

New Members Guide

2026

www.fwfo.org

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Welcome to the Fort Worth Football Officials Association (FWFO) 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 FWFO, 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 and in pop culture. 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. A football official monitors small aspects of every play. In addition, an official must be well-versed in the playing rules.

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 will be 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.

New Member Training Committee

GETTING STARTED

New Member Registration

In order to become a football official, you must join both the Fort Worth Football Officials Association (FWFO) and the Texas Association of Sports Officials (TASO).

If you're not a member already, join TASO Football Division:

Go to TASO website and click on "Apply" under New Applicants. You will require to pay a new member fee. Here is the link to use: www.taso.org. If you're already a member of the football division, then make sure that your dues are current.

Next, join FWFO:

Go to <http://www.fwfo.org/join> to complete the application and pay the fee.

Your membership in both TASO and FWFO enables you to work FWFO assigned games. Each new member official will receive an NCAA rule book. Additionally, new member officials will be granted access to the members section of the TASO & FWFO websites where you will find very useful information.

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 organization's website to take advantage of this benefit. We also thank you for your service. FWFO has numerous officials who are also military veterans.

Chapter Administrative Secretary / Treasurer

FWFO's administrative secretary / treasurer (CAST) handles all administrative aspects of FWFO such as member registration, contact information, record-keeping and other assorted functions. Game assignments are handled by the Varsity Assignment Secretary (VAS) and several sub-varsity regional assignors (SVRAs). Once you're registered, all questions pertaining to membership, RefTown, HUDL or other general questions should be directed to the CAST (cast@fwfo.org).

Meetings

New member training sessions are provided each season. These meetings are typically scheduled on Monday evenings from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM. The meetings are a valuable source of education and training at all levels. Some of the meetings may be on-field training sessions. The location and time of the meetings will be posted on the FWFO website (www.FWFO.org) and in RefTown so please check both locations regularly for 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 various lengths of service and experience ranging from high school to Division I NCAA football.

FWFO & TASO INFORMATION

Fort Worth Football Officials Association

The Fort Worth Football Officials Association (FWFO) is one of the largest chapters of football officials in the United States. With approximately 550 members who officiate football throughout Fort Worth and surrounding cities and at all college levels.

We are a chapter of the Texas Association of Sports 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 games. The VAS and SVRAs assign officials to work these games. The schools then pay the officials directly for their services. Our chapter typically has over 4,000 officiating game assignments to which multiple FWFO officials 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 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 the 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 board of directors. The TASO board of directors is comprised of the president and president-elect (or vice president), of each of the six sports.

Current TASO membership is approximately 16,000 members in 196 local chapters throughout the state. You can learn more about TASO by going to: www.taso.org.

Rankings

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

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 FWFO to officiate games. Please note that these dues are variable and are subject to change from year to year. Your initial membership in FWFO will expire December 31. Annual membership renewal takes place each January.

These dues cover the necessary administrative and operating costs of the various organizations, rulebooks, and your ticket for the FWFO banquet held in November. With your dues, you will get an NCAA Football Rules and Interpretations book. Your membership in TASO includes \$5,000,000 in General Liability coverage while you are engaged in your officiating duties.

Game Fees

Most schools will have you fill out a pay sheet and a W-9 form; and, will mail you a check within 2-3 weeks. Current pay sheets can be found in the [Forms section](#) under Games and Milage on the FWFO website. For sub-varsity games, use the 5-Person crew pay sheet; and, depending on the number of officials assigned to the game, you will use either a 5-Person or 7-Person crew pay sheet for varsity games.

Sub-varsity game fees are determined by the UIL. Sub-varsity game fees range from \$50 to \$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 \$95-\$180. This is just a general range and could vary depending on each school district. Officials are also reimbursed for travel, based on the game(s) location.

Schools may use ArbiterPay to pay officials for games worked. You will receive a welcome email once your Arbiter account is established. Follow the directions to log in and go to the “Payments” tab at the top. Then follow the directions to set up a separate ArbiterPay account.

If after 45 days you have not received payment from a particular school, you may submit a Game Payment Issue Report through RefTown. Log in to your RefTown account and click on “My Games” under the “Schedules” drop down menu. Change “from Today” in the date section to “Before Today” and click “Search”. Scroll down and find the game you’ve not been paid and click on the five digit game number. Look on the far right under “Reports” and click on “Game Payment Issue Report”. Complete the required information and click “Submit”. The CAST and assignors will work diligently to get you paid. Please have patience while they work with the respective school.

Please Note: 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 it again. Just indicate “ON-FILE”. It is only necessary to enter your Social Security number the first time you officiate in that district.

GAME ASSIGNMENTS

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, sub-varsity assignments, sixth man on a crew, chain crew 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.

Eligibility

To be eligible to officiate on the field, you will need to:

- A. Take and pass (with a minimum score of 70%) the annual TASO rules and mechanics test and mechanics exam before being assigned your first sub-varsity game. As a new member, you're eligible to take the “New Member’s Test”. The exam will start in July.
- B. Receive credit for “at least one TASO Football Approved Rules Clinic prior to the first game of the season. Rules clinics and the state meeting are held starting in June and August, respectfully.
- C. Attend at least three (3) New Member Training sessions before being eligible for sub-varsity assignments. There will be Spring training sessions in April and summer training sessions begins in July. Spring scrimmages are held in May and pre-season scrimmages start in August.

Game Assignments

FWFO uses a web-based scheduling system called RefTown. You will receive a welcome email once your account has been established in RefTown. For any issues with RefTown, including login, please contact the CAST.

Sub-Varsity Regional Assignors

Sub-varsity regional assignors are a liaison between the schools and FWFO and are responsible for specific geographic segments throughout Fort Worth and surrounding North Texas area. The sub-varsity assignors coordinate the sub-varsity games and chain crew assignments for their respective areas and schools. Contact information and a list of schools sub-varsity assignors are responsible for scheduling is available on the FWFO website.

You should identify assignors that schedule games in those areas that you want to work. We suggest looking to work in areas that are convenient to your work or home. However, you might have to expand to other areas to get more games. We also suggest that you work for more than one sub-varsity assignor to establish a positive reputation within the chapter.

Please contact your targeted sub-varsity assignor 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.

Sub-Varsity Games

New officials initially gain experience by working sub-varsity games. These are paid game assignments typically worked with 3-4 officials. Sub-varsity games are typically scheduled Monday through Thursday evenings (most games start at 5:30 to 6:00 PM – but there will be some games that may start earlier). In addition, most of the time you will be working 2 games at each assignment. You will often be working with more veteran officials as sub-varsity assignors try to avoid having games in which only new members.

Game assignments are usually made mid to late July, early August. However, there will always be games available throughout the season because changes often occur. We also suggest that during the season new officials keep their uniform with them, even when they do not have an assignment. There is always a possibility that a sub-varsity assignor may call looking for someone to work. You should also feel free to contact sub-varsity assignor on days you do not have games as they are likely to have openings emerge. There is also a section on the FWFO website, where officials post games they are trying to get covered. They will be listed under “Games Available” in the forum section.

Please note: If you receive any email from Arbiter Sports with the subject “*You have new games from FWFO*”, 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.

Chain Crew Assignments

Sub-varsity assignors will assign two officials to “pull chains” for all the varsity games at a respective stadium. These are paid assignments (typically \$75 with no travel reimbursement). These assignments allow a new member to meet and observe different varsity level crews. Most crews are typically open to chain crew members participating in their pre-games as well so take advantage of this when available as it is a good learning opportunity.

Chain crew assignments can be on Thursday, Friday & Saturday nights but mostly on Friday nights as that is when most varsity level games are on. These provide valuable insight into officiating where new officials further learn the basic rules and officiating mechanics by observing varsity level officials.

Assignment Tips for New Members

1. Be on time for your game assignments.
2. Once you accept an assignment from a Sub-varsity assignor honor that commitment. Do not give back game assignments because you believe that you have a better assignment opportunity.
3. You will have conflicts that emerge during the season – hopefully rare but we understand they do happen and should be a legitimate reason. If you need to give back an assignment, give the Sub-varsity assignor as much notice as possible. If you have to give back an assignment on the day of the game, you should attempt to find a replacement as well. Do not overbook yourself so have your calendar accessible to you whenever accepting assignments.

Mentorship Program

FWFO offers a Mentorship program for all new members. This program is intended to pair you with an experienced FWFO 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. A member of the Mentor Committee will reach out to you to get you started.

Scrimmages

Scrimmages occur at the varsity level twice a year, in the Spring (May) and Fall (August). FWFO will assign a varsity crew(s) 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.

FWFO will provide a schedule of scrimmages, and which crews are assigned. New members should contact the referee of the respective crew(s) to see if it is okay for them to attend. You may also check with the Varsity Assignment Secretary to see if there are specific scrimmages in which FWFO 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 to work.

There are also new members' 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 and will be posted in RefTown and on the FWFO website.

Pee-Wee/Youth Football Leagues

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

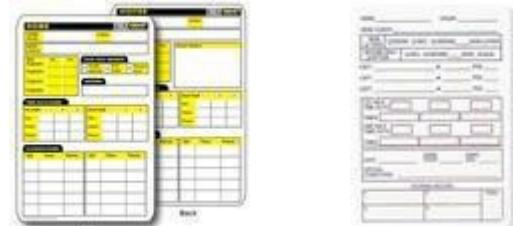
UNIFORMS

On-Field Uniform

Here is a minimum list of items you'll need for an on-field uniform.

<p>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</p>	
<p>Pants shall be full length black pants and must include a 1- & 1/4-inch white strip down the seam of the leg, must not be cuffed, and must continue to the shoe without a break. (Mandatory for Varsity assignments and chain assignments)</p> <p>Shorts should be black with a 1- & 1/4-inch white strip down the seam of the leg. (Authorized for scrimmages and for sub-varsity assignments)</p>	
<p>Undershirt / Undershorts shall be a solid black shirt and black compression shorts/tights. (NOTE: If you are wearing a short sleeve officiating shirt you must wear a short sleeve black undershirt.)</p>	
<p>Belt. A black leather belt, with a width in the range of 1.25-2 inches wide.</p>	

<p>Cap. Black with white piping hat. (NOTE: you will not need a white hat)</p>	
<p>Socks. Solid black socks.</p>	
<p>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)</p>	
<p>Whistle. The FOX 40 lanyard whistle, finger whistle or both are allowed.</p>	
<p>Lanyard. Use with whistles requiring a lanyard. Multiple styles are available.</p>	
<p>Foul Marker (aka Flag). A light gold foul marker weighted in the center with pebbles, sand or beans. The ball can be black or light gold.</p>	

<p>Bean Bag. White or Black is allowed.</p>	
<p>Chain Clip. Multiple options are available. This is used when you are working on a chain crew. Preferred equipment for all short-flank officials.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>Down Indicator. Elastic down indicator. Various options are sold by our uniform vendors. Examples shown below.</p>	

Chain Assignments

The uniform for all **chain assignments** will be the same as your sub-varsity uniform with pants and with the exception of an all-white polo style shirt instead of a striped shirt. A small logo on the white polo is acceptable as long as it is appropriate. You will need your chain clip but not the other accessories.

Common Uniform Do's and Don'ts:

- ✓ DO ensure that your uniform is clean and wrinkle free
- ✓ DO make sure your uniform shirt is tucked in
- ✓ DO make sure that your shoes are clean and serviceable, shine if possible.
- ✓ DO carry a backup whistle, down indicator, and flag.
- ✓ DO wear black undergarments beneath your shirt and pants.
- ✓ DON'T wear sunglasses for varsity assignments.
- ✓ DON'T let your flag hang out by carrying it inside front of your pants, shorts, or in back pocket

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 chapter meetings and other clinics.

Stipes Plus

806-352-1245

www.stripesplus.com

Officials Gear Outlet

432-853-0514

www.officialsgearoutlet.com

Ump Junk

210-365-1110

www.umpjunksa.com

IT'S MY 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. You would wear your black undershirt while driving; put your Stripe shirt on at the field parking lot.

Payment: Most stadiums will have a sign-in sheet at the gate or nearby. If not, some administrative person or another official 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 or sent through ArbitrPay. 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, 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. Most of the time as a *New Member* you will work on the wings. Don't be afraid to work multiple positions if you have more than one game. We strongly recommend work some games at the "referee" position, so you can work on game management, penalty announcements, and enforcements.

Varsity Assignments: (Chain Crews)

Travel: Please contact the Head Linesman by Wednesday for crew details. You can meet and ride with them or meet at the stadium. If not, arrive at the Stadium at least one hour prior to kick-off.
DON'T BE LATE IF YOU ARE ATTENDING THE PRE-GAME.

Dress: You will be able to dress at the stadium in most cases. However, you may choose to arrive already dressed. Make sure you allow for dressing time.

Payment: There will be sign-in sheets at the locker room. If not, the crew will instruct you as to where you sign-in for payment.

NEW OFFICIAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Be on time.
2. Honor your commitments. If you get assignments show up. If a conflict emerges then help find a replacement.
3. Recognize the importance of the games you are working to the Players, Parents, and Coaches.
4. Represent yourself and FWFO 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”: study together, work together.
10. Be available and flexible. Show your schedulers that you are dependable.
11. Don’t be afraid to be wrong: a new official has a lot to learn. 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!!!!

AFTER COMPLETING YOUR FIRST YEAR

Congratulations on completing your first year. Now what do you do next?

First, if you enjoyed being a football official make sure you pay your annual dues on time. A letter will arrive from the FWFO chapter secretary for you to complete so you get credit for your points earned and to pay next year's dues (TASO & FWFO).

Second, the FWFO chapter supports an off-season training. The main objective of this program is to help make you the best possible football official you can be. The target audience is officials in the 1-10th year of officiating, but anyone from the chapter is welcome to attend, including new members.

There are usually two training sessions -- one in the Spring (April) and the weekly sessions starting in July. The training sessions are held on Monday evenings from 6:30-8pm. The agenda is posted on the FWFO website and in RefTown along with an email blast to officials. Class sessions will cover rules, mechanics, rule quizzes, and video. Many of the presentations will be from veteran officials who also have an interest in helping make you the best possible football official you can be. In addition, we have a spring on-field clinic for officials to be evaluated by veteran officials from within the chapter.

Many younger officials who have attended and have worked at becoming the best official they can be are being rewarded for their efforts. Some have received their first varsity game assignments, and some have been picked up on crews and will start their first season working with a varsity crew. Many of them continue to attend because they know the level of effort which got them to their current point. They also know what more is expected of them going forward.

RESOURCES

Rulebooks

- 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. FWFO also provides all new members rulebooks.
- Be sure to also get a pdf version of the UIL Texas High School exceptions to NCAA rules which will be applicable to all games our chapter officiates. Rules information can also be found on the FWFO & TASO websites.

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. The ***Redding Study Guide*** is highly recommended.

Websites & Videos

- **CFO Website**: Site that provides rules information and interpretation for free. There are other functions such as weekly videos and national training that you receive after registering for CFO. There is a yearly registration fee required, but TASO members typically receive a discount. This is a paid site.
- 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 <https://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 rules, topics and fouls.
- Many high school crews get HUML videos of their games from the schools after working their varsity game. Talk to a crew chief about potentially sharing their video. You will be given access to HUML if you're a Pool Official working varsity assignments. If you're a member of a crew, your crew chief will provide you with HUML access.

Tests

- Working rules tests are an excellent way of improving your rules knowledge
- TASO administers an annual test that is available on the website.
- New Members must take and pass the TASO New members test or the Regular test. It is recommended for your first year to take the New Members test.
- 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 & 7 man officiating crews. To access them go to www.taso.org then click on [TASO Football - Member's Portal Page](#) (login required).

Links

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

- FWFO website, www.fwfo.org
- TASO website, www.taso.org
- Reftown, www.reftown.com
- TASO approved Mechanics manuals for a crew of 3, 4, 5 and 7 officials, www.taso.org then click on [TASO Football - Member's Portal Page](#) (login required)
- NCAA Rules, Online PDF, ePub & Mobi version available on NCAA website [here](#)
- UIL & TAPPS Exceptions to Football Rules, www.taso.org then click on [TASO Football - Member's Portal Page](#) (login required)
- www.ruletool.info
- College Football Officiating:
- Look for Fort Worth Football Officials on Facebook.