



Fall 2023 Flag Football Rules

1. The 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.
 - I. Winner of toss chooses offense or defense
 - II. Loser has choice of direction
 - III. There is no option to defer
- B. NO Kickoffs
- C. Offense starts possession on own 5-yard line
 - I. Offense has 4 plays/downs to cross midfield (awarded first down)
 - II. Offense then has 4 downs to score a touchdown
- D. If offense fails to reach midfield or score on a possession, the ball changes possession to the opposition.
 - I. The opposition will start its drive from its own 5-yard line
- E. ALL possession changes, EXCEPT for interceptions, will start on the offense's 5-yard line
- F. Teams will change sides at half-time.
- G. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

2. Terminology

- A. Line to gain – Midfield
- B. Rush Line – imaginary line running width of field, 7 yards from line of scrimmage (defense)
- C. Rusher – defensive player assigned to rush QB
- D. Live Ball – period of time the play is in action. Live ball penalties must be enforced before down is complete.
- E. Dead Ball – time between previous down and up until snap of next down
- F. Charging – movement of ball carrier directly at defensive player that has established position
- G. Flag Guarding – act by ball carrier to prevent defender from pulling flag by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, blocking access to the runner's flag with a hand or arm, or an untucked jersey will be considered flag guarding.
- H. Shovel Pass – legal pass attempted beyond line of scrimmage (LOS) by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot-put type manner
- I. Lateral – backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier



3. **Equipment**

- A. League provides each player with a flag belt and jersey
- B. Footballs can vary by division.
- C. All flags must be located on each side of the player (not front and back). Extra slack from flag must be taped to the belt, cut or tucked in.
- D. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged, but NO cleats with exposed metal are allowed.
- E. Players may tape forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces of any type with exposed metal are not allowed.
- F. The coaches are responsible for ensuring their players are properly dressed.
- G. The game official will have final decision on uniform issues.
- H. Player's jerseys MUST be tucked into their pants or shorts.
- I. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.

4. **The Field**

- A. Field dimensions are 50 yards long by 25 yards wide with 10-yard endzones.
- B. A midfield line-to-gain will be marked.
- C. No run-zones are located on each side of midfield line and 5 yards from each goal line.
- D. No run-zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays.
 - I. Teams cannot run the ball in any fashion while the ball is within these zones
 - II. These zones will be marked by either a painted line or cone placed out of bounds

5. **Rosters**

- A. Home teams wear dark colored jerseys; visiting teams wear light colored jerseys
- B. Teams MUST start a game with a minimum of 5 players, and no more than 10
- C. Team with insufficient subs may play with 4 players, but no fewer than 4
- D. If necessary and agreed upon, teams may borrow players from another team only if they do not have a sufficient amount. This will help avoid forfeits

6. **Timing**

- A. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two, 20-minute halves.
- B. Clock stops only for timeouts
- C. Once ball is spotted and ready for play, each team will have 30 seconds to snap the ball.
 - I. Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced



- D. ONLY 1 timeout (60 seconds) is available per team per half
- E. Officials may stop the clock at their discretion
- F. In the event of 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 regulation, an overtime (OT) period will be used to determine a winner as follows:
 - I. Each team will be allowed a minimum of one possession
 - II. First possession is determined by winner of regulation coin toss. Loser determines end of field that both teams will start their respective drives
 - III. There are no time outs
 - IV. Each team will be scored based upon yardage gained (NO SCORING)
 - 1. Each team will be given a series starting from its own 5-yard line to drive the field as far as they can. The game official will note yardage gained. The team with the most yards gained will win the game.
 - 2. In the event of an interception, the ball will be marked at either the LOS or the point where the defender's flags were pulled, whichever is more advantageous for the defense. This will determine the length of the drive by the offense to note total yardage gained on the possession for the team throwing the INT.
 - 3. If both teams score a touchdown and complete the same amount of points during conversion, the process will be repeated.
 - 4. Winning through yardage is equivalent to winning by 6 points for tie breaker purposes
 - V. Multiple Overtimes
 - 1. First OT period – Scoring teams can go for a 1 point or 2 point PAT
 - 2. Second OT period – Scoring teams must go for 2 point PAT

7. **Scoring**

- A. Touchdown – 6 points
- B. PAT (Point After Touchdown) –
 - I. 1 Point from 5-yard line
 - 1. Pass ONLY (No rush zone)
 - II. 2 Points from 10-yard line
 - 1. Run or Pass
- C. Safety – 2 points
 - I. Occurs when player with ball has possession in own endzone
 - 1. Has flag pulled while in endzone



2. Flag falls out
 3. Player in possession of ball steps out of bounds
 4. Player in possession of ball has knee or elbow touch ground
 5. Safety also occurs when offensive has a penalty in endzone
- D. Mercy Rule
- I. One team winning by 28 points or more
 - II. Losing teams gets one possession to score
 1. If they do not score, the game is over.
8. **Coaches**
- A. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division
 - B. Coaches MUST move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball
9. **Live Ball / Dead Ball**
- A. Game official will indicate neutral zone and line of scrimmage (LOS)
 - B. Automatic dead ball foul if any player (offense/defense) enters neutral zone
 - I. Officials may give a “courtesy” notification for players to move back
 - C. Player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in field of play
 - D. Defense may not mimic offensive team signals or confuse offensive players
 - I. Unsportsmanlike penalty
 - E. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - I. Ball hits the ground
 - II. Ball carrier’s flag is pulled
 - III. Ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - IV. Ball carrier’s knee or elbow touches the ground
 - V. Ball carrier’s flag falls out
 - VI. 7 second pass clock expires
 - F. THERE ARE NO FUMBLES – Ball is spotted where ball carrier’s feet were at time of fumble
 - G. Inadvertent whistle – offense has two choices
 - I. Take the ball where it was when the whistle was blown
 - II. Replay the down from original line of scrimmage



10. Running

- A. Ball is spotted where runner's feet are when flag is pulled, not where the ball is.
 - I. Forward progress measured by the player's front foot
- B. Quarterback cannot directly run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage
- C. Hand offs must be behind the LOS in the offensive backfield
 - I. Offense is allowed to use multiple handoffs
 - II. "Center sneak play" is NOT ALLOWED in all divisions
- D. NO laterals or pitches of any kind
- E. No-Run Zones – offense is not allowed to run the ball within 5 yards of midfield line as well as 5 yards from goal line.
- F. Player who takes hand off can throw the ball if behind LOS
- G. After ball is handed off in backfield, ALL defensive players are eligible to rush. No crossing the line of scrimmage will be allowed after a handoff in Preschool – 3rd grade leagues.
- H. Runners may NOT leave their feet to advance the ball
 - I. No diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull (Flag Guarding)
- i. Spinning is allowed as long as player does not leave their feet
- j. Only lateral moves to the left and right are allowed
- k. Runners may only leave feet in order to avoid collision with another player
- l. NO blocking or "screening" is allowed
- m. Offensive players must stop their motion once ball has crossed the LOS.
 - i. No running with ball carrier
 - ii. At the official's discretion, they may give a warning for "running with the ball carrier." Otherwise, a dead ball foul will be called and the ball will be marked.

11. Passing

- A. All passes MUST be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and beyond the LOS
- B. Shovel passes are allowed, but receiver must be beyond the LOS
- C. The quarterback has a seven second pass clock.
 - I. Pass must be thrown within seven seconds or play will be blown dead and down will count.
 - 1. If QB is in endzone and 7 second clock expires, ball is returned to LOS, but down will count

12. Receiving

- A. All players are eligible to receive passes



- B. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time and that motion must be parallel to LOS until snap of ball
- C. All players must have one foot in bounds when making a catch
- D. Simultaneous possession will be awarded to offense
- E. Interceptions change possession at the point of interception. Only possession that does not start on 5-yard line
- F. Interceptions are returnable, but not on attempted conversions after touchdowns

13. Rushing the Passer

- A. Rushing the passer is NOT allowed in the Preschool and KG/1st grade divisions.
- B. All players who rush passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the LOS when ball is snapped.
- C. Any number of players can rush quarterback
- D. Once ball is handed off, 7-yard rule is no longer in effect
- E. Official will indicate 7-yard rush line
 - I. A rush is legal from the 7-yard line point.
 - II. If rusher leaves rush line before snap, they may return to rush line and reset and then legally resume rushing QB
 - III. Penalty may be called if rusher leaves rush line before snap and crosses LOS before handoff or pass (Illegal rush – 5-yard penalty from LOS & first down)
 - IV. Any defensive player that crosses LOS before ball is snapped (Offsides – 5-yard penalty from LOS & first down)
 - V. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the LOS before ball is passed or handed off (Illegal Rush 5 yards penalty from LOS & first down)
- F. Players rushing quarterback may attempt to block pass or pull flag. NO CONTACT can be made with quarterback in ANY way.
 - I. Blocking pass and then making contact with QB is a penalty (Roughing the passer – 10 yards LOS & first down)
- G. Offense cannot impede rusher in ANY way. Rusher has right to clear path to QB
 - I. Offensive player is responsible for avoiding contact. (Impeding the Rusher-5 yards & loss of down)
 - II. Any disruption to rushers path is a penalty (Impeding Rusher-5 yards & loss of down)
 - 1. If offensive player does not move after snap, it is defensive players responsibility to avoid offensive player



14. Flag Pulling

- A. Legal flag pull occurs only if ball carrier has complete possession of ball
- B. Defenders can dive, but cannot tackle, hold or run through ball carrier (Tackling, holding, or running through the ball carrier will be considered “Unnecessary Roughness” and followed with a penalty.
- C. It is illegal to strip the ball
- D. If ball carrier’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball
- E. Flag guarding is illegal – no stiff arms or intentionally covering flags with an untucked jersey

15. Formations

- A. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the LOS (Center) and up to four players on the LOS. The quarterback must be off the LOS, but can be lined up under center.
- B. One player may go in motion behind the LOS (min 1 yard)
- C. No motion is allowed towards LOS at any time (False Start)
- D. All offensive players, except player in motion, must come to complete stop for one second before snap (Offside/FALSE Start)
- E. Center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs or turned to the side to a player in the backfield and the ball MUST completely leave his/her hands. The ball can be hiked as a direct snap to the running back. This will only be allowed in the 4th-12th Grade divisions.

16. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- A. Includes intentional act of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, and blocking. The game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game.
 - I. Decision is made at the official’s discretion and is final.
- B. Offensive language is also illegal
 - I. Official has right to determine offensive language
 - 1. Official will provide a warning
 - 2. Second offense will warrant ejection
 - 3. Offensive language is not limited to only players
 - a. Coaches, parents & fans are also subject to same penalties



17. Penalties

- A. Official will call all penalties
- B. Official will determine all incidental contact
- C. Game may not end on defensive penalty
- D. All penalties will be assessed from LOS, except as noted (Spot fouls)
 - I. Spot Fouls
 - 1. Defensive Pass Interference – Automatic first down
 - 2. Holding – 5 yards auto first down
 - 3. Stripping – 10 yards auto first down
 - 4. Defensive unnecessary roughness – 10 yards auto first down
 - 5. Screening, Blocking/running with ball carrier – 5 yards loss of down
 - 6. Charging – 10 yards loss of down
 - 7. Flag guarding – 10 yards loss of down
 - 8. Offensive unnecessary roughness – 10 yards loss of down
 - II. Defensive Penalties
 - 1. Offside – 5 yards LOS & auto first down
 - 2. Illegal Rush – 5 yards LOS & auto first down
 - 3. Illegal flag pull – 5 yards LOS & auto first down
 - 4. Roughing the passer – 10 yards LOS & auto first down
 - 5. Taunting – 10 yards LOS & auto first down
 - III. Offensive Penalties
 - 1. Offside/False Start – 5 yards LOS & loss of down
 - 2. Illegal forward pass – 5 yards LOS & loss of down
 - 3. Offensive Pass Interference – 5 yards LOS & loss of down
 - 4. Illegal Motion – 5 yards LOS & loss of down
 - 5. Delay of game – 5 yards LOS & loss of down
 - 6. Impeding the rusher – 5 yards LOS & loss of down

(Updated on 07.07.23)