

# Official ITS Flag Football Rules

All general rules of flag football apply as governed by NFL FLAG, unless otherwise noted below.

Adopted: 1-15-08  
Amended 11-29-23

## 1. PLAYING FIELD AND EQUIPMENT

- 1.1. Facilities: Coaches, players and fans are expected to demonstrate appropriate respect for the various game locations by following the rules displayed at each site.
- 1.2. Field Dimensions: The field is 70 yards in length by 30 yards in width. End zones are inclusive of the length of the field. The midfield first down line, no run zones, goal line, and back of the end zone should be marked on the field. Sideline yard markers or cones should be placed at each line. (See Appendix A)
- 1.3. Game Ball: Teams will use the NFL FLAG branded footballs provided by the program. The following criteria shall be used when selecting an appropriate game ball:
  - 1.3.1. *A & B League*: Junior size ball (brown in color)
  - 1.3.2. *C & D League*: Pee wee size ball (blue in color)
- 1.4. Flags: Team must wear NFL FLAG branded flag belts. If the NFL FLAG belt is not available, teams may use an approved alternate flag belt approved by ITS. Each team should wear the same style of flag belt, but with different colored flags. Flag length may not be altered.
- 1.5. Line Markers: The official should use two marking devices to identify the line of scrimmage and neutral zone. A special marker will also be used to designate the Rush Line which is 7-yards from the line of scrimmage. Appropriate markers include bean bags, plastic discs, etc.
- 1.6. First Aid Kit: The host site should have a first aid kit readily available. Essential supplies include ice packs, bandages, and gauze wrap.

## 2. PLAYERS AND TEAMS

- 2.1. Divisions: Teams will be divided into coed age appropriate divisions as defined as follows. Inter Tribal Sports reserves the right to adjust or combine divisions as participation dictates.
  - 2.1.1. *A-League*: 18 years and younger
  - 2.1.2. *B-League*: 14 years and younger
  - 2.1.3. *C-League*: 11 years and younger
  - 2.1.4. *D-League*: 7 years and younger (5 years and under with approval of the parent and tribe)
- 2.2. Eligibility: All players must be of the appropriate age on the day of the first official game of the season. If a player's birthdate falls on opening day they are considered the older age for

that day and rest of the season. Those turning older during the season will be eligible to continue playing for the team with which they began the season. Players may not play down to lower age divisions, but may play up with parental consent.

2.2.1. *18-Year-Old Participation*: **All 18-year or older are required to have a background check in order to participate as a player.**

2.2.2. *A & B-League Eligibility*: The flag football program is open to all communities of each participating tribe/tribal organization. However, some restrictions have been placed on individuals that play in the A & B-League. The following summarizes those restrictions as outlined in **100.1 Eligibility Policy** (see policy for more details):

2.2.2.1. Participants must self-identify as Native American or

2.2.2.2. Be an immediate family member of a tribal member (child, stepchild, foster child, sibling, step-sibling, half-sibling, etc.) or

2.2.2.3. Live on the reservation or

2.2.2.4. Attends a school on a reservation. NOTE: In order to participate in the A & B-League under the on reservation school student provision, any non-native youth must have previously participated in at least one sport in two different calendar years.

Teams may lodge a protest of ineligible players with the site supervisor and then must complete a formal protest form within 24-hours of the game. Teams found in violation of the eligibility rule will be subject to forfeiture of games and non-credit for all other eligible players for each game in which the infraction occurred.

- 2.3. Rosters: Team rosters and player paperwork must be submitted to the ITS office by the published due date. Player additions and deletions can be made throughout the season, but all appropriate paperwork must be submitted in order for a new player to be eligible to participate in games. (see **100.2 Registration Policy for more details**)
- 2.4. Players: A team consists of five (5) players. Teams must participate with a minimum of four (4) players on the field at all times.
- 2.5. Player Equipment: Players may choose to wear items such as cleats, soft knee pads, beanies, bandanas or hair ties during game play without penalty. Soft pads may only be allowed for medical or injury purposes.
- 2.5.1. *Eye Glasses*: Players with eyeglasses must secure them with a safety strap.
- 2.5.2. *Mouth Guard*: Although not required equipment are highly recommended. Mouth guards are not provided by ITS.

- 2.6. Illegal Player Equipment: Players will not be permitted to wear any item that may cause a safety concern. This includes but is not limited to jewelry such as rings, bracelets, necklaces, ear rings or other body jewelry; hard plastic, metal or front toe cleats; open toe shoes; hard splints or casts; arm, hand or wrist pads; hats with rigid bills or visors. The player must remove the illegal items prior to the start of game play or when requested by league officials.
- 2.7. Uniforms: In order to be eligible to play, teams must wear an ITS approved uniform consisting of one of the following sets: (1) ITS Universal Uniform and black shorts with ITS logo; (2) NFL Flag Football Jerseys and black shorts with ITS logo; (3) Other ITS issued uniform with ITS issued shorts
- 2.7.1. Teams must be suited in the same style uniform at all times. At no time may the team be mix-matched.
- 2.7.2. Jerseys must be tucked in at all times.
- 2.7.3. When applicable, home team will wear dark color jerseys; visiting team will wear light colored jerseys.
- 2.7.4. If a uniform issue is noticed during the game, the player shall be permanently removed from the game or given the opportunity to comply with the **100.4 League Uniform Policy**. Failure to do so will result in a forfeit. All uniform issues must be resolved before the end of the game, disputes will not be permitted after the game has ended.

### 3. GAME PRELIMINARIES

- 3.1. Duration of Games: Games consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute half time. The clock will continuously run except for timeouts. ITS Staff or the host site will provide the game clock, however, the officials have final authority on game clock. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- 3.2. Timeouts: Each team will receive one (1) 60-second timeout per half. There are no timeouts permitted during overtime play.
- 3.3. Coin Toss: The home team shall call the coin toss. Winner of coin may choose first possession, defer or direction. Direction of play automatically changes for second half.
- 3.4. Overtime Play: In the event of a tie game at the end of regulation play an overtime period will be allowed using the following format.
- 3.4.1. *First Possession*: A coin toss will determine first possession.
- 3.4.2. *Overtime Play*: Teams are not permitted a timeout. If the game remains tied, play may continue for one additional possession each.

- 3.4.3. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense’s 5-yard line for one point or the defense’s 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.
- 3.4.3.1. If the game remains tied after the second possession during regular season, the game will be declared a tie.
  - 3.4.3.2. If the game remains tied after the second possession during championships, the process will continue until a winner is determined.
  - 3.4.3.3. *Scoring:* Same scoring rules apply. However if the overtime period extends beyond the first possession, teams must attempt a 2-point PAT.
- 3.5. Game Times: Clock starts at scheduled game time unless field is not yet available due to the length of the preceding game. There is no grace period for teams that are not ready to play at game time (see Rule 3.7). The teams may agree to scrimmage in the event of a forfeit, but may not exceed the 40-minute time limit or the start time of the next scheduled game.
- 3.6. Late Arriving Teams: *The following is a summary of the **600.5 Late Arriving Teams Policy**, see the complete policy for additional details.* If a team that has not arrived or is not ready to play at the scheduled game time, the late-arriving team policy may be enacted by the game official. As stated in the policy, the game clock will start and the opposing team will receive one (1) point each minute until the game begins. “Ready to play” is defined as a minimum of four players on the field wearing appropriate uniforms and flag belts. If neither team is ready to play, no points shall be awarded, but the game clock will run. If a team is present, but not ready to play, they may use their timeout to stop the clock prior to the actual start of the game. The game clock shall not be stopped for any other reason. If the game has not begun at the end of 20-minutes, at which point the score would be 20-0, the game will officially be considered a forfeit and the final score shall be recorded as 20-0.
- 3.7. Adverse Weather: *The following is a summary of the **600.2 Weather Condition Policy**, see the complete policy for additional details.* Three days prior to the games or event, the weather forecast will be checked at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov) to determine if cancellation of game is a possibility. The National Weather Service’s website will be the standard resource to access the forecast for the zip codes for the outdoor game sites. No later than 1:00 pm on the day before the scheduled games, the weather forecast will be evaluated according to the criteria

detailed in the policy, a final decision will be made, and all affected teams will be notified of any schedule changes via a phone call and email.

- 3.8. Protests: Game protests are only permitted for ineligible players (see Rule 2.2.2.).
- 3.9. Player Check-in: Coaches are responsible for checking in their players on the designated ITS scoresheet. The scoresheet is the official document used to track games played. Coaches must account for all players present in order to earn credit; this includes any players that arrive late. The coach must initial the certification statement on the scoresheet to verify player attendance.

## 4. SCORING

- 4.1. Value of Scores: Teams will score based on the following point values:
  - 4.1.1. *Touchdown*: 6 points
  - 4.1.2. *Point After Touchdown (PAT)*: 1 point from 5-yardline; 2 points from 10-yardline
  - 4.1.3. *Safety*: 2 points
- 4.2. Mercy Rule: After one team is winning by 28 points or more, the losing team receives one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game becomes final and shall continue as a scrimmage. If mercy rule becomes effective in the first half of play, teams may continue to scrimmage throughout the second half of the game not to exceed the time limit or the start of the next scheduled game.
  - 4.2.1. *Score Display*: Once the game becomes final the game score will be reset to display “0 – 0”.

## 5. GAME PLAY

- 5.1. Coaches: Coaches are permitted on the field for C League games only. In A & B League players may relay play calls or information from the coach to the huddle. Coaches must not interfere with game play. In the event coach’s interference occurs, play will be stopped and the down will be replayed.
- 5.2. Substitutions: Teams may substitute players on any dead ball.
- 5.3. Start of Possession: All possessions will begin on the teams own 5-yardline.
- 5.4. Downs: The offensive team has ~~three (3)~~ Four (4) plays to cross the midfield line. Once the team crosses that point they will have ~~three (3)~~ Four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- 5.5. **If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown after three (3) plays, they may elect to “punt” on 4<sup>th</sup> down. There is no actual punt; possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.**

- 5.6. First Down: The midfield line will serve as the first down point. No additional first downs are available.
- 5.7. Change of Possession: ~~If a team fails to achieve a first down or touchdown, a change of possession will occur. The opposing team will start with the ball on their own 5-yardline. If the offense fails to score or fails to cross mid-field in 4 downs, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive at the current spot of the ball.~~
- 5.8. Quarterback Run: The quarterback may not directly run the ball. The quarterback may scramble in the backfield to avoid a sack, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 5.9. No Run Zones: In order to prevent teams from conducting power run plays, no run zones have been established. These zones extend 5-yards prior to midfield and the end zone. (See Appendix A)
- 5.10. Running the Ball: Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Laterals and pitches are not allowed. Runners may not leave their feet by leaping, diving, or jumping to avoid a flag pull or advance the ball. This will be considered flag guarding and subject to a penalty.
- 5.11. Blocking: Offensive players may not block, screen, or impede any defensive player from access to the ball carrier. Additionally, offensive players may not run with the ball carrier and stop all motion once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage.
- 5.12. Fumble: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carriers feet were at the time of the fumble. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- 5.13. Passing Clock: The quarterback must pass the ball within 7-seconds. Failure to do so will result in a dead ball and end of the down, no yardage penalty will be assessed.
- 5.14. Passing/Receiving: All players are eligible to receive passes. In the event of a simultaneous possession by both the offensive and defensive player, the possession will be awarded to the offense.
- 5.15. Interception: A team that intercepts the ball will take over possession at the point in which the individual was marked down. An interception is returnable for a touchdown except on PAT's.
- 5.16. PAT Declaration: Teams must declare whether they will attempt a 1-point PAT (5-yardline) or a 2-point PAT (10-yardline). No changes are permitted after a choice has been made.
- 5.17. Rushing the Passer: All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7-yards from the line of scrimmage, as delineated by the referee. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule no longer applies and all defensive players are eligible to rush. Teams do not need to identify their rushers.

- 5.18. Flag Pulling: The ball carrier is ruled down at the point at which their flag is pulled. Defensive players should drop the flag to the ground. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier. The defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 5.19. Flag Guarding: Players may not intentionally obstruct access to their flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or otherwise covering the flags in anyway. A flag guarding penalty will be assessed.
- 5.20. Flags Fall Off: If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- 5.21. Multiple Division Rule: Players cannot move from 1 team to another during games scheduled to start at the same time, even if the first game has ended.

## 6. PENALTY ENFORCEMENT

- 6.1. Spot Fouls: The following lists various spot fouls that will be enforced during the games.
- 6.1.1. *Defensive Pass Interference*: automatic first down
  - 6.1.2. *Holding*: +5 yards and automatic first down
  - 6.1.3. *Stripping*: +10 yards and automatic first down
  - 6.1.4. *Defensive Unnecessary Roughness*: +10 yards and automatic first down
  - 6.1.5. *Screening, Blocking or Running with the Ball Carrier*: -5 yards and loss of down
  - 6.1.6. *Charging*: -10 yards and loss of down
  - 6.1.7. *Flag Guarding*: -10 yards and loss of down
  - 6.1.8. *Offensive Unnecessary Roughness*: -10 yards and loss of down
- 6.2. Defensive Penalties: The following lists various defensive penalties that will be enforced during the games.
- 6.2.1. *Offside*: +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
  - 6.2.2. *Illegal Rush (starting from inside 7-yard marker)*: +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
  - 6.2.3. *Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has the ball)*: +5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
  - 6.2.4. *Roughing the Passer*: +10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
  - 6.2.5. *Taunting*: +10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
  - 6.2.6. *Defensive Pass Interference*: spot foul, automatic first down
  - 6.2.7. *Holding*: spot foul, +5 yards and automatic first down
  - 6.2.8. *Stripping*: spot foul, +10 yards and automatic first down

6.2.9. *Defensive Unnecessary Roughness*: spot foul, +10 yards and automatic first down

6.3. Offensive Penalties: The following lists various offensive penalties that will be enforced during the games.

6.3.1. *Offside/False Start*: -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

6.3.2. *Illegal Forward Pass (thrown beyond or caught behind line of scrimmage)*: -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

6.3.3. *Offensive Pass Interference*: -5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

6.3.4. *Illegal Motion (more than one player moving)*: -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

6.3.5. *Delay of Game*: -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

6.3.6. *Impeding the Rusher*: -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

6.3.7. *Screening, Blocking or Running with the Ball Carrier*: spot foul, -5 yards and loss of down

6.3.8. *Charging*: spot foul, -10 yards and loss of down

6.3.9. *Flag Guarding*: spot foul, -10 yards and loss of down

6.3.10. *Offensive Unnecessary Roughness*: spot foul, -10 yards and loss of down

## 7. CHAMPIONSHIPS

7.1. Championship Eligibility: To be eligible for play-offs or tournament play, players must play in at least 50% of the regular season scheduled games. Game forfeiture credit, game day credit given to ineligible players that participate in a game, may not exceed 30% of the scheduled games per season. Any team found to be playing with ineligible players will forfeit all games in which the ineligible player participated. A registered player can receive one game day credit for every missed regular season game they are scheduled to play due to participation in ITS sanctioned events. The ITS office must be informed of any players no later than one week after games have been played.

7.1.1. *Multiple Division Rule*: Players will be permitted to participate in multiple divisions during championship play provided they qualify under Rule 7.1 & Rule 2.1. Adjustments to game schedules will not be made to accommodate such players. Players cannot move from 1 team to another during games scheduled to start at the same time, even if the first game has ended.

7.1.2. *Multiple Team Rule*: Players are permitted to play for multiple teams for the same tribe within the same division during the regular season. For the purpose of



championships, players may only participate on the original team they were registered.

- 7.2. Championship Seeding: Teams will be seeded in the championship tournament based on the regular season standings win percentage ([www.intertribalsports.org](http://www.intertribalsports.org)). In the event of a tie, head to head record will serve as the primary tie breaker. If a tie still remains the tie breaker will be determined by fewest average points allowed per game during the regular season. In the event that more than 2 teams are tied, the tie breaker will be determined by the fewest average points allowed per game during the regular season. In the unlikely event a tie remains, a coin toss will be the final tie breaker.

## 8. OFFICIATING

- 8.1. Referees: Inter Tribal Sports will hire two (2) referees for regular season and championship games for A, B & C Leagues. In the event that hired referees are not present, ITS staff and/or community volunteers will referee. Calls should not be disputed by coaches or players. ITS staff, coaches or volunteers will umpire for D-League games.
- 8.2. Volunteers: Each team is required to provide one volunteer for one half of the game (visitors for the first half; home team for the second half) to assist with sideline duties as needed during their scheduled A, B and C league games. This may include but not limited to scorekeeping or down marker assistance. If a volunteer is not available at the scheduled start time, late arrival procedures will be followed until a volunteer is present. In the event of a dispute, the site supervisor and/or referee will make the final determination. Volunteers 18 years or older are required to have a background check. Please see policy 300.1 Background Check for further information.

## 9. CONDUCT AND SPORTSMANSHIP

- 9.1. Sportsmanship: Prior to and following each game, players will move to the center of the field and shake hands with their opponents.
- 9.2. Coach Conduct: Coaches are required to sign and adhere to the Coaches' Conduct Agreement.
- 9.2.1. *Coaches' Online Certification*: Coaches are required to complete the online coach's certification form.
- 9.2.2. *Coach Certification*: *The following is a summary of the 200.2 Coach Certification Policy. Please see the complete policy for additional details.* In order to be eligible to coach, head and assistant coaches must be in good standing and submit all required forms to be certified. Eligibility requirements include but not limited to background check, Coaches Online Certification, register online as a coach, agree to and abide by the 200.3























Coaches Conduct and Ethics Policy, and attend pre-season meeting/coaches clinic, if any. Coaches that complete the certification process shall receive an ID badge as specified by the 200.4 Identification Badge Policy. The ID badge must be clearly displayed at all times during league games. Coaches without ID badges will not be allowed to coach or be present in the immediate area of the playing surface or field (i.e. bench, dugout, or sideline).

- 9.3. Player Conduct: Players are expected to display good sportsmanship at all times. Trash talking, profanity, cheap shots, and fighting will not be tolerated. **Please see policy 100.5 Player Conduct for further information.**
- 9.4. Fan Conduct: Coaches and/or Board representatives are responsible for the behavior of their team's fans. Unruly or unsportsmanlike conduct by fans will not be tolerated and may result in ejection from the facility. Penalty may also include forfeit of game or expulsion of team from the league.
- 9.5. Board Review: The Board Disciplinary Committee will review cases of poor sportsmanship and conduct issues and has the authority to issue penalties against players and coaches at their discretion.

# Appendix A: Field Dimensions



























# Appendix B: Football Referee Signals

<p>1</p>  <p><b>Ball ready for play</b> *Untimed down</p>	<p>2</p>  <p><b>Start clock</b></p>	<p>3</p>  <p><b>Time-out</b> Discretionary or injury time-out (follow by tapping hands on chest)</p>	<p>4</p>  <p><b>TV/Radio time-out</b></p>	
<p>5</p>  <p><b>Touchdown</b> Field goal Point(s) after touchdown</p>	<p>6</p>  <p><b>Safety</b></p>	<p>7</p>  <p><b>Dead ball foul</b> Touchback (move side to side)</p>	<p>8</p>  <p><b>First down</b></p>	
<p>9</p>  <p><b>Loss of down</b></p>	<p>10</p>  <p><b>Incomplete forward pass</b> Penalty declined No play, no score Toss option deferred</p>	<p>11</p>  <p><b>Legal touching of forward pass or scrimmage kick</b></p>	<p>12</p>  <p><b>Inadvertent whistle (Face Press Box)</b></p>	<p>13</p>  <p><b>Disregard flag</b></p>
<p>14</p>  <p><b>End of period</b></p>	<p>15</p>  <p><b>Sideline warning (NFHS)</b></p>	<p>16</p>  <p><b>First touching (NFHS)</b> Illegal touching</p>	<p>17</p>  <p><b>Uncatchable forward pass (NCAA)</b></p>	
<p>18</p>  <p><b>Encroachment (NFHS)</b> Offside defense or free-kick defense (NCAA)</p>	<p>19</p>  <p><b>False start</b> Illegal formation</p> <p><b>Encroachment offense (NCAA)</b></p>	<p>20</p>  <p><b>Illegal shift - 2 hands</b> Illegal motion - 1 hand</p>	<p>21</p>  <p><b>Delay of game</b></p>	<p>22</p>  <p><b>Substitution infraction</b></p>

*NOTE:* Referee gestures are based on officially recognized high school and college signals. Not all signals apply or will be used in the ITS Flag Football League.

# Appendix B Continue: Football Referee Signals

<p>23</p>  <p>Failure to wear required equipment</p>	<p>24</p>  <p>Illegal helmet contact</p>	<p>25</p>  <p>Illegal Horse-Collar Tackle</p>	<p>27</p>  <p>Unsportsmanlike conduct Noncontact foul</p>	<p>28</p>  <p>Illegal participation (NFHS)</p>
<p>29</p>  <p>Sideline interference (Face Press Box)</p>	<p>30</p>  <p>Running into or Roughing kicker or holder</p>	<p>31</p>  <p>Illegal batting/kicking (Followed by pointing toward toe for kicking)</p>	<p>32</p>  <p>Invalid fair catch signal (NFHS) Illegal fair catch signal</p>	<p>33</p>  <p>Forward pass interference Kick catching interference</p>
<p>34</p>  <p>Roughing passer</p>	<p>35</p>  <p>Illegal pass/forward handing (Face Press Box)</p>	<p>36</p>  <p>Intentional grounding</p>	<p>37</p>  <p>Ineligible downfield on pass</p>	<p>38</p>  <p>Personal foul</p>
<p>39</p>  <p>Clipping</p>	<p>40</p>  <p>Blocking below waist Illegal block</p>	<p>41</p>  <p>Chop block</p>	<p>42</p>  <p>Holding/obstructing Illegal use of hands/arms</p>	<p>43</p>  <p>Illegal block in the back</p>
<p>44</p>  <p>Helping runner Interlocked blocking</p>	<p>45</p>  <p>Grasping face mask, helmet opening or chin strap</p>	<p>46</p>  <p>Tripping</p>	<p>47</p>  <p>Disqualification</p>	

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