

Referee Certification — L2 — Certified Referee

State Level — Instructor Guide & Participant Handouts

Total contact time: 16 hours over 2 days

Program Manual — Version 1.0 | July 2026

Session Schedule

This guide covers all 7 modules for Referee L2 — Certified Referee, combining an instructor script with printable participant handouts for each module.

1. Advanced Rule Interpretation & Case Studies	2 hr
2. Multi-Official Crew Mechanics	3 hr
3. Advanced Signal Communication & Crew Coordination	2 hr
4. Penalty Enforcement & Scoring-Play Rulings	2 hr
5. Conflict Resolution & Game Management Under Pressure	2 hr
6. Technology in Officiating: Video Review Basics	1.5 hr
7. Crew-Based Live Practicum & Evaluation	3.5 hr

How to Use This Manual

Each module below contains two parts: an Instructor Guide (learning objectives, a full delivery script, key teaching points, and a structured activity) followed immediately by a Participant Handout page designed to be photocopied and given to each attendee (notes/worksheet items, reflection prompts, and quick-check questions). An Instructor Answer Key for all quick-check questions is provided as an appendix at the end of this manual — it is not intended for participant distribution.

Module 1: Advanced Rule Interpretation & Case Studies

Duration: 2 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Correctly rule on ambiguous or rare scenarios.
- Apply a precedence framework when the rulebook is silent.

Instructor Script

L2 moves from ‘what is the rule’ to ‘what do you do when two rules seem to conflict, or the rulebook doesn't cover it directly’ — e.g., simultaneous flag-pull and pass-completion timing, or a ball carrier whose flag falls off accidentally versus is pulled.

Teach a decision framework: identify which principle takes precedence — player safety, then competitive fairness, then the technical letter of the rule, in that order at grassroots/state level — rule confidently, and be willing to briefly explain your reasoning to a coach without re-litigating it.

Work through 8–10 real case studies covering the ambiguous scenarios that come up most often at state-level competition.

Key Teaching Points

- Precedence framework: safety > fairness > letter of the rule
- Confident ruling with brief explanation
- Common ambiguous-scenario library

Activity: Case-Study Workbook

1. Rule individually on each of 8–10 scenarios.
2. Compare answers as a group.
3. Discuss disagreements using the precedence framework.

Participant Handout — Module 1: Advanced Rule Interpretation & Case Studies

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the case-study workbook.
- ☐ Keep the precedence framework card for gameday.

Reflection & Application

Which of the 8–10 case studies did your group disagree on most, and why?

Quick Check

1. What is the precedence order when rules seem to conflict?
2. If a flag falls off accidentally vs. is legally pulled — does it matter for the ruling?

Module 2: Multi-Official Crew Mechanics

Duration: 3 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Operate correctly within a 2–3 official crew.
- Understand each position's zone of responsibility.
- Execute a clean mechanic handoff.

Instructor Script

Teach the standard 2-official system: a Referee (backfield/QB focus, overall game control) and a Line Judge/Umpire (line of scrimmage and flag-pull focus on one side), each with a clearly defined primary zone and a shared zone requiring a glance-and-confirm before either official signals.

Extend to the 3-official system used at higher-level state competition, adding a deep official for scoring-play and sideline coverage.

Cover the core discipline of crew officiating: never signal or call something in another official's primary zone unless they clearly missed it and you have a materially better look — crews that 'help' too eagerly undermine each other's authority and confuse the benches.

Key Teaching Points

- 2-official zone assignment
- 3-official system addition
- Primary-zone discipline and when to assist

Activity: Crew Positioning Walk-Through & Live Rep

1. Walk through 2-official and 3-official positioning diagrams.
2. Live-rep a 5v5 series in full crew formation.
3. Rotate positions and repeat.

Participant Handout — Module 2: Multi-Official Crew Mechanics

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the crew positioning diagram worksheet (2- and 3-official).
- ☐ Keep the zone-of-responsibility card.

Reflection & Application

Which crew position (Referee, Line Judge/Umpire, deep official) do you feel least confident in, and why?

Quick Check

1. Which official generally has backfield/QB focus and overall game control?
2. When should an official call something outside their primary zone?

Module 3: Advanced Signal Communication & Crew Coordination

Duration: 2 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Coordinate signals across a crew without contradiction.
- Use pre-game and between-play communication effectively.

Instructor Script

Teach the crew pre-game routine: confirm mechanics, agree who has primary on close scoring plays, and agree a simple non-verbal check-in signal for 'are we together on that call' before either official commits publicly.

Cover the discipline of never overruling a crewmate's signal in front of players/coaches — if there's a disagreement, it's resolved with a brief, private conference away from both benches, and one official (typically the crew chief) delivers the final ruling to keep a single, clear voice of authority.

Practice synchronized signaling drills so a crew's calls look and feel unified rather than like two separate officials working alone.

Key Teaching Points

- Pre-game crew routine
- Private-conference resolution of disagreement
- Single-voice delivery of the final ruling

Activity: Signal-Synchronization Drill

1. Run a synchronized signaling drill across the crew.
2. Introduce a staged disagreement scenario mid-drill.
3. Practice resolving it via a private conference and single-voice delivery.

Participant Handout — Module 3: Advanced Signal Communication & Crew Coordination

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the pre-game routine checklist.
- ☐ Practice the crew conference script.

Reflection & Application

What would you do if you privately disagreed with a crewmate's call in the moment?

Quick Check

1. Where should a crew disagreement be resolved?
2. Who typically delivers the final ruling after a crew conference?

Module 4: Penalty Enforcement & Scoring-Play Rulings

Duration: 2 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Correctly enforce penalty yardage and down consequences.
- Rule confidently on close scoring plays.

Instructor Script

Cover penalty enforcement mechanics: where the penalty is assessed from (spot of the foul vs. previous spot, depending on foul type), how it affects the down (loss of down for some offensive fouls, automatic first down for some defensive fouls), and how to communicate the 'options' to the offended team's coach where the rules allow a choice (accept penalty vs. take the result of the play).

Cover scoring-play rulings: confirming possession and flag status at the goal line/plane, and the common close call of a flag pulled simultaneously with the ball crossing the plane (rule: if any part of the ball crosses the plane before the flag is pulled, it is a score).

Build confidence in delivering a close scoring ruling decisively rather than looking uncertain, which invites dispute even when the call is correct.

Key Teaching Points

- Enforcement spot and down consequences
- Offended-team options communication
- Goal-line simultaneous-action ruling
- Decisive delivery

Activity: Enforcement Worksheet + Goal-Line Drill

1. Complete the penalty enforcement worksheet (10 scenarios).
2. Review answers as a group.
3. Run the goal-line video call drill.

Participant Handout — Module 4: Penalty Enforcement & Scoring-Play Rulings

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the penalty enforcement worksheet.
- ☐ Review the goal-line ruling quick card.

Reflection & Application

Why might a hesitant delivery invite more dispute than a decisive one, even when both calls are correct?

Quick Check

1. If any part of the ball crosses the plane before the flag is pulled, what's the ruling?
2. What must be communicated to the offended team's coach when the rules allow a choice?

Module 5: Conflict Resolution & Game Management Under Pressure

Duration: 2 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Manage an escalating multi-person conflict.
- Make and hold a difficult call under crowd/bench pressure.

Instructor Script

Extend L1's individual de-escalation to crew-level conflict management: when a coach and multiple players are agitated simultaneously, the crew chief addresses the coach directly (coaches are responsible for their players' conduct) while a second official quietly moves players apart if needed, rather than the whole crew engaging every voice at once.

Cover holding a correct-but-unpopular call under pressure: a crew that changes an accurate ruling because of crowd or bench reaction damages trust in officiating far more than one difficult correct call does — the standard is 'would I make this same call with nobody watching,' not 'will this call be popular.'

Key Teaching Points

- Crew-chief-addresses-coach principle
- Parallel de-escalation roles within the crew
- Holding a correct call under pressure

Activity: Full-Crew Role-Play

1. Role-play an escalating multi-person conflict scenario as a full crew.
2. Apply the crew-chief/parallel-role structure.
3. Debrief afterward.

Participant Handout — Module 5: Conflict Resolution & Game Management Under Pressure

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the crew conflict-response roles card.
- ☐ Reflect using the 'would I make this call alone' prompt.

Reflection & Application

Describe a moment (in any context) where you changed a decision because of pressure rather than new information. What would you do differently now?

Quick Check

1. Who should address the coach directly during a multi-person conflict?
2. What's the standard for holding a correct call under pressure?

Module 6: Technology in Officiating: Video Review Basics

Duration: 1.5 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Understand where and how video review is used at state level.
- Know its limits at grassroots.

Instructor Script

At state-level competition, video review (where available) is typically limited to scoring plays and time-expiration plays, not judgment calls like contact fouls, to keep games moving — teach officials to know this boundary so they don't invite review requests the system isn't built for.

Cover the basic review protocol: play stops, the crew chief reviews the available angle, and the ruling is either confirmed or corrected with a clear announcement of the final ruling and reasoning.

Address the grassroots reality: most games have no review technology at all, and a single sideline phone video from a parent is not an official review tool, however clear it looks — the on-field call stands absent a formal review system.

Key Teaching Points

- What state-level review does and doesn't cover
- Review protocol steps
- Grassroots reality: no informal phone-video reviews

Activity: Mock Review Exercise

1. Describe a play and a 'video angle' to the group.
2. Practice the review-announcement script.
3. Discuss how to handle a parent's phone video request at grassroots level.

Participant Handout — Module 6: Technology in Officiating: Video Review Basics

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the review-scope quick card.
- ☐ Practice the review-announcement script template.

Reflection & Application

How would you politely explain to a parent that their phone video isn't an official review tool?

Quick Check

1. Is illegal contact/pass-interference-equivalent typically reviewable at state level?
2. Does a parent's phone video count as an official review?

Module 7: Crew-Based Live Practicum & Evaluation

Duration: 3.5 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Officiate a full live game as part of a crew.
- Be evaluated against the L2 rubric.

Instructor Script

Each candidate officiates a full live game within an assigned crew, rotating positions if multiple candidates are present, while an assessor observes crew mechanics, individual rule application, signal clarity, and conflict management under the modules covered in this level.

This is the practical gate for L2 certification, paired with the written exam and the video-based rules test.

Key Teaching Points

- Full-game live crew assessment across all L2 domains

Activity: Live Officiated Game

1. Candidate officiates a full live game within an assigned crew.
2. Assessor scores against the L2 rubric.
3. Debrief and self-reflection after the game.

Participant Handout — Module 7: Crew-Based Live Practicum & Evaluation

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the L2 practicum rubric self-score.
- ☐ Complete the self-reflection form.

Reflection & Application

Which module from this level do you expect to be tested hardest during the live practicum?

Quick Check

1. What three assessments make up L2 certification alongside the practicum?

2. What does the assessor observe during the live practicum?

Appendix: Instructor Answer Key

For instructor/assessor use only — not for participant distribution.

Module 1: Advanced Rule Interpretation & Case Studies

1. What is the precedence order when rules seem to conflict? — Player safety, then competitive fairness, then the technical letter of the rule.
2. If a flag falls off accidentally vs. is legally pulled — does it matter for the ruling? — Yes — an accidental fall generally does not end the play the same way a legal pull does; this is one of the case-study scenarios to rule on consistently.

Module 2: Multi-Official Crew Mechanics

1. Which official generally has backfield/QB focus and overall game control? — The Referee.
2. When should an official call something outside their primary zone? — Only if the assigned official clearly missed it and they have a materially better look.

Module 3: Advanced Signal Communication & Crew Coordination

1. Where should a crew disagreement be resolved? — In a brief, private conference away from both benches.
2. Who typically delivers the final ruling after a crew conference? — The crew chief (typically the Referee position).

Module 4: Penalty Enforcement & Scoring-Play Rulings

1. If any part of the ball crosses the plane before the flag is pulled, what's the ruling? — It is a score.
2. What must be communicated to the offended team's coach when the rules allow a choice? — The options — accept the penalty or take the result of the play.

Module 5: Conflict Resolution & Game Management Under Pressure

1. Who should address the coach directly during a multi-person conflict? — The crew chief — coaches are responsible for their players' conduct.
2. What's the standard for holding a correct call under pressure? — 'Would I make this same call with nobody watching' — not whether it's popular.

Module 6: Technology in Officiating: Video Review Basics

1. Is illegal contact/pass-interference-equivalent typically reviewable at state level? — No — review is typically limited to scoring plays and time-expiration plays, not judgment calls.
2. Does a parent's phone video count as an official review? — No — the on-field call stands absent a formal review system.

Module 7: Crew-Based Live Practicum & Evaluation

1. What three assessments make up L2 certification alongside the practicum? — The written exam and the video-based rules test (plus the live crew practicum itself).
2. What does the assessor observe during the live practicum? — Crew mechanics, individual rule application, signal clarity, and conflict management.