

THE PROFESSIONAL BOXING REFEREE MANUAL

2026 Edition

*The definitive guide to refereeing
professional boxing*

Rules and mechanics with
the underlying principles of
safety and fairness



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1. Introduction and Principles

Boxing is an international sport, belonging to no single country or boxing authority. Its integrity depends on officials who uphold the highest standards of professionalism, fairness, and consistency.

Referees carry direct responsibility for the safety of the boxers and the orderly conduct of the bout. They must apply the governing rules evenly, manage the action with authority and restraint, and make immediate decisions that protect both safety and fairness.

Referees must always maintain a strong state of readiness, mentally, physically, and professionally, for the benefit of the boxers. Preparation, focus, and consistent application of established procedures are essential at every level of competition.

This manual outlines the principles, responsibilities, and mechanics required of professional boxing referees. Its purpose is to support clear decision-making, sound judgment, and consistent performance before, during, and after each bout.

1.1 About This Manual

This manual is designed as a practical guide for professional boxing referees. It provides clear instruction, aligns with accepted rules and protocols, and emphasizes safety, fairness, and professionalism.

1.2 Harmonization with Governing Boxing Authority

The procedures and standards in this manual are intended to guide referees in all professional boxing bouts. When any provision conflicts with the governing rules, laws, or directives of the governing boxing authority, the authority's regulations shall take precedence. Referees must always apply the practices in this manual within the framework established by their governing boxing authority that oversees their bout.

1.3 Core Principles of Refereeing

The foundation of effective refereeing is built upon four core principles: safety and fairness, neutrality and impartiality, professionalism and consistency, and adaptability to bout conditions. Safety and fairness must always come first. Referees must remain neutral and free of influence, treating both boxers equally in every decision. Professionalism and consistency ensure that rulings are based on sound judgment and uniform application of rules. Adaptability allows the referee to respond appropriately to each bout's unique rhythm, style, and circumstances while maintaining full control and focus throughout the bout.

2. Boxer Safety

Safety is the cornerstone of refereeing. Referees must place the well-being of the boxer above competitive, promotional, or other external considerations.

This responsibility includes ensuring protective equipment is legal and properly fitted, monitoring lacerations, swelling, and other injuries, and applying referee mechanics and protocols consistently and fairly.

2.1 Injury Management

2.1.1 Working with the Ringside Physician

Clear communication between the referee and ringside physician before the bout begins is essential. The referee must know where the physician is seated and be able to access them without delay when consultation becomes necessary.

Referees must work closely with the ringside physician and the rest of the safety team to identify potential risks early and take prompt, well-timed action. The timing of a referee's intervention is as important as the decision itself; hesitation or premature action can affect both safety and fairness.

A medical consultation should be ordered when clearly necessary and not as a routine response to every visible injury. The referee's goal is to protect the boxer while minimizing unnecessary interruptions that disrupt the natural rhythm of a competitive bout.

Before calling the physician, the referee should consider:

- The boxer's awareness, balance, and defensive ability.
- The time remaining in the round and whether the Corner can address the issue during the one-minute rest period.
- The overall flow of the bout and the effectiveness of the Corner in managing the injury.

If the round is near its end and the injury appears stable, the referee may allow the Corner to manage the situation between rounds. When appropriate, the referee may signal for the physician to observe or check the boxer during the rest period without interrupting the Seconds Team's work. The Chief Second and their team are entitled to the full one-minute rest period to control bleeding, manage swelling, and assist their boxer, unless an immediate safety concern exists.

2.1.2 When to Call the Ringside Physician

The ringside physician must be called immediately when:

- An injury presents an immediate or escalating safety risk.
- A boxer shows impaired vision or breathing.
- Bleeding or swelling cannot be controlled by the Corner during the rest period.
- A suspected fracture, facial deformity, or neurological sign (such as disorientation, numbness, or loss of coordination) is observed.

Minor, stable injuries, such as small cuts or manageable swelling, may be observed without medical interruption unless they worsen or compromise safety.

Procedure when calling the physician:

- Command "Time!" and direct the uninjured boxer to the furthest neutral Corner.
- Maintain a clear line of sight to both the injured boxer and the physician.
- Allow the physician to conduct the examination without interference from the Corner or other personnel.

If the physician recommends that the boxer is unfit to continue, the referee shall confirm the basis for the recommendation. Unless bout rules specifically state otherwise, the referee remains the sole authority to stop the bout. If the referee concurs, the bout ends immediately.

Referees shall evaluate the full context, including the boxer's responsiveness, the nature of the injury, the time remaining in the round, and the level of competition. Generally, a bout should be stopped for lacerations or swelling only when the injury prevents the boxer from seeing incoming punches or defending effectively. Cosmetic appearance or visible bleeding alone should not determine any stoppage absent another serious condition. The referee's decision is to balance boxer safety with the principle of allowing fair competition to continue whenever safely possible.

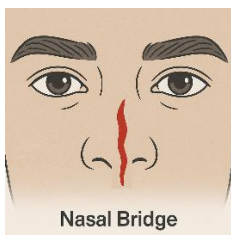
2.2 Serious Locations for Lacerations and Swellings

The following nine areas are considered the most serious due to the potential for permanent damage and complications during the bout. Lacerations in these areas require heightened referee attention because even small or seemingly manageable cuts can affect vision, breathing, defense, or a boxer's ability to protect themselves as the bout progresses. Severity must be evaluated based on location and functional impact, not appearance alone.

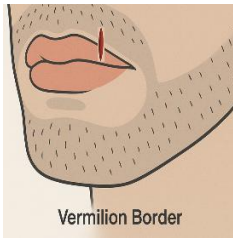
The referee's evaluation must consider two distinct but related concerns: the immediate risk during the bout and the potential for permanent injury or subsequent medical consequences.



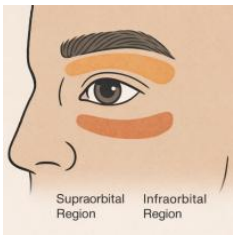
Tarsal Plate / Lacrimal Sac - Located inside the corner of the eye, injuries in this area may cause permanent damage to the tear ducts, leading to dry eye and recurring infections. This is the most serious location for lacerations and requires immediate inspection. The eyelids and tear ducts are thin and superficial, and even a small cut can cause lasting harm. Damage in this area can quickly affect vision and eye protection, requiring close observation and prompt consultation with the ringside physician.



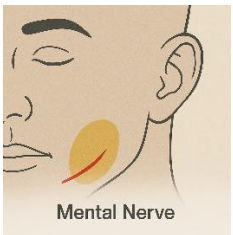
Nasal Bridge - Lacerations in this area are often associated with fractures. Even without a fracture, these injuries may impair breathing and compromise the boxer's ability to maintain normal respiratory function during exertion. Referees should monitor for increasing swelling, bleeding into the airway, or signs of distress.



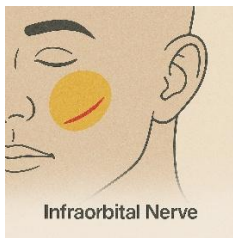
Vermillion Border - This is the line between the lip and the face. Injuries here are difficult to suture properly and may result in scarring that interferes with the ability to close the mouth fully. During the bout, lacerations in this area can affect mouthpiece retention, increase bleeding into the mouth, and impair breathing or communication.



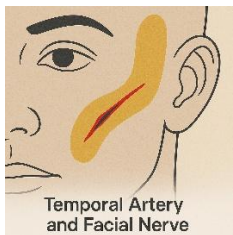
Supraorbital Nerve and Supratrochlear Region - Located above and below the eye along the orbital rim. Lacerations in these areas can bleed freely and swell quickly, often causing blood or swelling to obstruct vision. Because the skin is thin and lies close to bone, cuts may appear wide or severe even when relatively shallow. Swelling in either region can impair the boxer's ability to see, defend, or respond safely, requiring close observation and possible consultation with the ringside physician.



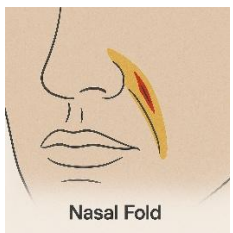
Mental Nerve - This sensory nerve supplies the lower lip, chin, and parts of the gums. Lacerations here may cause numbness or long-term sensory loss. During a bout, loss of sensation may affect the boxer's awareness of damage, mouthpiece position, or defensive posture, requiring increased referee vigilance.



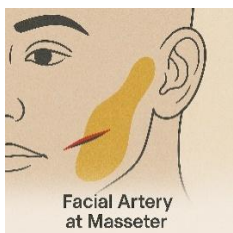
Infraorbital Nerve - Located below the eye, along the upper cheek. Lacerations in this area can swell rapidly and cause significant facial bruising or distortion. Because the tissue under the eye is soft and highly vascular, even moderate cuts can bleed freely and cause the eyelid to swell shut. Deep injuries may affect sensation in the upper lip or cheek and should be evaluated by the ringside physician, particularly if vision becomes compromised.



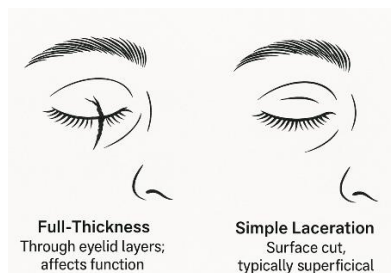
Superficial Temporal Artery and Facial Nerve - Trauma in this area can affect vision or damage blood vessels, increasing the risk of serious bleeding or neurological complications. Lacerations here may worsen rapidly with continued contact and require immediate attention if swelling or bleeding interferes with vision or balance.



Nasolabial Fold and Facial Artery - The facial artery runs through the nasolabial fold. Lacerations here can cause heavy bleeding that may be difficult to control during the bout. Referees should monitor whether bleeding interferes with vision or breathing and whether continued action increases the risk of further injury.



Facial Artery at the Masseter / Lower Cheek Area - Injuries here can lead to hematoma or facial swelling that impairs performance, jaw movement, or vision. Progressive swelling in this area may affect the boxer's ability to defend or maintain proper head position.



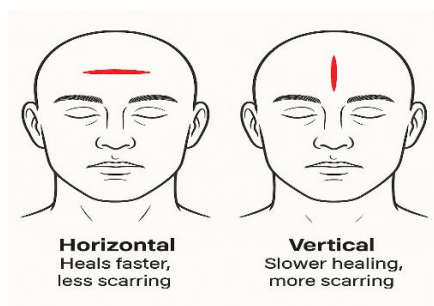
Eyelid Lacerations - Full-Thickness vs. Simple

A **full-thickness eyelid** laceration extends through all layers of the eyelid. It can impair eyelid function, making it difficult or impossible to close the eye fully, which increases the risk of infection, corneal damage, and further trauma. These injuries require urgent medical attention and careful referee consideration, as the inability to protect the eye significantly increases in-bout risk.

In contrast, a **simple eyelid laceration** is typically superficial and limited to the outer skin layer. While still requiring care and monitoring, these injuries are less likely to compromise eyelid function. Referees must continue to observe whether swelling or bleeding progresses to impair vision.

Lacerations Inside the Mouth

Lacerations inside the mouth, including the tongue or inner lips, can bleed heavily. These injuries may not be immediately visible but increase the risk of the boxer swallowing blood or experiencing breathing difficulty. Referees should watch for signs of oral trauma such as coughing, distress, difficulty managing the mouthpiece, or frequent spitting of blood, recognizing that internal injuries may be more serious than they appear.



Forehead Lacerations

Horizontal lacerations typically align with natural tension lines of the skin. They are easier to manage, heal more quickly, and result in less scarring.

Vertical lacerations, by contrast, are under greater tension, heal more slowly, and are more likely to scar. They often require more advanced wound management.

Referees should focus on whether bleeding from a forehead laceration affects the boxer's vision or ability to defend, rather than judging severity by wound size or appearance alone.

2.2.2 Swelling

Swelling is a common response to trauma and can present safety concerns depending on its severity and location. Referees must assess not only the size and visibility of swelling, but also how it affects vision, breathing, balance, or the boxer's ability to defend themselves. Progressive swelling during a bout may present greater risk than its initial appearance suggests.

Types of Swelling

Localized Swelling - Occurs directly at the site of injury. Often manageable unless it worsens, obstructs vision, or interferes with breathing or defense.

Generalized Swelling - Spreads beyond the original impact area. May indicate internal bleeding, fracture, or deeper tissue injury and often requires medical evaluation, particularly when it alters facial structure, vision, or airway function.

2.2.3 Referee Assessment and In-Bout Application

When evaluating lacerations and swelling, referees must prioritize location, function, and progression over appearance. The focus is not on how the injury looks, but what it does to the boxer's ability to compete safely.

Injuries that affect or threaten vision, breathing, or defensive ability require heightened attention regardless of size or initial severity. Bleeding that obscures vision, swelling that worsens between rounds, or trauma involving high-risk facial zones may compromise safety even when a boxer appears willing to continue.

Referees must continuously reassess these conditions throughout the bout and consult the ringside physician without delay when function is impaired or risk increases. Decisions must be guided by observed impact on safety, not by cosmetic presentation or Corner assurances.

2.3 Approved Substances for Bleeding Control

Referees shall be aware that standards and permitted substances for bleeding control vary among boxing authorities. During the dressing room instructions, referees should confirm which coagulants will be used and ensure they are in their original, clearly labeled containers and are not expired. Even when an inspector is assigned to this task, the referee's awareness reinforces proper enforcement and safety.

Only substances approved by the governing boxing authority may be used. In many authorities, adrenaline (epinephrine) 1:1000 is the only approved coagulant.

Approved Coagulants:

Adrenaline (epinephrine) 1:1000 - A clear liquid and the most used coagulant in boxing. It is supplied in clearly labeled, single-use glass ampoules.

Avitene - A collagen-based powder, sponge, or foam that promotes natural clotting. Often marketed under names such as QuikClot or Celox.

Thrombin - A clot-promoting enzyme used in powder form or mixed with sterile saline. Less commonly used due to cost.

Caustic agents or sealing products, such as Monsel's solution or "New Skin," are not permitted. These substances may leave dark staining, create a shiny or rubbery surface, or emit a strong chemical odor. Confirmation of the substance to be used is conducted during the dressing room instructions and equipment check, as outlined in Section 4.4.

3. Referee Preparation and Professionalism

3.1 Role and Authority

Unless the boxing authority's rules state otherwise, the referee is the sole arbiter of the bout, with final authority over all matters inside the ring. The referee is responsible for enforcing the governing rules, safeguarding the health of the boxers, and ensuring the bout is conducted fairly. Decisions made within this authority shall be respected by all participants and officials.

It is the referee's responsibility to determine whether an injury results from a legal blow, a foul, an accident, or a self-inflicted action. The referee may consult the ringside physician for medical evaluation; however, the decision to stop or allow the bout to continue remains the referee's responsibility under the applicable rules.

3.2 Referee Development

Referees must commit to ongoing professional development throughout their careers. Development is a long-term process that includes continued study of rules and procedures, objective review of performance trends, and openness to constructive feedback from supervisors and peers. Evaluation should be viewed as a professional tool, not criticism, with the purpose of strengthening safety, fairness, and consistency.

As referees advance to higher levels of competition, development becomes increasingly important. Consistent performance alone is not sufficient, particularly at the championship level, where sharper judgment and stronger mechanics are required.

Key areas of development include:

- Consistent decision-making.
- Uniform application of rules, mechanics, and protocols.
- Efficient movement and proper positioning.
- Clear, controlled verbal commands.
- Sound judgment, patience, and restraint in stoppages and point deductions.

Also consider that ego and complacency are among the referee's greatest risks; one leads to over intervention, the other to inaction.

3.3 Self-Assessment and Performance Review

Referees should conduct honest and objective self-assessment to remain accountable and improve performance.

After each assignment, referees should perform a structured self-review:

- Assess overall performance based on control, accuracy, and consistent rule application.
- Review movement, positioning, and decision-making separately before evaluating the bout as a whole.
- Identify whether the bout was easy, challenging, or difficult, and consider why.
- Review recordings when available, using pause or slow-motion tools to identify strengths, errors, and missed opportunities in real time.
- Take brief, constructive notes to identify patterns and guide improvement.

Self-assessment is a professional responsibility and a necessary component of referee development.

3.4 Practical Training

To maintain sharp mechanics and sound judgment, referees should engage in training beyond assigned bouts.

Effective training methods include:

Live Training - Officiating sparring sessions to refine movement, positioning, timing, and foul recognition, while remaining mindful of conflicts of interest.

Video Review - Studying bouts to evaluate knockdowns, fouls, stoppages, and procedural execution.

Self-Directed Drills - Practicing movement patterns, verbal commands, and responses to simulated situations.

Consistent training, whether live, video-based, or independent, helps ensure referees remain prepared, professional, and capable of performing at the highest levels of the sport.

3.5 Readiness to Work

Referees must be physically fit, mentally focused, and emotionally always composed. They should arrive prepared, with full knowledge of the governing rules, procedures, and bout-specific requirements.

3.6 Attire and Professional Appearance

Referees must always project professionalism.

Required attire includes:

- Light blue, long-sleeve shirt with bout emblem.
- Black bow tie.
- Black trousers.
- Black or dark-colored boxing shoes.
- Black blazer (outside of the ring).

Referees should maintain neat grooming and a composed demeanor, reinforcing respect for the sport and their authority in the ring. To preserve a professional appearance throughout the bout, referees may use methods such as shirt-tucking straps, tapered shirts, or similar techniques to keep the shirt properly in place.

4. Pre-Bout Duties

4.1 Rules Meeting

Referees should attend the rules meeting, whether conducted privately for a specific bout or as part of a group meeting for the event. This is particularly important for championship, elimination, or elite bouts.

The rules meeting provides essential information, including bout-specific rules, bout order, safety personnel locations, and the boxing authority's expectations.

4.2 Pre-Bout Preparations

Before the bout begins, the referee shall complete several tasks to ensure safety, fairness, and rule compliance. These include inspecting the ring, verifying boxer equipment and attire, confirming the positions of key personnel, and delivering dressing room instructions to both boxers and their teams.

4.3 Ring Inspection and Personnel Check

Although an Inspector or designated event personnel often conducts the official ring inspection, the referee remains responsible for verifying that all safety and operational standards are met before officiating.

Ideally, the ring inspection should be documented on an inspection sheet.

If no Inspector or personnel are assigned, the referee is to personally complete these checks.

Even when an Inspector or event staff perform these checks, the referee must visually confirm that all requirements have been met. Final accountability rests with the referee.

4.3.1 Ring Safety Check

Before the first bout, the referee should confirm or personally check:

Canvas - Securely stretched, properly padded, non-slip, clean and dry, and free of dips, lumps, indentations, gaps, or foreign substances.

Ropes and Spacer Ties - Evenly tightened with secure, symmetrical spacer ties to prevent sagging or separation. The lowest rope must be set slightly looser than the other ropes to help cushion a falling boxer and reduce the risk of injury.

Corners and Padding - Corner pads, turnbuckles, and posts must be properly attached, fully padded, and free of exposed metal, hardware, sharp edges, or torn coverings.

Ring Apron and Steps - The apron must be secure and free of tripping hazards. Ring steps must be stable, correctly positioned, and unobstructed.

Obstructions - No towels, stools, buckets, cables, or advertising materials may be placed where they could interfere with boxing activity or official movement.

Equipment Placement - Cameras, microphones, lighting, and related equipment must be positioned safely and must not obstruct boxers, officials, or emergency access.

Any safety hazard must be corrected immediately. If an issue cannot be resolved promptly, the referee must report it to the Inspector or boxing authority representative and delay officiating until the matter is addressed.

4.3.2 Working with the Inspector

The inspector serves as a key support to the referee by monitoring compliance, managing logistics, and identifying issues that may affect safety or fairness. While inspectors carry out many preparatory and observational duties, the referee remains the final authority on all matters inside the ring.

Before the bout, the referee and inspector should establish clear communication and confirm expectations regarding ring readiness, equipment status, and personnel positioning. The referee should know where the inspector is stationed and how information will be relayed if concerns arise.

During the bout, inspectors may observe issues involving equipment, Corner conduct, or safety conditions that warrant the referee's attention. The referee should remain alert to information conveyed by the inspector while independently assessing whether intervention is required.

At critical moments, such as the one-minute rest period, knockdowns at or near the bell, or equipment-related concerns, the inspector can assist by maintaining order and preventing unauthorized interference while the referee manages the bout.

After the bout, the referee should briefly confirm with the inspector that required post-bout procedures, inspections, and reports have been completed. Clear communication at this stage supports accountability and helps ensure that no safety or compliance issues are overlooked.

4.3.3 Personnel Location and Readiness

The referee shall also confirm the location and readiness of all essential officials and emergency personnel:

Supervisor/Boxing Authority Representative - At the main event table.

Timekeeper - Typically adjacent to the authority representative.

Knockdown Judge - Next to the timekeeper.

Judges - Three, positioned on separate sides of the ring.

Ringside Physician - At or near a neutral Corner.

Emergency Personnel - With stretcher, oxygen, and ambulance accessible ringside.

When satisfied that all safety measures, officials, and emergency arrangements are in place, the referee will inform the boxing authority.

4.3.4 Coordination with the Timekeeper and Knockdown Judge

Before the bout, the referee must coordinate directly with the Timekeeper and Knockdown Judge. This responsibility is especially important when the referee has not previously worked with the assigned officiating team.

The purpose of this coordination is to ensure that all officials share a clear understanding of signals, timing procedures, and responsibilities before the first bell. Even experienced officials may apply procedures slightly differently based on boxing authority or prior assignments. These differences must be addressed before the bout begins.

The referee should confirm the following:

- How and when the Timekeeper will start and stop the clock.
- The ten-second warning signal before the end of the round.
- Procedures for temporary stoppages, including injuries, fouls, and dislodged mouthpieces.
- Knockdown count coordination, including visual counting and cadence.
- Procedures for knockdowns near the end of a round.
- Procedures if a boxer falls out of the ring.
- Roles in the event of referee injury, substitution, or unforeseen disruption.

This coordination should be brief, direct, and professional. It is not a review of rules, but a confirmation of shared expectations and readiness.

Failure to establish this coordination before the bout increases the risk of timing errors, count discrepancies, and visible confusion during critical moments. The referee bears responsibility for ensuring that the officiating team operates as a unified group once the bout begins.

4.4 Dressing Room Instructions

Referees must time their instructional talk with awareness of the boxers' preparation and readiness. The dressing room is the referee's best opportunity to set expectations and establish control before the bout. Use this time to speak directly to both boxers and their Seconds teams. Deliver instructions clearly, consistently, and in your own words. Keep them brief but complete. After giving instructions, invite questions or concerns to confirm that everyone understands the procedures and expectations before entering the ring.

4.4.1 Points to Cover

Equal Instructions - Begin by telling both boxers that they will receive identical instructions and that those instructions will be enforced equally.

Three Primary Fouls - Explain that the most common and dangerous fouls are the use of the head, low blows, and holding. State clearly that these will not be tolerated, and repeated or deliberate fouls may result in point deductions or disqualification.

Self-Protection and Sportsmanship - Remind both boxers that they must always protect themselves, follow referee commands immediately, and maintain discipline and respect throughout the bout.

Waistline and Fair Blows - Show or indicate the line of the trunks and explain that the top of the beltline marks the legal target area for body blows. Any punch landing below that line is considered low and a foul.

Referee Verbal Commands During Action - Tell the boxers that if you give a verbal command during the action but do not stop or pause the bout, they must continue boxing while following the instruction. They should not stop or separate unless you specifically command “Time” or “Break.”

Self-Separation upon Command - Explain that when a self separation command is given, both boxers must disengage immediately and independently, protect themselves, and be ready to resume boxing without waiting for physical assistance from the referee.

Infighting vs. Holding - Clarify that active inside boxing is permitted and will not be stopped simply because it is close. Separation commands are used only to address prolonged holding, stalling, or unsafe situations. Failure to comply may be considered a foul.

Legal Knockdown Protocol - Explain that if a knockdown occurs, the boxer who scores it must go immediately to the furthest neutral Corner and remain there until told to continue. The downed boxer must listen carefully, follow all commands, and step forward when directed to show readiness. Advise that failure to respond or show control may result in a Technical Knockout. If a boxer goes down again without a punch, you will continue the count unless medical, or safety concerns require immediate intervention.

Temporary Stops - Inform both boxers that temporary stops may occur for equipment adjustments, injuries, or mouthpiece replacement. You will command “Time,” separate them, and resume the bout as soon as the issue is resolved.

End of Round Conduct - Explain that the ten-second signal warns that the round is ending. Both boxers must remain alert and disciplined through the bell. No punches are allowed after the bell; any that land will be judged as fouls depending on their intent and effect.

Mouthpiece Instructions - Remind boxers that their mouthpiece must remain inside their mouth and properly set during competition. Not doing so is a foul. If the mouthpiece comes out, the referee will stop the action, have it rinsed, and replaced promptly. Intentionally allowing the mouthpiece to come out for any reason is a foul and may result in a warning or point deduction.

The referee should confirm that each boxer has a properly fitted mouthpiece and determine whether a second mouthpiece is available in the Corner. If a second mouthpiece is present, the referee should visually inspect it for general suitability and apparent fit.

The responsibility for ensuring that any mouthpiece brought to the bout is safe, properly fitted, and of appropriate quality rests with the boxer and their Corner. The referee is not responsible for selecting, fitting, or testing mouthpieces. Awareness of what is available provides valuable context if mouthpiece issues arise during the bout.

This awareness supports timely and defensible bout management if mouthpiece issues arise during competition.

Bleeding and Swelling Control Supplies - Confirm which approved coagulants and swelling control tools (such as a pressure plate) each Corner has available. All coagulant substances must be authority-approved, properly labeled, in their original container and unexpired.

During the dressing room inspection, the referee must ensure that no item presents a safety risk or violates equipment standards.

In addition to standard checks, the referee should remain alert for:

- Oral piercings, including tongue or lip jewelry, are prohibited.
- Temporary tattoos, adhesives, body paint, or cosmetics that may smear, drip, or transfer during the bout.
- Hair ties, clips, beads, or fasteners that are hard, abrasive, or capable of causing injury.
- Sequins, decorative elements, stitching, or attachments on trunks that may loosen, detach, or create a hazard during the bout.
- Shoes with loose trim, exposed stitching, decorative elements, or damaged soles that could detach or compromise footing.

Any non-compliant item must be corrected before the boxer leaves the dressing room. If uncertainty exists, the referee should consult the Inspector or boxing authority representative before allowing the boxer to proceed.

4.4.2 Instructions to the Seconds Team (Corner)

If possible, the referee should address the Corner team separately from the boxer to discuss certain points not relevant to the boxer. This allows procedural and equipment-related instructions to be delivered clearly without distracting the boxer during preparation.

Explain to each Corner that a maximum of four Seconds are permitted: one inside the ring, two on the apron, and one on the floor. Only the Chief Second may stop the bout by stepping onto the apron and signaling the referee or signaling the Inspector if one is present. Towels or objects must not be thrown into the ring to stop the bout. They must never enter the ring to stop a bout, as some boxing authorities treat this as grounds for disqualification and disciplinary action.

Instruct the Corner to act professionally, enter and exit the ring promptly at the bell, manage water and coaching properly, and keep the Corner clean and free of hazards. Only approved substances may be used for bleeding control. The Corner is responsible for ensuring a serviceable mouthpiece is immediately available and replaced without delay if it becomes dislodged.

4.4.3 The Referee's Role in Controlling the Seconds Team

This balance involves three responsibilities:

- Manage the bout with an awareness of both safety and rhythm; avoid unnecessary interruptions and only intervene when there is danger or rule violations.
- Respect the one-minute rest period as the team's essential time to assist their boxer.
- Enforce boundaries on the Seconds' conduct, preventing interference, unauthorized coaching, treatment, or actions that compromise safety, fairness, or the referee's authority.

4.4.4 Female Boxer Equipment and Appearance

Female boxers are subject to the same general equipment, attire, and appearance standards as all boxers.

During the dressing room inspection, the referee shall ensure compliance with all applicable rules and verify that no equipment or appearance issue creates a safety concern or unfair advantage.

In addition, the referee shall specifically verify the following female-specific or conditional items:

Breast protector - May be required or permitted depending on the boxing authority. The referee shall verify compliance with the governing boxing authority.

Body shirt or blouse - Where required by the boxing authority, the boxer must wear an approved body shirt or blouse that fits properly and does not interfere with competition.

Any equipment or appearance issue must be corrected before the boxer leaves the dressing room. If compliance cannot be achieved, the referee must notify the boxing authority immediately.

4.4.5 Final Equipment and Attire Check

Before leaving the dressing room, confirm with both boxers and their Corner that all equipment meets requirements:

Handwraps and Gloves - Properly applied, approved, and taped. Any concern regarding application, materials, or integrity must be resolved before the bout begins.

Mouthpiece - A properly fitted mouthpiece is mandatory and must be in place before the bout starts. A spare mouthpiece should be available in the Corner.

Protective Gear - Groin protector (protective cup) for male boxers, and a competition-approved pelvic protector and chest protector, when applicable, for female boxers. Training protectors or improperly fitted protectors are not permitted.

Trunks - Trunks must be secured at or above the navel and remain properly positioned for the duration of the bout. The fair- and foul-blow line is constant and does not change based on trunk style or waistband placement.

Shoes - Boxing shoes must provide secure footing and adequate support. Shoes may not contain metallic parts, sharp edges, or detachable elements that could interfere with the bout.

Grooming and Accessories - No cosmetics, jewelry, piercings, or hard objects are permitted. Hair must be secured to prevent interference or eye injury. Facial hair must not present a safety risk or interfere during clinches.

Any issue that cannot be corrected immediately must be reported to the boxing authority before the bout begins.

5. Bout Control

5.1 Movement and Positioning

Refereeing starts with where you stand and how you move. Move with purpose. Your feet and eyes must always be in position, and your voice must be clear and timely, so you can see cleanly, act quickly, and stay out of the way. Use short lateral steps and pivots instead of crossing your feet to avoid losing traction. Keep a balanced stance, light on the balls of your feet, and avoid gestures that draw attention. Your movement should support the boxing, not compete with it.

5.2 Maintaining the Open/Dominant Side

Prioritize the open side, the angle that provides the clearest view of where punches land and how they affect each boxer. When both boxers share the same stance, identifying the open side is straightforward. When boxers switch stances or face opposite stances, adjust positioning so the primary punching lane and scoring surfaces remain visible.

In opposite-stance matchups, an effective way to begin each round on the open side is to establish that position while walking from the Corner to center ring before the bell. With the boxers still separated in their corners, the referee naturally steps into the open side and is properly aligned as the round begins. This positioning occurs before live action and does not require moving between the boxers once the bout is underway.

If one boxer appears hurt, tired, or fading, the referee should return to that boxer's open side more often to better read reactions, anticipate danger, and intervene when necessary.

5.3 Range and Presence

Stay close enough to intervene, yet far enough to avoid being struck or trapped. Close distance in loud venues or during heated exchanges so verbal commands are heard. When the action moves to the ropes or corners, circle to maintain a clear view of where punches land and how they affect the boxers. Avoid standing in the corner where movement can be restricted. Keep the judges' sightlines clean and never stand between a judge and the exchange.

5.4 Shortening the Distance

Close in when the pace surges, infighting begins, one boxer appears unsteady, the action nears the ropes or a corner, or crowd noise increases. Closing in is not jumping in. Slide your feet and square your shoulders to the action so you remain balanced and ready to intervene.

When the moment passes, move back to a working range that allows unobstructed vision and safe movement.

Near corners, be prepared to angle out so you do not become trapped behind a clinch or flurry. If you must step in, do so with purpose, then step out to a neutral lane. Avoid unnecessary resets to center ring unless a safety concern requires it.

5.5 Ropes, Corners, and Noise

Near the ropes or Corners, anticipate problems early. Angle your position to see the free hand and target. Use your voice sooner so neither boxer is pinned in a tangle of arms and heads. In loud venues, close the distance to ensure your commands are heard, then move back once order returns.

5.6 End-of-Round Awareness and Positioning

The referee shall remain alert to the approaching end of each round and the timekeeper's ten-second warning.

Upon hearing the ten-second signal, the referee should shorten the distance and assume a strong, centered position to clearly observe the closing exchanges and maintain control.

At the sounding of the bell, the referee must immediately:

- Command "Time!"
- Signal the end of the round with a clear hand signal.
- Ensure the boxers stop punching, separate, and return directly to their respective Corners.

Once the bell sounds, the round is over and the competition period ends.

If a boxer falls after the bell while disengaging or returning to their Corner, the round has already ended. In such cases, the Corner may assist the boxer once the referee has control and the other boxer is separated.

Proper positioning and clear end-of-round mechanics greatly reduce the risk of late blows. If a late blow does occur, these actions help the referee accurately determine whether the contact was accidental or intentional.

5.7 One-Minute Rest Period

The one-minute rest period is a critical phase of the bout for both the boxers and their Corner. Unless an immediate safety concern exists, boxers are entitled to the full one-minute rest period after each round, except after the final round. The referee shall not allow anyone to interrupt the Seconds while they are working with their boxer during this time unless an immediate safety concern requires intervention.

5.7.1 Referee Responsibilities During the One-Minute Rest Period

At the end of each round, the referee shall collect the scorecards promptly and deliver them to the appropriate boxing authority representative without reviewing or commenting on them. Once this task is complete, the referee should use the remainder of the rest period to reset mentally, maintain situational awareness, and observe the condition of both boxers.

During the rest period, the referee should closely observe the boxers and their Corners for any signs that a boxer may be unfit to safely continue. This includes their communication, changes in posture, balance, responsiveness, awareness, or behavior when compared to earlier rounds.

These observations are not medical judgments, but part of the referee's responsibility to recognize potential safety concerns and to consult the ringside physician when appropriate.

The referee should also remain aware of personnel activity around the ring, in case attention is needed for equipment issues, rule clarification, or safety concerns.

The referee shall ensure each boxer can be clearly observed, whether seated or standing. Throughout the rest period, maintain eye contact with the officiating team when appropriate, remain alert for the ten-second warning, and be prepared to assume proper position before the next round begins.

Effective use of the one-minute rest period allows the referee to gather critical information, maintain control, and be fully prepared to protect the boxers and manage the bout safely and professionally as the next round begins.

5.8 Separation of the Boxers

Proper movement positions the referee to see clearly and act decisively. When boxers engage at close range, effective separation ensures that action continues safely, fairly, and without unnecessary interruption.

Effective separation is essential to maintaining the natural flow of a bout. Referees must set clear standards during dressing room instructions and enforce them consistently throughout the bout. The goal is to allow legitimate inside boxing to continue while promptly addressing excessive holding, stalling, or unsafe situations.

5.8.1 Dressing Room Expectations

Referees must clearly establish self-separation standards in the dressing room and apply them consistently. Commands such as “Break” or “Punch out” require immediate, independent disengagement by both boxers, without waiting for physical assistance. Boxers are expected to protect themselves as they separate and be ready to resume boxing immediately.

Boxers must also understand that infighting is a legitimate part of boxing and will not be stopped simply because it is close. A separation command is used only to stop prolonged holding or stalling, not active inside boxing where at least one hand is free and working. Clear instruction at this stage helps preserve bout rhythm and minimizes unnecessary referee involvement.

5.8.2 Distinguishing Close-Range Tactics

Infighting is legitimate when both boxers are active, hands working, heads disciplined, each trying to land or improve position. Clinching or tying up may occur naturally and is acceptable when brief and purposeful, such as to neutralize an attack or reset positioning.

When these actions become prolonged, purely defensive, or used to stall, they become holding and must be addressed. Tying up to stall or slow the action is not a legitimate tactic when it prevents offense. The referee shall recognize these distinctions and intervene only when necessary.

5.8.3 Self-Separation Before Physical Intervention

During the bout, verbal control should be the referee’s primary management tool. Separation commands must be given firmly and only when necessary. When at least one boxer has a free hand and is actively working, the exchange should be allowed to continue. Overuse of separation commands during active infighting disrupts rhythm and may unfairly benefit a tiring boxer.

The referee should reinforce self-separation through consistent verbal prompts and issue a direct separation command only when both boxers are fully tied with no free hand or when safety requires it. If a boxer continues to hold after clear instructions, a warning should be issued; if the behavior persists, a point deduction is warranted. Commands should be short, consistent, and delivered in a manner that allows boxers to respond instinctively.

5.8.4 Physical Separation as a Last Resort

When verbal efforts fail, the referee must step in with authority and neutrality. Use open palms on the upper arms or chest, without grabbing, twisting, or favoring one side. Both boxers should be separated simultaneously and smoothly, with each required to take a step back before action resumes.

After separation, the referee should step straight back to normal observation distance, allowing clean re-engagement without crowding or obstruction. Walking between the boxers should be avoided unless safety concerns exist, such as entanglement in the ropes, loose equipment, or injury.

Close-range work should be allowed to continue when both boxers are active, using short punches or effective inside movement. Intervention is required only when action stops due to clamping, leaning, or wrapping that prevents boxing. Acting too soon disrupts rhythm; acting too late encourages fouling. Balanced judgment preserves safety, fairness, and bout flow.

6. Verbal Commands and Hand Signals

Referees shall use clear, firm, and concise verbal commands, paired with hand signals, to manage the action confidently. Commands should be delivered from proper position, with the referee centered, visible, and clear of the boxers. Commands should be short, direct, and ideally in a language the boxer understands when possible. They shall also be explained during dressing room instructions so that boxers know what is expected and understand that compliance is immediate, with no pause or delay in obeying referee directions.

6.1 Primary Commands

The referee uses three essential action commands during every bout: “Stop!”, “Break!”, and “Box!”

These are action commands only and do not stop the clock.

The command “Time!” is a procedural command used when the referee requires the clock to be stopped. “Stop!” is used to halt all action immediately.

“Break!” or another separation command instructs the boxers to separate cleanly and take a step back before boxing is resumed.

“Box!” signals the boxers to resume action.

Other situational commands may be used, when necessary, provided they are clear and consistent with established mechanics.

A referee may also call out a foul verbally while allowing the action to continue.

Regardless of the circumstance, all commands must be delivered clearly, consistently, and decisively to maintain control and ensure boxer safety.

6.2 Using Commands to Reduce Physical Intervention

Referees should rely on clear, consistent verbal commands to manage the bout and guide behavior before resorting to physical intervention. Effective use of commands helps maintain control, preserve bout flow, and reduce unnecessary stoppages or handling. Commands must be firm, concise, and applied with judgment to direct action while allowing legal boxing to continue.

6.3 Referee Commands and Signals

Hand signals reinforce verbal commands and ensure communication even in noisy environments. They also serve to inform judges, timekeeping officials, and the audience.

The standard signals include:

To begin the bout - At center ring, the referee faces the timekeeper and signals with an extended arm.

Time out - Extend both arms slightly forward, forming a “T” at chest level while commanding “Time!”

End of the round - The referee enforces the bell by commanding “Time!” Proper positioning following the ten-second signal ensures boxing ceases immediately and safely.

Slip or No Knockdown - Extend both hands in front at waist level, crisscrossing them 1-2 times while declaring “No Knockdown!”

Legal Knockdown - Stand in front of the downed boxer, point to the canvas, and declare “Down!”

Terminating the bout (Technical Knockout) - Extend and wave one or both hands above the head in a crisscross motion to signal that the bout has been stopped.

6.4 Referee Positioning During Action Stoppages

During all action stoppages, the referee should maintain a controlled working distance from the boxers and avoid stepping between them unless safety requires immediate physical intervention. This positioning allows clear observation, maintains authority, and limits unnecessary physical intrusion.

The referee should face the boxers squarely, remain balanced, and maintain direct sightlines while issuing commands or signals. Side-on positioning, turning away, or twisting the body to observe the boxers should be avoided, as these positions reduce visibility, balance, and command presence.

All official commands and signals, including foul indications and point deductions, must be delivered clearly and consistently so boxers, judges, timekeepers, and inspectors receive the same information at the same time.

Proper positioning and clear signaling during stoppages support effective communication, accurate evaluation, and calm, professional bout control.

7. Competition Period and Timing Boundaries

The referee must clearly understand and enforce the limits of the competition period, as it is the only time during which legal boxing actions occur and fouls may result in point deductions. All bout control, fouls, point deductions, and stoppage decisions are governed by whether an action occurs inside or outside this period. Actions outside this period are handled differently and are not subject to scoring.

7.1 Definition of the Competition Period

The competition period consists only of the active round time.

Male bouts use three (3)-minute rounds.

Female bouts use two (2)-minute rounds. Some boxing authorities may permit three (3)-minute rounds.

The one-minute rest period is not part of the competition period.

7.2 Start and End of the Round

Each round begins and ends with the sound of the bell. When the bell rings to start a round, the competition period begins. When the bell rings to end a round, the competition period immediately ends. Once the bell sounds, all boxing action must stop, and any action occurring after the bell is outside the competition period.

7.3 Referee Authority Inside and Outside the Competition Period

Unless governing rules provide otherwise, if a referee directs judges to apply a point deduction for conduct that occurred outside the competition period, judges must not record the deduction. In such cases, judges should respectfully inform the referee that no active round exists and that the matter should be referred to the supervisor or boxing authority representative for guidance.

This process preserves the referee's authority while ensuring that deductions are applied only within a valid competition period.

8. Center-Ring Instructions

Before the opening bell, the referee brings both boxers and their Chief Second to center ring. This is not a speech, but a brief, clear directive that establishes final control and sets the professional tone of the bout following the dressing room instructions. It is given publicly so that both boxers, their Corners, and all officials hear the same expectations at the same time. Boxers should already be in bout attire only, with robes, hats, and accessories removed.

The referee's instructions shall be concise, professional, and delivered with authority. The recommended points should be covered, but referees are not expected to be robotic or recite a fixed script. Instructions may be delivered in the referee's own words, provided the essential content is clearly communicated.

This is not the time to repeat the full dressing-room briefing but to reinforce the most critical points:

- The mandatory phrase “Protect yourself at all times” must be spoken clearly, as it carries both legal and safety weight.
- Emphasize that boxers must obey all referee commands without hesitation.
- On the command “Break!” or similar, boxers are expected to self-separate immediately, without waiting for physical intervention.
- Establish the waistline and clarify the fair blow zones for each boxer.
- Briefly caution against common fouls when appropriate, without repeating full rule explanations.

To close, the referee may offer the glove-touch as a gesture of sportsmanship. This is optional. If the boxers choose not to touch gloves, they are returned directly to their corners without delay or pressure. The referee then ensures the ring is clear, with only the boxers and referee inside, and all other officials in position.

These center-ring instructions serve as the final reminder of rules and standards before competition begins. Delivered with clarity and consistency, they establish authority, reinforce safety, and ensure both boxers and their teams understand what is expected once the bout begins.

9. Fouls and Enforcement

Referees must identify, evaluate, and respond to fouls promptly and consistently. This includes issuing cautions for minor infractions, deducting points for repeated or deliberate fouls, and disqualifying when an act is flagrant, intentional, or endangers an opponent's safety.

Enforcement begins with recognizing whether an action is legal or illegal under the governing rules and applying the appropriate response with authority and consistency. Every decision should be communicated using clear verbal commands and the appropriate hand signals.

9.1 Fair Blows - Referee Definition and Application

9.1.1 Fair Blows - Referee Scope and Application

This section defines what constitutes a fair blow from the referee's perspective. The referee applies this definition solely for rule enforcement, foul recognition, and safety.

9.1.2 Definition of a Fair Blow

A fair blow is a legal punch delivered with the knuckle portion of the closed glove to the front or side of the head or to the body above the waistline.

A punch does not constitute a fair blow if it:

- Lands below the waistline
- Lands on an illegal target area, including the back of the head or spine
- Is delivered with an illegal part of the glove or body
- Is thrown while the opponent is down
- Is delivered after the bell or in violation of a referee command

Such actions may require referee intervention, including verbal instruction, warning, point deduction, or disqualification, depending on severity and intent.

For the referee, the concept of a fair blow is applied only to determine legality, enforce the governing rules, and protect boxer safety. The referee does not evaluate the scoring value or effectiveness of a fair blow.

Judgment regarding scoring value is the responsibility of the judges and is addressed separately in *The Professional Boxing Judge Manual – 2026 Edition*.

9.2 Definition of a Foul

A foul is any action that violates boxing rules, whether intentional or accidental. All fouls must be recognized and addressed, as they may endanger safety, compromise fairness, or disrupt the natural flow of the bout.

Intentional fouls carry strict consequences, often immediate point deductions or disqualification.

Accidental fouls are judged by severity, impact, and frequency of occurrence.

9.3 Foul Severity Levels and Referee Response

Fouls fall into three categories:

Minor Fouls - Do not significantly affect safety or flow. Address with a verbal warning and hand signal.

Major Fouls - Compromise fairness or safety. May require a stoppage, caution, or point deduction.

Flagrant Fouls - Dangerous, deliberate, or repeated. Require point(s) deduction or disqualification.

The referee's decision regarding the foul must be communicated verbally and with the proper hand signal to ensure judges are fully informed.

9.4 Referee Protocol for Fouls

When a foul occurs, the referee stops the bout if necessary and directs the non-offending boxer to the furthest neutral Corner. If the foul results in an injury that requires medical evaluation, the referee consults the ringside physician. All decisions must be announced clearly, such as identifying the offending boxer and stating, for example, "One point deduction, low blow." Once the ruling is made, the referee resumes the bout promptly unless a full stoppage or disqualification is required.

The following framework applies broadly to foul management across all situations:

Accidental / no injury - verbal acknowledgement

Accidental / minor injury - declare incident

Accidental / significant injury - stop, assess, consult physician

Intentional - deduct points or disqualify

9.4.1 Concussive Head Impact Fouls

In cases where a boxer is fouled, whenever possible, it is important to the integrity of the sport that the bout resumes as soon as possible when it is safe to do so. However, in situations involving a concussive head impact, allowing a boxer to "recover" and resume boxing may place the boxer at risk of sustaining a second, more serious injury within the same bout. This risk must be recognized and weighed carefully.

Concussive head impact fouls prioritize medical judgment over time allowances. The Five (5) Minute Rule is not automatically appropriate in these situations. The referee must exercise sound judgment and prioritize boxer safety over bout continuation.

When a foul results in a suspected concussive head impact, the referee must engage in a clear and direct consultation with the ringside physician to determine the boxer's fitness to continue. That medical assessment should guide whether recovery time is granted or whether the bout should be stopped.

The goal is not to rush resumption, but to prevent avoidable harm while maintaining fairness and consistency.

9.5 Accidental Fouls

If an accidental foul (other than an accidental low blow) causes an injury and the boxer cannot continue, the outcome is governed by the Four (4) Round Rule.

9.6 Four (4) Round Rule - Application and Scoring

When a bout is stopped due to an accidental foul (other than a low blow) and a boxer cannot continue, the outcome is determined by the Four (4) Round Rule.

If the bout is stopped before four complete rounds are finished, the result is a No Decision.

If the bout is stopped after four complete rounds are finished, the bout goes to the judges' scorecards, resulting in a Technical Decision for the boxer who is ahead on points at the time of the stoppage.

When the bout goes to the scorecards under this rule, judges shall score any partial round based only on the legal boxing action that occurred before the stoppage.

For Four (4) Round Rule purposes, a "completed round" is a round that ends with the sound of the bell. A round that is stopped before the bell is a partial round and is scored only when the bout qualifies to go to the scorecards under this rule.

9.7 Accidental Low Blow

If a boxer is hit with an accidental low blow and cannot continue after being given a five (5) minute recovery period, that boxer loses by Technical Knockout.

The Four (4) Round Rule does not apply.

9.8 Resumption and Retroactive Complaints

If a bout continues after an accidental foul, the injury is considered resolved for purposes of applying the Four-Round Rule. If the same injury is later cited as the reason for a stoppage without a new foul or separate injury, the Four-Round Rule no longer applies, and the injured boxer must either continue or lose by Technical Knockout.

9.9 Intentional Fouls

If an intentional foul causes an injury severe enough to stop the action right away, the fouling boxer loses by Disqualification.

If the bout is allowed to continue, the referee will deduct one or two points from the fouling boxer. Typically, two points are deducted for an intentional foul that causes injury or for repetitive fouls, depending on the boxing authority's rules.

If the injury from the intentional foul later causes the bout to be stopped and it is stopped before four complete rounds, it is a No Decision. If stopped after four complete rounds, the injured boxer wins by Technical Decision if they are ahead, or the result is a Technical Draw if they are behind or even on points. The fouling boxer cannot be declared the winner.

9.10 Disqualification Guidelines

Disqualification should be used only when necessary and as a last resort. A boxer may be disqualified for committing repeated fouls despite warnings, for committing a flagrant or dangerous foul, or for showing deliberate disregard for the referee's authority. Before taking this step, ensure that the boxer understood the instructions and that prior measures such as warnings or deductions were applied, unless the foul is so severe that immediate disqualification is justified.

9.11 Most Prominent Fouls

Across all fouls, the referee must classify the action based on intent and resulting injury. Accidental fouls without injury may be acknowledged verbally, while those causing injury require escalation. Intentional fouls demand immediate corrective action, including point deductions or disqualification, depending on severity.

The following fouls are among the most common and most significant encountered in professional boxing and require consistent recognition and application by the referee.

9.11.1 Headbutts / Illegal Use of the Head

Headbutts most often occur during close exchanges, particularly in opposite stances or when one boxer leans past the lead foot and allows the head to enter the opponent's space.

Headbutts may occur during close-range exchanges, particularly when stances are opposite or head position is poorly controlled. Classification requires careful evaluation of body positioning, head movement, and whether the contact resulted from boxing action or deliberate use of the head. This section addresses recognition and classification; referee response and bout outcomes are addressed separately.

9.11.2 Low Blows

Any blow below the waistline (navel to the top of the hips) is a foul. Protective gear must remain at or below this line.

Low blows may be accidental or intentional. Accidental low blows may warrant recovery time under the Five (5) Minute Rule. Intentional low blows require immediate enforcement, including point deductions or disqualification depending on severity and outcome.

9.11.3 Holding

Grabbing or tying up without offensive purpose is a foul. It must be distinguished from legal infighting, brief clinches for position, or quick defensive resets. Persistent holding results in a warning, followed by a deduction if it continues. Hitting while holding is treated as a more serious foul.

9.11.4 Blow to an Opponent While Down

Striking a downed opponent is a serious foul. Before addressing the foul, the referee must first determine and declare whether the opponent is down as the result of a legal knockdown or a slip or fall.

If the action follows a legal knockdown, the referee must declare the knockdown.

If it follows a slip or fall, the referee must declare “No Knockdown!”

9.11.5 Blow to the Back of the Head

A blow to the back of the head is highly dangerous and often occurs when a boxer turns suddenly. If accidental, there is no penalty unless injury results or the action is repeated, in which case the referee must intervene to protect safety.

9.11.6 Other Common Fouls

- Blow after referee’s command or after the bell.
- Blow to the back or kidneys.
- Using elbow, forearm, or shoulder.
- Attacking while holding or using the ropes.
- Hitting with an open glove, back of glove, or thumb.
- Hitting an opponent entangled in the ropes.
- Pushing or shoving.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct (taunting, abusive language, spitting mouthpiece, assaulting an official).
- Stepping on toes.
- Striking with knee or shoulder.
- Passive defense (excessive retreat, clinching, or shelling without offense).
- Biting.
- Crouching excessively below the waist.

9.12 Enforcement Principles

When handling fouls, the referee’s responsibility is to recognize the infraction immediately, stop the action if necessary, and respond in a manner that is fair, consistent, and proportionate to the severity and intent of the foul. Clear verbal commands and the correct hand signals are used to communicate both to the boxers and to the officials what has occurred. Accidental fouls are addressed differently from intentional fouls, and the referee must quickly assess whether there is injury, whether the bout can continue, and whether consultation with the ringside physician is required.

The referee should apply a graduated response whenever appropriate, based on severity and intent. Minor or tactical fouls may be addressed first with a firm verbal instruction, making it clear that the behavior must stop. If the foul is repeated, deliberate, or disrupts the fairness of the bout, a formal warning or point deduction is warranted. Certain fouls, such as striking an opponent while down or other dangerous actions, require immediate and decisive penalties, including disqualification when the governing rules and the severity of the act demand it.

Throughout the bout, consistency is essential. Similar fouls should receive similar responses regardless of the round, the boxer involved, or the stage of the bout. The referee must remain calm, decisive, and transparent in their actions, ensuring that fouls are managed in a way that protects boxer safety, preserves competitive fairness, and always maintains control of the bout.

Summary of foul levels and response:

Minor Foul - Verbal warning.

Major Foul - Warning or point deduction.

Flagrant Foul - Immediate point deduction or disqualification.

10. Referee Mechanics

This section describes the actions and procedures the referee uses to manage the bout. These mechanics must be applied with authority, consistency, and awareness to maintain safety, fairness, and control.

10.1 Adverse Situations and Suspension of the Bout

Boxing is fast-paced, and unexpected situations can develop instantly. A referee must remain alert, anticipate potential problems, and use effective positioning to maintain control of the bout. When unforeseen events occur, the referee is responsible for ensuring safety, order, and fairness until normal competition can resume or a final ruling is made.

10.1.1 General Responsibilities

The referee's duties are to:

- Respond promptly and maintain order in the ring.
- Use clear, authoritative verbal commands and hand signals.
- De-escalate hazardous or volatile situations to protect the boxers and maintain control.

10.1.2 Suspension for Unforeseen Reasons

If a bout must be stopped for reasons unrelated to the boxers, such as ring malfunctions, acts of nature, lighting or power failure, environmental hazards, or other external interference, the referee will apply the Core Sequence for Temporary Stops (Section 10.2.1).

The referee will also consider the following:

1. Consult the boxing authority, bout supervisor, and ringside physician if safety is in question to determine whether the bout can resume.
2. Request additional security if crowd safety becomes an issue and adequate response has not been provided.
3. Manage recovery time fairly and avoid unnecessary delay. Except for accidental low blows, where the Five-Minute Rule applies, other interruptions are managed through referee judgment, often in consultation with the boxing authority representative.
4. Apply the Four-Round Rule if the issue cannot be resolved and the bout cannot continue.

10.1.3 Resuming the Bout

Ensure both boxers are ready and give clear instructions before restarting.

Resume timing from the point of suspension, with the timekeeper restarting the clock on the referee's signal.

10.1.4 Boxer Falling Out of the Ring

A boxer may fall partially or completely out of the ring due to natural action, movement, or a foul. The referee's response depends on whether the fall resulted from a legal blow, a slip, or a foul. Only a fall caused by a legal blow is treated as a knockdown.

If a boxer falls out of the ring due to a slip or foul, the incident is not treated as a knockdown and no knockdown count applies. The referee must manage the situation under the appropriate slip or foul protocol.

10.1.5 Knocked Out of the Ring (Fair Blow)

When a boxer is knocked out of the ring by a legal blow:

- Issue a twenty (20) count.
- Direct the scoring boxer to the furthest neutral Corner.
- The downed boxer must return to the ring unassisted before the count concludes.

If the boxer receives undue assistance, take appropriate action.

If both boxers fall out of the ring as the result of legal blows, count both boxers to twenty (20).

10.1.6 Boxer Through or Onto the Ropes

If a boxer is knocked onto or through the ropes as the result of a legal blow:

- If the boxer remains on the apron, administer a ten (10) count.
- If the boxer falls completely out of the ring, administer a twenty (20) count.
- The boxer must return unassisted before the count ends.

10.1.7 Accidental Fall - Referee Response

When a boxer falls outside the ring due to an accident or slip:

- No knockdown count is administered.
- Assess the boxer's condition and consult with officials as needed.
- Resume the bout under the applicable slip protocol.

In all cases, unauthorized assistance to a boxer outside the ring may result in a point deduction or disqualification at the referee's discretion.

10.2 Temporary Stop Mechanics

Temporary stoppages are a normal part of refereeing and must be handled with calm, consistent mechanics. The referee's responsibility is to stop the action only as long as necessary, protect both boxers, and resume the bout promptly once the situation is resolved. Unnecessary temporary stops should be avoided.

10.2.1 Core Sequence for Temporary Stops

1. Give a firm verbal command "Time!" with the proper hand signal.
2. Direct the standing boxer to the furthest neutral corner when needed to maintain control and create space.
3. Maintain a working distance with clear sight lines of both boxers.
4. Identify the issue (injury, slip, equipment, foul, external cause).
5. Apply the appropriate rule or corrective action.
6. Command "Box!" when resolved or stop the bout if continuation is unsafe or not permitted.

10.2.2 Slips (No Knockdown)

Slips are managed using the Core Sequence for Temporary Stops (Section 10.2.1), with the following adjustments:

1. If a boxer falls without being struck, immediately command “No Knockdown!” with the official hand signal.
2. Direct the standing boxer to the furthest neutral Corner if necessary.
3. Allow the fallen boxer a brief moment to regain footing.
4. Wipe the gloves.
5. Resume quickly with the command “Box!” This is a reset, not an injury timeout.

Do not walk between the boxers.

10.2.3 Fouls and Point Deductions

Identify the foul - Clearly announce what occurred (“Low blow,” “Intentional headbutt,” etc.).

Determine severity - Accidental vs. intentional, minor vs. flagrant.

Apply penalty - If deducting, face the boxing authority table and state your determination clearly.

Communicate to judges - Ensure all three judges acknowledge the deduction before resuming.

Escalation - Warnings, deductions, or disqualification, as necessary.

If a point deduction was issued and the round went to its natural conclusion, the referee is to confirm with the judges that they recorded the deduction.

10.3 Injury and Equipment-Related Stops

10.3.1 Applicability of the Five-Minute Rule

The Five-Minute Rule is traditionally applied to accidental low blows.

It is not a general recovery rule for all fouls, nor is it intended to override established foul protocol for intentional fouls. Situations involving other fouls or injuries are managed through referee judgment, medical consultation, and applicable rules, not by default time allowances.

Recovery outside the Five-Minute Rule is measured more in seconds than in minutes and is based on the referee’s assessment of immediate fitness to continue, not comfort.

In practice, temporary stoppages rarely approach the full five minutes. Most situations are resolved quickly once the referee assesses the boxer’s condition and determines whether continuation is possible.

The referee should not delay a decision or prolong a stoppage when the boxer’s ability or inability to continue is already clear.

10.3.2 Referee Actions When the Rule Is Applied

When the Five-Minute Rule is applied, the referee must:

- Immediately stop the action and direct the opponent to the furthest neutral corner.
- Clearly announce that recovery time is being granted so that both boxers, the corners, officials, and ringside personnel understand the situation.
- Ensure the timekeeper is tracking the recovery period.
- Maintain visual supervision of both boxers throughout the stoppage.
- Prevent coaching, treatment, or interference by the Seconds during the recovery period.
- Consult the ringside physician whenever there is doubt about the boxer's ability to continue.

The referee must remain calm, neutral, and deliberate. The purpose of the recovery period is to determine whether the bout can safely resume, not to prolong the stoppage.

10.3.3 Headbutts

This section addresses referee response and bout management following a headbutt. When a headbutt results in injury or requires intervention, the referee must stop the action and follow the appropriate injury and foul procedures.

Accidental Headbutts - Injury Assessment

If the injury is minor, allow the bout to continue and permit treatment in the corner. If the injury is serious, stop the action and consult the ringside physician.

When the bout outcome is determined by the Four (4) Round Rule, application and scoring shall be governed by Section 9.6 of this manual:

- **Before four (4) complete rounds** - No Decision.
- **After four (4) complete rounds** - Go to the scorecards.

If the boxer is cleared to continue, resume boxing promptly.

Intentional Headbutts

If the headbutt causes an injury, the referee must first assess the boxer's condition and consult the ringside physician, when necessary, before applying the appropriate sanction.

Apply the appropriate penalty based on severity. Deduct at least one point (some authorities require two).

If the injured boxer cannot continue, disqualify the offending boxer.

If the bout is later stopped due to an injury caused by an intentional headbutt, the bout outcome is governed by the intentional foul provisions and the Four (4) Round Rule as outlined in Sections 9.6 and 9.9.

10.3.4 Boxer Recovery and Referee Conduct

Once recovery time is granted, the referee does not coach, instruct, or assist the boxer.

The referee should not:

- Tell the boxer to walk, stretch, bend, breathe, or perform movements.
- Offer encouragement, reassurance, or advice.
- Act as a trainer, medical provider, or advocate.

The boxer is expected to manage their own recovery in a professional manner. The referee's responsibility is observation and decision-making, not participation.

10.3.5 Time Awareness and Announcements

As recovery time progresses, the referee should remain aware of elapsed time and may announce time remaining aloud when appropriate (for example, "Four minutes").

These announcements must be clear, neutral, and informational, ensuring transparency for all involved without creating pressure or urgency.

The referee must not allow recovery time to extend beyond what is necessary to determine readiness and willingness to continue. The bout should resume as soon as possible, but if at any point the referee or ringside physician determines that the boxer cannot safely continue, the bout must be stopped immediately.

10.3.6 Intentional Fouls (Sanctions and Time Management)

This subsection addresses intentional fouls only. Accidental injuries that do not constitute fouls are addressed separately in the following subsection.

Intentional fouls are governed by established foul protocol, including point deductions or disqualification. While the referee's priority remains boxer safety and the possibility of continuation when appropriate, the Five-Minute Rule itself is not intended to apply to intentional fouls.

Any recovery time following an intentional foul must be managed through referee judgment, physician consultation, and applicable authority rules, not as an automatic time allowance.

10.3.7 Accidental Injury (Not the Result of a Foul)

An accidental injury occurs when a boxer is harmed by a factor other than a legal or illegal action by the opponent. These injuries are not the result of a foul and are managed using temporary stoppage procedures.

10.3.8 Accidental Injuries from External Causes

An accidental injury from an external cause occurs when a boxer is injured by factors unrelated to the opponent's actions, such as contact with the ring, ropes, posts, or equipment. Manage these situations using the Core Sequence for Temporary Stops (Section 10.2.1). Evaluate the injured boxer and consult the ringside physician when appropriate to determine fitness to continue.

If the bout cannot continue due to the injury, apply the Four (4) Round Rule as applicable. When the bout outcome is determined by the Four (4) Round Rule, application and scoring shall be governed by Section 9.6 of this manual.

Once boxing resumes, the injury is considered resolved and may not later be used to invoke the Four (4) Round Rule or alter the bout outcome.

10.3.9 Self-Injury

Self-injury occurs when a boxer causes their own injury through their actions, including but not limited to awkward footwork, poor positioning, loss of balance, wild or reckless punching, or attempting an intentional foul.

Self-injury does not warrant recovery time. Allowing time to recover from a self-inflicted condition would unfairly prejudice the opposing boxer and may invite staged or tactical behavior.

When self-injury occurs:

- Command "Time!" and declare a self-injury.
- Direct the opposing boxer to a neutral corner.
- Immediately require the injured boxer to demonstrate readiness and willingness to continue.

If the boxer cannot continue when ordered to do so, the bout is ruled a Technical Knockout loss.

The Four (4) Round Rule and the Five (5) Minute Rule do not apply to self-injury. Ringside physician evaluation is not used to enable continuation and may be consulted only for post-bout medical care.

10.3.10 Managing Loose Tape or Gauze

Loose or exposed tape or gauze presents a safety risk and must be corrected promptly.

Manage the interruption using the Core Sequence for Temporary Stops (Section 10.2.1), with the following requirements:

- Isolate the affected hand and clearly identify the issue.
- Peel or cut away loose tape or gauze; rewrapping is not permitted.
- Resume boxing immediately once the issue is corrected.

If the condition is minor, poses no immediate risk, and can be safely addressed during the one-minute rest period, the referee may allow correction at that time to avoid unnecessary interruption. When this occurs, the referee should confirm during the rest period that the issue has been fully corrected before the next round begins.

10.3.11 Handling Damaged Gloves

A damaged glove constitutes an equipment failure and must be addressed without delay.

Manage the interruption using the Core Sequence for Temporary Stops (Section 10.2.1), with the following requirements:

- Inspect the glove to confirm damage and determine whether replacement is required.
- Replace the damaged glove only with a pre-approved spare provided by the boxing authority.
- Confirm proper fit and secure fastening before resuming boxing.

After the bout, the damaged glove shall be submitted to the boxing authority in accordance with local procedures.

10.4 Knockdown Management

10.4.1 Legal Knockdown

A legal knockdown occurs when, from a fair blow or series of fair blows, a boxer:

- Touches the canvas with any part of the body other than the soles of the feet.
- Hangs helplessly on the ropes or relies on them to remain upright.
- Voluntarily goes down to one knee for any reason.

10.4.2 Fundamental Legal Knockdown Rules

Saving by the Bell - The boxer cannot be saved by the bell in any round.

Mandatory Eight Count - Always give a full eight-count even if the boxer rises immediately.

Three Knockdown Rule - In some boxing authorities, three in one round, Technical Knockout.

Ten Count - If a boxer who has suffered a legal knockdown fails to demonstrate both readiness and willingness to continue boxing before the count of ten (10), the bout is ruled a Knockout.

10.4.3 Special Knockdown Scenarios

On the ropes - The boxer's neck strikes the ropes, or the boxer becomes entangled on or suspended by the ropes without the ability to defend themselves.

Hits the back of the head on the canvas - The boxer goes down and impacts the canvas with the back of their head.

Falls flat on their face - The boxer goes down face first, which may indicate loss of motor control or consciousness.

Down again without receiving another blow - The boxer may be experiencing delayed or lingering effects from the fair blow(s). Continue the mandatory count if warranted.

Double knockdowns - Both boxers go down simultaneously, requiring strict focus on the state of both boxers at the same time, while needing to precisely count.

Boxer goes down contemporaneous with bell - Complete the count.

Boxer goes down after the bell - If the bell has sounded to end the round, the boxers have disengaged and are returning to their corners, and a boxer then goes down, even if the boxer was struck just before the bell, the round has ended and the rest period is in effect. This is not a knockdown and no count applies. If the referee has concern about the boxer's condition, the referee may call the ringside physician to evaluate the boxer in the corner. The physician's role is limited to medical assessment and does not replace or interfere with the Seconds' work unless an immediate safety issue exists.

Before the rest period ends, the referee should confirm with the ringside physician whether the boxer appears medically fit to continue.

If the rest period concludes and the boxer appears ready to resume, the referee should approach the boxer briefly, ask if they are able to continue, and make a determination.

Once boxing resumes, the referee should observe the boxer closely for any sign of impairment or deterioration and be prepared to intervene if safety becomes a concern.

10.4.4 Legal Knockdown Mechanics

The referee must follow these steps during a knockdown:

1. Command “Down!” with a clear hand signal and establish immediate separation and control.

This verbal command and hand signal confirm that a legal knockdown has occurred and clearly distinguishes it from slips or non-scoring falls. The command “Down!” is a ruling, not part of the count, and does not replace or delay the mandatory count. Consistent use of “Down!” ensures that all officials, Corners, and both boxers understand the referee’s decision.

2. Stand 1–2 arm’s length from the downed boxer.
3. Direct the scoring boxer to the furthest neutral corner. Pause the count if they fail to go to or remain there.
4. Unless confident in personal timing, pick up the count from the timekeeper or knockdown judge. Count audibly and signal clearly in front of the boxer’s face.
5. At count eight (8) or nine (9), instruct the boxer to take one step forward to confirm readiness.
6. Wipe the boxer’s gloves after they take the step.
7. Confirm both boxers are separated, then command “Box!” to resume action. Do not walk between the boxers.

Referees are discouraged from adding any discretionary tasks or physical evaluations not outlined in recognized protocols, as doing so can unnecessarily delay or extend the mandatory ten (10) count and compromise proper knockdown management.

10.4.5 Recognizing Signs a Boxer May Be Unable to Continue

During the knockdown count and immediately after a boxer rises, the referee must closely observe for indicators that the boxer may be unfit to continue. These signs may result from the knockdown itself, a preceding damaging sequence, or a cumulative effect revealed by the knockdown.

Referees should be alert for the following knockdown-related indicators:

- Inability to rise independently, loss of balance, or collapse upon attempting to stand.
- Disorientation, delayed or confused responses to commands, or lack of awareness during the count or upon rising.
- Rising from a knockdown but remaining unstable, unresponsive, or unable to regain balance after standing.
- Turning away, remaining motionless, or showing reluctance or inability to respond to the command to resume once upright.
- Failing to demonstrate basic self-protection or awareness immediately after the count.
- Difficulty locating the referee, understanding instructions, or returning toward the correct Corner after the knockdown.
- Visible injury revealed or worsened by the knockdown that immediately impairs vision, balance, or breathing.

These observations must be assessed collectively, not in isolation. A single sign may be sufficient to warrant intervention, while multiple lesser signs may indicate a boxer who cannot safely continue.

10.4.6 Knockdown Evaluation and Outcomes

The count is more than a cadence; it is the referee's evaluation window. Unless a boxer is clearly knocked out or there is an obvious medical emergency, the referee should begin and continue the count, often allowing it to progress to at least six (6) or seven (7). Some boxers appear finished early but then regain awareness and balance as the count develops. Continuing the count allows the referee to observe movement, assess responsiveness, and make an informed safety decision. Position correctly, keep the count clear and consistent, and use this time to evaluate the boxer's ability to continue.

10.4.7 Outcome Classifications

KO (Knockout) - Occurs when a boxer who has suffered a legal knockdown fails to rise and demonstrate readiness and willingness to continue before the completion of the ten (10) count.

TKO (Technical Knockout) - Referee, physician, or Chief Second stops bout for safety.

10.4.8 Common Referee Errors in Knockdown Management

Failing to protect boxer safety:

- Failing to recognize or act on clear signs that a boxer is unable to continue and requires an immediate stoppage.
- Resuming action despite clear signs that the boxer cannot safely defend themselves.

Breaking count integrity:

- Losing the count, rushing cadence, or showing poor hand and voice coordination.
- Using exaggerated or inconsistent gestures that confuse boxers, judges, or spectators.

Weak neutral-Corner control:

- Failing to enforce or confirm proper neutral-Corner positioning before continuing the count.
- Allowing premature reentry by the opponent before the referee signals resumption.

Improper positioning and evaluation:

- Standing too far away to assess the downed boxer accurately.
- Walking between boxers during resumption, obstructing view or delaying action.

Unauthorized or incomplete procedures:

The following are examples of deviations from required knockdown mechanics and performance standards and should not occur unless immediate safety demands otherwise:

- Adding discretionary or non-mandatory evaluations, such as side steps, turns, balance demonstrations, or extended dialogue, that delay, replace, or extend the mandatory count.
- Restarting the bout without completing required mechanics, including confirming a forward step and wiping gloves before resumption.

10.5 Competition Level and Safety Judgment

Competition level may influence how long you observe, but never the safety threshold:

Preliminary bouts - Extra caution due to inexperience; stop promptly at signs of danger.

Non-title bouts - Some latitude if the boxer remains responsive; still err on the side of safety.

Championship/elite bouts - Higher stakes, but health remains paramount.

In all cases, do not hesitate to stop the bout if safety is compromised.

10.6 Mouthpiece Management

10.6.1 Purpose of the Mouthpiece

The mouthpiece protects the teeth, jaw, and soft tissue, helps absorb impact, and aids breathing. Each boxer should have a second mouthpiece available. If none are available when damaged, or it becomes lost, the result may be a Technical Knockout or disqualification per the governing boxing authority.

10.6.1.1 Availability of a Second Mouthpiece

Some references are made to having a “second” mouthpiece available. In practice, this concept does not materially change the referee’s responsibility. If a boxer possesses more than one mouthpiece, each must be of equal quality, proper fit, and suitability for competition. There is no distinction between a “primary” mouthpiece and a lesser backup.

A spare mouthpiece may not always be immediately available. If a replacement mouthpiece is used, it must meet the same standards as the original. A replacement must not be used to compensate for poor fit, repeated dislodgement, or improper use.

The referee’s focus must remain on correct mechanics, clear expectations, and timely control of the bout. Mouthpiece availability does not alter enforcement standards or delay management. Safety and fairness are maintained through consistent application of procedure, not reliance on an assumed backup.

10.6.2 Mechanics for Handling a Dislodged Mouthpiece

Mouthpiece interruptions are handled using the Core Sequence for Temporary Stops (Section 10.2.1), with the following mouthpiece-specific requirements:

1. Retrieve the mouthpiece and give it to the Chief Second, never reinsert it yourself.
2. Instruct the boxer to keep it in place once returned.
3. Wipe gloves if the boxer touched the canvas.
4. Command “Box!” to resume when ready.

10.6.3 Mouthpiece Dislodged During a Knockdown

Address only after completing the count and knockdown protocol. This procedure follows completion of knockdown mechanics outlined in Section 10.4.

10.6.4 Intentional or Repeated Expulsion

Always follow the boxing authority’s rules for point deduction and disqualification.

Generally:

First offense - Caution.

Second offense - Warning or point deduction.

Repeat or deliberate acts - Possible disqualification (last resort).

10.6.5 Common Referee Errors in Mouthpiece Management

- Failing to command “Time!” before retrieval.
- Re-inserting the mouthpiece yourself.
- Stopping action too soon.
- Losing visual focus on boxers.
- Sending the boxer to the wrong Corner.
- Allowing excessive delay.
- Tossing the mouthpiece across the ring.

11. General Performance Standards

Referees must execute established mechanics and protocols consistently to maintain safety and fairness. Deviating from these procedures by skipping steps, improvising, or adding actions not recognized by the governing rules risks disrupting bout flow, creating unfair advantages, and undermining confidence in the referee's authority.

This principle is most clearly illustrated in knockdown situations, a mandatory eight-count for all knockdowns and a ten-count for a knockout. When executed correctly, this structure provides sufficient time, typically 12 to 13 seconds in real time, for the referee to evaluate the boxer's condition through positioning, verbal cues, eye contact, and the mechanics themselves. Case studies and video review show that when additional mechanics or steps, such as extended gait tests, are added, the evaluation period is often stretched to 20–22 seconds, and in some instances longer. These extended counts fall outside the intended structure, create confusion, compromise consistency, and may unfairly prejudice the scoring boxer by granting additional recovery time that can alter the outcome of the bout. They also conflict with the purpose and structure of the established count rules, which are designed to balance safety evaluation with fairness and timely resumption of action.

Principles:

- Follow the mechanics exactly as outlined in the governing rules. Adjust only when unique circumstances demand immediate action for safety.
- Rely on training and established procedure rather than creating steps on the spot.
- Avoid unnecessary additions that delay the bout, confuse boxers, Corners, and officials, or alter the competitive balance of the round.
- Do not implement modified mechanics unless they have been formally reviewed and adopted by the boxing authority.
- Discipline in execution promotes consistency, clarity, and authority. Anticipating each step allows referees to react decisively within the governing rules.

By adhering to the accepted system, referees ensure that safety evaluations are conducted fairly and efficiently, without exceeding the authority provided by the governing rules.

12. Post-Bout Responsibilities

12.1 Scorecard Management and Winner's Announcement

At the end of each round, the referee must collect the scorecards without reviewing or commenting on them. Do not fold or mark the cards. Deliver them face down to the boxing authority representative, ideally resting them on the thigh during transfer to preserve discretion.

After the final round, return to your corner and remain there until the official decision is announced. At that moment, raise the winner's hand with professionalism and composure to signify victory. This action must be carried out with neutrality and respect, keeping the focus on the boxers.

12.2 Technical Knockout, Knockout, and Concussed Boxers

When a bout ends by Technical Knockout or Knockout, or when a boxer shows signs of concussion, the referee must prioritize safety above all other considerations. The referee must remain with the boxer until the ringside physician and medical personnel have assumed care and must communicate any relevant observations from the bout that may assist medical evaluation.

The referee must coordinate with the Inspector to ensure the boxer is safely escorted from the ring. Under no circumstances should a boxer who has suffered a Technical Knockout or Knockout leave the venue until cleared by medical personnel. A boxer must never be left unattended.

12.3 Post-Bout Professionalism and Conduct

The announcement of the decision is a defining moment of the bout and is often recorded by the media and preserved as part of the sport's history. At that moment, the referee's responsibility is to remain composed, neutral, and professional. The focus must remain on the boxers, not on the referee.

The referee must avoid gestures, expressions, or conduct that draw attention to themselves, suggest favoritism, or diminish the significance of the moment for either boxer. Raising the winner's hand is a necessary and symbolic duty and must be done calmly and without exaggeration. Pointing, celebratory gestures, smiling, or unnecessary movements are inappropriate and undermine the seriousness of the moment.

This standard is especially important following a technical knockout or knockout, when the losing boxer may be injured, disoriented, or receiving medical attention. In these situations, the referee's conduct must reflect restraint, situational awareness, and respect, maintaining continuous attention to order and professionalism. The referee's priority remains the boxer's welfare and proper control of the situation, not personal display.

12.4 Glove, Handwrap, and Equipment Check

After the bout, gloves and handwraps should be removed under the direct supervision of an inspector or other assigned official. This post-bout removal helps prevent tampering and serves as a final safeguard for safety and regulatory compliance.

While handwrap application and glove approval are typically supervised by an inspector or designated official, the referee may still be required to observe the removal process. This is particularly important when the referee was not present for the full pre-bout wrapping or gloving. In such cases, the referee must remain attentive to any irregularities and assist in reporting concerns to the appropriate authority.

12.4.1 Handwrap Awareness and Indicators

Handwraps are intended to support the bones and joints of the hand and maintain proper alignment. They must remain soft and flexible and must not create a hardened or cast-like effect.

During removal or inspection, officials should remain alert for indicators that may suggest non-compliance or manipulation, including:

- Unusual stiffness or rigidity in the handwraps.
- Excessive bulk or irregular padding around the knuckle area.
- Evidence of moisture, dampness, or hardened material.
- Tape applied in a manner that compromises flexibility or fairness.

Knuckle padding, if permitted by the boxing authority, must remain soft and flexible and must not create a rigid striking surface. Any padding that appears hardened, excessively dense, or capable of altering the natural impact profile must be reported.

12.4.2 Glove Inspection

Gloves must be inspected for overall integrity and condition. Attention should be given to:

- Thumb attachment and general structural integrity.
- Padding that appears uneven, overly stiff, misshaped, or manipulated.
- Signs of compression, padding shifting, or foreign substances.

Any glove condition that raises concern regarding safety or fairness must be documented and reported.

12.4.3 Evidence Preservation and Reporting

If tampering, prohibited materials, or irregularities are suspected, the equipment must be preserved intact and reported immediately to the boxing authority. Gloves or handwraps involved in a suspected violation should not be altered, discarded, or returned.

A brief post-bout check-in between the referee and inspector helps confirm that all equipment inspections and related reporting obligations have been completed.

13. Credits

Although I have attended numerous ringside physician seminars and extensively studied their writings, I am not a medical expert. Fortunately, I have had the privilege of consulting with exceptional ringside physicians, whose insights have allowed me to present the medical-related sections of this manual in a clear manner.

The images and descriptions of lacerations in this section were sourced from a ringside physician training seminar led by **Larry Lovelace, D.O., FACEP**, and **Daniel O'Donoghue, PA-C, Ph.D.**

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14. About the Author

Armando Garcia is an international professional boxing official and trainer who remains active as a referee, judge, and supervisor. He is the author of The Professional Boxing Referee Manual (©2022) and has conducted referee and judge training programs worldwide.

Armando also manages his **You Tube Channel: The Boxing Officials Training Channel**.

He has trained international officials for the World Boxing Association (WBA) in multiple countries and has led training programs in the United States through the Association of Boxing Commissions (ABC), including programs attended by World Boxing Organization (WBO) and International Boxing Federation (IBF) officials. His ABC training work has reached numerous U.S. state commissions, including California, Florida, Missouri, Georgia, Washington, D.C., and New Mexico.

A former AIBA Continental Bureau Referee/Judge, he has also served in regulatory and administrative roles, including Executive Officer of the California State Athletic Commission. He was named WBA International Official of the Year (2002) and later received the WBC and Ringside Physicians Association Commissioner of the Year Award (2006).

His work emphasizes safety, fairness, consistency, and the practical application of boxing rules.

Professional Records (BoxRec – Official Boxing Record Keeper):

Referee: <https://boxrec.com/en/referee/400946>

Judge: <https://boxrec.com/en/judge/400946>

Supervisor: <https://boxrec.com/en/supervisor/400946>

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