

Rules Governing Games (not applicable for Flag league)

NYO Football is governed by the Georgia High School Football Rules which are available through GHSA. Obtain the GHSA rules by going to its website or download an app - <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nfhs-rules/id1173502036?mt=8>. There are certain rules, however, which NYO has revised; the most important of which are summarized in the following alphabetically sequenced sections:

3rd Grade league rules:

League Organization

- 9-man football – 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. 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.*
- Clarifications on motion and offensive shifts: In 3rd grade, offenses may put an offensive back 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.

Blowout Scoring Situations – Avoid them!

A "blow out" scoring situation is considered to be one in which one 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 while on the run but instead should screen or shadow block the defender.

Jerseys:

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.

Kicking offs in 3rd Grade Old League:

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. No field goals are allowed. 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.*

Punting in 3rd Grade Leagues:

There will be no punting in either these leagues. 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:

In the Littles, 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. Littles 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.*

Big 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.

Fourth Grade, Fifth Grade and Bigs 6th & 7th 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].

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 8-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 & 7th grades) 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 four plays to score from the fifteen (15) yard line and 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.

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 to 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 contact leagues. Each of these leagues have four 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, he is considered an offense back. *Players over the offensive back weight 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 at or 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 the outside shoulder of the offensive tackle and inside the offensive end. 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 which league such players will participate within 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 – age 11 (*)	115	135	135	None
Bigs – age 12 (*)	112			
Bigs – age 13 (*)	105			

(*) - Ages in Bigs are as of September 1st