

NEOFFL OFFICIAL RULE BOOK

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- ***Weather Thirty-Minute Rule Per OHSAA***– Competition or practice shall be suspended once lightning has been recognized or thunder is heard. It is required to wait at least 30 minutes after the last flash of lightning is witnessed or thunder is heard prior to resuming practice or competition. Given the average rates of thunderstorm travel, the storm should move 10-12 miles away from the area. This significantly reduces the risk of local lightning flashes. Any subsequent lightning or thunder after the beginning of the 30-minute count shall reset the clock, and another count shall begin.

NEOFFL RULES-We are a Rec League

FORMAT

- The game is played with Five (5) players. However, a minimum of three (3) players must be on the field.
- A player may only appear on one roster per division.
- If a player is found playing on a team illegally, the coach, illegal player, and/or team may be suspended from the league. Only rostered players are allowed to play in a game.

PLAYER ATTIRE

- Players must wear light or dark shirts or jerseys.
- Players are designated as home or away based on the schedule.
- The away team will wear the light side of the shirt/jersey and the home team will wear their dark side.
- Players are required to wear protective mouthpieces during game play.
- The belts that hold the flags (not the flags themselves) must be secured to ensure they do not hang, appearing to be a flag. If the belt is hanging, flag guarding may be called.
- Shirts/jerseys must be tucked in always. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.
- No metal cleats are allowed.
- No jewelry, or hand warmers are permitted during the games. Hats with a brim, may be worn backwards only.
- Officials will dry off a ball upon request. Towels are not permitted on the waist of players.
- Players must wear **NEO league issued shorts**. These shorts have the NEO Flag logo on them and make it easy for officials to identify that they are legal shorts.
- Players must wear **NEO league issued flag belts**. These belts are yellow or green and make it easy for officials to identify that they are legal.

EQUIPMENT – FLAGS & BALLS

- Flags must be NEO league issued (yellow or green)
- Team shorts-league issued black shorts with the NEO logo on them.
- Only the official balls listed below may be used.

Game balls will be provided.

Grades K (mini)

Grades 1, 2, 3, 4=Pee Wee size ball.

Grades 5, 6 ,7-8, MS Girls=Junior size ball.

Elite Middle School=Youth size ball

COACHES

- All coaches, both offensive and defensive, must move to their own sidelines prior to the snap of the ball. Exception: K division offensive coaches may remain on the field during a play.
- Coaches are responsible for having a rulebook, knowing their schedule, and cleaning up their sideline.

POSSESSIONS

- A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The designated away team for the game will call the coin toss. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense or defense. The team that begins on offense in the first half will begin on defense in the second half.
- Teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half.
- For each possession the offense has **four downs** to obtain a first down at midfield, if midfield is obtained, the offense then has four more downs to reach the end zone.
- A first down is only obtained one of two ways; the offense reaches midfield within four downs or a defensive penalty occurs with the result being an automatic first down.
- If the offense fails to reach midfield or fails to reach the end zone within four downs, the result is a change of position.

FIELD SET UP

- The field is roughly 67 yards in total length by 25 yards in total width. Some field modifications may exist.
- Teams must choose opposite sides of the field to watch the game. Exceptions: Games that are played on the turf field require parents to view the games from the stands.
- Most possession changes will start at the offensive team's 5-yard line. Exception: Interceptions.
- A 5-yard (15 feet) buffer zone is in place during all games. This buffer zone surrounds the playing field. This zone assists in maintaining the safety of our players and spectators during game play. Only coaches and players of the current game, as well as league personnel are allowed within this zone during the game. Coaches are asked to assist us with the enforcement of this rule. This may be enforced by a delay of game or too many men on the field penalty.

GENERAL OFFENSE

- NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT of any kind is permitted.
 - All blocking is illegal. Any offensive player who continues running and impedes the progress of a defensive player who is attempting to pull the ball carrier's flag will be called for illegal blocking.
 - All offensive players must start with their mouth pieces in, shirts/jerseys tucked in, flag belts on, and flags properly secured at the hips of each player.
 - The ball must be snapped between the center's legs to start a play. Shotgun snaps are allowed.
- *K and 1st and 2nd grade divisions can snap sideways
- There is a 30-second huddle clock, Starts on the ready whistle.
 - Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage. A motion player does NOT need to stop, prior to the snap of the ball.
 - No laterals of any kind, anywhere on the field.
 - Spinning is permitted. Spinning out of control is not.
 - Jumping or diving to ADVANCE the ball is illegal. However, an offensive player may jump over a defensive player on the ground to avoid a collision. Jumping or diving to catch a pass is permitted.

PASSING GAME

- The QB has a seven (7) second "pass clock."
 - If the pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is ruled dead, with a loss of down. The ball is placed at the original line of scrimmage.
 - If the ball is handed off, the seven-second pass rule is no longer in effect.
 - If any portion of the passer's body is behind the line-of-scrimmage it is a legal pass.
 - **4/23/26** Intentional Grounding: Any pass that reaches or passes the line of scrimmage will not be considered intentional grounding. Intentional grounding will only be called if a pass lands behind the line of scrimmage with no receiver in the area.
 - Passing- All passes must be forward. Forward passes are allowed to be caught behind the line of scrimmage.
- *No backward laterals or backward pitches are allowed.
- *No double passes are allowed.

RECEIVING GAME

- All players are eligible to receive passes, including the QB, but only if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage first.
- A receiver must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
- A receiver is down where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls off, even without contact from another player, that player is ruled down at the spot the flag fell off.
- If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls off prior to receiving the ball and later in the same play catches the ball without replacing the flag, the receiver will be down immediately at the point of reception.

- If a receiver and defender both catch the ball at the same time and both retain possession to the ground, then the tie would go to the receiver, with receiver being down at the point of the tied reception.
- A receiver cannot run out of bounds and then come back in bounds and be the first to catch the ball.

RUNNING GAME

- Only “direct” handoffs (player to player, hand to hand) behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a handoff. A player must completely let go of the ball to be considered a legal handoff.
- **4/23/26** Center Rushing: Centers are permitted to rush the ball. However, the center must loop back and take the handoff behind the quarterback; failure to do so remains a penalty. This update is intended to allow centers to rush the ball similarly to how they are permitted to catch passes, while still preventing the center from taking a handoff through their legs.
- There is no limit to the number of handoffs that can be performed by the offense in a single play, so long as the ball never crosses the line of scrimmage.
- The QB can run the ball only if he/she has first handed the ball off behind the line of scrimmage and then taken a “direct” handoff back from another player before the ball has ever crossed the line of scrimmage.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball, if he or she does not pass the line of scrimmage first.
- It is the responsibility of the ball carrier to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact will not be penalized, provided the ball carrier tries to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) may be penalized. Intentional contact will not be tolerated, and may also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and/or player ejection.

GENERAL DEFENSE

- NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT of any kind is permitted.
- Defensive players cannot pass the line of scrimmage, until the ball is handed off.
- Defenders must only attempt to grab an offensive player's flags when trying to get them down.
- If a defender attempts to pull an offensive player's flags and inadvertently grabs their jersey, the defender must immediately and completely release the jersey before they can reattempt to pull the flag. Failure to do so will result in a holding penalty.
- All defensive players must give the offense a one-yard cushion prior to the snap of the ball.

FLAG PULLING/GUARDING

- Flag Guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder or covering the flags with the football jersey.
- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- The belts that hold the flags (not the flags themselves) must be secured to ensure they do not hang, appearing to be a flag. If the belt is hanging, flag guarding may be called.
- Shirts/jerseys must be tucked in always. If a shirt/jersey is hanging out, flag guarding may be called.

INTERCEPTIONS

- Interceptions are returnable.

NO RUN ZONES (end zone only)

- “No Run Zones” are only enforced in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-8 Rec, Middle School Girls, Elite
- “No Run Zones” come into effect only when the offensive team is approaching the end zone.
- Whenever within the “No Run Zone” the offense must pass.
- If a run play occurs while inside the “No Run Zone”, the play is immediately dead with the consumption of a down.

RUSHING OF THE QUARTERBACK

- You may only rush the quarterback in the 4, 5, 6, 7-8 Rec, Middle School Girls, Elite
- The rush will be designated by the referee seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Any number of players may rush the quarterback if they are beyond the rush marker at the time the ball is snapped.
- If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the hand off or passed ball.
- The rusher must take an angled path to the QB, from five yards of either side of the rusher. If this path is crossed and contact is made involving the rusher and any offensive player, then an offensive impeding penalty will be assessed.
- Once the rusher angle is set, he/she cannot change their path to the QB. If the path is changed, they will lose right of way privileges. This means that if any contact is made, it will be called against the initiating player.
- The rusher CANNOT run straight into the center. The center has the right away so long as the center remains in his/her original spot at the time the ball was snapped.
- If contact is made with the center by the rusher who has not taken an angle to the quarterback, a defensive impeding penalty will be assessed.
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
- The rusher may attempt to block the pass, but it is a penalty to contact the quarterback's arm.

INADVERTENT WHISTLE

- If there is an inadvertent whistle during a play, the offense has the choice of either the result of the play at the point the whistle was blown or replaying the down.
- If there is an inadvertent whistle during a passing play and the ball is in flight, the down is replayed.
- The half or game can't end with an inadvertent whistle. This would be an untimed down.

DEAD BALLS

- A play is ruled dead when the ball carrier's flag is pulled, the ball carrier's flag inadvertently falls off, the ball carrier steps out of bounds, any part of the ball carrier's body other than hands touch the ground, the ball carrier lets the ball hit the ground, a penalty occurs, QB runs out of time or after a touchdown or extra point is scored.
- There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground, unless the ball carrier loses control of the ball moving forward. It will be placed where the carrier's feet are when possession is lost.

SCORING

- A touchdown is equivalent to 6 points.

EXTRA POINTS

- Following a touchdown, the offensive team is given an opportunity to score an extra point.
- 1 Point is attempted five yards out from the goal line. This is a "NO RUN" zone in the 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-8 Rec, Middle School Girls, Elite
- 2 Points are attempted 10 yards out from the goal line. 3 points from 15 yards out.
- An interception on an extra point can be returned to the opposite end zone for 2 pts.
- If a penalty occurs during the extra point attempt, the penalty will be assessed but the extra Point value remains the same.

TIME SITUATIONS

- The referee may stop the clock at their own discretion.
- Each team is allowed two 30-second timeouts per **GAME** for 1st-8th grade divisions. *NO timeouts for kindergarten division.
- Games are played with two 20-minute halves and a two-minute half-time. (Tournament games can altered)
- The clock will automatically stop at the one-minute warning of each half. *Kindergarten clock does not stop. Regulation time will be used till the half or game ends. Exception: one team is ahead by 19 pts. *Kindergarten clock does not stop.
- Once a team is ahead by 21 pts. The defense can no longer rush the passer.
- Once a 30 -point differential has been obtained. The team that is behind gets the ball at midfield and must score in 4 downs or less. The defensive team may not rush the passer. Teams may scrimmage if they don't score and if time permits.
- Teams are required to have a minimum of three players to play a game; if a team is unable to field at least three players the game will be forfeited.
- A forfeit will result in a 21-0 result.

OVERTIME for Tournament Games ONLY. *There will be no overtime played in the regular season

- If the score is tied at the end of regulation, teams move directly into overtime.
- Coin toss determines possession. The team that did not call the opening coin toss will call the overtime coin toss.
- The team that wins the coin toss has the choice to take the ball or defend.
- Offensive team will have 1 play from the 7 yard line to score. If they score they win. If they don't and the defense wins.
- If an interception occurs the play is dead and the game is over.
- The games will be scored as the actual score of the game plus 1 point for the winning team.

PROTEST RULE

- A coach has the right to protest one rule interpretation per game. The head coach must have a copy of the rules present and call a "Protest Time Out.". The protest must take place before the next play is started. The official must stop the clock and read the rule in question. If no agreeable solution is determined, then an event liaison may arbitrate and will have the final say. If a team protests a rule interpretation and is proven wrong, the team will be charged a timeout. If the team doesn't have a time out then that team will be penalized for delay of game. You can't protest a judgment call.

GENERAL PENALTY INFORMATION

- Only head coaches may approach the referee. Judgment calls can not be argued.
- A game or half will not end on any accepted live ball defensive penalty or inadvertent whistle.
- Any offensive penalty in your own end zone results in a safety (2 points).
- A second defensive penalty on an extra point, will equate to the number of points the offensive team was attempting and be awarded.

WARNINGS

- At the official's discretion a warning may be given in place of a penalty to a player or coach for any of the stated rules. Coaches and players should not expect to receive more than one warning if any.

Defensive spot fouls

All flag football penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage, except for spot fouls. Spot fouls are penalties that are assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred. Here are the flag football penalties categorized as defensive spot fouls:

Type/Description

Defensive pass interference

The player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball

Holding

The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball

Stripping

A player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession

Defensive flag football penalties

You'll find that many defensive flag football penalties are behavior-oriented and can take on several definitions. Unsportsmanlike conduct, for example, can include any physical acts, like intentional tackling, elbows, or cheap shots, as well as verbal, such as confrontational language. Referees can also dish out a flag football penalty to fans who aren't keeping the field safe and kid-friendly. Bottom line: these flag football penalties are designed to teach youth players the importance of respect and good sportsmanship.

Type/Description

Unnecessary roughness

Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent

Unsportsmanlike conduct

Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent

Offside

A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped

Illegal rush

The rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage

Illegal flag pull

A player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball

Roughing the passer

A player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass

Taunting

A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams

Offensive spot fouls

Offensive spot fouls are also assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred. All of these flag football penalties result in a loss of down. But any loss of down on the fourth down results in a turnover, with the other team taking possession. Here are flag football penalties categorized as offensive spot fouls:

Type/Description

Screening, blocking or running with the ball

The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent

Charging

The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows

Flag guarding

The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag

Offensive flag football penalties

Similar to defensive flag football penalties, offensive flag football penalties include infractions for unsportsmanlike behavior, whether it's physical or verbal. On offense, there are also penalties for improper movements on the line of scrimmage, such as moving before the play starts or delaying the game. For example, each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Delay-of-games penalties are enforced after one warning. Here's a list of offensive flag football penalties:

Type/Description

Unnecessary roughness

Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent after a turnover

Unsportsmanlike conduct

Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent

Offside/false start

A player charges or moves in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped

Illegal forward pass

A player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage

Pass interference

The eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball

Illegal motion

Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped

Delay of game

Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play

Impeding the rusher

The rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player

Illegal procedure

A technical rules violation, such as illegal formation

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forward then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession)

SPORTSMANSHIP

- Trash talking is not allowed. Trash talking is offensive language used against opposing coaches, players, officials, league personnel or fans. Officials will give one and only one warning. If this trash talking continues, the offender may be ejected from the game.
- If any league personnel or official witness any act of rough housing, including but not limited to, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and that player may be ejected. Further disciplinary action may follow including event expulsion.
- After the game, teams are expected to form a line at midfield and congratulate the opposing team regardless of the outcome of the game.

NEOFFL has and always will provide an atmosphere where players, friends and families can feel comfortable enjoying a day of football. Any players, teams, or family members that jeopardize that environment will be asked to leave.

NEOFFL operates under a **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**.

ALL RULES ARE SUBJECT TO LEAGUE DIRECTORS DISCRETION.

Coaches and player ejections will be dealt with on an individual basis by the league directors.

EXTRA POINTS:

Playing time: We are a **rec league**. Coaches should try to distribute playing time as evenly as possible.

GRADES/DIVISIONS

NO RUN ZONES AT 5 YD LINE

K=NO

1=NO

2=NO

3, 4, 5, 6, 7/8 Rec, MS Girls, Elite=YES

FOOTBALL SIZE

K=Mini

1=PW

2=PW

3=PW

4=PW

5, 6, 7/8 Rec, MS Girls=JUNIOR

Elite - Youth

GRADES/DIVISIONS

RUSH THE QB

K=NO

1=NO

2=NO

3=NO

4, 5, 6, 7/8 Rec, MS Girls, Elite=YES

MUST SNAP BETWEEN LEGS

K=NO

1=NO

2=NO

3rd, 4, 5, 6, 7/8 Rec, MS Girls, Elite=YES

COACHES ON FIELD OFFENSE *Must be off before the ball is snapped except kindergarten.

K=2

1=2

2=2

3, 4, 5, 6, 7/8 Rec, MS Girls, Elite=1

COACHES ON FIELD DEFENSE *Must be off before the ball is snapped except kindergarten.

K=2

1=2

2=2

3, 4, 5, 6 =1

7/8 Rec, MS Girls, Elite=0

***All coaches should have youth concussion training. Please email the league if you do not have it.**