



Survival Guide for New Officials

Author: Lucia Perfetti Clark

April, 2011

I'd be a dishonest salesperson if I said that your first season was going to be easy. Only working a copious number of games can put you at ease with your rules knowledge and applications. However, there are some things you can do from the first day to make things easy on yourself, and they both relate to that old Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared."

Look the part. This can be broken down into two different areas: your uniform and your reffing bag.

Uniform

While you don't need absolutely every accessory that a seasoned official comes to the field with, start by buying the most basic uniform that will get you through the majority of your weather for the season. Supplement with what you might already have in your closet. You'll need a shirt with 1-inch vertical stripes, with cuffed arms, and preferably a collar. Whatever bottom your game requires – be it long black pants for inclement weather (both games), white shorts (men's game, NFHS rules), black shorts/kilt (women's game) – be sure to purchase one item for cold weather and the appropriate one for warm weather. You can purchase more as you get game fees.

Then you need socks and appropriate shoes. Check your manuals for details. You likely won't need cleats. You can get by with turf shoes or a running shoe.

When it comes to uniforms, all accessories should be black, and here's where you can start to plan your future purchases: hat gloves, bags, and a black Gore-Tex rain suit is great for inclement weather.

Bag

On many game days your bag will be a life-saver if it's well equipped. Think about having two of everything in your bag. That can help bail out a partner.

Women's Bag: manual, rule book, whistle, cards, flag, tape measure, pencil, coin.

Men's Bag: rulebook, whistle, two flags, tape measure, coin, 20-second timer, pencil, and scorecard.

Great Options for Both: pain reliever, sunscreen, lip balm, bug spray, athletic tape, unmolded mouth guard, granola bar or Swedish fish (fast sugar to digest easily), laminated timing/scoring instructions for your table personnel.



Bring your forms for payment already filled out, and have extras in your bag just in case.

Look the part and be prepared, because you never get a second chance to make that first impression.

Newbies On-Field

We've covered what you can do before the game, and how to look the part, but I have just one piece of advice for new officials once you step onto the field: **blow your whistle**. It sounds silly, but it's something new officials forget to do.

You've sat through hours of classroom. You've been reading your rule book, watching film, and talking to other officials. It can be hard to put it all into action, but you have to make a decision based on what you see on the field. You're going to make mistakes. This is how you learn. Don't rely on your partner who might have more experience to make your calls for you. Partners have their own responsibilities, and they can't work the game for both of you. The first step to becoming a good official is seeing something, recognizing it as a foul and blowing your whistle.

If you get stumped at that point, your partner might be able to help you. But you'll never get anywhere with a silent whistle. As a new official, let your partner know that you're new. Ask questions and ask for feedback, but make your own calls.

As a crew you can always talk about judgment and rule application after the game, and it's a better conversation if you have examples.