

Rules Governing Tackle Leagues (Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6)

NYO Football is governed by the Georgia High School Football Rules which are available through GHSA. Obtain the GHSA rules by going to <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/nfhs-digital/id6746011559>. There are certain rules, however, which NYO has revised; the most important of which are summarized in the following sections:

Organization of League – NYO Football program is organized into seven leagues which are primarily based on each player's grade. While players are not permitted to participate in a younger league, certain players will be required to participate in an older league if the player's age exceeds the following chart or the player's weight exceeds the limits of the weight restrictions at the end of this rules section.

Leagues	Age Limits
Grades K & 1 st	For Kindergarten & first grade players. Players who turn 7 prior to March 1 st of the current year shall be required to play in the 2 nd grade league.
Second Grade Flag League	Players who turn 8 prior to March 1 st of the current year shall be required to play in the 3 rd grade league.
3 rd Grade League	Players who turn 9 prior to March 1 st of the current year shall be required to play in the 4 th grade league
Fourth Grade League	Players who turn 10 prior to March 1 st of the current year shall be required to play in the 5 th grade league
Fifth Grade League	Players who turn 11 prior to March 1 st of the current year shall be required to play in the 6 th grade league
Bigs – 6 th Grade League	Players who turn 12 prior to March 1 st of the current year shall be required to play in the 7 th grade league
7 th & 8 th Grade Leagues	No limitations for 7 th & 8 th grade players

3rd Grade league rules - (the following rules relate to the 3rd grade (3G) League):

- Players on the field may vary from 11 – In the event of 9-man football for example, each team will play with 6 players on the line and 3 in the backfield, rather than 7 & 4 respectively. – The reduced number of players will be easier to coach and more fun to play. Players will have an increased opportunity to play skill positions.
- Coaches will be monitored and strongly encouraged to:
 - Create practice schedules throughout the season that include meaningful time spent on developing core football skills (blocking, tackling, etc.)
 - Run basic offensive and defensive schemes
 - Avoid blitzing and stunts on defense
 - Teach proper tackling of the ball carrier (vs. a focus on stripping the ball)
- *To further clarify what blitzing is and isn't.....The linebackers must read the play before moving forward. Linebackers should not be coached to immediately rush towards the line of scrimmage when (or just before) the snap....probably the best way to think about it is they must first read play-action, and then rush in to make the tackle. What does this mean in short yardage plays where run is most likely and forward momentum of a linebacker is necessary to stop the conversion?...the intent is for you to bring your linebackers up closer to the line in lieu of them approaching the line as the ball is snapped. Both approaches result in linebackers selling out for run but one looks like a blitz from the stands and one looks like linebackers reading run and reacting quickly.....you get the gist of what we're after. Another way to think about this is that the feet of the linebacker should not be moving forward until after the snap of the ball. To further clarify what stunts are or aren't.....Defensive linemen that slant one direction or another are not stunting. Defensive linemen or DEs that purposely go behind another lineman are stunting....some in the past have called it "looping"for our purposes looping is stunting and both are not permitted.*
- In 3rd grade, no defensive lineman can line up in the "A" gap between the center and the guards....they must be head up on the guards or further out. Further, linebackers can line up behind the defensive linemen in the "A" gap but all linebackers must be at the same depth so the middle linebacker can line up over the "A" gap but can't be closer to the LOS than the other linebackers.

- Clarifications on motion and offensive shifts: In 3rd grade, offenses may put an offensive back/wide receiver/tight end in motion according to normal rules on motion (see page 24 herein). The defense may adjust as necessary to the man in motion, without assistance or coaching from the coach on the field (consistent with the rule for On-field Coaches, see page 20 herein). Shifts of multiple offensive players (even if reset before the snap) is not allowed in the 3rd grade.
- The minimum play rule shall be modified to require that each player must play at least one half of offense and one half of defense, for either the entire first half or the entire second half of each game.
- One coach per team is permitted on the field to help call plays. Once the any player leaves the offensive huddle the on the field coaches are not allowed to instruct their players. On the field coaches are not permitted to use electronic devices to communicate.
- IN THE EVENT THIS CONFLICTS WITH COMMUNICATIONS FROM Martin Stephenson

Blowout Scoring Situations – Avoid them!

A “blow out” scoring situation is considered to be one in which on team is ahead by 20 or more points. NYO Football has only one specific rule concerning these situations which states that IF requested by the coach of the team that is behind by 20 or more points, the clock will run continuously. All wins that exceed that point margin are not necessarily the result of bad intentions by the winning coaches, but that does not really matter. Winning by a large margin or scoring at the end of the game when it is not necessary creates tremendous ill will among parents and opposing coaches. It is deflating to the losing players and is a bad example for the players on the winning team. The coach that is ahead in a blowout situation must take appropriate measures to assure the score does not become more lopsided. If you are fortunate enough to be up by 20 points, do whatever you reasonably can to keep the scoring margin no greater than 20. Specifically, some or all of the following steps should be implemented:

- Pull your best four players off the field for the balance of the game. This will not be a violation of the Minimum Play Rule. Alternatively, put your best players at low impact positions such as wide receiver & don’t throw to them.
- Rotate your least gifted players to QB & running back.
- Don’t pass.
- Run up the middle
- Take a knee
- Some coaches who have been ahead have voluntarily given the ball back to the losing team after stopping them on downs
- Do not call time-outs EXCEPT in situations where the losing team is out of timeouts and it would be beneficial to them to have an opportunity to score or make a first down.
- In the past coaches comfortably ahead have told game officials to call a penalty on their team in the event they score an unnecessary TD or told the scorer to remove points from their team’s score.
- After the game explain to your team why you took these actions and use it as a sportsmanship lesson.

No Blind Side Blocks: As a reminder blind side blocks are now illegal per GHSA rules. The objective of this rule is to enhance player safety by eliminating hits on defenders who may be looking in another direction. In these situations blockers should no longer deliver blocks on defenders that are looking in another direction. In these situations the blocker should screen or shadow block the defender.

Jerseys/Equipment:

Once assigned at the beginning of the season players are not allowed to exchange jerseys. If a player must wear a different jersey # during a game, his coach must clearly communicate the change to the opposing coach as far in advance of kick off as possible. Players are allowed to wear a helmet visor, but only clear helmet visors are allowed.

Kicking offs in 3rd Grade League:

There are no kickoffs in the 3rd grade league. The team with possession of the ball to start the game and the team starting the second half with possession will have the ball spotted on their own 20 yard line.

Punting in 3rd Grade League:

There will be no punting in 3rd Grade. . If a team elects to "punt" on fourth down, the coach will advise the official and the ball will be moved 20 yards down field and possession will change. "Punts" from or inside the opposing team's 30 yard line will be placed half the distance to the goal line. Officials will control the clock during punts running off approximately 8 seconds during the play. Quick kicks are not permitted.

4th & 5th Grade Leagues Punting & Kicking:

If a team elects to punt on any down, the official will be advised and the teams will line up in punt formation. The ball will be snapped to the punter and both teams will maintain their positions until the ball is punted; i.e., there is a "free punt." There will be no punt blocking or fake punts. The punter must remain between a traditional alignment of the tackles while punting which means the punter may not move east and west on the field more than a couple yards before kicking. Also, the defensive team receiving the punt must have at least five players on the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted. On punts, a player over the running back weight limit cannot be lined up any deeper than a linebacker position on the punt receiving team. If the ball comes to a player over the running back weight limit on a punt, he can run the ball. Quick kicks are permitted but not on 4th down. Little teams are not allowed to kick extra points or field goals when playing on Blackwell Field. Players over the running back weight limit must be on the front line while on the kick-off receiving team. If the ball comes to a player over the running back weight limit on the kick-off, he can run the ball. Onside Kick-offs: If the kicking team is ahead then its kick must travel 20 yards (rather than 10 yards) in order for the kicking team to recover and gain possession of the ball. *This is true even if a member of the receiving team touches the ball before it has gone 20 yards unless the receiver gained possession of the ball and fumbled it while running with the ball.*

Bigs Punting and Kicking:

Punting is live in the Bigs. There is no requirement to declare a punt. Punt blocking and fake punts are allowed. On punts, a player over the running back weight limit and up to 135 lbs. cannot be lined up any deeper than a linebacker position on the punt receiving team. A player over 135 pounds must play an interior down lineman position. If the ball comes to a player over the running back weight on a punt, he can run the ball. Players over the running back limit must be on the front line on the kick-off receiving team. If the ball comes to a player over the running back weight limit on the kick-off, he can run the ball. Field goals and extra points will be allowed. Normal high school rules apply. Onside Kick-offs: If the kicking team is ahead then its kick must travel 20 yards (rather than 10 yards) in order for the kicking team to recover and gain possession of the ball. *This is true even if a member of the receiving team touches the ball before it has gone 20 yards unless the receiver gained possession of the ball and fumbled it while running with the ball.*

Length of Games:

Third Grade Leagues:

There will be 7 minute quarters in 3rd Grade League. The clock will be stopped under normal high school rules during the entire game. Each team is allowed a total of three (3) timeouts per half.

Fourth Grade, Fifth Grade and Bigs 6th grade) Leagues:

There will be 8 minute quarters in the Littles and Bigs. The clock will be stopped under normal high school rules during the entire game.

Minimum Play Rule !

At a minimum, all players must play either all offensive or all defensive plays throughout each game and the corresponding special team plays, i.e. kick offs and punt returns are considered defensive plays and kick returns and punts will be considered offensive plays. This means that at each change of possession all players on the bench should enter the game. The one acceptable variation to this rule will be if a team utilizes two players to run in plays on literally every offensive and defensive play. The only exception to the Minimum Play Rule is for players who have missed practice on a chronic basis. Those players may be played less than half the game as a disciplinary measure IF the coach first advises the parents, the opposing coach and League Director before the game that this action will be taken. The League Director will have final authority on the player's participation. If a player is injured during the game and will be played less than the minimum, the coach should alert the player's parents if possible. If a complaint is brought to the League's attention involving minimum play, a video of the game will be sought. If the video tape reveals the Minimum Play rule was violated, that team will forfeit the game.

Officiating in Third Grade Leagues

With the exception of unsportsmanlike infractions, no penalties will be longer than five (5) yards.

On-field Coaches in Third Grade League:

The 3rd grade league is the only age division in which one coach from each team is allowed on the field during the game. The goal of this practice is to promote faster play and instruction between plays; on-field coaches are not to read the opponent's formations in order to direct the play or alignment of his team after the huddle is broken. Specifically, the on field coach must be quiet once the center's hands are on the ball. Violations will result in a five yard penalty. If the offense sends the center & guards out from the huddle early, the defensive coach can continue to speak until the full offense is set [or, breaks the huddle. On Field coaches cannot use any electronics devices.

Playing in a younger or Older League - NYO does not allow players to participate in a younger league. Certain players will be required to play in an older league if their age or weight exceeds the limits set forth in NYO's rules. Players may request to participate in an older league; the Football Committee will evaluate these situations individually.

Scoring

Touchdowns count as six points. After a touchdown, the scoring team has an option for extra points:

- a) The ball may be placed at the **5-yard line** and a score results in two points when run or passed.
- b) The ball may be placed at the 3-yard line and a score results in one point when run or passed.
- c) For Bigs teams the ball may be placed at the 3-yard line and kicked which will result in one point. Field goals, as permitted only in the BIGS, will result in 3 points.

Shotgun Snaps – Protection of Center

GA high school rules provide protection for centers which are vulnerable while making shotgun snaps. The high school rule states that the center cannot be hit until he has a reasonable opportunity to recover to a football position provided the QB is seven (7) or more yards behind the center. NYO has reduced the seven yard distance the QB must be from the center as follows by league:

- 2nd & 3rd Grade Leagues - one (1) yard
- 4th & 5th Grade Leagues - three (3) yards
- Bigs (6th grade) League - five (5) yards

Provided the QB is at least these distances from the center, the center cannot be hit until he has a reasonable time to recover. This rule does not restrict a nose guard from aligning over the center or from rushing to either side of the center.

Tie Games

Regular season games will be allowed to end with a tie score. Playoff games will utilize the Georgia High School rule for breaking ties in which each team receives ONE POSSESSION from the fifteen (15) yard line PER OVERTIME, that sequence is repeated until the tie is broken. If the score remains tied after the second OT, the officials will require teams to go for a two point conversion. Please refer to GHSA rule book for the complete set of overtime rules applicable to playoff games.

Weight Rules

Weight limits have been established to promote safety and fair competition. Player weights will be initially determined during Tryouts. A player who is not at the tryout must have an official weigh-in at NYO before his / her respective draft. If a player's weight is above the limit for that player's age appropriate league, the player will be required to play in the older league, except where special circumstances exist. The League Directors will resolve all such issues in their sole discretion. Please review these comments about weighs:

1. Parents and players are asked to comply with the spirit of these rules. Players should not lose excessive weight prior to weigh-ins.
2. Players may remove their shoes and shirts during weigh-ins.
3. If a player's weight during Tryouts does not qualify that player for a given classification, such as playing in the offensive backfield, the player is ineligible for that classification for the balance of the season. The player cannot lose weight and subsequently qualify.
4. There may be up to two additional weigh-ins, the dates of which will be purposely announced on short notice, during the season and / or playoffs.

5. For subsequent weigh-ins, players will be allowed to weigh an additional two (2) pounds if weighed in October plus an additional three (3) lbs. if weighed in November. This will allow players to have healthy growth during the season. For example, an offensive back in the Bigs that could weigh 115 lbs. on the first day of Tryouts can weigh 117 in October and 120 lbs. in November. If a player exceeds a weight on a subsequent weigh-in, he will lose his running back/receiver status for the balance of the season.

Please keep in mind that attempting to judge weights from the sideline is highly deceptive. If you are concerned about the apparent size of a player, you are welcome to call or email the League. Decades of secondary weigh ins have clearly demonstrated that players of this age rarely gain meaningful weight during the season.

Weight Limits

NYO Football has five tackle / contact leagues. Each of these leagues have weight limits relevant to the following player classifications:

- 1) **Offensive backs** – Regardless of whether a player carries the ball if the player aligns off of the line of scrimmage, that player is considered an offense back. *Players over the offensive back weight limit may not pick up an offensive fumble and run with the ball if it is deemed in the eyes of the officials to be a deliberate play designed to get the ball into the hands of a player otherwise too heavy to carry the ball. If such a play is run and missed by the officials it can be reviewed later by the Football Committee and appropriate action will be taken which may be taken including a coach's suspension or forfeiture. The intent of the rule must be followed. Within the Bigs there is a lower weight limit for 12 year old offensive backs vs. 11 year old backs.*
- 2) **Receiver** – To qualify as an eligible receiver, receptions by players over the offensive back weight limit must be on or across the line of scrimmage and passes to them must be thrown overhand, i.e. no shovel or screen passes. The maximum weight limit for receivers is established for each league. Reference the Kicking section of the rules for limitations concerning Receivers while receiving punts and kick offs.
- 3) **Interior Lineman** – *Players above this weight will be required to play as interior down linemen which means they must:*
 - a) Play from either a 3 or 4 point stance
 - b) On offense play as a center, guard or tackle. Tackle eligible passes to these players are not permitted.
 - c) On defense line up and play as a defensive guard or tackle **no wider than head up** the offensive tackle. This alignment should not be any more than one yard from the line of scrimmage and no further from the line of scrimmage than the rest of defensive lineman.
 - d) Players in this weight classification must play on the line when receiving kick offs and punts.
- 4) **Maximum Weight limit** – Three of the four leagues have an overall maximum weight limit. Players over this weight will be moved to the older age group. Please note that final decisions concerning in which league such players will participate will be made by the League Director in his sole discretion.

League	Offensive Back (lbs)	Receiver (lbs)	Interior Lineman are those weighing more than (lbs)	League Maximum (lbs)
3rd Grade League	75	95	95	110
4th Grade League	85	105	105	120
5th Grade League	95	115	115	130
Bigs – 6th graders	115	135	135	None
7th Grade League	No Limit	No Limit	No Limit	No Limit

Seventh (7th) and Eighth Grade League

Beginning with the 2025 season, NYO's 7th and 8th grade players will participate on separate 7th and 8th grade middle school league teams in collaboration with Riverwood High School. 7th grade and 8th grade games will conform to Georgia High School rules. NYO's "in-house rules" that involve minimum play, weight limit, etc. will not apply to 7th and 8th grade players. The head coach for the 7th Grade and 8th grade teams is a former NYO player. We believe that this format for 7th grade players and 8th grade players will help prepare them for the school teams on which they will compete in the future.