

Westfield PAL Flag Football Rules (2021)

Equipment

- All players must wear jerseys of the same color.
- Jerseys cannot be worn in a manner where an opponent cannot pull a flag. (Tucked in)
- Flags belts must be worn by all players and include 2 flags worn at the side of the waist. The extra length of the flag belt must be tucked away so that it isn't confused with a flag.
- Gloves and soft brimmed hats may be worn.
- Leg and arm pads may be worn.
- Cleats must have a rubber sole, no metal cleats allowed.

Field setup

Fields will be set up with discs/cones identifying:

- The goal line
- The back of the end zone
- Mid-field
- The five yard line (5 yards from each end zone)

Safety / Contact Rules and PENALTY ASSESSMENT

- No deliberate contact allowed. This includes all forms of blocking, running through other players to get to the ball handler, a ball handler deliberately lowering their shoulder and running into the defender, etc....
- Repeating first rule: NO DELIBERATE CONTACT ALLOWED!
- No grabbing of shirts or belts by tacklers before / while grabbing the flag.
- No stiff-arming or flag guarding by the ball carrier.
- Defender may not push ball carrier out of bounds.
- Defenders may not strip the ball from the ball carrier.
- Spinning is allowed but ball carriers may not leave their feet to avoid a defender.
- No diving after other players.
- Coaches need to clear the field of play prior to the ball being snapped. This is particularly true for defensive coaches, who need to head to the sideline before each snap. Offensive coaches can stay out of the way by standing behind their teams or going to the sideline.
- PENALTY ASSESSMENT:
 - If the DEFENSE commits a contact penalty (deliberate contact, shirt or belt grabbing, pushing a player out of bounds, etc...), then the offense will be rewarded the ball where the play ended WITHOUT loss of down.
 - If the OFFENSE commits a contact penalty (blocking, flag guarding, lowering shoulder, etc...) then the ball should be dead at its spot when the penalty was incurred WITH loss of down.
 - As this is self-policed, please respect the perspective of opposing coaches. When needed, please bring the kids together to emphasize that contact is not permitted.

Rules of Game Play

- Officially, each team should play 6 or 7 players at a time, but judgment can be applied depending on field size and level of attendance.
- Substitutions may occur on any dead ball.
- Coin toss or coach's agreement will determine the first possession.

- Offensive team will take possession of the ball at the first disc (5 yard line) and has a series of 4 downs to cross midfield.
- The only first down is earned by crossing midfield. From that point, the offense has one final 4 down series to score.
- In the event that the offense does not score in 4 downs the ball will be moved to the opposing 5 yard line and the opposing team will take possession.
- No punting or kickoffs allowed.
- Upon a team scoring, the opposing team will take control of the ball at the five yard line.
- One foot in bounds and control of the ball for a pass reception to count as a completion.
- QB may not carry the ball past line of scrimmage (unless QB receives a handoff, pitch or pass from another player).
- Unlimited handoffs, pitches or backwards passes are permitted behind the line of scrimmage.
- No handoffs, pitches or passes beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Any play that ends with a forward pass (regardless of the number of handoffs and pitches behind the line of scrimmage) is considered a passing play.
- In Division I (1st – 3rd grade), an offense may have 2 running plays per 4 down series. This resets with a first down.
- In Divisions II and III (4th grade and up), an offense may have 1 running play per 4 down series. This resets with a first down.
- Offensive team must pass the ball when the ball is inside of the 5 yard line (as denoted by the disc/cone marking the 5 yard line). Running plays are not permitted inside the 5.
- All offensive players are eligible receivers.
- Offense must have one player to snap the ball to the QB.
- Only one offensive player may be in motion at the time of the snap.
- Opposing coach will call 5 Mississippi count, no immediate rushing by defense. Coaches should agree at the START of the game on the speed of Mississippi counts.
- Once offense has handed off ball, 5 Mississippi count is no longer required.
- In Division I (1st – 3rd grade), NO zone defense allowed. In Divisions II and III (4th grade and up), Defense may use any formation desired.
- Each touchdown is 7 points.
- No returning of interceptions. Defensive team takes possession of the ball at the spot of the interception.

Time of games

- Each game shall last 60 minutes running time.
- First 30 minutes is devoted to practice, game to immediately follow.
- Division I – 1st-3rd grade age group.
 - Practice starts 8:15 – 8:45 AM. Game 8:45 AM – 9:45 AM
- Division II– 4th-6th grade age group.
 - Practice starts 10:10 – 10:40. Game 10:40 – 11:40. Practice time can be shortened a bit if both coaches agree.
- Division III –7th-9th grade age group.
 - Games are 12:00 – 1:15. Practice can be up to 15 minutes long, based on coach agreement. Games should start by 12:15PM at the latest and must end at 1:15PM.
- Teams should keep the game moving, but it's understood that younger kids need longer to get their plays than the oldest. When ball is spotted, offense has 30 seconds to call a play and snap the ball in 7th-9th grade, 45 seconds in 4th-6th grade, and 60 seconds in 1st-3rd grade. (First infraction is warning. Second infraction is loss of down)

Dead Ball

- Non possessed ball touching the ground (a fumble).
- Ball carrier's knee touches ground.
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- Ball carrier's flag is removed or falls off.
- Interception – ball spotted at INT point, cannot be returned.
- Score

Sportsmanship

- No foul play will be tolerated.
- Any flagrant acts of blocking, tackling, illegal contact, unnecessary roughness, unsportsmanlike act will result in player being immediately ejected from the game followed by a one game suspension.
- No trash talking allowed.
- Coaches are required to control their players conduct on the sideline.
- Coaches are encouraged to advise parents to refrain from yelling at players to block, or to commit another form of an illegal act.
- Particularly at the younger ages, be flexible. Remember that the primary goal is not to win, but to have a fun, clean game where the kids have opportunities to make plays.