

Football (Tackle)

SECONDARY - INTERSCHOOL 2025

- This activity includes additional safety standards specific to Qualifications and First Aid (previously designated High Risk).
- Consult [Risk Management](#).
- The safety standards for this activity must be presented to the activity provider prior to the activity taking place. The activity provider must meet the minimum requirements listed in the safety standards. For more information on planning trips using outside providers, consult [Outside Activity Providers](#).

Equipment

- Determine that all equipment is safe (for example, no sharp corners, cracks, or splinters) and all assistive devices (e.g., a walker) are in good working condition and properly adjusted for the height and mobility needs of the student prior to participation.
- Protective equipment must not be altered (for example, cutting a portion off the back of mouth guards, adding padding to a protective helmet).
- Parents/guardians 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, [OFSA](#), 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, OFSA 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.
- Students must not participate when the length of fingernails poses a safety risk to themselves or others.

Facilities

- Determine that all facilities are safe and accessible for the students participating. 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. The Coach must notify the 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. The Coach must notify the 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 walking, running, or wheeling takes place off school site for a warm-up, conditioning and/or is an integral part of the activity:
 - Coaches must do a safety check 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 activity.
 - 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 school board policies and procedures (i.e., transportation, excursion/field trip) for communication with parents/guardians, the location of an off-site activity, means of transportation, supervision ratios, and 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 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/guardian's signed permission, indicating it is safe for them 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. If games must be rescheduled (for example, weather), there must be a minimum of 2 full days in between regular season games. For example, if a team has a regular scheduled game on Monday, which must be rescheduled, it could be played on any day during the same week, while still having 2 days between a rescheduled Friday game and the next regular scheduled game the following Monday). The minimum number of days required between games also applies to individual player participation in league and playoff games.
- There must be a minimum of 2 full days in between each team's scheduled playoff games and individual player participation in 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.
- 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.

Supervision

- All activities must be supervised.
- The type 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.
- Direct Supervision is required during the safety and initial skill instruction.
- Direct Supervision is required during the initial practice of contact skills.
- On-Site Supervision is required after students' demonstration of proficiency.
- On-Site Supervision is required for the duration of all other components of the activity (e.g., equipment setup and take down, warm-ups/cool downs, application of the skills and games).
- The Community Coach Liaison must be accessible to the Community Coach and students (at practices and competitions). The level of support will be commensurate with the expertise and qualifications of the Community Coach as determined by the Principal/Designate.
- As a minimum the Community Coach Liaison will provide In-the-Area supervision for all practices and competitions. Direct Supervision is required if a Community Coach is under the age of 18.

- When students are competing outside their school district (e.g., travel tournaments, regional/ provincial competitions):
 - a Community Coach Liaison from the same school board must be accessible to the Community Coach; and
 - consult school board and local athletic association rules and regulations with regard to Coach, Community Coach, and Community Coach Liaison duties and adhere to the higher standard of care.
- Where a Qualified Instructor is used, the Qualified Instructor must provide safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring for the safe application of skills and student behaviour for the duration of the activity.
- A Volunteer, under the direction of a Coach, can monitor students during practices and competitions. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.
- Responsibilities must be clearly outlined for additional Coaches and Volunteers who are monitoring the activity.

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.
 - 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 designated 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) including specific direction for participants with accessibility needs, and use of assistive devices or medications;
 - follow their school board's concussion protocol for a suspected concussion;
 - and not be a participant in the activity.

Definitions

- **Coach** (i.e. Teacher Coach/Community Coach):
 - An individual who volunteers to coach a school team and is approved by the Principal/Designate.

- **Community Coach:**

- An individual approved by the principal who volunteers to coach a school team. An individual acting in the role of a Community Coach must be assigned a Community Coach Liaison.
- Examples of a Community Coach are:
 - teachers not under contract by the board;
 - retired teachers;
 - early childhood educators, teacher candidates, educational assistants;
 - co-op students, other secondary students;
 - parent/guardian;
 - individuals/coaches from the community.

- **Community Coach Liaison:**

- A Teacher, Principal, or Vice Principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school board who is responsible for carrying out all the duties required of a Teacher pursuant to the Education Act and the safety standards. The level of support will be commensurate with the expertise and qualifications of the Community Coach and will be determined by the Principal or Designate.

- **Monitor:**

- A Volunteer and/or Qualified Instructor who assists the Teacher Coach with a group of students and has a responsibility to monitor student behaviors for the duration of the activity.
- A Community Coach who has a responsibility to coach and monitor student behaviors for the duration of the athletic season and/or a Qualified Instructor(s)/Volunteer(s) who assists the Community Coach during practices and competitions.

- **Monitoring:**

- The role of monitoring is to observe, identify, act, and report:

- Observe: Observe with attention to detail the actions of the students.
- Identify: Identify the student and the unsafe behaviour.
- Act: Take appropriate actions to safeguard students and others (e.g., stop the activity).
- Report: Provide the name of the student and the unsafe behaviour to the Coach for management and direction.

- **Qualified Instructor:**

- An individual who provides safety and skill instruction, and monitoring for an activity, and possesses the required qualifications (e.g., experience, certifications). This role could be fulfilled by a teacher, volunteer, or an employee of an outside provider. An instructor does not have the authority to supervise.

- **Supervision:**

- The vigilant overseeing of an activity for management or direction. Activities, facilities, and equipment have inherent risks, but the more effectively they are supervised, the safer they become.
- The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education includes three Types of supervision, Direct Supervision, On-Site Supervision, and In-the-Area Supervision. These types of supervision take into consideration the level of risk, which is related to the number of participants, the skill level of the participants, the type of equipment used, the environmental conditions, the age, and developmental stage.
- The three types of supervision described are not hierarchical but represent the type of supervision that activities require and the type of supervision that is inherently possible.
- Some activities in OPASSE transition from one type of supervision to another type of supervision (e.g., Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision OR On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision).

- **Teacher Coach:**

- A Teacher Coach is a teacher, principal, or vice principal with a current certification from the Ontario College of Teachers and under contract by the school board.

- **Types of Supervision:**

- **Direct Supervision:**

- Direct Supervision requires that the Coach is physically present at the activity, providing visual and verbal oversight for management and direction of both the activity and student safety.

- **Provisos:**

- No other activity can occur when part of the activity or the entire activity is under Direct Supervision when there is only one Coach supervising.
- The Supervision section of the relevant activity safety standards page in the Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education describes when parts of an activity are under Direct Supervision.
- Where a Community Coach is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring, a Community Coach Liaison is accessible for management and direction as determined by the Principal/Designate.

- **An activity may be under Direct Supervision:**

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the set up and take down of equipment;
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- During the performance/practice of the activity skill; and
- When the activities transition from Direct Supervision to On-Site Supervision.

- **In-the-Area Supervision:**

- The Coach is located in proximity to a combination of locations where the student activities take place, is circulating, and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student safety.
 - Provisos:
 - The Coach is circulating between the activities, occurring at separate locations, and is readily accessible, or the location of the coach is communicated to the student.
 - Where a Community Coach is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and is monitoring, a Community Coach Liaison is accessible for management and direction as determined by the Principal/Designate.
 - Students may be out of sight for periods of time.
 - An activity or a component of the activity is under In-the-Area Supervision:
 - Where the same activity is located in separate locations. (e.g., Track and Field, Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine));
 - Where two or more activities under In-the-Area Supervision occur in separate locations (e.g., Badminton, Table Tennis, Handball (Wall));
 - Where the skill application of the activity takes place at a different location from the Coach (e.g., Cross Country Running, Skiing (Alpine), Cycling);
 - Where activities occur in double or triple gymnasiums; and
 - Where more than one Qualified Instructor is providing activities at a combination of locations.
- **On-Site Supervision:**
 - The Coach is present at one location where the student activity takes place (e.g., gymnasium, sports field, tennis courts at an Outside Activity Provider's facility) and is accessible for providing management and direction of the physical activity and student

safety.

- **Provisos:**

- Where more than one activity occurs in one location, the Coach is circulating between the activities and is accessible for management and direction.
- Momentary presence in adjoining rooms (e.g., equipment room, outside storage shed, boathouse) is considered to be On-Site Supervision.
- Where a Community Coach is providing the safety and initial skill instruction and monitoring, a Community Coach Liaison is accessible for management and direction as determined by the Principal/Designate.

- **An activity may be under On-Site Supervision:**

- During the entire duration of the activity;
- During the safety and initial skill instruction;
- With activities using multiple stations while the Coach is circulating;
- When combining two or more activities at one location while the Coach is circulating; and
- When activities transition from On-Site Supervision to In-the-Area Supervision.

- **Volunteer:**

- A responsible adult (e.g., Educational Assistants, Retired Teachers, Co-op Students, Parents/Guardians, Teacher Candidates) approved by the Principal/Designate who is under the direction of a Coach and has been instructed on their monitoring responsibilities. Refer to your school board's policy on volunteers assisting with students' physical activities.

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