

NFL FLAG Rules

PLAYING TIME

- All players should receive equal playing time for both offense and defense in each game they participate in.
- If a coach is caught not evenly rotating players, disciplinary action will be taken.

FORMAT

- The game is played with Five (5) players. However, a minimum of four (4) players must be on the field at all times.

PLAYER ATTIRE

- The away team will wear the white side of the jersey and the home team will wear the colored side.
- Players are recommended to wear mouthpieces
- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times. If a jersey is not tucked in, flag guarding may be called.

EQUIPMENT - FLAGS & BALLS

- The league will provide each team with its NFL jerseys, flags, and footballs.
- At the end of the season, each team must return their footballs to the league director.

COACHES

- K-4th grade may have 1 head coach and one assistant during games. Additional helper coaches during practice are encouraged and must have completed USA training and background check.
- Only one coach allowed on the field during the game and must remain out of play once huddle is broken.
- Coaches are responsible for understanding the rules

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 three downs with a fourth down option to obtain a first down at midfield, if midfield is obtained, the offense then has three more downs to reach the end zone.
- Fourth down option – On the first half of the field ONLY, a team has a fourth down decision to make. A team may either choose to “GO FOR IT” or to declare a “TURNOVER”. If a team decides to “GO FOR IT”, they will have one play to cross midfield. If successful with this attempt, a first down will be awarded. If not, the opposing team will take possession of the ball at the point of the failed conversion. If a “TURNOVER” is decided this will effectively end the drive resulting in a change of possession. The ball will be placed at either the 5 yard line.
- A first down is only obtained one of two ways; the offense reaches midfield within three downs with a fourth down option or a defensive penalty occurs with the result being an automatic first down.
- If the offense fails to reach midfield (first down line) or fails to reach the end zone, the result is a turnover.

FIELD SET UP

- Most possession changes will start at the offensive team’s 5-yard line. Exception: Interceptions will be placed at the spot the intercepting players flag is pulled.
- 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.

OFFENSE

- NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT of any kind is permitted.
- Downfield 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.
- The ball must be snapped between the center's legs to start a play. Shotgun snaps are allowed.
- There is a 45-second huddle clock, which starts once the line of scrimmage is marked and the ball is spotted.
- 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 motioned player does NOT need to stop, prior to the snap of the ball.
- No laterals of any kind, anywhere on the field are legal.
- Spinning is permitted.
- 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.
- The ball will be spotted at the location of where the flag was when it was separated from the belt.

PASSING

- 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 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

- 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 his or her flag belt is pulled.
- To achieve a first down, or a touchdown, the ball carrier's flag belt must cross the plane of the first down line and/or goal line.
- 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.
- In the event that 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 can't willingly run out of bounds and then come back in bounds to catch a ball.

RUNNING

- Only "direct" handoffs 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 amount 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, as long as 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 makes an effort 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.

DEFENSE

- NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT of any kind is permitted.
- Defensive players cannot pass the line of scrimmage until the ball is handed off. Exception: 3/4 and 5/6
- 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. Diving after a flag IS allowed.

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 flag belts (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 can be returned.
- In the event of an interception, all other defenders on the field must stop and cannot block or impede the offensive players from pursuing the ball carrier.
- The ball will be spotted at the point the ball carrier is ruled down (flag is pulled, flag falls off, any part of the body other than the hand touches the ground, the ball is dropped, running out of bounds, a touchdown is scored, or a penalty is committed).

NO RUN ZONES

- "No Run Zones" are only enforced in 3/4 and 5/6.
- "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 THE QUARTERBACK

- You may only rush the quarterback in 3/4 and 5/6.
- The rush marker will be designated by the referee seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Any number of players may rush the quarterback as long as they are behind the rush marker when 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 considered a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to a hand off or a passed ball.
- The rusher must take an angled path to the QB. 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 of way so long as the center remains at the 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 make contact with the quarterback's arm.

REPLAY OF DOWN/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.
- If a ball falls to or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled a “do over” with no loss of down. (K/1 and 2nd grade only)

DEAD BALL

- 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 3/4 and 5/6.
- 2 Extra Points is attempted 12 yards out from the goal line.
- An interception on an extra point will result in a failed attempt.

SAFETIES

- 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 5 yard line.

GAME CLOCK

- The referee may stop the clock at their own discretion.
- Each team is allowed one 60-second timeout per half.
- Timeouts do NOT carry over into the next half.
- Games are played with 4 periods of 10 minutes.
- The clock will also stop during final minute of the second half of an 8-point differential game, for an incompletion, out of bounds, an extra point attempt, a penalty, a change of possession, when a first down is obtained.

PENALTIES

- 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 penalty on an extra point, will equate to the number of points the offensive team was attempting and be awarded.
- If the offense throws an interception and commits an infraction after the interception, when the opposing team takes offensive possession they will get an additional 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of that Down

- False start
- Offsides
- Illegal motion
- Offensive impeding
- Delay of game
- Coach interference
- Attempting to run from a “No Run Zone”

- Offensive pass interference
- Too many players on the field
- Improper equipment - (missing or improperly placed flags)

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Spot of Infraction and Loss of that Down

- Flag guarding
- Illegal ball advancement – (jumping or diving to advance the ball, laterals)
- Intentional contact – (blocking, charging, tackling, tripping, pushing, holding, obstructing, stiff arming)

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Line of Scrimmage, Automatic First Down

- Roughing the passer
- Intentionally removing a receiver's flag belt before he/she contacts the ball
- Illegally rushing the quarterback
- Too many players on the field
- Coach interference – (remaining on the field during a play)
- Improper equipment - (missing or improperly placed flags)

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES - 5 Yards from the Spot of Infraction, Automatic First Down

- Defensive Pass Interference
- Intentional contact – (blocking, charging, tackling, tripping, pushing, holding, obstructing, stiff arming)

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT -

- If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion.
- Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

DEFENSIVE UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT- 15 Yards from End of Play, Automatic First Down

OFFENSIVE UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT- 15 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss Of Down

EJECTIONS

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct or Personal Fouls (Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment
- At the official's discretion, a player or a coach may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules.
- Any person ejected will be asked to leave the field before play resumes. If an ejected player/fan/parent does not leave the field, a delay of game penalty will be called and will continue to be called until the situation is addressed.