

# Wrestling Meeting Folder

# 2026-2027

Steve Dalberth, New York State Rules Interpreter

**1.** **Rule 1-5-1:** This change has increased the minimum body fat percentage for female wrestlers from 12% to 19%. The minimum for male wrestlers remains at 7%.

**2.** **Rule 4-2-6:** This rule brings tooth and mouth protector language in line with a broader NFHS Rules publication standard.

Wrestlers with braces or special orthodontic devices are required to wear a tooth and mouth protector.

A tooth and mouth protector (intraoral) shall include an occlusal (protecting and separating the biting surfaces) and a labial (protecting the teeth and supporting structures) portion and cover the teeth and all areas of the braces or orthodontic device with adequate thickness. This would include upper and lower teeth if devices are present on both.

It may not include unnecessary attachments or anything that creates a health or choking risk.

The following recommendations have been added to the 2026-27 Rules Book.

It is recommended that the protector be properly fitted and;

a. Constructed from a model made from an impression of the individual's teeth and braces or special orthodontic device;

b. Constructed and fitted to the individual by impressing the teeth and braces or special orthodontic device into the tooth and mouth protector itself;

c. Not include any attachment(s) that do not serve a purpose and function in protecting the teeth or mouth; and

d. Not include anything on it that is a health or risk issue (e.g., choking) and can pose a danger to themselves and/or other wrestlers.

**Note: State** Associations may deem a tooth and mouth protector required equipment.

**3.** **Rule 4-3-7:** No wrestler shall wear any audio (microphone) or video (camera) device during competition. The use of electronic communication devices, (e.g., amplifying devices, wireless communication devices, headphones, etc.) by wrestlers on the mat is prohibited.

**Notes:**

1. Medical appliances and /or medical devices are not considered wearable technology.
**Case Book 4.3.6 Situation E**: Wrestler A reports to the table with a hearing aid or Cochlear implant (a surgically implanted hearing device for individuals with severe hearing loss).

**Ruling:** A hearing aid is legal special equipment, so long as it is not used as a communication device between the wrestler and another person.

2. State Associations may also have policies in place to further address the use of electronic devices.

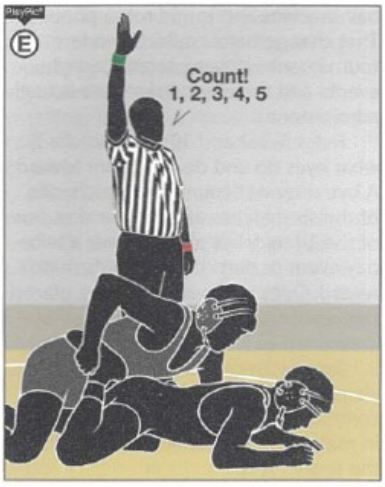
**4.** **Rule 4-5-1:** The weigh-in procedure for dual meet competition now gives additional flexibility. Contestants may weigh-in shoulder to shoulder **or by team(s)**, a maximum of one hour before the start of a dual meet.

This rule also applies each day of a multiple dual event.

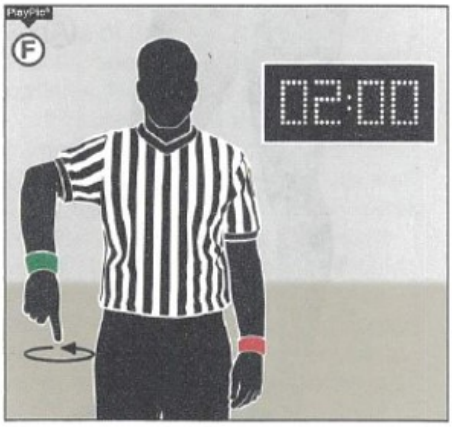
**5.** **Rule 5-25-4b:** When the wrestler in the advantage position legally holds the heel to the buttocks while the defensive wrestler is broken down the referee shall signal and vocalize a 5 second count.

If the hold is not released by the conclusion of the 5 second count it will be considered a stalling violation. This ruling is applied when wrestlers are in the position illustrated in Play Pic E and does not apply during scramble situations.

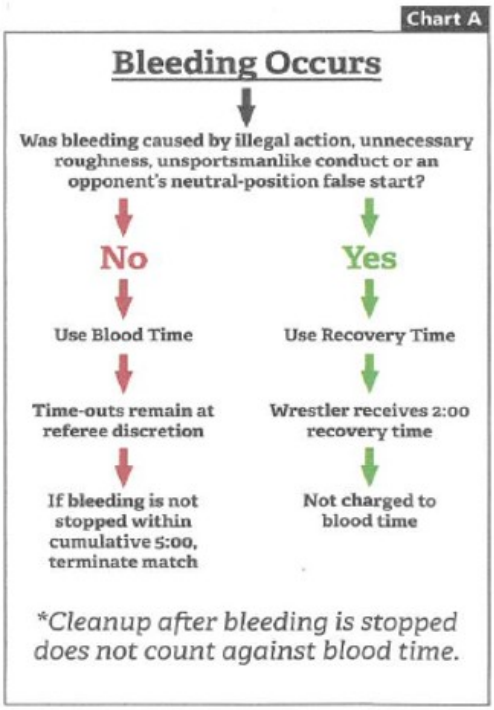
**6.** **Rule 5-28-3 and 8-2-7:** Bleeding normally remains blood time and the number of blood time-outs remain at the referee's discretion. If bleeding is not stopped within a cumulative 5 minutes, the match is terminated and the opponent is awarded the match by default. However, if the bleeding is caused by an illegal action, unnecessary roughness, unsportsmanlike conduct or a neutral-position false start, the wrestler receives recovery time instead of having to use the blood time process. Chart A and PlayPic F.




The referee shall signal and vocalize the five-second count when a wrestler legally holds the heel to the buttocks while the defensive wrestler is broken down for more than five seconds.




When injury or bleeding is caused by illegal action, unnecessary roughness, unsportsmanlike conduct or an opponent's neutral-position false start, the wrestler receives two minutes of recovery time.




**7.** **Rule 1-4-3, 5-3-1-5, 10-3-1-5:** Modified how the use of byes affects bracketing in tournaments, round robin, pool play and scramble events.

**8.** Signal No. 2 has been changed. The stop signal will be the hand raised over the head with a straight arm as in PlayPic E.

The former signal No. 3 (Officials Timeout) has been removed. PlayPic G

Signal No. 9 (NO Control) has been modified to move the hands left to right instead of circular. PlayPic H.

Signal No. 21 (Near Fall) has been modified so the No. 3 is signaled as is making the "OK" sign. PlayPic I



The former signal No. 3 (Officials Timeout) has been removed.



Signal No. 9 (No Control) has been modified to move the hands left to right instead of circular.



Signal No. 21 (Near Fall) has been modified so the number three is signaled as if making the "OK" sign.

**Rule 7-6-3:** Now adds specific direction for neutral-position out of bounds situations. When wrestling is stopped because the action goes out of bounds in the neutral position, the referee must be able to identify what caused the stoppage. Was one wrestler leaving the wrestling area?

Was a wrestler pushing or pulling the opponent out? Was a wrestler backing out? Or was wrestling action simply continuing through the boundary?

The answer determines the proper ruling and signal.

That distinction matters. The change is designed to separate legitimate wrestling action from edge-of-the-mat stalling. It also gives officials clearer language and mechanics to explain the decision. Four new signals are added to support the rule change; pushing the opponent out of bounds, pulling the opponent out of bounds, backing out of the wrestling circle and wrestling action continuing out of bounds.

The new signals are more than presentation mechanics. They are decision-making tools. Officials should not simply whistle and point back to the center. The new process should be; identify the action, stop the match, use the correct signal, and verbalize the ruling.

**Backing out of the wrestling circle. PlayPic A**

Use this when a wrestler retreats out of the wrestling area instead of engaging. This signal should be tied to clear backing out, not a legitimate pivot, re-attack, counter or continued wrestling action. The official must distinguish between a wrestler creating space to wrestle and a wrestler leaving the area to avoid wrestling.

**Wrestling action continuing out of bounds. PlayPic B**

Use this when both wrestlers are actively wrestling and the action carries them out. This signal is important because it tells everyone the referee saw the edge action and judged it to be legitimate wrestling, not stalling. It should help reduce the perception that every out-of-bounds stoppage near the edge must produce a stalling call.

**Pulling the opponent out of bounds. PlayPic C**

Use this when a wrestler pulls the opponent toward or through the boundary to stop action or avoid wrestling. This is especially important when the motion looks less obvious than a push. Referees should watch the hands, hips and body pressure to determine whether the wrestler is using the boundary as an escape route.

**Pushing the opponent out of bounds. PlayPic D**

Use this when one wrestler drives or forces the opponent out of the wrestling area as a means of avoiding wrestling or preventing the opponent from continuing action. The key is not merely that one wrestler moved forward. The referee must judge whether the push caused the action to leave the wrestling area in a way that should be penalized as stalling.

For officials, this creates a simple but important teaching sequence: see the action, decide what caused the stoppage, use the proper signal and restart.

**Note:** When stopping the match for out of bounds in the neutral position, it is not necessary to use the stopping the match signal referees will sound the whistle, use signal #10 for out of bounds and then use one of the 4 PlayPic signals listed below.



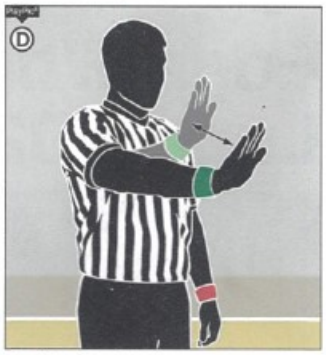
Signal 16a. Neutral Stalling Back Out



Signal 16b. Neutral Position Wrestlers Engaged



Signal 16c. Pulling Opponent Out-of-Bounds



Signal 16d. Pushing Opponent Out-of-Bounds

## Recent Rule Change Review

**Tech Falls and Match Stoppage Rule 5-11-2c, 5-11-4**

**a.** If a takedown or reversal straight to near-fall criteria creates a 15-point advantage the match shall continue until the near-fall criteria is no longer met.

**b.** If a near-fall creates a 15-point advantage, the match shall continue until the near-fall criteria is no longer met.

This also applies to a take down in the sudden victory period that goes directly into near-fall criteria and to a reversal that goes directly into near-fall criteria in the ultimate tie breaker. Rule 6-7-3

## Leg Sleeves

**Rule 4-3-5:** Leg sleeves are legal with or without a pad and must be removed for skin checks.

## Cut Back

**Rule 7-5-1n:** Leg block (cut-back) when leaving the feet and using the foot or leg "cut out" an opponent's leg, to include from the rear-standing position.

## Locked Hands

**Rule 7-3-3:** Interlocking or overlapping the hands, fingers or arms around the opponent's body with or without an "extremity" included is a technical violation.

# Points of Emphasis

## Signaling and Mechanics

- The use of the proper signals has become a highly emphasized aspect of officiating wrestling. We should all try to use the signals as they appear in the Rules Book.
- Starting the match use signal #1 exactly as shown.
- When awarding points hold up the appropriate number of fingers on the hand of the corresponding wrist band. Slowly rotate the hand so that it can be seen from several angles and then give the correct signal.
- When awarding penalty points, first give the signal, technical violation, penalty, etc. and then show the correct number of points as described above.
- When the action goes out of bounds it is not necessary to do the stop sign. Sound the whistle and use signal #10. All other match stoppages will use the stop signal #2.
- When showing no control don't look like an airplane.
- When signaling neutral, elbows bent thumbs tucked.
- Use one hand at a time when signaling escapes and stalling, not both hands at the same time.
- Only show the points one time.
- The reversal signal #18 should be done at shoulder height.

## Near Falls, Common Mistakes:

**1.** Not recognizing when criteria is being met

**2.** Counting too quickly.

**3.** Failing to stop counting when criteria has been interrupted.

Example: Wrestler A has their opponent on their back. The referee begins counting near-fall points as soon as the shoulders are at less than a 45 degree angle. As the count continues, the defensive wrestler is able to slowly return to an angle that is greater than 45 degrees and the referee gets to a three or four count even though the proper near-fall criteria is no longer being met. The final three or four count should not have occurred. As soon as the shoulders or scapula exceeded 45 degrees the count should have been stopped.

**4.** This is similar to number 3, where the wrestler goes into criteria and the referee starts to count for near-fall points, but the defensive wrestler momentarily gets out of criteria and immediately returns, and the referee fails to restart the count.

**5.** Awarding near-fall points prematurely except where noted in Rule 5-11-2c and 6-7-3. Following a tilt where near-fall points have been earned the points shall not be awarded until the defensive wrestler is completely back to a defensible position. If the wrist is still being controlled by a one on one, two on one, cross wrist or similar hold the points must continue to be held.
**Note: It** is not necessary to completely relinquish control of the wrist, but it must be clear to the referee that the defensive wrestler is back to a defensible position. Look for the ability to rotate the palm down and extend the forearm past the pectoral muscle or shoulder height.

**6.** When a leg Turk is in place and near-fall points have been earned, the points will be held as long as the Turk remains in place. Even if the offensive wrestler completely let's go with both hands, if the Turk is still in, the hips are being turned and that is not a defensible position.
When a cross body or grape vine is being used it is not necessary to remove the leg when the defensive wrestler returns to their base. This is different from the leg Turk because the hips are square to the mat as opposed to being partially turned.

**7.** Sometimes from a neutral position wrestlers will go directly in to near-fall criteria and the referee will begin an audible and visual count and before the requirement of control beyond reaction time has been satisfied the wrestlers roll back out in to a neutral position. When this occurs coaches will often argue that because you got a one count that you are obligated to award and takedown and an escape. This is not correct. The referee is allowed to wipe off a takedown that they incorrectly assumed was going to be scored under the above circumstances.

**8.** When the defensive wrestler places themselves in a precarious position during an attempted escape or reversal, a nearfall shall not be scored, unless the offensive wrestler has control and restrains the opponent in near-fall criteria.

While attempting maneuvers such as a Granby Roll, Jonesy Tilt or leg pass it is not uncommon for the defensive wrestler to expose their own shoulders to the mat. When this occurs, it should not be considered a near-fall situation until the offensive wrestler is restraining the opponent.

## Rules Book Definition of Standing

**Rule 7-1-5w:** A back flip from the standing position, or front flip and/or front hurdle over an opponent in the standing position is illegal. Wrestlers are considered to be standing when their weight is supported by their feet and their knees are off the mat, even if they have a hand(s) down on the mat. Some people are conflating this situation with the rules governing locked hands which requires the weight to be 'entirely on the feet'. Therefore, if a hand(s) is in contact with the mat, their weight is not entirely on their feet and they would be penalized for a technical violation. See Case Book 7.1.5 situation M.

## Fleeing the Mat

**Rule 7-3-1:** When from a neutral position one wrestler has a single leg controlled off the mat or is in a rear standing position and the opponent intentionally goes out of bounds and creates a match stoppage, it will be considered an imminent scoring situation. Some confusion has been occurring with this rule because some people are applying the dictionary definition of the word imminent which means something is about to happen, implying that it is definitely going to happen. This was not the intention of the Rules Committee when they implemented this rule.

Rather than apply the literal definition the word imminent to these situations, replace it with a "potential scoring opportunity".

These are not the only two positions where a potential scoring opportunity could occur and the opponent be penalized for fleeing the mat, as opposed to a stalling call.

## Wrong Leg in vs. Locked on the Leg

When the opponent is locked on the leg as shown in illustrations #27 and #28 there is control by the wrestler on top even though the hand of the opponent are locked around the leg at or above the knee. The top wrestler has the opponent off their base and is hip to hip.

The requirement to establish control with the near leg (wrong leg) in is different. The scoring contestant must be under the near arm as shown in illustrations #29 and #30. If the opponent remains locked on the leg, control has not been demonstrated. If the positions shown in #29 and #30 are attained control may be awarded even if the bottom wrestler's calf is not hooked, as long as the top wrestler is hip to hip with control under both arms or with control under the near arm in some type of grasp with the other arm (ankle, tight waist, wrist etc.). Exception is: if the bottom wrestler is locked on the leg and the top wrestler applies a far side half nelson and is successful in turning the opponent into a pinning situation, control may be awarded.