



**2026 SPRING FLAG FOOTBALL
RULES**

PREGAME

1. All coaches on the field must wear PSO approved badge.
2. Before each home game it's the home team responsibility to bring together both teams for prayer. Prayer to be led by the home teams Team Champlain.

I. GAME

1. At the start of each game captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. There is no option to defer. Possession changes to start the second half for the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 35-yard line (start pylon) and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
 - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elects to "punt" on 4th down, the possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross mid field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.

- b. Any time prior to making the ball, 'Ready for Play', the referee **MUST** ask the offensive team's head coach to declare 'Punt or Play'. The coach **MUST** answer at that time or risk a delay of game penalty at the referee's discretion.
 - c. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - d. If the declaration is "Punt" the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing Team's 35-yard line, (start pylon) 1st down, with **NO** option to change the declaration.
 - e. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive Team starts at its 35- yard line. (start pylon)
4. At the start of the 2nd half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

II. TERMINOLOGY

- 1. Boundary lines: The outer perimeter lines around the field. Including the sidelines and back of the end zone lines
- 2. Pass Only/No Run Zone: 5 yards or less to the line to gain for first down, and 5 yards or less from the goal line
- 3. Line-to-Gain: The line the offense must pass to get a 1st down or score
- 4. Rush Line: An imaginary line running across the width of the field for 7 yards (on the defensive side of the field) from the line of scrimmage.
- 5. Offense: The team with possession of the ball.
- 6. Defense: The team opposes the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

7. Passer: The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the QB

8: Rusher: The defensive player assigned to rush the QB to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. Defense has ONLY 1 Rusher and must come from 7 yards deep and must identify by raising hand.

9. 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.

10. Dead Ball: Refers to the period immediately before or after a play

11. Whistle: Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in action for a timeout, halftime or the end of game

12. Inadvertent Whistle: Official's whistle that is blown in error

13. Charging: An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm, or chest.

14. Flag Guarding: An illegal act made by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flag with a stiff arm, lowering head or elbow or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, arm or ball.

15. Shovel Pass: A legal forward pass across the Line of Scrimmage, underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward.

16. Lateral: A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier

17. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

III. EQUIPMENT

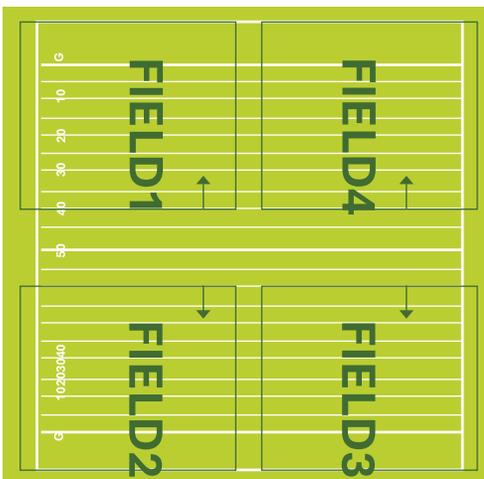
1. All players must wear official PSO FLAG BELTS and FLAGS. All players must wear mouth guards while on the field. Game balls should be age specific.
2. PSO uses age specific footballs as follows.
MINI= Pre-K and K
PEE-WEE= 1st and 2nd grade division
JUNIOR= 3rd,4th,5th and 6th grade division
3. Players must wear PSO APPROVED uniforms
4. Players must wear shoes. Cleats may not be allowed at certain locations.

However, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
5. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are never allowed.
6. Players must remove all jewelry and hard-billed hats. Winter beanies are allowed.
7. Players may wear soft shell helmets, halos and sunglasses, but they must be secured while on the field.
8. 1 PSO official football will be provided to each team. To be used in games only when on offense.

IV. FIELD

1. No Run Zones/Pass Only are located 5 yards or less prior to the line to gain (midfield) and 5 yards or less prior to the endzone. (NO BUBBLE SCREENS)
2. No run zones are placed to prevent teams from conducting power run plays, while in the no run zone you cannot run the ball in any fashion UNLESS the QB is Blitzed and only after Blitzed has crossed the Line of Scrimmage.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. To start a drive, the referee will place the ball in the middle of the field prior to the "Ready to Play". The ball may NOT be placed closer than 10 yards to any boundary.

V. ONE-WAY-FIELD



The starting position will begin at the 35-yard line. (start pylon)

1. There are no safeties. Ball will be spotted at the 35-yard line (start pylon) with a change of possession.
2. The ball will never start further back than the 35-yard line. (start pylon)

3. Interception can be returned for a TD and worth 6 points. But if flag is pulled any time before a touchdown ball will be spotted at the 35-yard line (start pylon) with change of possession. (NO EXTRA POINTS ON INT RETURNS FOR A TD)
4. PUNT's declaration is FINAL unless you have your timeout available, and you can then use it to change your decision.
5. Both teams will be on the same sideline. Parents will be on the opposite sidelines.

VI. TIMING

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with FOUR 10-minute qtrs. Unless one team gains a 35-point advantage, which will end the game unless teams agree to continue without changing the score. The clock stops for halftime, injuries and the Officials' discretion.
2. Halftime is 2-MINUTES.
3. Each time a ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
4. Each team has ONE 60-second timeout per half. They do not carry over.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. NO OVERTIME FOR REGULAR SEASON GAMES.

VII. SCORING

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass.

- b. Interception during 1 and 2 -point PAT will be blown dead.
- 3. Interceptions can be returned for scores during regular game play that are worth six points, but if the returners flag is pulled during the return, the ball is spotted back at the beginning of play spot at the 35-yard line. (start pylon)
- 3. 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 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
- 4. After one team is winning by 35 points or more, the game is over. TEAMS may elect to continue, but no additional points scored will be added.
- 5. ***Forfeits scored 35-0 for the winning team.***
- 6. The coaches, officials, and scorekeeper must sign and verify the score sheet. If a coach does not verify the score sheet before leaving the field, the scorekeeper will note that the score sheet and the score will be FINAL.

VIII. Coaches

- 1. Coaches are expected to adhere to [PSO CODE OF ETHICS](#) coaching guidelines and code of conduct.
- 2. Coaches are permitted to 2 coaches on the sideline and one offensive coach on the field only (No Defensive Coaches on Field) (Exception for Pre K and 1st Grade divisions, a Defensive Coach is allowed on field. However, the coach must be off before play begins.)
 - a. All team managers, team moms, fans, etc. are required and must remain off the field in the designated league viewing area.

b.Coaches, this is your responsibility to keep your fans, and any other members in the designated areas.

3. Coaches must remain on the sideline except to attend to an injured player.

4. ALL PSO COACHES MUST WEAR PSO BADGES AT ALL TIMES TO BE ON SIDELINES.
(GAMES & PRACTICE)

5. Teams may huddle on the sideline with their coach to get the play, but the play clock will not stop once the ball is signaled 'Ready to Play'.

IX. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.

2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.

a. 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.

3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or a body part other than the hand contacts the ground in the field of play with possession.

5.Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. Other unfair acts would be not returning five eligible players to the field of play after halftime, a team or officials time out prior to the 'Ready to Play' signal by the referee. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

7. Play is ruled "dead" when:

a. The ball hits the ground.

If the ball hits the ground because of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hits the ground. (If bad snap at Start Pylon since no safeties ball goes back to Start Pylon)

b. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.

c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.

d. A touchdown, PAT scored.

e. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.

f. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.

g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).

h. The 7 second pass clock expires.

i. Inadvertent whistle

j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet diving or hurdles a player.

NOTE: Fumbles/ loss of possession: Ground contact must be made for the play to be dead at that spot. A fumble is a loss of possession by a player, resulting in the ball contacting the ground.

8. If inadvertent or erroneous whistle occurs the offense has two options:

A) Take the ball where the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.

B) replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.

9. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule of interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged, and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
10. Officials should all agree to change a call on the field that is in dispute.

X. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap under center directly, or in shotgun formation.
3. Direct handoffs, pitches, and laterals are permitted behind the line of scrimmage only. If this takes place after the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, the play is to be blown dead by the official. The ball shall be placed at the spot of possession was lost for the succeeding play.
 - a. "Center Sneak" play is NOT allowed. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center.
 - b. Any player who receives a handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - c. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or a backward pass, pitch or lateral has occurred, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated, and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
4. Definition of a "Legal Handoff" - Total loss of possession directly from 1 offensive play to another.

5. Pre-K-1st Grade can snap between legs or sidesaddle however QB MUST be directly behind center and can only snap to him.

6. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before the end zone, and 5 yards before the first down line are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

7. Runners are not permitted to jump, leap or hurdle, in the officials' judgement, while advancing the ball. The play is to be blown dead, and the ball spotted where it was when they left the ground.

8. Ballcarriers may leave their feet, and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB's passing progression or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player, and the play will continue without stoppage. However, if while leaving the ground, contact is made unnecessary roughness or an illegal contact penalty may be enforced by the official.

9. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.

10. Offensive players in close proximity to the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.

11. Flag obstruction – All jerseys 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.

12. Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the current ball-carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is dead.

13. The QB can run with the ball anytime he is Blitzed, but only after the blitzed has crossed the L.O.S.

XI. Passing

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

1. Only 1 forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage is permitted each offensive play. The ball must be out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.

a. Passes may be thrown forward or backwards behind the line of scrimmage.

b. There is no intentional grounding.

c. All passes, except backwards passes, that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.

d. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.

2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be forward from behind the line of scrimmage and received beyond the line of scrimmage.

3. 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, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.

a. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated as an incomplete pass

XIII. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. One player can rush the quarterback. Rushers **MUST** identify themselves by raising their hand before the snap. Rushers **MUST** rush the passer immediately after the snap. Delayed rush is **NOT** permitted, by rule. Players not rushing to the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage. **Pre-K Kinder and 1st Grade have no blitz rule!**
2. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point of 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage. ii. A rush from anywhere on the field **AFTER** the ball has been handed off, pitched or lateraled by the quarterback.
 - b A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff, pitch, lateral or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from scrimmage and first down).

- iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed, pitched, lateraled or handed off – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect. Teams are required to identify their rushers before the play.

4. Players rushing against the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact with the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer's penalty.
5. 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. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. 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’s 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.**
6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled.
7. QB CAN SCRAMBLE AND RUN IF BILTZED.

XIV. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.

2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. 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, ball, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

XV. Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
 - b. One player at a time may go in motion at least 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage.
2. 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.

3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

XVI. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. 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!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is **NOT** allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. Offensive players may **NOT** initiate contact at the line of scrimmage with defenders, in the officials' judgement. **ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment **ALL** players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly and adhere to league requirements for seating:

- a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents 10 yards off the field in the designated area.
 - b. Stay in designated areas, not between fields.
 - c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
- a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
 - c. Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties on any player or coach in a game are automatic disqualification from that game and may lead to additional discipline.

XVIII. Penalties

General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines against it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards and automatic first down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening or blocking	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down
Holding/Illegal Contact	-5 yards and loss of down

Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside / illegal substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-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	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down

Offside / false start / illegal substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the 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 (More than one person moving)	-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
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Taunting	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down