



August 19, 2026

NFHS Cross Country Weekly Rule Interpretations

Welcome to the beginning of the 2026-27 school year and the NFHS cross country season. We are excited about the upcoming fall season and look forward to sharing weekly interpretations with you this year to keep us all aligned.

As the new school year begins, there are a few important items to share with officials across the nation. The primary role of the official is to ensure a competitive environment that does not heighten the risk of injury, and that the actions of competitors, coaches and other team personnel are in compliance with the rules. Focus is on fair competition with the attention on the athletes, rather than the official. The conduct of each official affects the public's attitude toward all officials. Therefore, every official must uphold the honor, integrity and dignity of the profession.

Whether you are a veteran official or first year official make sure you are ready for the upcoming season. Remember the 2026 Rules Book is used for the fall cross country season.

1. Take a minute to review your officials kit to make sure you show up prepared for your first meet.
2. Make sure that you monitor the weather conditions as you will serve as a crucial set of eyes alongside meet directors, and athletic trainers.
3. At the start line make sure your instructions are clear, calm and concise. Athletes are already filled with adrenaline and ready to go; long speeches only heighten the tension.
4. Make sure teams are easily identifiable. Sometimes in regular season meets there are not clerks available and it is important to make sure teams are ready to go and identifiable.
5. Walk the course before the meet. Make sure it is clearly marked and there are no hazards in the way. Make sure the finish line is set before and meets the NFHS rules.

Cross Country is a unique atmosphere for participants and fans. It is a high intensity sport rooted in community and camaraderie. Thank you for dedicating your time, weekend mornings, and energy to supporting interscholastic athletics. Have a safe, rewarding, and exciting cross country season!

SITUATION: Arriving at the cross country course for a meet, a coach from Team A protests the route as there is only an 80-meter straightaway up a hill before a slight curve to the right at the beginning of the course. The official informs the coach that the 100-meter straightaway is a recommendation not a requirement for a race course. **RULING:** Incorrect procedure. **COMMENT:** A straightaway at the beginning of the course of at least 100 meters is required before any significant turns. [8-1-2]

SITUATION: While inspecting the cross country course prior to the meet, the visiting coach discovers that in several portions of the course, bales of hay or logs have been placed across the running course; theoretically, to make the course more challenging. The coach of the visiting team objects to the artificial barriers. **RULING:** The artificial barriers shall be removed. [8-1-3b]

SITUATION: Upon arriving at the state championship cross country meet, which is held at a local golf course, Team A's coach protests to the referee that the course does not have painted or chalked directional lines to assist the runners. Instead, there is a series of small "surveyor"-type colored flags marking the course direction. **RULING:** The

protest is denied. **COMMENT:** Survey-type flags are permitted when the venue will not allow the use of a painted or chalk line across the club fairways. [8-1-3]