated a second time.

Section 8: Safety

1. In the 12U division, the ball will be placed on the 30-yard line; the kicking team can choose to put the ball in play by punt or free kick.
2. In the 8U & 10U divisions, the ball will be placed on the opponent’s 25-yard line and possession will change. (Same as placing the ball on the 30 for a kick or punt and moving it 25 yards per punt rule.)

Section 9: Punts

1. In the 8U and 10U divisions there will not be any punts. On 4th down, a team may go for a first down, or they must declare a punt. A team may use the entire play clock to declare the punt, but they must state their intentions to punt before the clock expires. If the clock expires before their intentions to punt are expressed, a delay penalty will be assessed. If the team calls a time out or goes to the line in an attempt to draw the defense off sides or to run a play, they may then change their previously expressed punting intentions **ONLY** by calling a timeout. If they choose to punt, the ball will be moved twenty five (25) yards from the line of scrimmage, but not inside the 10 yard line. In the 12U division the punt is live, the defense can attempt to block the punt and all players are eligible to move at the snap. (No waiting until the ball is kicked.)

WHEN THE BALL IS BEING MOVED, THE CLOCK SHOULD BE STOPPED EVEN THOUGH THIS IS CONSIDERED A LIVE BALL PLAY!

Section 10: Playoffs

1. During the playoffs, games rescheduled due to inclement weather or games in general, will not be rescheduled due to a department’s failure to properly communicate times or dates to their coaches. **GAME TIME IS FORFEIT TIME!** Any change in the

schedule must be brought to the attention of the affected department's director. It is strongly suggested to email and/or fax the change so that it is in writing and follow it up with a phone call to assure that proper notice has been given.

2. During the playoffs, the TOP TEAM on the bracket is the HOME TEAM unless the host site team is located at the bottom of the bracket. HOST site team is ALWAYS the HOME TEAM.
3. In playoffs, the high school overtime process will be used. Each team will have 1 timeout in overtime.

Section 11: Gate Fees

1. No gate fees may be charged during regular season games.
2. Each recreation department may charge a gate fee for playoffs. The gate fees are:
 - a. Adults: \$5.00
 - b. Children (6-17): \$3.00
 - c. 5 and Under: FREE
3. Gate fee for Super Saturdays, homecomings or other special events /games will be under the discretion of the department, but should not exceed the price above.

Section 12: Protest

1. No game will be protested due to an official's errant calls or misinterpretation of the rules, both National Federation and Tri-County Football League Rules. Field director will be responsible for properly addressing rules should they be called upon by the officials. Only protests in regard to ineligible players will be addressed by the Tri-County Football League Board of Directors.
2. ANY COACH ejected from a game by an official or a field director must leave the facility grounds IMMEDIATELY. Punishment is a 1-game suspension (next scheduled game, includes playoffs). Any coach that is suspended for a game, MAY NOT be on the grounds during the game for which they are suspended. A second ejection will result in the coach being terminated by their recreation department. Each recreation department reserves the right to suspend or terminate a coach on a first or second offense! **ANY PLAYER ejected from a game will be required to sit out the next scheduled game, playoffs included. The player must attend the game in uniform (minus pads and helmet) and watch from the sideline.** If a coach or player is to be suspended, the facility hosting that team's next game will be notified of the suspension. If a director feels a coach or player should not have been ejected, that director may ask for a board hearing to review the case. A minimum of 70% of the Tri-County Football League Board of Directors MUST be present to hear the case and rule on the decision.

Section 13: 8 and Under Division Rules

1. Coaches on the Field:
2. One offensive coach and one defensive coach will be allowed on the field throughout the entire season.
3. **All coaches on the field MUST be 10-yards behind the deepest player in formation on offense and defense along with absolutely no talking to, motioning to or positioning of players once the ball is snapped.** (i.e. Must make every effort to be out of the way while the ball is live.).
 - a. Penalties are as follows:
 - i. 1st offense: verbal warning
 - ii. 2nd offense: sideline interference called and 5 yd. penalty from end of run
 - iii. 3rd offense: unsportsmanlike conduct called, 15 yd. penalty from end of run and on field coach will be required to coach from within the team box for the remainder of the game. This does not mean that a team has to play without a coach on the field; the coach that was removed from the field may be replaced by another coach until there are no coaches left.
 - iv. At any point, if a coach fails to move out of the area of action or purposely interfere with the play, at the official's discretion, will be given an unsportsmanlike penalty for play interference, 15 yd penalty from the end of run and will be required to coach from within the team box for the remainder of the game. This does not mean that a team has to play without a coach on the field; the coach that was removed from the field may be replaced by another coach until there are no coaches left.
4. Teams will have a 35-second play clock. **The league asks that the 35-second play clock be strictly enforced.** If a team is at the line of scrimmage and a penalty is called, THEY CANNOT go back into the huddle, they must run the play!
 - a. Penalty: 5-yard delay of game.
5. During the regular season & playoff games, **except between the 10-yard line and the goal line:**
 - a. No more than 6 defensive players are allowed on the line of scrimmage
 - b. NO lineman can stand up on the line of scrimmage. All linemen must be in a down position except the defensive ends, which must line up outside of the tight ends.
 - c. Linebackers, corners and safeties MUST be 4 yards beyond the offensive line of scrimmage to allow the play time to develop.
 - d. No more than 1 defensive player may line up inside the guards. Other than the nose guard, a defensive player lined up on a guard must be head up to the guard but may be angled inward. Nose guard can line up head up to the center OR in either "A" gap. No other defensive linemen may line up in the "A" gap. This rule has been devised to protect the center and/or allow time for the center and quarterback exchange. SPECIAL NOTE: coaches running an "unconventional" spread offense do so at their own risk. In this spread, the defense is allowed to line up in their "normal" positions.
 - e. **Penalty: 1st offense is a 15-yard penalty and a WARNING to the head coach, 2nd offense is another 15-yard penalty and EJECTION of the head coach.**

- f. **Officials will look at the defensive alignment before the snap to make sure that players are lined up properly.**

6. Kickoffs

- a. In the 8U there will not be any kickoffs of any kind. Play will start from the twenty five (25) yard line.

7. Punts

- a. Review section 9:1 for specific division rules regarding punting.

Tri-County Board of Directors for Youth Sports:

The Directors who make up the Tri-County Board for Youth Sports will continue to follow a “Zero Tolerance” policy regarding inappropriate behavior. This policy will encompass all interactions during the course of the pre-season, regular season and post-season, which shall include but not be limited to the following: practices, games, jamborees, homecomings, opening day ceremonies, all-stars, tournaments and any other league sponsored event(s).

Spectator Parent Conduct:

All parents/spectators should remember that their actions at game and/or practices reflect directly on the children.

Tobacco products should be refrained from being used in the presence of the kids. Several city recreation departments are currently looking at adopting the Pickens County School Board policies on tobacco free facilities. You will be notified at the games if this issue has been put in place and ask that you honor it.

Rules **ALL** Parents, Spectators and Coaches Need to Abide By:

1. IF A PARENT OR COACH IS EJECTED FOR UNRULY BEHAVIOR, THE PLAYER MUST LEAVE ALSO. Ejected persons must leave the facility grounds immediately!
2. Over the years, it has been harder and harder for department's to find quality high school officials due to fans badgering and belittling officials without intervention by recreation departments. The Tri-County Board has addressed this with the following: No fan or spectator may in any way harass or criticize officials before, during, or after a ballgame. Fans that are observed doing this will be given one warning. Continued problems, the fan will be asked to leave facility grounds/or removed by local law enforcement.
3. All facilities located in the Tri-County Football League are under police/sheriff's department jurisdiction; therefore, unruly fans can be in violation of the state code for disorderly conduct. Law enforcement has full authority over all public facilities/grounds. State Code: 16-17-530.
4. Anyone entering public facility/grounds under the influence of alcohol is subject to removal and/or arrest under State Code: 16-17-530.
5. Municipal facilities fall under state, county, or municipal litter laws, so please place any and all trash in trash receptacles. State Code: 16-11-700.
6. Foul language will not be allowed at any sporting events or public grounds/facilities. State Code: 16-17530.
7. Spectators/Parents are not allowed on the sidelines or field before, during or after a ballgame except for a medical emergency.

8. Due to privacy laws, at no time can any parent/spectator, ask to see Birth Certificates, etc. A coach may request to see the "certified roster" where player's birth certificates were checked. Only on-site representatives may review Birth Certificates for players not certified.

9. The Tri-county Board of Directors for Youth Sports, recognizes the importance of the Internet in shaping the public's perception. The Board of Directors also recognizes the importance of our volunteers, employees and parents in leading and setting the tone of social media interactions. Personally identifiable information (such as a name and date of birth and/or a street address which, when taken together, can identify a particular individual) should not be disclosed in any manner on any social networking site without the approval of the recreation department directors, coaches, officials and/or parents/guardians.

10. Since most municipalities have ordinances concerning the discharge of air horns, etc and artificial noisemaking devices are disruptive to not only the players but fellow spectators, all artificial noisemaking devices such as air horns, megaphones, cowbells, etc. will not be tolerated at any game and violator is subject to removal.

11. Drones will not be allowed in any facility during practices, games, jamborees or tournaments for safety concerns.

*Violators of any of the above may be fined up to 100.00 or up to 30 days in jail with the exception of littering - punishable by up to \$300.00 or 30 days in jail.

Ignorance of state and county laws or municipal ordinances is no excuse for inappropriate behavior.

Please be respectful of others and set forth examples we want our children to follow.

Thank you!

Tri-County Recreation Tackle Football League

Summer Conditioning Parameters

Purpose: To promote heat and equipment acclimatization for recreation athletes

ALL CONDITIONING SESSIONS ARE OPTIONAL TO ATHLETES

- 1. Summer conditioning will begin on Monday, June 8 and run through Sunday, July 12.**
- 2. Recreation departments CAN separate based on age of teams.**
- 3. Each team or age group is allowed 3 hours of conditioning per week and can only condition Monday through Saturday.**
- 4. No conditioning sessions can last more than 1 ½ hours. Conditioning sessions can be run as follows: 3 one-hour sessions per week, or 2 one-and one-half hour sessions per week.**
- 5. The Tri-County Summer Pre-Season Timeline will go as follows:**
 - Monday, June 8 – Sunday, June 28: Conditioning (No Helmet)**
 - Monday, June 29 – Sunday, July 5: Recovery Week (No Conditioning)**
 - Monday, July 6 – Sunday, July 12: Conditioning (Helmet Only)**
 - Monday, July 13 – Sunday, July 26: Practice (Helmet Only)**
 - Monday, July 27 – First Game: Practice (Full Pads)**

6. All time periods labeled as conditioning will consist of conditioning only. There is to be no installation of defensive or offensive schemes during any period labeled conditioning only.
7. Only equipment intended for general conditioning purposes, such as cones, agility ladders, and resistance bands, may be used during conditioning sessions.
8. The week of July 4th (June 29 – July 5) will be a recovery week. No conditioning should be done during this period.
9. Starting on Monday, July 6, recreation departments may add helmets only to the conditioning plan. No other equipment should be added. (footballs, shields, dummies, sleds, shoulder pads, etc.)
10. The start date for practice in full pads would be Monday, July 27. The first scrimmage should not be held any earlier than Friday, August 7.

Any infraction of these rules will result in the violating department being suspended from the current season's Tri-County Tournament if approved by a majority vote of the eligible members of the Tri-County Board.

APPENDIX A – JV/Varsity Clock Rules

Article 1 : The clock shall start for a period:

1. If a period begins with a free kick when the kick is touched, other than first touching by

Kicker.

2. If a period begins with a snap, when the ball is legally snapped.

Article 2 - The clock shall start with the ready-for-play signal for situations other than a free kick if the clock was stopped:

1. For an official's time-out.
 - a. on a change of possession, the clock begins on the ready-for-play
2. Because the ball has become dead following any foul provided in either (a) or (b).
 1. There has been no charged time-out during the dead ball interval.
 2. The down is not an extension of a period or try.
 3. The action, which caused the down to end, did not also cause the clock to be
stopped.

in 8U and 10U division the clock begins on the ready-for-play after a simulated punt

Article 3 - The clock shall start with the snap or when any free kick is touched, other than first touching by Kicker, if the clock was stopped because of the following:

- A. The ball goes out-of-bounds.
- B. A fair catch is made.
- C. A fair catch is awarded.
- D. The ball becomes dead behind the goal line. E. A forward pass is incomplete.
- F. A request for a charged or television/radio time-out is granted. G. A period ends. H. A team attempts to consume time illegally.
- I. The penalty for a delay of game foul is accepted.

APPENDIX B – Directions for Completing the SCAP Concussion in Sports Training Course

- Visit <https://nfhslearn.com>
- Look at the top right of the page, and click “Register”.
- Follow the steps to start an account (when asked to input profile information, click “Coach”, enter any sports that you coach, enter your state and city, and type in “SCAP” in the box that asks for your organization).
- You will now be taken to a page that says “My Courses” (a few tutorial pop-ups will come, just click next. Once the tutorial is finished, you will be on a page that says “State Coaching Requirements”. The only course that you need is the “Concussion in Sports” course.).
- A window will pop up, click “Continue”.
- You will be taken to the checkout page – you will see a price of \$0.00.
- Click the drop down box and select South Carolina.
- Next click “Checkout”, and you will be sent to a receipt page.
- On the receipt page there will be a script prompting you to click to access your “Course”.
- Follow the directions to compete the course, and take the test at the end.
- Once finished, click the “Download Certificate” box.
- The certificate can then be printed and turned in with other required paperwork for SCAP Tournaments.