

Football (Tackle)

SECONDARY - INTERSCHOOL

HIGH RISK ACTIVITY

- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- This activity page must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed on this page. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).
- Consult curricular [Fitness Activities](#) and curricular [Weight Training](#) when involving participants in weight training and/or training and fitness development activities.

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe for use (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters). Students must be encouraged to report equipment problems to the coach.
- Protective equipment must not be altered (for example, cutting apportion off the back of mouth guards).
- Parents must be informed about the importance of an annual equipment inspection by an accredited equipment reconditioner.
- A member of the coaching staff must supervise the issuing and proper fitting of equipment including equipment supplied by the student.
- The coaching staff must approve any exchange of equipment among players.
- The minimum protective equipment that must be worn for all contact situations includes:
 - a full fit interior mouth guard
 - a properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines) and properly worn helmet
 - shoulder pads
 - hip-tailbone pads
 - thigh pads
 - knee protection

- Student athletes must receive instruction on how to adjust and maintain the equipment properly prior to wearing football gear.
- The helmets must bear a clearly legible and legal **NOCSAE** warning sticker, in order to prove that the helmet meets the NOCSAE safety standard.
- Football helmets must be inspected annually (for example, equipment manager, trained coach, reconditioning company). Where helmet shows visible defects (for example, cracks) or has reached manufacturers years of use (for example, 10 years) it must be removed from service. Football helmets must be reconditioned as determined by an accredited equipment re-conditioner. Football helmets must be re-certified by an accredited equipment re-conditioner as per the manufacturer's requirements.
- Shoulder pads must be inspected annually (for example, equipment manager, trained coach, reconditioning company). Where shoulder pad shows loss of protective integrity or is cracked it must be removed from service.
- Bladder inflation devices must be accessible on-site for helmets that have air.
- Football helmets must be replaced after 10 years from date of manufacture.
- For students who request to supply their own football helmet, the coach must ensure that the helmet meets the following NOCSAE reconditioning and recertification standards:
 - A recertification statement and label must be on the inside of the helmet with the:
 - Name of the recertifying company
 - Date of recertification – as per the manufacturer's requirements
 - The helmet is less than 10 years from date of manufacture.
- All shields (visors) must be clear. Coloured or tinted visors must not be worn unless medical certification by an ophthalmologist is presented.
- Down-box and yardage sticks personnel must be trained in safe use of equipment.
- Blocking sleds must be checked regularly to make sure they are safe for use.
- Practice equipment, such as blocking sleds and bags, must be kept at a safe distance from practising players when not in use.
- Goalposts must be padded if in field of play. Padding must be 1.8m (6') high.
- Use footballs appropriate to the size and ability of group (e.g., smaller football or foam ball).

Refer to the [First Aid](#) section for first aid equipment requirements.

Clothing/Footwear/Jewellery

- Appropriate clothing must be worn. Clothing in practices and games must be suitable for weather conditions. Suitable footwear that satisfies football regulations and that is properly maintained must be worn.
- The wearing of jewellery during practices and competitions must meet the rules of the governing body of the sport/activity, [OFSAA](#), and local athletic association. Consult the [General Safety Standards for Clothing, Footwear, and Jewellery](#) when jewellery is not addressed by the governing body of the sport/activity, OFSAA or the local athletic association.
- When long hair poses a safety risk it must be secured. Devices (for example, hair pins, elastics and barrettes) used to tie back long hair must not present a safety concern.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe for use. Students must be encouraged to report facility problems to the coach.
- Playing surface and surrounding area must be free of all obstacles and must provide safe footing and traction.
- Boundary lines must be clearly visible. Lime must not be used to line the field.
- Spectator stands and player benches must be well removed from playing field.
- Practices: Holes, hazards (for example, glass, rocks, sprinkler heads, sewer grates), and severely uneven surfaces must be identified. The conditions must be made safe or the activity must be modified or moved to a safe location. Hazards which cannot be removed must be brought to the attention of the students. Coach must notify principal/designate of unsafe field conditions.
- Competitions: Where hazardous conditions that cannot be avoided are identified by the coach and/or officials the conditions must be made safe or the competition must be cancelled or moved to a safe location. Coach must notify principal/designate of unsafe field conditions.
- Walls, stages, equipment, trees, and posts must not be used as turning points, finish lines, end zones, or boundaries. Establish a clearly delineated boundary line away from the hazards, using

visual markers (for example, lines, pylons), to prevent contact/collision.

- Consult **General Safety Standards for Facilities** for the opening and closing of gymnasium divider doors/curtains.
- When running takes place off school site for a warm up, conditioning run and/or is an integral part of the activity:
 - Coaches must do a safety check ‘walk through’ in order to identify potential problems prior to initial use of route or course.
 - Coaches must outline to the students the route or course (for example, notice of areas to approach with caution) before the start of the run.
 - Coaches must determine that students are not crossing busy intersections unless directly supervised.

Environmental Considerations

- When environmental conditions may pose a risk to student safety (for example, thunderstorms [lightning] or student(s) with asthma, triggered by air quality), coaches must take into consideration their school board/school’s protocols and procedures related to:
 - environmental conditions (consult **Weather**); and
 - insects (for example, mosquitoes and ticks [consult the school/school board’s protocols and/or regional Public Health Department’s website]).
- Students must receive instruction on safety procedures related to environmental conditions and be made aware of ways to protect themselves (for example, sun burn, heat stroke).
- At all times the school board’s weather and insect procedures are the minimum standards. In situations where a higher standard of care is presented (for example, outside activity providers, facility/program coordinators), the higher standard of care must be followed.

Special Rules/Instructions

- Be aware of students whose medical condition (for example, asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation. Consult **Medical Conditions**.
- Prior to participation students must receive concussion information through the appropriate Ministry of Education’s Concussion Awareness Resource or the school board approved

concussion resources. Students must also receive information on:

- the Concussion Code of Conduct;
 - concussion prevention strategies specific to the activity and inherent risks of the activity (that is, outline possible risks and ways to minimize the risks);
 - procedures and rules for safe play; and
 - the importance of reporting symptoms related to a suspected concussion.
- Students must confirm their review of the concussion awareness resource and Concussion Code of Conduct prior to participation.
 - Refer to the school board's transportation procedures related to communicating with parents/guardians the location of an off-site activity and the means of transportation used as well as to the need for obtaining parent/guardian permission.
 - Previous training, fitness level, and the length of time and intensity of physical activity must be taken into consideration.
 - Activities must be based on skills that are taught.
 - Skills must be taught in proper progression.
 - A proper warm-up and cool-down must be included.
 - Emphasize controlled movement when requiring students to walk or run backwards. Backward-running races are not permitted.
 - When involved in practice drills, students must not be required to close their eyes or be blindfolded.
 - Fair play and rules of the sport must be taught and strictly enforced.
 - Adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) must be accessible for students before, during, and after physical activity to prevent dehydration.
 - Students must be informed that they are not to share water bottles.
 - Any player with a playing cast must provide a doctor's note or parent's signed permission, indicating it is safe for him/her to play.
 - Any knee braces or casts must be approved by the official prior to the commencement of the game.
 - Any exposed orthopaedic apparatus must be soft or padded.
 - Training must include flexibility, strength and cardiovascular enhancing activities.

- There must be a minimum of 4 full days in between each team’s regular scheduled games. However, in the event of unforeseen circumstances (for example, weather), make-up or rescheduled games must be scheduled with a minimum of two full days in between (for example, if a team has a regular scheduled game on Monday and that game must be rescheduled, it could be played the same week on the Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday or Friday, while still having 2 days between the rescheduled Friday game and the next regular scheduled game the following Monday).
- There must be a minimum of two full days in between each team’s scheduled playoff games (for example, if a team has a playoff game on Monday, their next game can be as early as Thursday).
- Each student must have actively participated in at least eight days of practices that include safe tackling, blocking, and running in each practice before playing in their first game.
- Safe blocking and tackling techniques (for example, head-up tackling) must be taught and reinforced throughout the season. No head blocking or spear tackling techniques must be taught.
- Coaches need to assess heat, humidity and physical condition of students when planning practices.
- Players must not compete in two tackle football leagues at the same time. Coaches must inform parents/guardians and players that they cannot compete in two tackle football leagues at the same time (for example, high school football and rep football).
- Parents/guardians must be informed of the school board’s policy related to initiation/hazing activities.
- The presence and location of spectators must not present a safety concern. A school is responsible for supervising its own spectators. The ratio of supervisor to spectators must address safety concerns.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The level of supervision must be commensurate with the inherent risk of the activity. The level of risk is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, and environmental conditions.

- Constant visual supervision during initial practice of contact skills.
- Subsequently, on-site supervision is required.
- Students must be informed that the use of equipment and the gymnasium are prohibited without supervision. In addition to verbal communication, the doors must be locked or signs must be posted indicating that students are not allowed to use the gym unless appropriately supervised.
- As a minimum the designated coach liaison will provide in-the-area supervision for all practices, games, and competitions.
- When a school team is travelling outside of their school district, a coach liaison from the same school/school district must accompany the team, must be accessible and at least one of the following criteria must be in place:
 - coach liaison is visible;
 - coach liaison is circulating on the same site;
 - location of coach liaison is at the same location and whereabouts is known;
 - if a coach is a high school student and under the age of 18, the coach liaison must be visible at all times.
- Consult school board and local athletic association rules and regulations with regard to coach and coach liaison duties and adhere to the higher standard of care.

Qualifications

- Game/match official(s) must be certified and/or experienced in officiating the sport.
- The head coach must demonstrate knowledge of the sport, skills, and strategies to the principal or designate.
- All coaches must be familiar with and implement, where applicable, the criteria outlined in **Coaches Expectations**.
- One member of the coaching staff must be knowledgeable of the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education concussion protocol or school board concussion protocol.
- Each member of the coaching staff must have qualifications which are derived from at least one of the following:
 - NCCP Community Sport Coach – Novice Coach Course
 - Trained in any of the NCCP Football Courses - Positional Coach, Coordinator, Head Coach

- Coaches that have in the past completed a level 1, 2, 3 or 4 certification (Football Canada will have transferred these designations into the current NCCP designations).
 - Attendance at a tackle football clinic or workshop, provided by an instructor who is knowledgeable of the activity and where safety is addressed, within the last five years) that is recognized as NCCP Professional Development.
 - Accreditation as a NCCP Learning Facilitator for Football
 - Past experience within the last 3 years as a coach in tackle football, having knowledge of the activity (for example, appropriate skills and progressions) and current safety practices as outlined in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education.
- NCCP Designation chart:
 - In-Training = I am taking a course
 - Trained = I have completed the course but not been evaluated
 - Certified = I have completed the course, completed any workbooks and that I have been successfully evaluated.
 - Any individual providing instruction must be Safe Contact trained. These individuals must renew their Safe Contact training every 5 years. **Please note:** individuals who took the Safe Contact training prior to April 1st 2017 must renew their Safe Contract training prior to April 1st 2022. Individuals who took the Safe Contact training after April 1st 2017 must renew their Safe Contact training every 5 years from the date they took the course.
 - A coach new to tackle football must become Safe Contact trained within one year of their first date of coaching and must have coaching qualifications derived from at least one of the qualifications listed.
 - All coaches providing instruction must successfully complete the Making Head Way – Football e-learning course prior to coaching.
 - For more information on sport-specific NCCP training please visit coach.ca.

First Aid

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible. (Consult [Sample First Aid Kit](#))
- A working communication device (for example, cell phone) must be accessible.
- The individual who takes responsibility for providing first aid to injured students must:

- as a minimum, have a current first aid certification from a recognized first aid provider (for example, St. John Ambulance, Red Cross) that includes CPR B or C and training in head, neck and spinal injury management;
- be in the area and readily accessible during the entire practice/competition;
- be aware of the school's first aid emergency action plan and follow their first aid emergency response (consult [First Aid Plan and First Aid Emergency Response](#));
- follow their school board's concussion protocol for a suspected concussion; and
- not be a participant in the activity.

Definitions

- **Coach:**

- Any individual approved by the principal or designate (consult [Coaches Expectations](#)). All new coaches must go through an approval process by school administrator/designate to determine the coach's knowledge, experience and, where appropriate, qualifications (for example, higher risk sports) to safely coach the sport.

- **Coach Liaison:**

- A teacher, principal, or vice-principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school/school board. Consult [Coaches Expectations](#) for more information.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of a sport for regulation or direction. All facilities, equipment, and sports have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education designate three categories of supervision, Constant visual supervision, On-site supervision, and In-the-area supervision. The categories take into consideration the risk level of the activity, the participants' skill level and the participants' maturity. The three levels of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that an activity requires and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Constant visual supervision:**

- The coach is physically present, watching the activity in question. Only one activity requiring “Constant visual” supervision may take place while other activities are going on.
- For example, during a track and field practice, some students are involved in high jump, some in relay, and others in distance running. For high Jump, the coach is at the event and is observing the activity.

- **In-the-area Supervision:**

- The coach could be in the gymnasium while another activity is taking place in an area adjacent to the gymnasium. In-the-area supervision requires the coach to be readily accessible.
- For example, In-the-area supervision occurs:
 - in activities in which students may be out of sight for periods of time and the location of the coach is not nearby (for example, alpine skiing, cross-country running). At least one of the following criteria must be in place:
 - The coach is circulating
 - The location of the coach has been communicated to students and volunteers
 - in single activities and those that may be combined (for example, other in- the-area activities such as badminton, table tennis, handball – wall) with the following criteria in place:
 - The coach must be circulating between the activities and readily accessible
 - The coach informs the students of the location of the activities

- **On-site Supervision:**

- Entails coach presence but not necessarily constantly viewing one specific activity. Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (for example, equipment room) to the gym is considered part of “on-site supervision”.
- For example, during a track and field practice, some students are involved in high jump, some in relay, and others in distance running. For the relay, students are

participating on the track/field and can be seen by the coach.

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