

Wentzville

Flag Football

2024

Official Rule Book



I. Game

- a. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- b. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams **MAY NOT CHOOSE TO DEFER** to the second half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
- c. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
- d. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line. (7vs7 possession changes at the 40-yard line).
- e. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line (7vs7 possession changes start at the 40-yard line).
- f. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line (7vs7 possession changes start at the 40-yard line).
- g. Teams change sides after the first half (7vs7 continues from the 40-yard line).

II. Terminology

- **Boundary Lines:** The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
- **Line of Scrimmage (LOS):** An imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
- **Line-To-Gain:** The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- **Rush Line:** An imaginary line running across the width of the field 10 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
- **Offense:** The squad with possession of the ball.
- **Defense:** The squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Passer:** The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
- **Rusher:** The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
- **Downs (1-2-3):** The offensive squad has three attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Live Ball:** Refers to the period that the play is in action. Generally used regarding penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- **Dead Ball:** Refers to the period immediately before or after a play.
- **Whistle:** Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, half time, or the end of the game.
- **Inadvertent Whistle:** Official’s whistle that is performed in error.
- **Charging:** The movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, contacting the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.
- **Flag Guarding:** An act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm.
- **Shovel Pass:** A legal pass attempted beyond the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot-put type of manner; however, a shovel pass is not allowed in the “No-Run Zone”
- **Lateral:** A backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

III. Equipment

- a. The league provides each player with a flag belt and shirt. Teams will use the football provided by the league.
- b. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however, cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
- c. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
- d. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- e. Official flag shirts must be worn during play.
- f. Players’ shirts must be tucked into the pants if the shirt hangs below the belt line.
- g. **Pants or shorts with belt loop or pockets must be taped.**
- h. Players must wear protective mouthpiece.
- i. Flags must be a different color than shorts or pants worn by players.
- j. Flag length cannot be altered.
- k. If a player shows up without a uniform, they are not eligible for play **UNLESS** the opposing coach has been notified and agrees the player is deemed eligible. (Rosters may be referenced).

IV. Field

- a. The field dimensions may vary according to age and field availability.
- b. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones (a 5-yard zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.

- c. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- d. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5-yards from midfield to gain the down, and one zone 5-yards from the goal line to score a TD).
- e. Note: 7 vs 7 is played from the 40-yard line (out of bounds is marked at the 35-yard line) towards the end zone with midfield being the 20 yard line. TWO no-run zones still apply with one being 5 yards from midfield and the other 5 yards from the end zone.

V. Rosters

- a. Teams can play with less than 7 players. If a team fields a unit with less than 7 players, the opposing team can still field their full 7 players.
- b. Players must be on the team roster; however, in the case of forfeiting (due to lack of players), at the opposing team discretion, non-roster players may participate. The referee will be notified before the start of the game whether the game is considered scrimmage or will be on the record and both team coaches will sign the game card.

VI. Timing and Overtime

- a. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two twenty-minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts and injuries.
- b. Halftime is ten (10) minutes long.
- c. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- d. Each team has two timeouts per half.
- e. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- f. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- g. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game should be determined a tie.

ONLY IN TOURNAMENT/PLAYOFFS

- a. In tournament or playoff situations, an overtime (OT) period will be used to determine a winner. OT format is as follows:
 - i. Each team is allowed a minimum of one possession. The only exception is if the first offensive team throws an interception and opposing team scores. In this case, the game ends with the intercepting team winning. Possession begins at midfield.
 - ii. All regulation period red rules and penalties are in effect.
 - iii. There are no timeouts.
- iv. In OT, the winner will be decided by the team that scores the most points in the same number of plays as the offensive possession. Except in the case of an interception run back for a TD. After two possessions tears are required to attempt 2-point conversions until a winner is determined.

VII. Scoring

- a. **Touchdown:** 6 points
- b. **PAT (Point After Touchdown):** 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (12-yard line).
 - i. Note: 1-point PAT is pass only. 2-point PAT can be run or pass.
 - 1. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the PAT, requires a charged timeout. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned. (Note: 7 vs 7 a 1-point conversion from the 7-yard line or a 2-point conversion from the 15-yard line)
- c. **Safety:** 2points
 - i. A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out

of bounds, or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone, or the ball hit the ground.

- d. **Mercy Rule:** After one team is winning by twenty-eight points or more, the losing team gets one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game goes into scrimmage mode playing up to the fifteen-minute mark in the second half if time allows. After the fifteen-minute mark, the game is over.
- e. **Scrimmage Mode:** The losing team gets the ball for up to three possessions. Each possession lasts until the team scores or fails to achieve the Line-to-gain. Points do not count in final score. After three possessions the game is over.

VII. Coaches

- a. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to always support the coach.
- b. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and age. Coaches must stop coach once the QB's have started their cadence.
- c. Coaches are expected to adhere to the coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.
- d. Each team shall sit on opposite sides of the field.
- e. Coaches may leave the sideline to aid an injured player, point out a scoring mistake, request a timeout to ascertain where a correctable error needs to be rectified, or to seek information from the official during a timeout or intermission.
- f. Head coaches are responsible for conduct and behavior of player and fans. There will be **NO** screaming at referees by coaches. First offense is a 15-yard penalty. Second offense will result in an ejection ensued by an additional 1 game suspension. Ejected coaches must vacate the field and exit the parking lot immediately. The game WILL NOT resume until the coach has exited the premise.

VIII. Live Ball/Dead Ball

- a. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- b. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds if one foot come down in the field of play.
- d. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
- e. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- f. Any official can whistle the play dead.
- g. Plays is ruled "dead" when:
 - i. The ball hits the ground (including QB and center exchanges).
- h. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- i. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- j. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- k. The ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
- l. The ball carrier's flag falls out.
- m. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- n. The 7 second pass clock expires.
- o. Inadvertent whistle.
 - i. **NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.**
- p. 8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - i. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - ii. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

- q. 9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged, and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call to give each team the full benefit of each call.

X. Running

- a. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
- b. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the backfield but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, unless the defense passes the line of scrimmage.
- c. Handoffs, tosses, pitches and reverses are allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
 - i. Center Sneak-the ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap, and he/she must step backward off the line of scrimmage to receive a direct handoff from the quarterback before advancing the ball.
- d. No-Run Zone," located 5-yards before each end zone and 5-yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zone in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
- e. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- f. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- g. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- h. Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
- i. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- j. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
- k. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier (8 yards away from ball carrier).
- l. Flag Obstruction – All shirts MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XI. Passing

- a. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage, except screen passes.
- b. A legal pass attempted beyond the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot-put type of manner; however, a shovel pass is not allowed in the "No-Run Zone".
- c. The quarterback has a seven second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the seven second rule is no longer in effect.
 - i. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the seven second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.

XII. Receiving

- a. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).

- b. 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.
- c. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- d. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- e. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversion after touchdowns. Note: 7 vs 7 interceptions must be returned (not allowed on conversions). If not, this results in a change of possession starting back at the 40-yard line).

XIII. **Rushing the Passer**

- a. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of ten yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
- b. Once the ball is handed off, the ten-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush Line ten yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - i. A legal rush is:
 - 1. Any rush from a point 10 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - 2. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback. iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 10-yard area), they may return in the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - 3. If a rusher leaves the line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
- d. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap, crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass, is an Illegal Rush (5 yards, LOS and first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped is offsides (5 yards, LOS and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line, crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off is Illegal Rush (5 yards, LOS and first down).
- e. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback; seven second clock is in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before they play; however, if they do send a rusher, the rusher must verify with the official that they are in the correct position.
 - iii. If rusher leaves the 10-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as defender with no Offsides penalty enforced.
 - 1. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then contacting the passer will result in roughing the passer penalty.
 - 2. 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.
 - 3. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when a flag is pulled.

- a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XIV. Flag Pulling

- a. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- b. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- c. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- d. If the player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- e. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- f. 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 intentionally covering the flags with the football shirt.
- g. If a defensive player brings an offensive player to the ground a 5-yard penalty will be added to the end of the run.

XV. Formations

- a. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage (7 vs 7 must have at minimum three players (the center and two flankers/receivers – all are eligible - on the line of scrimmage and up to six players on the line of scrimmage). The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - i. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
- b. 2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
 - i. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a False Start.
 - ii. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion **BETWEEN** his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.
 - iii. Bunch formations are allowed however the inside receivers must be no closer than 3 yards from the center.

XVI. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- a. 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. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
- b. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- c. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- d. Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- e. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- f. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship, as well:
 - i. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or the teams.
- g. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
- h. Compliment **ALL** players, not just one child or team.
- i. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:

- j. Keep younger kids and equipment (such as coolers, chairs and tents) a minimum of 10 yards off the field and end zone area.
- k. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.

XVII. Penalties

a. General

- i. The referee will call all penalties.
- ii. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- iii. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
- iv. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgement calls.
- v. Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless offense declines the penalty.
- vi. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- vii. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- viii. If there is a penalty within 5 yards of scoring the referee has the right to award the touchdown.

Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+5 yards and Automatic First Down
Stripping	+10 yards and Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yards and Automatic First Down
Screening and Blocking	-5 yards and Loss of Down
Charging	-10 yards and Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	-10 yards and Loss of Down
Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and Loss of Down

Defensive Penalties

Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and Automatic First Down
Illegal Rush (starting rush from inside 10-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull (before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+10 yards from line of scrimmage and Automatic First Down
Taunting	+10 yards from line of scrimmage and Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	SPOT FOUL and Automatic First Down
Holding	SPOT FOUL, +5 yards and Automatic First Down

Stripping	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards and Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards and Automatic First Down

Offensive Penalties

Offside/False Start	-5 Yards from line of scrimmage and Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass (pass thrown beyond line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 Yards from line of scrimmage and Loss of Down
Illegal Motion	-5 Yards from line of scrimmage and Loss of Down
Delay of Game	-5 Yards from line of scrimmage and Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 Yards from line of scrimmage and Loss of Down
Screening or Blocking for the Ball Carrier	SPOT FOUL, -5 yards and Loss of Down
Charging	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards and Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards and Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards and Loss of Down

XVIII. Approved Footballs

- a. PreK-3rd Grade Peewee
- b. 4th Grade and 5th Grade Junior
- c. 6th Grade and 7th Grade Youth

XIX. Teams/Playtime/Practice

- a. Teams are made up of registered players. We reserve the right to add players to any team without enough players.
- b. Coaches must play all players.
- c. Teams should practice at least once a week.

XX. Additional Rules

- a. PreK-1st Grade – No blitz in No-Run Zone.
- b. PreK-3rd Grade is played 5 on 5 with a smaller field. One coach on the field for offense and defense, all other rules apply.
- c. 4th Grade-7th Grade is played 7 on 7 with a larger field. One coach on the field for offense. Passing and handoffs are allowed, all other rules apply.
- d. Playoff seeding is as follows:
 - i. Overall Record
 - ii. Head-to-Head
 - iii. Plus/Minus Point Differential
 - iv. Common Opponent Record

v. Coin Flip