New Officials Guide

2026

www.dfoa.com

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Introduction

Welcome to the DFOA and Texas high school football. You are about to embark upon an interesting, rewarding, and challenging journey. We are excited that you have decided to join DFOA, and we look forward to helping you develop as a football official.

The tradition of Texas high school football is well-known and celebrated throughout the country. However, there is one aspect that typically garners little attention (and hopefully so), which is the individuals in the black and white stripes. A Texas high school football official is responsible for ensuring the fairness and smooth running of the games. It is a significant responsibility that is both daunting and immensely rewarding.

Officiating is a complete 180 degree turn from playing or casually observing a football game. Once you step onto a field as a football official you will never watch the game in the same way. No longer will you focus solely on the football or watching all 22 players at once. Football officials monitor aspects of every play. In addition, an official must be well-versed in the rules & mechanics.

The role of our new member training program is to help you build your knowledge of the rules coupled with the mechanics necessary to put yourself in position to make the right calls. Your initial games may seem like a blur, but we hope that our program will move you along the learning curve so that the game slows down and you become more comfortable and proficient at officiating.

Football officiating allows you to remain involved in athletics, to stay in shape, earn extra money, contribute positively to the youth of Texas, and also make great friends. We look forward to getting to know you and are excited about serving as your guides on the road to becoming a football official.

Please let us know what we can do to help and best of luck in your development. Most importantly, HAVE FUN.

The DFOA New Member Training Committee

Getting Started

New Member Registration:

In order to become an Official in the Dallas Football Officials Association (DFOA) you must join the Texas Association of Sports Officials (TASO) and our chapter, DFOA. You will be required to pay a total of $125 for your first season. There are 2 steps you must complete for the membership process.

1) First join TASO:
Go to: www.taso.org then click on "Apply" button in the New Applicants section on the TASO home page. This step will require online payment of $75.

2) Next, join DFOA,
Go to https://www.dfoa.com/join/ to register. This step will require online payment of $75.

3) Register in Reftown, which is the online tool the DFOA uses to schedule you to officiate football games. To register go to https://reftown.com/registration.asp. There is no charge for this registration.

Your membership allows you the opportunity to work DFOA assigned games. Each new member official will also receive an NCAA rule book. Additionally, new member officials will be granted access to the members section of the TASO website where you will find additional useful information.

Attention: Military Veterans. There is an organization called Battlefields-to-Ballfields that has partnered with TASO to offer a scholarship that reimburses a member's initial uniform and 3 years of dues. If you have ever served in the US Military, we highly encourage you to visit this great organizations website to take advantage of this wonderful benefit. We also thank you for your service. Our chapter has numerous officials who are also Veterans as well.

DFOA Secretary

The Secretary of the DFOA handles all the administrative aspects of the Chapter such as member registration, contact info, record-keeping, game assignments, and other assorted functions.

The current Secretary of DFOA is Xavier Velazquez (secretary@dfoa.com). His full contact information is available on the DFOA website in the 'Contact Us' section.

Once you have paid your dues and registered, all questions pertaining to your membership, Reftown & HUDL access should be directed to Xavier.

Meetings

New member training sessions are provided each season. These meetings are typically scheduled from 6:30 PM to 8:00PM on Monday evenings and will start in mid-June of each year and go up until the season starts. The meetings are designed for the benefit of the officials and are an invaluable source of education and training at all levels. Some of these meeting dates may actually be on-field training sessions for new members. The location and time of the meetings will be posted on the DFOA website (www.dfoa.com) so please check the website regularly to get the latest information.

New Member Training Committee

This committee manages and performs all activities regarding the training of new officials. The members of the committee are all veteran officials with a mixture with various lengths of service and experiences ranging from high school to NCAA football level.

TASO & DFOA Information

Dallas Football Officials Association

The Dallas Football Officials Association is one of the largest chapters of football officials in the United States. With approximately 700 members who officiate football throughout Dallas and surrounding cities.

We are a chapter of the Texas Association of Sport Officials (TASO), which is the governing body over a majority of junior and high school sports officials in the state of Texas. They work directly with the University Interscholastic League (UIL), governing body of the public schools in Texas, as well as Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS), the governing body of the private schools.

Every year, before the season, we make agreements with local schools and districts to provide football officials for their varsity and sub-varsity football games. We assign officials to work these games. The schools then pay the official directly for their services. Our chapter typically has > 3,000 officiating game assignments to which multiple DFOA members are assigned each year.

Texas Association of Sports Officials

In the late 1930s, the Southwest Conference (SWC) recognized the need for training sports officials and developing local associations under the umbrella of the Southwest Officials Association (SOA) throughout the state. While the SWC was motivated by a commitment to improving officiating and athletics, the overriding belief was that from such a structure would result in better trained officials for SWC competition. As a result, the Southwest Conference Official's Association (SWOA) was formed to handle football and basketball officiating duties. Though originally formed to train collegiate officials, many high school officials joined the SWOA ranks. In 1977, the Texas football, basketball, and baseball officiating associations recognized the need to form a statewide governing body for high school officials. As a result, the Southwest Officials Association (SOA) was formed based in Dallas. Since the formation of the SOA in 1977, the volleyball, softball, and soccer divisions also came into the SOA.

In 1999, the SOA changed its name to the Texas Association of Sports Officials (TASO). After a brief tenure in Mesquite, TX, the TASO office relocated to its current location in Richardson, TX.

With the University Interscholastic League (UIL) governing high school athletics in Texas, TASO provides officials for all UIL contests. TASO is independent of the UIL but works closely with the UIL in providing officials for UIL contests.

TASO is an independent organization of sports officials governed by sports officials unlike other states in which officials are only members of a state association. Each of the six divisions is individually governed by a board of directors comprised of officers and regional directors elected by the membership throughout the state. Overall TASO policy is set by the TASO All-Sports

board of directors. The TASO board of directors is comprised of the president and president-elect (or vice president), in each of the six sports.

Current TASO membership is approximately 15,000 members in > 100 local chapters throughout the state. You can learn more about TASO by going to: www.taso.org.

Rankings

Each member will be classified from TASO Division I-V. You accumulate points by working games, scrimmages, training as an official, and attending different types of sanctioned TASO approved events including rules or on-field clinics. The more points you earn the higher you move up in divisions. New members start in Division V (5).

Division V	0 – 59 points
Division IV	60 – 179 points
Division III	180 – 359 points
Division II	360 – 659 points
Division I	660 and more points

Dues

As mentioned previously, you are required to join both the TASO and DFOA to be member. Please note that these dues are variable and are subject to change from year to year.

These dues cover the necessary administrative and operating costs of the various organizations, rulebooks, and your invitation to the chapter banquet typically held in November. With your dues, you will get a copy of the NCAA Football Rules. Your membership in TASO includes $5,000,000 in General Liability coverage while you are engaged in your officiating duties.

Game Fees

Sub varsity game fees are determined by the UIL. Most schools will have you fill out a pay sheet and a W-9 form and then mail you a check within 2-3 weeks or they may use Arbiter pay where you can get paid typically in 1 week. Sub-varsity game fees range from $50-$65 per game plus a minimum of $20 for travel pay based on distance of the game site from the chapter center point. Varsity games range from $115 minimum per game and goes up based on gate receipts and distance of the game site from the chapter center point. This is just a general range and could vary depending on each school district. Each school district may require a completed W-9 form each year. Once you have completed a W-9 for a specific school district the next time you officiate a game in that district you do not need to put your Social Security number on their game site paperwork-just indicate "ON-FILE". It is only necessary to provide your Social Security number the first time you officiate in that district.

For official UIL Football game fees check out: http://www.uiltexas.org/athletics/officials-fee-schedule

How to Get Games

The main objective of our training program is to prepare you to work on the field. There are several types of on-field assignments available to new members. These include scrimmages and sub-varsity assignments. While Pee-Wee or other youth league games may be available these are not officially scheduled by our chapter. There are many officials in our chapter that schedule these and if you ask around you will find out who they are and can contact them if interested.

What is the process for receiving game assignments?

First, to officiate games, an official must pay TASO & chapter dues and score a 70% or higher on the TASO annual football test or the TASO New Members test. The new members test is recommended for new officials their first year as the questions are designed with a new official in mind. However, you can take the regular TASO test if you desire but you still must score a 70% or higher to officiate games. No matter which test you take you get up to 20 attempts to take and pass the test.

Satellite Secretaries

The DFOA utilizes a system of Satellite Secretaries for non-varsity game assignments. The Satellite Secretaries work as a liaison between the schools and the DFOA and are responsible for specific geographic segments throughout Dallas and surrounding North Texas area. The Satellite Secretaries coordinate the sub-varsity game assignments for their respective areas and schools.

You should identify secretaries that make assignments in those areas that you want to work in. We suggest looking to work in areas that are convenient to your work or home. However, you might have to expand to other areas in order to get more games. We suggest that you work for more than one satellite secretary in order to establish a positive reputation within the chapter.

Please contact your targeted Satellite Secretaries as soon as possible regarding the following potential assignments. Make sure you verify your calendar so you can accept assignments and make sure that you don't overbook yourself.

Assignment Tips for New Members

1) ***Block any dates that you cannot work in Reftown so you minimize rejecting assignments.***
2) ***Be on time for your game assignments***
3) ***Once you accept an assignment from a satellite secretary honor that commitment. Do not give back games because you believe that you have a better assignment opportunity.***
4) ***You will have conflicts that emerge during the season. If you need to give back an assignment, give the satellite secretary as much notice as possible. If you have to give back an assignment on the day of the game then you should attempt to find a replacement as well.***
5) ***Do not overbook yourself so have your calendar with you whenever accepting assignments***

Sub-Varsity Games

New officials initially gain experience by working sub-varsity games. These are paid game assignments typically worked with 3-5 officials. Sub-varsity games are typically scheduled Monday through Thursday evenings (Start times typically range from 5:30 to 6:00pm). In addition, the majority of the time you will be working 2 games at each assignment. You will often be working with more veteran officials. Satellite secretaries try to avoid having games in which only new members are officiating.

The DFOA uses a web-based scheduling system called RefTown. Upon joining TASO & the DFOA, each member will be given an account to use RefTown. To use RefTown go to www.reftown.com.

> **Please Note:** If you receive any email from Arbiter Sports with the Subject *"[ArbiterSports.com] You have new games from Dallas FB*", please disregard them. These are auto generated by the schools that use ArbiterPay to pay officials. Officials are not required to do anything when receiving these emails.

Many games are booked during the summer but there are still games available throughout the fall. Don't be afraid to contact Satellite Secretaries frequently because changes often occur throughout the season. We also suggest that during the season new officials keep their uniform with them on a daily basis even when they do not have an assignment. There is always a possibility that a satellite secretary may call looking for someone to work. You should feel free to contact Satellite Secretaries on days you do not have games as they are likely to have openings emerge.

Mentorship Program

The DFOA offers a Mentorship program for all new DFOA members to participate in. This program is intended to pair you with an experienced DFOA official that can provide guidance and advice on what to expect as a new official. We highly encourage you to take advantage of this program. If you are interested, please send an email to btiff@sbcglobal.net, expressing your desire to have a mentor assigned.

Scrimmages

Scrimmages occur at the Varsity level twice a year, in the Spring (May) and Fall (August). The Chapter will assign one of the varsity crews or other veteran officials to work the scrimmages. The scrimmages are open to all officials and are great opportunities for new officials to get snaps and earn points before the season begins. We recommend that new members try to work as many scrimmages as possible.

The chapter will provide a schedule of scrimmages, and which crews are working those. New members should contact the referee of the respective crews to see if it is okay for them to attend. You may also check with the Chapter secretary to see if there are specific scrimmages in which

the Chapter needs more officials to attend. We recommend trying to attend a scrimmage with the fewest number of people assigned in order to maximize the number of snaps that you get.

There are also new member's on-field training and scrimmages that are arranged each year as well. The dates for these will be announced on the website as well as in new members training classes.

Pee-Wee/Youth Football Leagues

Pee-Wee/Youth games are not directly associated with our chapter but are assigned by several members of our chapter who work with the various Pee-Wee/Youth leagues. These games provide great training opportunities for new officials as well.

Uniforms

What you will need at a minimum for an on-field uniform is listed below.

UNIFORM ITEMS:

- SHIRTS - Black and white striped Short sleeved polyester shirt - specifically the TASO Approved football shirt as shown below. This is the only shirt allowed for both Varsity & Sub-varsity games. A long-sleeve version of this shirt is also available and recommended as sometimes late in the season the weather gets cooler.
- A shirt with a position letter or Placard is not required or allowed for sub-varsity assignments

- PANTS - The pants shall be full length black pants. The pants must include a one and one quarter inch white strip on the seam of the leg, must not be cuffed, and must continue to the shoe without a break.

- SHORTS - Black shorts with white side seams (NOTE: required for scrimmages and for sub-varsity-thru end of September **but never for Varsity games or sub-varsity games after end of September**)

- UNDERSHIRT/UNDERSHORTS – Black T-shirt and black compression shorts/tights. (NOTE: If you are wearing a short sleeve officiating shirt you must wear a short sleeve black undershirt.)

- BELT - A black leather belt, with a width in the range of 1.25-2 inches wide.

- Black with white piping hat (NOTE: you will not need a white hat)

- Black Bucket Style Hat with TASO Logo. (NOTE: optional for scrimmages and for sub-varsity **but never for Varsity games.**)

- SOCKS: Black socks not higher than the ankle

- SHOES - Predominantly black shoes with black laces and appropriate soles or cleats. (NOTE: Some white is allowed but the shoes must be mostly black in color)

- WHISTLE – The FOX 40 lanyard whistle, finger whistle or both are allowed.

- LANYARD – Used with whistles requiring a lanyard. Multiple styles are available.

- FOUL MARKER (aka Flag) – A light gold foul marker weighted in the center with pebbles, sand or beans.

- BEAN BAG - White or Black is allowed.

- CHAIN CLIP – Multiple options are available. Examples shown below.

- WRITING UTENSIL – You will need something to write with during the game. Pencils are commonly used and are sold by our uniform vendors. Example shown below.

- GAME CARD - Plastic game card or something else you can write on to track details during the game, Game cards are commonly used and sold by our uniform vendors. Example shown below.

- DOWN INDICATOR - Elastic down indicator. Various options are sold by our uniform vendors. Examples shown below.

Equipment Vendors
Most vendors will have available a "Starter Packet" at a discount price for new members. This packet will include all necessary equipment for officiating football. These vendors will also be available at different times during our Monday night chapter meetings. For a list of TASO Uniform vendors click on this link: TASO-UNIFORM-VENDORS

Some Common Uniform Do's and Don'ts:

DO ensure that your uniform is clean and serviceable

DO make sure that your shirt is tucked in

DO make sure that your shoes are clean and serviceable; shined if needed

DO carry a backup whistle, down indicator and flag if possible

DO wear black undergarments beneath your shirt and pants

DON'T let your flag hang out by carrying inside front of your pants, shorts, or in back pocket

DON'T wear wrinkled pants or striped shirt

DON'T wear a hat with visible sweat stains

Where to Get….

Rulebooks

- All new members will receive a hardcopy of the NCAA Football rulebook. Contact the DFOA Chapter Secretary for your copy.
- For a searchable PDF of the rulebook go to http://www.ncaapublications.com/ You can download the PDF file for **FREE.** Many officials choose to have these printed and bound.
- Be sure to also get a PDF version of the UIL Texas High School exceptions to NCAA rules which will are applicable to all games our chapter officiates. Rules information can also be found on the DFOA & TASO websites, www.dfoa.com & www.taso.org.

Study Guides

- These are not meant to be a replacement for the rule book, but instead a teaching manual organized around phases of the game and overall topics of importance.
    - **Redding Study Guide *** HIGHLY RECOMMENDED*****

Websites & Videos

- CFO Website: College Football Officials Association. There are weekly videos and national training material that you receive after registering for CFO. There is a yearly registration fee required, but TASO members receive a significant discount to join. You do not have to be a College Football Official. It is open to all TASO members.
- Many College officials receive weekly training tapes from their respective conferences so if interested reach out to those officials.
- A great resource for rules study is the following website www.ruletool.info. Not only does it organize the rules in an easy to review manner it also has many video links embedded to provide examples of many of the rule's topics and fouls.
- Many high school crews get HUDL videos of their games from the schools after working their varsity game. You will receive an account in our DFOA HUDL account. Talk to a crew chief about potentially sharing their video for you to watch and learn.

Tests

Working rules tests are an excellent way of improving your rules knowledge

- TASO administers an annual regular & new member's test that is available on the website. www.taso.org
- Several college conferences give tests to their members so find those officials and ask for copies.

Mechanics Manuals

- We spend a lot of time discussing mechanics for 3-, 4-, & 5-man officiating crews. The mechanics manuals are available on the www.taso.org websites (login required).

It's Your First Game

Sub-Varsity Assignments

Travel: Please arrive 20-30 minutes prior to the assigned kickoff time.

Dress: You will need to go dressed, unless otherwise notified of dressing facility available. Typically, you will get dressed prior to leaving for the game site or will dress at the game site (be respectful).

Payment: Most stadiums will have a sign-in sheet at the gate or nearby. If not, some administrative person will direct you in completion of forms for payment process. You will not receive payment at the game site typically it will be mailed to you at a later date. You may have to fill out some additional tax forms (e.g. W-9) the first time that you work for a specific district. Some districts require officials to have a taxpayer ID number or Social Security # when you sign-in so make sure you take that with you to your games. It's always a good idea to carry W-9's with you to the game site in case they request you complete one. Please note whenever possible if you already have supplied a Social Security number to a school district you can indicate "ON-FILE" on any sections of paperwork asking for it. This will help minimize any potential fraud issues.

Position: Once you arrive and meet the other officials you will discuss which position you will be working. Although Reftown may have you listed at a position, you will actually decide at the game site with the other officials which position you will work for each game. Most of the time as a ***New Member*** you will work ***Head Line Judge*** or ***Line Judge***. This is not to say that if multiple games are to be worked that you couldn't move to another position for the second game. If you're the Head Line Judge we suggest that you immediately begin to look for people to work chains.

2026 DFOA New Officials Training Agenda

IMPORTANT NOTE: These are the planned New Members Training Dates but are subject to change at any time. Please check the DFOA website regularly in case the meeting date/times may have changed.

Training Location(s): Unless noted otherwise for the specific date, all training listed below will be held at the following location:

> ***Dallas College-Brookhaven Campus, 3939 Valley View Lane, Farmers Branch. TX. Building: X, Room X1091. Please Park in parking lot P6 or P7 as it is closest.*** (Map)

June 15th, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Orientation,
Topics:

- Introductions & Expectations
- New Members Guide – Overview
- Training Agenda
- Next Steps & more

June 22nd, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training,
Topics:

- Football Rules & Mechanics – What we use.
- Rule 2 – Definitions (part 1)

June 29th, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training,
Topics:

- Rule 2 – Definitions (part 2)

Starting July 13th and forward new officials training classes will be in the following Bldg/room on Dallas College-Brookhaven Campus, 3939 Valley View Lane, Farmers Branch. TX. Building: H, Room 126. Please Park in parking lot P4 as it is closest. (Map)

July 13th, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training,
Topics:

- Coin Toss
- Free Kicks

July 20th, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training, (Building: H, Room 126. Please Park in parking lot P4 as it is closest. (Map)
Topics:

- Running Game

Jul 27th 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training.
Topics:

- Passing Game

Aug 3rd, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training
Topics:

- Scrimmage Kicks
- Fair Catch Kick
- Uniform Review

Aug 10th, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training
Topics:

- Uniform Review
- Penalty Enforcement
- 3- & 4-Man Mechanics Review

Aug 17th 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training
Topics:

- How you get Paid
- Personal & Unsportsmanlike Fouls

Aug 24th, 6:30-8:30pm, New Members Training
Topics:

- Goal Line plays & Mechanics
- Game Management & Unusual Plays
    a. Time Outs
    b. Ball Mechanics
    c. Clock Management
    d. Coach Communication/Conflict Resolution

New Official Expectations

1. Be on Time
2. Honor your commitments. If you get assignments show up. If a conflict emerges contact the assignor ASAP and help find a replacement
3. Recognize the importance of the games you are working to the Players, Parents, and Coaches
4. Represent yourself and the DFOA in a professional manner
5. Look the part both on and off the field. Clean and neat uniforms. Take pride in your appearance
6. Ask Questions: you cannot learn unless you get the information
7. Be a Sponge: rules, mechanics, officiating philosophies
8. Find a Mentor: a veteran official or a varsity crew
9. Find a new member "buddy" and study together, work together
10. Become a satellite secretary's "Go to Guy", the person he can always trust to help him out and do a great job
11. Know your place: a new official has a lot to learn from others. You don't have all the answers (none of us do)
12. Go to clinics when possible, to learn and improve as an official
13. Strive to get better every game
14. HAVE FUN

Useful Links

The following are links to several of the web sites you will utilize as well as links to additional useful information:

- DFOA website, www.dfoa.com
- TASO website, www.taso.org
- Reftown, www.reftown.com
- TASO approved Mechanics manuals for a crew of 3, 4, 5 and 7 officials. Log in to your TASO account at www.taso.org and then click on the *TASO Football - Member's Portal Page link.*
- NCAA Football Rules
- UIL Exceptions to Football Rules – <click here>
- www.ruletool.info
- TASO Approved Uniform Vendors: Approved-Vendors
- College Football Officiating