

NEOFFL OFFICIAL RULE BOOK

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NEOFFL RULES

Coaches, we ask that you coordinate practices 1-2 days per week for 1-1.5 hours each practice. Set up practices when most/all of your kids are available.

Coaches Guidelines.

- 1) Teach players the basic fundamentals of the game and always have an emphasis on sportsmanship, fair play, and full participation
- 2) Provide a safe and fun environment for the players
- 3) **Give each player equal playing time.** *Please know that this is a recreation league, designed to help kids learn the game of football.
- 4) Communicate with parents on practice/game days and times and communicate as needed.
- 5) Ensure to give the kids a positive experience and make this a priority over winning
- 6) Will not try and manipulate the rules in any way.
- 7) Be patient, especially with the players, coach them don't yell.
- 8) Only players that are listed on your roster are allowed to play in your regular season scheduled games unless given permission from the Don Schutz.
- 9) For the league tournament/playoffs/bowl games, NO team is allowed to play a player that is not listed on their regular season roster. This rule has NO Exceptions. Any team that plays a player not listed on their regular season roster will forfeit that game(s) and be removed from playing on further games in the tournament/playoffs/bowl games.

Coaches that do not follow the above guidelines can be subject to disciplinary actions when necessary and if the league administrators feel appropriate. Discipline can be a verbal warning, written warning, partial or full game suspensions, banned from coaching with Northeast Ohio Flag Football. If there are questions on any of the above guidelines, contact admin@neoflag.org

FORMAT

- The game is played with Five (5) players. However, a minimum of three (3) players must be on the field always.
- 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.

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.
- Shorts and pants cannot have open pockets. All open pockets must be taped.

EQUIPMENT – FLAGS & BALLS

- Flags must be NFL FLAG sanctioned. Only yellow, green, red or blue flags are allowed.
- Team shorts and flags cannot be the same color. If your flags are blue, you cannot wear blue shorts or pants.
- Only the official balls listed below may be used. Game balls will be provided.
Grades K, 1-2, and 3-4 will use the Pee Wee size ball.
Grades 5-6 ,7-8, and 9-12 girls will use the Junior size ball.

COACHES

- Only 4 coaches are allowed on your sideline during the game. This includes a camera or film person.
- All coaches, both offensive and defensive, must move to the sidelines prior to the snap of the ball. Exception: Grades K and 1-2 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 we 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 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

- 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.
- Passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, including feet. Failure to comply, results in a loss of down.
- Only one forward pass per down. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.

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 to catch a 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.
- 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 players 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.
- You cannot return an interception during overtime. The play will just result in a loss of possession.

NO RUN ZONES

- "No Run Zones" are only enforced in Grades 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12 girls.
- "No Run Zones" are designed to avoid short-yardage situations.
- "No Run Zones" come into effect only when the offensive team is approaching a first down or the end zone. Exception: If the offensive team has already achieved a first down, but has been pushed back into a "No Run Zone", then the "No Run Zone" is no longer in effect.
- 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 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12 girls divisions.
- 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.
- If the rusher takes an angled path to the QB and this path is crossed and contact is made involving the rusher by 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 of 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 Extra Point is attempted five yards out from the goal line. This is a "NO RUN" zone in the 3-4,5-6,7-8 and 9-12 girls divisions.
- 2 Extra Points is attempted 10 yards out from the goal line. 3 Extra points from 20 yards out.
- An interception on an extra point can be returned for the same amount of points the try was for.
- A safety occurs when one of the following happens; the QB or ball carrier is downed in his/her end zone, the QB or ball carrier runs out of bounds inside his/her end zone, the quarterback or ball carrier fumbles the ball in his/her end zone, a bad snap resulting in the ball landing in offensive end zone, and an offensive penalty occurring inside the offensive end zone.
- If a safety occurs, the team that scored the safety will be awarded 2 points and will receive the ball on their own 5-yard line.

TIME SITUATIONS

- The referee may stop the clock at their own discretion.
- Each team is allowed two 30-second timeouts per half.
- Timeouts do NOT carry over into the next half.
- Games are played with two 20-minute halves and a two-minute half-time.
- The clock will automatically stop at the one-minute warning of each half. Regulation time will be used till the half or game ends. Exception: one team is ahead by 19 pts.
- 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

- 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 one play to score from the 7 yard line. If they score they win. If they don't score they lose.

* Tournament/Playoffs/Bowl Games-Each team will be given the opportunity to be on offense and go for 1 point, 2 points, or 3 points. (If team A goes for 2 points and makes it, team B can go for 2 points to tie it or 3 points to win the game). If a second OT is needed the team that played offense first in the 1st OT will play defense first in the 2nd OT on continue back and forth until a winner is determined.

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 timeout then that team will be penalized for delay of game. You can't protest a judgement call.

GENERAL PENALTY INFORMATION

- Only head coaches may approach the referee. Judgment calls cannot 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 | Yardage |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Defensive pass interference | The player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball | Automatic first down |
| Holding | The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball | +5 yards and automatic first down |
| Stripping | A player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession | +5 yards and automatic first down |

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 | Yardage |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| Screening, blocking or running with the ball | The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent | -5 yards and loss of down |
| Charging | The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows | -10 yards and loss of down |
| Flag guarding | The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag | -5 yards and loss of down |

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 | Yardage |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Unnecessary roughness | Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent | +10 yards and automatic first down |
| Unsportsmanlike conduct | Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent | +10 yards and automatic first down |
| Offside | A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped | +5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down |
| Illegal rush | The rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage | +5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down |
| Illegal flag pull | A player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball | +5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down |
| Roughing the passer | A player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass | +5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down |
| Taunting | A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams | +5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down |

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 | Yardage |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Unnecessary roughness | Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent after a turnover | -10 yards and loss of down |
| Unsportsmanlike conduct | Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent | -10 yards and loss of down |
| Offside/false start | A player charges or moves in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |
| Illegal forward pass | A player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |
| Pass interference | The eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |
| Illegal motion | Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |
| Delay of game | Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |
| Impeding the rusher | The rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |
| Illegal procedure | A technical rules violation, such as illegal formation | -5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down |

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

"Center sneak" play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.

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 handoff or passed ball.

The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

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.
- Coaches: no touch rule – coaches should refrain from high fives handshake lines and other contact from team mates, opposing players, coaches, officials and fans. A round of applause can be used following the game in lieu of the handshake line.

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.

EXTRA POINTS:

Playing time: should try to distribute evenly as possible.

| GRADES | K | 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-12 |
|---|----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| NO RUN ZONES AT 5YD LINE AND 5YD BEFORE MID-FIELD | NO | NO | YES | YES | YES |
| FOOTBALL SIZE (PEE WEE OR JUNIOR) | PW | PW | PW | JUN | JUN |
| RUSH THE QB | NO | NO | NO | YES | YES |
| MUST SNAP BETWEEN LEGS | NO | NO | YES | YES | YES |
| COACHES ON FIELD OFFENSE | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| COACHES ON FIELD DEFENSE | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | | | | | |