



# 2020-2021 MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE

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## Football

Note that the resumption of all activities and athletics are subject to change based on the most current information, directives from state government and health department officials, and member school feedback.

### Football:

Start date: September 28

Acclimatization: 11 Days

First competition date: October 9 (including lower levels)

Last date of regular season competition: Weds., November 11 or 12

End date: Saturday, November 28

Total weeks including postseason: 9

Maximum number of contests: 6 (regular season)

Maximum number of regular season contests per week: 1

- All aspects of athletics including meetings, practices, competitions, transportation and facility usage must align with the requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education plan for return to learning, must follow the requirements from the [Minnesota Department of Health's Guidance on Youth Sports](#), and must include the required actions identified in the Governor's Executive Orders.
- The first week of practice should focus on implementing effective protocols and routines for pre-participation screenings, effective social distancing, compliance with all health recommendations, establishment of pod limits of 25 or less, and additional actions that mitigate the spread of disease and enhance safety of students and coaches.
- Athletic programs must follow the identified protocols for students or coaches who have tested positive, are experiencing symptoms consistent with a COVID-19 diagnosis or have had exposure to an individual who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- For schools that are required by localized metrics to be in a distance learning mode, practices are limited to virtual contact only.
- Interscholastic scrimmages will not be allowed.
- No captain's practices should be held.
- Competitions with opponents from bordering states are allowed when less than 50 miles one way and when determined as local. Competitions of greater distances may be approved by the MSHSL with supporting rationale. Any out of state competition must follow MSHSL guidelines for competition types.
- Sportsmanship should have a constant presence in all school-based athletics.
  - Teams are encouraged to find appropriate methods of demonstrating good sportsmanship and respect towards others within the physical distance guidance.
  - Additional care should be taken when addressing contest officials with questions or seeking interpretations. At no time, other than in the natural course of competition, should a coach or player violate the required physical distance with an official. Any coach or player verbally interacts with an official must do so with a mask on and at a safe distance.



**COVID-19 NOTICE**  
**PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

In accordance with governmental directives, the MSHSL will offer certain activities subject to compliance with local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and guidelines. The Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Education and the MSHSL have developed guidance and requirements related to youth sports, use of school facilities and modifications of MSHSL activities designed to keep participants safe and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Even with these measures, the MSHSL cannot guarantee that students or other individuals participating in organized athletic activities (“Participants”) will not be exposed to COVID-19. Participants and their parents/legal guardians should consider the risks

before participating in any MSHSL activities. It is a shared responsibility to protect everyone from COVID-19 and Participants should follow MDH/CDC guidelines to reduce the risk of exposure, including but not limited to the following:

- Stay home as much as possible;
- Stay at least 6 feet from other people if you are in public places;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water. Wash for at least 20 seconds;
- Always wash your hands after being in a public place;
- Always wash your hands after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol;
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Throw used tissues in the trash;
- Wear face coverings/masks that cover your nose and mouth and fit snugly against the sides of your face.

In recognizing the serious nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the positive impact that participation in MSHSL fine arts activities and athletics has on student participants, it is imperative that students and families know and understand the following:

1. Participating in MSHSL activities is **voluntary**.
2. While participating in MSHSL activities, all laws as well as MSHSL and school rules, guidelines, and protocols related to COVID-19 must be followed.
3. Participant acknowledges the contagious nature of COVID-19, and the Participant understands that there is risk of injury and/or illness from participating in MSHSL activities, including the risk to have direct or indirect contact with individuals who have been exposed to and/or diagnosed with COVID-19.
4. Participant agrees that if he/she is exposed to, or infected by, COVID-19 during the period of participation, they will immediately cease participation and follow Minnesota Department of Health protocols for schools and activities and MSHSL guidelines for notification and return to participation.
5. Participant has signed a separate Eligibility Statement connected to general participation in MSHSL athletics/activities and agrees that the terms of that statement are wholly incorporated into this document and that the terms of this document are incorporated into the Eligibility Statement.

Additional information regarding Activity Participation and COVID can be found at:

- [health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf](http://health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf),
- [health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf](http://health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf)
- [www.mshsl.org](http://www.mshsl.org)
- [www.nfhs.org](http://www.nfhs.org)

### General COVID Safety:

1. Educate athletes about physical distancing, handwashing and sanitizer use, and other immune system protocols.
2. Any person who has had a fever or cold symptoms in the previous 24 hours should not be allowed to take part in workouts and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate healthcare professional.
3. Individually or as a team, participants should confirm that they are symptom free. These confirmations can be aligned with the CDC's "Coronavirus Self-Checker" or current MDH recommendations.
4. A record should be kept of all individuals present at practices and competitions (contact tracing).
5. It is recommended that personal prep areas are to be set up prior to practice - Cones or other markers should be set up at least 6 feet apart so players have a specific place for their own bag, water bottle, etc. One cone or marker should be assigned per player.
6. Avoid grouping of athletes at start and end of practice or during transitions Staggered start times for practices and team meetings are recommended, when possible and when field space does not allow players to come and go from separate areas.
7. Workouts should be conducted in "pods" – following current MDH Return-to-Play guidelines. Pods are small groups of students always working out together. This will ensure limited exposure if someone develops an infection.
8. Whenever possible, players should maintain the recommended six feet of distancing between individuals and should not be in contact with each other. In addition, there is to be no sharing of equipment to the extent that it is possible.
9. Officials are not expected to monitor physical distancing: each person is responsible to provide space between themselves and others. Coaches should provide direction to their students regarding social distancing and other safety protocols.
10. Team celebrations or congratulations should be no-touch and should be done with appropriate social distancing.
11. When spectators are allowed at outside events, they should not have access to student athletes during the competition. Social distancing should be practiced throughout the entire event and spectators may connect with participants following the completion of the event.

## MSHSL Football Guidance and Information

<b>Practice</b>	
Required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand sanitizer should be available for each student-athlete and used as often as possible.</li> <li>• Masks or gaiters are required for coaches and school personnel during practice. Err on the side of safety whenever possible.</li> </ul>
Recommendations and Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended that all activities occur outdoors</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment</b>	
Required:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Footballs should be sanitized before and/or after each practice, whether self-provided or brought by the coach.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spalding Football Cleaning Recommendations: <a href="https://nfhs.org/media/4029991/spalding-ball-cleaning-7-7-20-revised.pdf">https://nfhs.org/media/4029991/spalding-ball-cleaning-7-7-20-revised.pdf</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.</li> <li>• Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.</li> </ul>
Recommendations and Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be no shared athletic equipment (towels, clothing, shoes, or sports specific equipment) between students.</li> <li>• Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing) individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.</li> <li>• Individual drills requiring the use of athletic equipment are permissible, but the equipment should be cleaned prior to use by the next individual.</li> </ul>
<b>Football Practice Restrictions</b>	
<p><b>School activities administrators along with coaches should determine where their teams are at on the daily acclimatization progression to begin Monday, September 28</b></p> <p><b>Four pods of 25 athletes per regulation football field.</b></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Definitions for Football Pre-Season Practice/Heat Acclimatization Policy</u></a></p>	
Days 1–3	“Contact Practices” are not allowed.
Day 1:	Helmets only
Day 2:	Shoulder pads may be worn for up to 1 hour of practice time
Days 3 - 5:	Full Pads allowed – No Thud or Live Action
Days 6 & 7:	<b>(Exception for 2020:</b> Teaching practice is allowed on <b>Day 6</b> only– helmets only, no pads, no contact, no conditioning)
Days 8–10:	No restrictions on what equipment can be worn.
<u>Day 11 (day prior to game):</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact practices are not allowed.</li> </ul>
Day 12:	<b>Exception for 2020:</b> first day on which a game at any level may be played

## Competition

### General

**Recommendations and Considerations:**

- Before, during and after the contest, players, coaches, game officials, team personnel and game administration officials should wash and sanitize their hands as often as possible.
- Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times while on the sidelines and on the field of play when possible.
- Gloves are permissible for all coaches and team staff and for all game administration officials.
- Try and limit the number of non-essential personnel who are on the field level throughout the contest.

### Masks/Face Coverings

**Required:**

- All participants, including student-athletes, coaches, officials and personnel, must wear masks if they cannot socially distance at 6 feet from others, unless actively participating in the game. This includes coming and going from the facility, and on the sideline during the game.
- If a student-athlete needs to recover after coming off the field and before putting on mask, the player should stand 12 feet away from others.

**Recommendations and Considerations:**

- All participants are strongly encouraged to wear masks during the Pregame Conference.
- All participants, including student-athletes, coaches, officials and personnel, are strongly encouraged to wear masks when arriving and leaving the site.
- All participants, including student-athletes, coaches, officials and personnel, are strongly encouraged to wear masks on the sideline. If coaches need to remove a mask to give instructions to a player across the field, they need to be away from other sideline personnel and players.
- On field, masks are permissible for players and officials, but not required.
- Note: Gaiters can also be used in place of masks.

### Equipment

**Required:**

- The ball should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer. (Rule 1-3-2)
  - Spalding Football Cleaning Recommendations: <https://nfhs.org/media/4029991/spalding-ball-cleaning-7-7-20-revised.pdf>
- Cloth face coverings are permissible. Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint) shall **NOT** be allowed during the contest. (Rules 1-5-1a, 1-5-3c(4))
- All students shall bring their own water bottle. Water bottles must not be shared.
- Hydration stations (water cows, water trough, water fountains, etc.) should not be utilized.

<p>Recommendations and Considerations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tooth and mouth protector: **Still being determined at this time on how to best handle the tooth and mouth protector during the contest. The NFHS SMAC will update the membership as soon as guidance is developed for all sports that require a tooth and mouth protector. (Rule 1-5-1d(5))</li> <li>• Gloves are permissible but still must comply with Rule 1-5-2b by meeting either the NOCSAE Standard or the SFIA Specification. (Rule 1-5-2b)</li> <li>• There should be no shared athletic equipment (towels, clothing, shoes, or sports specific equipment) between students.</li> <li>• Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing) individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.</li> <li>• Individual drills requiring the use of athletic equipment are permissible, but the equipment should be cleaned prior to use by the next individual.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Site Set Up</b></p>	
<p>Required:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team Benches - Bench personnel should observe social distancing of 6 feet. Recommend to place tape or other marks 6 feet apart on the bench.</li> </ul>
<p>Recommendations and Considerations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team box may be extended on both sides of the field to the 10-yard lines (for players only) in order for more social-distancing space for the teams. (Rule 1-2-3g)</li> <li>• If available, dressing facilities for game officials and teams should be large enough for them to use social-distancing protocols and should be properly cleaned and sanitized prior to their arrival.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pre-competition</b></p>	
<p>Required:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspend pregame protocol of shaking hands during introductions.</li> </ul>
<p>Recommendations and Considerations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team huddles should be avoided (pregame and throughout competition).</li> <li>• If teams are arriving for the second game of a double-header, they should not enter the venue until the previous teams have left the venue.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Competition</b></p>	
<p>Recommendations and Considerations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times while in the team box. (Rule 1-2-3g)</li> <li>• Do not share uniforms, towels and other apparel and equipment. (Rule 1-2-3g)</li> <li>• The ball holders should maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times during the contest. (Rule (1-3-2)</li> <li>• Intermission between periods and after scoring: The intermission may be extended to a maximum of two minutes between the first and second and the third and fourth periods and following a try, successful field goal or safety, and prior to the succeeding free kick. (Rule 3-5-7I)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclement weather – if a game has to be postponed due to lightning, when making the decision to wait 30 minutes or postpone to a later date (if the game is in the first half) or declare the competition complete (if the game is in the second half), administration and officials should work together to consider if student-athletes can be safely socially distanced while taking shelter. If taking shelter will put many participants in a tight indoor space (bus, practice shed, small hallway, etc.), officials and administration may choose to implement a contest-ending procedure prior to waiting 30 minutes.</li> </ul>
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### **Post-competition**

<b>Required:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspend post-game protocol of shaking hands.</li> <li>• Teams need to clean bench areas completely so they are free of ALL trash and belongings.</li> </ul>
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<b>Recommendations and Considerations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teams’ post-game meetings should be brief (leave venue asap).</li> <li>• Referees’ post-game meetings should be brief (leave venue asap).</li> <li>• Teams/coaches can consider other ways to show post-game appreciation for opponents and officials.</li> </ul>
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## **Competition Playing Rules Adjustments**

<b>Required:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing fields must be marked according to rule including restricted areas, team boxes and restraining lines as shown in the 2020 NFHS Rule Book.</li> <li>• The restricted area must be a minimum of two yards from the sideline away from the field of play.</li> <li>• Only school authorized personnel are allowed to be present in the team areas while maintaining physical distancing.</li> <li>• NO individuals are allowed inside the restraining lines, including chain crew and ball people.</li> <li>• Coaches and substitutes are only allowed to be in the restricted area between plays.</li> <li>• Only players and game officials are allowed on the field of play.</li> <li>• Footballs that will be used during the game are subject to the approval of the back judge or referee. 1-3-2</li> <li>• Players, coaches and other personnel shall maintain distancing from the chain crew and allow them to perform their duties without delay.</li> <li>• Only one captain is allowed at the coin toss.</li> <li>• The referee and umpire will meet with the head coach of the home team first and the visiting team second while maintaining physical distancing.</li> <li>• Communication with game officials is limited to the head coach only and physical distancing and masking is recommended.</li> <li>• All NFHS uniform and equipment rules apply unless otherwise noted.</li> <li>• Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint) shall not be allowed during the contest.</li> <li>• Measurements should be limited to fourth down plays only. The judgement of the referee is final.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolving Tied Games: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ One captain at the coin toss with the referee and umpire</li> <li>○ Choices for the winner of the toss are offense, defense or end of field for both possession series.</li> <li>○ The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option and shall have the choice of offense or defense for the second overtime period. Choices will be alternated for remaining overtime periods.</li> <li>○ All overtime periods will take place at the same end of the field that is chosen at the first coin toss.</li> <li>○ If the game is still tied after two overtime periods, the offensive team must attempt a two point try from the three-yard line.</li> <li>○ The game will continue until a team scores a greater number of points during an overtime period.</li> <li>○ All other NFHS overtime rules apply.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Recommendations and Considerations:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The restricted area and the team box may be extended to the 10-yard line.</li> <li>• The ball should be cleaned and sanitized throughout the contest as recommended by the ball manufacturer.</li> <li>• The ball holders should maintain social distancing of 6 feet at all times during the contest.</li> <li>• The kicker should retrieve the kicking tee following kickoffs/free kicks.</li> <li>• A chain crew shall consist of three individuals and it is recommended that auxiliary chains not be used.</li> <li>• Game clock/play clock operators shall meet with the referee, line judge and/or back judge approximately 30 minutes prior to the contest on the field while maintaining physical distancing.</li> <li>• Game clock or play clock operators shall be placed with as much distancing as possible and press box entrance should be limited to operations and coaches as space allows.</li> <li>• Cloth face coverings are permissible.</li> <li>• Players should limit contact with tooth and mouth protectors. Tooth and mouth protectors should remain in place as much as possible.</li> <li>• Periods may be shortened at any time by mutual agreement of opposing coaches and the referee.</li> <li>• A running clock may be instituted at any time by mutual agreement of opposing coaches and the referee.</li> <li>• Players and coaches shall remain within the playing enclosure while maintaining physical distancing during the halftime intermission.</li> <li>• The referee is not required to hold the ball overhead to indicate the end of a period.</li> <li>• All conferences/time outs shall take place near the team box area while maintaining physical distancing.</li> </ul>



## Football Pre-Season Practice/Heat Acclimatization Policy

(Portions of this policy are based on National Athletic Trainers' Association Preseason Heat-Acclimatization Guidelines for Secondary School Athletics, June 2009 AND Recommendations from the National Federation of High School Associations Concussion Summit, July 2014)

### DEFINITIONS:

**Heat Acclimatization Period** is defined as the initial 14 consecutive day period of pre-season practice, which begins the first day of practice prior to the regular season. Any practices or conditioning conducted before this time shall not be considered a part of the heat-acclimatization period.

**Practice** is defined as the period of time a participant engages in coach-supervised, school approved, sport or conditioning-related physical activity, including stretching, running, conditioning or physical training in the skills and fundamentals. Strength training and team meetings or video sessions do not count as a practice for the purpose of this policy.

**Levels of Contact** – as defined by USA Football, focuses on varying intensity levels throughout practices, to build player confidence, ensure their safety and prevent both physical and mental exhaustion. Six intensity levels are used to introduce players to practice drills which position them to master the fundamentals and increase skill development.

**AIR:** Intensity = 0 Players run a drill unopposed without contact.

**BAGS:** Intensity = 1 Drill is run against a bag or another soft-contact surface.

**CONTROL:** Intensity = 2 Drill is run at assigned speed until the moment of contact; one player is pre-determined the 'winner' by the coach. Contact remains above the waist and players stay on their feet when involved with contact.

**RESTRICTED CONTACT:** Intensity = 3 Teaching safe & proper techniques (block, shed, tackle) involving shoulder pads, and wearing helmets for protection. Contact above the hips only with hands, shoulders and chest. Keep the head out! Use quick whistle; no gang-tackling or cut blocking/tackling. Players stay on their feet when involved in contact.

**THUD:** Intensity = 4 Drill is run at assigned speed through the moment of contact; no pre-determined "winner." Contact remains above the waist, players stay on their feet and a quick whistle ends the drill.

**LIVE ACTION:** Intensity = 5 Drill is run in game-like conditions and is the only time that players are taken to the ground.

**Contact Practice** is defined as a practice during which drills and/or team work includes "Thud" or "Live Action," as described below. There are no restrictions on "Air;" "Bags;" "Control;" and "Restricted Contact." The Contact portion of this practice may not exceed 30 minutes.

**Walk-thru** is defined as a teaching opportunity with the athletes not wearing protective equipment. A walk-thru is not considered part of the 2 or 3 hour single practice limitation, but does count toward the daily practice time limit; cannot last more than 1 hour; and does not include any kind strength training or conditioning activities. A "walk thru" is only for running plays and teaching team schemes and assignments – full speed drills and/or physical contact are not allowed. Special team skills (punting and catching punts, kickoffs, and place kicking) is allowed.

**Recovery Period** is defined as the time between the end of one practice or walk-thru and the beginning of the next practice or walk-thru. During this time athletes must rest in a cool environment (65-80 degrees F), with no sport or conditioning-related activity permitted. Team meetings and video may be part of this recovery period if conducted in a cool environment.