

Football Equipment Policies and Guidelines

General Equipment Guidelines

1. All equipment should be used only for its intended purpose as prescribed by the manufacturer. Waterford Youth Football and Cheerleading League (WYFCL) administrators and coaches are responsible for collecting instructional materials from the manufacturer that contains information about the intended use, age group, capabilities, and limitations. All equipment used during play is required to meet the standards of the National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) and the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).
2. The Equipment Manager will establish a purchasing and inventory tracking system and keep a concise inventory of all equipment. The league equipment manager and football manager will work with equipment companies, while also maintaining the inventory tracking system to insure proper purchasing and reconditioning of all equipment. Equipment reconditioning includes annual cleaning, sanitizing and inspection. **Note: The inspection of helmets is very critical, as they have a limited life and need to be inspected by an authorized NOCSAE inspection company at least once every two (2) years.**
3. The Equipment Manager and Coaches are responsible for making sure that all equipment fits properly. The equipment manager and coaches must be properly trained on how to fit a helmet properly. Equipment that is too large, small, tight or loose presents an increased exposure to injury. Also, improperly fitting equipment creates a problem when athletes try to make their own modifications such as taking protective padding out of a helmet. Coaches should instruct athletes to bring fitting problems to their attention so that immediate corrections can be made.
4. All shoulder, hip, kidney, tailbone, thigh and knee pads shall meet the standards of the NFHS and the NOCSAE and shall not be altered by players or team staff in any way. Modification of equipment must be avoided as this can result in the manufacturer's warranty being voided. Players wearing illegal, altered or modified equipment will be removed from a game or practice and not allowed to return until the condition is corrected.
5. Players will not be allowed to wear face shields in practices or in games, unless the player receives a written physician's request. If face shields are allowed, only clear shields that are of a "snap on nature" can be used.
6. Players and parents are responsible for the care of their equipment during the season. Coaches must make sure that parents are given proper laundry instructions for jerseys & pants (See Page 6) and the Player Helmet Inspection Checklist (Page 7)
7. Players wearing protective gear, other than league issued, must have the protective gear approved for play by the equipment manager. Cast, braces, neoprene sleeves, etc... must comply with NFHS rules and be approved by the head official. Failure to comply will require the player to be exempt from participation in games or practices.

Guidelines for Protective Equipment

Helmets:

Head gear may be the most important piece of equipment a football player will wear. For this purpose the helmet, chinstrap, and facemask should be considered as a single unit. All helmets worn during practice and play must meet NOCSAE standards for protection. All interior pads must be secured in place prior to contact. Helmets must be reconditioned as

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recommended by the original manufacturer. The facemask must be properly fitted and attached with approved hardware. The chinstrap must be fitted properly and fastened completely during all contact practice and play. A properly fitted mouth guard is mandatory during all games and contact practices. Any helmet found in violation of policy will be removed from the game. Coaches are responsible for the condition of the helmet and are required to perform safety checks once per week to ensure that the helmet properly protects all players.

Regardless of the brand and styles chosen, all helmets must bear the NOCSAE approval seal and warning label. The NOCSAE helmet standards are voluntary test standards that have been developed to reduce head injuries by establishing minimum requirements of impact attenuation for football helmets. The NOCSAE seal and the warning label must be placed on the exterior of the helmet and be visible at all times.

Shoulder Pads:

All shoulder pads must be fitted properly. Proper fitting shoulder pads are defined as: the pads properly cover the shoulders, chest, and back, the laces are properly placed and tied, and the straps are properly attached and affixed. Pads not meeting these standards are not to be worn in practice or games. Coaches are responsible for the condition of the shoulder pads and are required to perform safety checks once per week to ensure that the shoulder pads properly protect all players.

Pants & Pads:

Proper fitted pants are required. The length must completely cover the knee. All pads, (knee, thigh, hip and tail) are to be properly fitted into the pants or girdle. All pads are required at all levels in both contact practices and games. The pants must be properly laced and the belt must be properly affixed. Coaches are responsible for the condition of the pants and pads, and are required to perform safety checks once per week to ensure that they properly protect all players.

Cleats:

Molded rubber cleats and replaceable molded screw-in cleats no longer than ½ inch are allowed if properly maintained but are not mandatory. The officials may require the removal of a pair of cleats they feel present an additional risk of injury. Coaches are responsible for the condition of each player's cleats and are required to perform safety checks once per week to ensure that they properly protect all players.

Mouth Guards:

The mouth protector is a mandatory and important piece of equipment which helps to protect the teeth from damage, the jaw from fractures, and the brain from concussions. Mouth guards shall be of any readily visible color, other than white or clear.

Eye Wear:

It is required that all players who must wear glasses during competition purchase eyewear with "industrial-quality safety lenses". Players will not be permitted to wear conventional eyewear, as it has a tendency to fragment much too easily. Contact lenses are also suggested as they are non-breakable and do not interfere with the player's peripheral vision. For additional protection, players wearing glasses are encouraged to wear a full cage or facemask which is specifically designed for that purpose.

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Guidelines for Equipping Female Players

While young female players are now playing tackle football, equipment specific to their needs has not yet been manufactured. In the meantime, the following guidelines are recommended to equip female players:

- Players should wear a firm, binding sports bra.
- Players must be equipped with a pair of shoulder pads that completely cover the breastplate area and must be properly fitted so that no hands can get underneath the pads.
- Players must be properly informed and instructed in the nature of their position so that there are no surprises in terms of the amount of contact to expect once play begins.

Equipment Maintenance, Care, and Inspection

Maintenance and Repair:

Maintenance is the ordinary upkeep of equipment - cleaning, sanitizing, tightening screws, restoring air pressure, etc. Repair is replacement of worn or broken parts, or correcting major problems.

Responsibility for these tasks will be assigned to the equipment manager and properly qualified adults. Such individuals must follow the guidelines and specifications of the equipment manufacturer that can be obtained from literature, bulletins, or discussions with the manufacturer's representative. Whenever in doubt about a repair to a piece of protective equipment, the equipment should be forwarded to an authorized manufacturer's representative for repair.

Reconditioning:

Reconditioning is an attempt to restore equipment to its like new condition. While it is possible that some reconditioning can be performed by the trained equipment manager, it is the policy of the WYFCL to send the equipment to an authorized NOCSOE inspection and reconditioning company.

There is nothing in the NOCSAE standard that requires any helmet to be recertified on any regular basis. NOCSAE does recommend that organizations adopt and follow a program of helmet inspection and reconditioning that meets their particular needs, based on age and size of players, severity of helmet usage, ages of helmets, among other factors. *Helmets shall be reconditioned by an authorized NOCSAE inspection company at least once every two (2) years. Helmets subject to substantial contact should be reconditioned after one (1) season. Helmets with ABS shells shall be discarded after 8 years of use.*

Shoulder pads shall be inspected each year and reconditioned or replaced as necessary.

Replacement:

Manufacturer's guidelines should be followed in determining the useful life of equipment. It is best to be conservative and to replace equipment prior to the end of its useful life rather than to place an athlete at risk. Such replacements should be planned well in advance of the new season. A certain percentage of equipment units should be replaced each year in a regular cycle to avoid wide variations in the age and quality of products.

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Record Keeping:

Written records are critical in protecting against an equipment related lawsuit.

The following information should be **documented** for each piece of equipment:

- Each piece should be assigned a permanent inventory number that is readily visible on the equipment of ID purposes.
- An inventory record should be kept for each piece documenting the following - Inventory Number, Manufacturer, Distributor, and Date of Purchase.
- For each year - name of athlete to whom issued including verification of return.
- Keep written notes regarding maintenance problems, repairs, and reconditioning.

If an athlete suffers from an injury that could result in a lawsuit, the equipment and its record should be put aside in a safe place until the possibility of litigation has passed.

Athlete Supplied Equipment:

There is an increasing trend of athletes providing their own equipment. The equipment should be comparable in quality and meet all standards as set by the WYFCL and the Southern New England Youth Football Conference. All athlete provided equipment is required to meet the standards of the National Federation of State High School Association (NFHS) and the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE).

The responsibilities of the administrators and coaches does not change in terms that the athlete provided equipment must be properly fitted, meets standards, maintained, and repaired. The same reconditioning and replacement policies must apply. Obviously, these responsibilities will be even more difficult to comply with because of problems in receiving manufacturer's literature and other record keeping.

Care and Cleaning – Jerseys and Pants:

Proper care and cleaning of uniforms is of paramount importance to attain desired appearance and longevity. Parents and players are advised to clean uniforms as prescribed on the labels. Cleaning procedures for Jerseys and Pants are provided below:

Game Jersey: Wash with dark colors in warm water and detergent. Do not bleach. Jerseys should be allowed to AIR DRY. Line Drying is recommended. If you must dry them, dry in dryer on cool or medium setting. Turn jersey inside out before drying to protect lettering from heat. The spandex type fibers will be discolored and loosened if a liquid bleach is used – **NO LIQUID BLEACH.**

Game Pants: Apply a pre-wash spray to badly stained areas and scrub with a laundry brush. Wash in warm water and detergent. No bleach. Dry in dryer on cool or medium setting.

Practice Pants: Apply a pre-wash, soak in sudsy water immediately before stains set, and scrub with a laundry brush to help get pants clean. Wash in warm water with detergent and dry in dryer on cool or medium setting.

Heavily soiled spots on game/practice pants and jerseys should be sprayed with SHOUT or Spray and Wash, presoaked and washed in warm water. NO BLEACH!!!

Equipment Inspection:

The condition of equipment is constantly changing due to misuse, collisions, wear and tear, and other environmental factors. For these reason, athletes should be instructed to inspect their equipment on a daily basis and after any occurrence that results in a change in condition or fit - such as an unusually hard collision or use by another athlete. Coaches should reinforce the

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inspection habits of athletes by inspecting the athlete's equipment at least once per week. Tools or replacement parts used to repair damaged equipment as well as an adult qualified to make repairs should be available for immediate correction. In addition, spare equipment should be available in the event that an immediate repair can't be made.

FOOTBALL HELMET INSPECTION

To assist in the repair and maintenance of helmets, NOCSAE has developed a number of guidelines to observe when inspecting helmets. There may be other things you want to check as this list is not intended to cover every observation which may be made. NOCSAE recommends that a periodic inspection of all helmets be made and that they be periodically retested under the NOCSAE recertification program. ***Football helmets must be inspected every.***

RECOMMENDED ANNUAL INSPECTION CHECK LIST

1. Check helmet fit for agreement with manufacturer's instructions and procedures.
2. Examine shell for cracks, particularly noting any cracks around holes (where most cracks start) and replace any shells that have cracked.

MANY CRACKS IN THE SHELL ARE INADVERTENTLY CAUSED BY OVERTIGHTENING OF THE FACEMASK SCREWS. DON'T USE A HELMET WITH A CRACKED SHELL.

3. Examine all mounting rivets, screws, hook/loop tape, and snaps for breakage, distortion, and/or looseness. Repair as necessary.
4. Replace faceguards if bare metal is showing, or if guard has spread (flattened out) or sprung (opened up).
5. Examine internal components of helmet and replace any parts which have become damaged such as Jaw Pads, Chin Straps, Front Sizers, Back Sizers, Crown Pad and Side Pads.
6. Inspect the hardware to see if it needs replacement.
7. Read instructions provided by manufacturer regarding care and maintenance procedures. Always follow these instructions. *Use only manufacturer's approved parts when replacements are needed.*
8. Never allow anyone to sit on helmets. This could cause the fit of the helmet to change.

FOR FOAM/AIR/LIQUID STYLE HELMETS

1. Foam/Air/Liquid Check foam padding for proper placement and any deterioration.
2. Check for cracks in vinyl/rubber covering of air, foam, liquid padded helmets.
3. Check that protective system or foam padding has not been altered or removed.
4. Check for proper amount of inflation in air padded helmets. Follow manufacturer's recommended practice for adjusting air pressure at the valves.
5. Check all rivets, screws, Velcro and snaps to assure they are properly fastened and holding protective parts.

CAUTION: *Only paints, waxes, decals or cleaning agents approved by the manufacturer are to be used on any helmet. It is possible to get a severe or delayed reaction by using unauthorized materials, which could permanently damage the helmet shell and affect its performance and durability.*

The equipment manager or qualified adult shall make repairs should any corrective action be required.

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Coach and Player Inspection Responsibilities:

1. Coaches should inspect player helmets each week. See Coach's Helmet Inspection Checklist below.
2. Players should inspect their helmets before each usage. See Player's Helmet Inspection Checklist below. (Hand out to the players at the beginning of the season)

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COACH'S FOOTBALL HELMET INSPECTION CHECKLIST

DO NOT ALLOW A PLAYER TO USE A HELMET IF THE SHELL IS CRACKED OR DEFORMED, OR IF INTERIOR PADDING IS DETERIORATED OR MODIFIED. USE ONLY APPROVED PADDING AND REPLACEMENT PARTS WHEN REPAIRING A HELMET.

1. **Read instructions provided** by the manufacturer regarding helmet care and maintenance procedures.
2. **Check each helmet for the exterior helmet warning statement label.** Replace any labels that are too worn to be read, or are missing.
3. **Examine shell for cracks**, *particularly noting any cracks around holes where most cracks start*), and replace any *shells* that have cracks. **DO NOT USE A HELMET WITH A CRACKED SHELL!**
4. **Examine all mounting rivets, screws, velcro, and snaps** for breakage, distortion and/or looseness. **Repair as necessary!**
5. **Examine for helmet completeness**, and replace any parts which have become damaged, such as sweatbands, *interior parts*, nose snubbers, and chinstraps.
6. **Replace jaw pads when damaged or worn.** Check for proper installation and fit.
7. **Replace face mask if bare metal is showing**, if there is a broken weld, or if the mask is grossly misshapen.
8. **Examine chin strap for proper adjustment**, and inspect to see if it is broken or stretched out of shape; also inspect chinstrap hardware to see if it needs replacement.
9. **Check helmet fit** for agreement with manufacturer's instructions and procedures.
10. **Never allow anyone to sit on a helmet.** This could crush or deform the helmet.

CAUTION: Only paints, waxes, decals, or cleaning agents approved by the manufacturer are to be used on any helmet. It is possible to get a severe or delayed reaction by using unauthorized materials, which could permanently damage the helmet shell and affect its performance and durability.

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PLAYER'S FOOTBALL HELMET INSPECTION CHECKLIST

DO NOT USE A HELMET IF THE SHELL IS CRACKED OR DEFORMED, OR IF INTERIOR PADDING IS DETERIORATED OR MODIFIED. USE ONLY APPROVED PADDING AND REPLACEMENT PARTS WHEN REPAIRING A HELMET.

CHECK FOR PROPER FIT

- When pushing down on the top of the helmet, **pressure should be felt on the top of the head**, not the eye brows.
- When strapped on, **the helmet should fit snugly.**
- When twisting the helmet from side-to-side, **the skin on the forehead should move with the helmet.**
- **Jaw pads should be snug** against the side of the face.
- There should be approximately **two fingers widths of space from the front of the helmet to the eye brows.**

INSPECT YOUR HELMET BEFORE EACH USE. NEVER WEAR A DAMAGED HELMET!

PADDED STYLE HELMET (FOAM/AIR/LIQUID)

- **Check foam padding for proper placement** and any deterioration.
- **Check for cracks in any vinyl/rubber coverings.**
- **Check that protective system or foam padding has not been altered or removed.**
- **Check for proper amount of inflation.**
- **Check all rivets, screws, velcro, and snaps** to assure they are properly fastened and holding protective parts.

IF ANY OF THE ABOVE INSPECTIONS INDICATE A NEED FOR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT, NOTIFY YOUR COACH IMMEDIATELY! THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!