



Championship Timekeeping Protocols 2026

The timekeeper should only call time off and on when instructed by the match referee. There are no circumstances where a timekeeper should call 'time off' without first being told to do so by the match referee. If the referee fails to call 'time back on' time should be restarted as soon as the ball is back in play.

Prior to the referees warm up the Timekeeper will be in position to check/test their equipment – i.e. The game clock, Shot clocks and the sirens.

During the referees warm up, the timekeeper will test the communication kit with the referee.

As the referee enters the playing field at the beginning of each half, The timekeeper will sound the hooter – At which point the referee must acknowledge that they have heard it.

'Time Off' at the scrum

When one team has formed a scrum, the referee will call 'time off'. 'Time on' should then be called once the ball has emerged from the scrum. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the timekeeper should ensure that the ball has emerged from the scrum before restarting the clock. As a guide the referee will call 'out' when the ball is back in play. This is particularly important if the clock has been stopped with only a few seconds to go.

'Time Off' at a restart

To be consistent throughout the game the referee will use their touch judges being in position as a guide to stop the clock. The touch judges will call 'in position' when they are in position for a restart. The referee at their discretion will then decide when to stop the clock. 'Time on' should be called when the ball has been kicked. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the timekeeper should restart the clock when the ball has been kicked. However, for restarts under shot clock protocols, the Referee will not call time off when their Touch Judges are in position and the game clock will continue to run.

'Time off' for kicks at goal

Referees should call 'time off' at one minute and 20 seconds (This will be prompted by the timekeeper) after a try has been awarded or a penalty has been awarded, and the team opt to kick for goal. If the player is about to kick the ball when time elapses, then the referee should use their discretion and allow the clock to continue running. 'Time on' should be called as the ball is kicked. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the timekeeper should restart the clock when the ball is kicked.

'Time off' for an injury

If an injured player is in such a position where to continue play would be dangerous then the referee will call 'time off'. The referee will call 'time on' when the game is restarted. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the timekeeper should restart the clock once the ball is back in play.



It shall be for the referee to determine at their discretion whether play should be allowed to continue unless they are specifically requested to stop the match by a Physio, Doctor or Head Trainer ("Off Field Personnel").

Should any Off Field Personnel require the match to be stopped for a player to receive treatment then in the case of the Doctor they should enter the field of play. As soon as the referee is aware that the Doctor has entered the field of play then they will call time off. In the case of Physios or Head Trainers then they should alert the referee to the fact they need the match stopping (by any means) at which point they will call time off.

For the avoidance of doubt, initial assessments of players can still take place by the Physio and/or Head Trainer without the match being stopped provided they do not interfere with play and/or it is safe to do so.

'Time off' following an altercation

Where there is an altercation between players, the referee should call 'time off' when the players have separated, and they are about to consult with their touch judges. If there is to be no consultation with touch judges the referee should still call 'time off' if they have to subsequently deal with a player. The referee should call 'time on' when they are about to restart play. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the timekeeper should restart the clock when the ball is back in play.

'Time off' for a video referral (TV games only)

Where the referee refers a decision to the video referee they should call 'time off' before they refer the incident. The referee should call 'time on' before they award or disallow the try. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the timekeeper should restart the clock when the referee is awarding or disallowing the try.

Sounding the siren to signal time has expired

The siren should be sounded as soon as 40 minutes has elapsed irrespective of where the ball is in play. As the siren sounds the referee should raise their arm to signal that they have heard the siren. If they do not the timekeeper should speak directly to the referee and tell them that time has elapsed. If the game is televised, then the Video Referee should inform the referee when time has elapsed.

Last 5 minutes of a game

The timekeeper is to advise the referee of the game entering into the last 5 minutes – At this point the following will apply :

During the last five minutes of a match, the clock will be stopped following a conversion, a decision not to take the conversion (After scoring a try the team declines to take the conversion). The clock will also be stopped at a penalty kick at goal or a drop goal attempt, where the ball goes out of the field of play.



The referee will call "TIME OFF" at 1 minute 20 seconds following the awarding of a try (This will be prompted by the timekeeper). This time limit also includes penalty kicks at goal.

Where a conversion or penalty is taken, "TIME ON" should be called as the ball is kicked. If the referee fails to call "TIME ON" then the timekeeper should restart the clock when the ball is kicked.

Once the conversion or penalty has been judged, "TIME OFF" should be called again and the clock stopped until play restarts.

Shot clocks:

The timekeeper will be responsible for the running of the shot clocks and the buzzers.

1. Where play is recommenced by a scrum, both teams must be properly bound and packed within 25 seconds from the time the Referee has verbally indicated that the 'shot clock' has started.

"Properly bound and packed" means all players in the scrum bound together, both teams packed together and the halfback ready to feed the ball into the scrum"

2. If one team is properly bound and packed then the Referee will call "TIME OFF", at which time the 'game clock' will stop but the 'shot clock' will continue to run. This team will be obliged to hold this formation until such time as:
 - a) The Referee indicates that they may stand; or
 - b) The opposing team packs and the scrum is formed.
3. If the 'shot clock' has counted down to zero seconds, and one team is not properly bound and packed, the Referee shall award a penalty to the non-offending team. This will result in a full penalty.
4. If the 'shot clock' has counted down to zero seconds, and both teams are not properly bound and packed, the Referee shall award a penalty to the team which has the feed. This will be a full penalty.
5. If, in the opinion of the Referee, the scrum is being delayed by factors outside of a team's control, the Referee will call "TIME OFF, SHOT CLOCK OFF". If "TIME OFF, SHOT CLOCK OFF" is called, the 'shot clock' and 'game clock' will both be stopped.
6. If the 'shot clock' is stopped, it will not be restarted.
7. The referee will start the shot clock indicating to the players that the game is ready to restart. Then, if the shot clock counts down to zero seconds, the player will be required to leave the field of play and either:
 - a) Be interchanged; or
 - b) Leave the field of play for the purpose of a head injury assessment; or
 - c) Leave the field of play and return once an interchange card is handed over; or



8. If, in the opinion of the Referee, a team deliberately does not attempt to pack a scrum, a penalty will be awarded to the non-offending team at the mark. This will be a full penalty.
9. 'Time on' should then be called once the ball has emerged from the scrum. If the referee fails to call 'time on' then the Timekeeper should ensure that the ball has emerged from the scrum before restarting the clock. As a guide the referee will call 'out' when the ball is back in play.

Dropouts:

1. Where a team is required to recommence play with a goal line or 20 metre dropout, they must do so within 25 seconds from the time the Referee has ruled the goal line or 20 metre dropout and verbally indicated that the 'shot clock' has started.
2. The kick will be deemed to be completed when the kicker's foot has struck the ball.
3. If the 'shot clock' has counted down to zero seconds, without the dropout having been taken, the Referee shall award a penalty to the non-kicking team:
 - a) In the case of a goal line dropout - at the centre of the 10-metre line; or
 - b) In the case of a 20-metre dropout - at the centre of the 20-metre line.
4. If, in the opinion of the Referee, the dropout is being delayed by a factor outside of a team's control, the Referee will call " TIME OFF, SHOT CLOCK OFF ". If " TIME OFF, SHOT CLOCK OFF" is called, the 'shot clock' and 'game clock' will be stopped.
5. If the 'shot clock' is stopped it will not be restarted.
6. The referee will start the shot clock indicating to the players that the game is ready to restart. Then, if the shot clock counts down to zero seconds, the player will be required to leave the field of play and either:
 - a) Be interchanged; or
 - b) Leave the field of play for the purpose of a head injury assessment; or
 - c) Leave the field of play and return once an interchange card is handed over; or
7. If, in the opinion of the Referee, a team deliberately does not attempt to take a dropout, a penalty will be awarded to the non-kicking team:
 - a) In the case of a goal-line dropout - at the centre of the 10-metre line; or
 - b) In the case of a 20-metre dropout -at the centre of the 20-metre line.

A dropout may be taken quicker if:

- All officials are in position; and
- It is taken in compliance with the Law Interpretations 2026 document.

