

HAMILTON FLAG FOOTBALL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Definitions</i>	2
<i>Rule 1: Game, Field, Ball and Equipment</i>	3
SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	3
SECTION 2: ROSTERS	4
SECTION 3: POSITIONS	4
SECTION 4. EQUIPMENT	5
SECTION 5. FLAG SPECIFICATIONS.....	5
SECTION 6. THE FIELD	6
<i>RULE 2: LEAGUE PLAY</i>	6
SECTION 1. LEAGUE PLAY.....	6
<i>RULE 3: LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL</i>	8
SECTION 1. LIVE BALL.....	8
SECTION 2. DEAD BALL	8
<i>RULE 4: GAME PLAY</i>	10
SECTION 1: SCORING	10
SECTION 2: RUNNING	10
SECTION 3: PASSING.....	11
SECTION 4: RECEIVING.....	12
SECTION 5: BLITZER AND RUSHER.....	13
SECTION 6. HOLDING, SHIELDING, CONTACT AND AIMING	14
SECTION 7. FLAG PULLING	15
SECTION 8. FORMATIONS	15
SECTION 9. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT	16
<i>RULE 5: ROSTERS AND PLAYING TIME (REGULAR SEASON & PLAYOFFS)</i>	17
SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	17
<i>RULE 6: ROOKIE DIVISION GAMEPLAY</i>	19
SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	19
<i>RULE 7: OFFICIAL DUTIES</i>	20
SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	20
SECTION 2. REFEREE (R) (also known as "HEAD REFEREE")	20
SECTION 3. LINE JUDGE (LJ)	21
SECTION 4. RUSH JUDGE (RJ).....	21
SECTION 5. SIDE JUDGE	22
<i>RULE 8: PENALTIES</i>	23
SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.....	23
SECTION 2. DEFENSIVE SPOT FOULS	23
SECTION 3. OFFENSIVE SPOT FOULS	23
SECTION 4. DEFENSIVE PENALTIES.....	24
SECTION 5. OFFENSIVE PENALTIES.....	24
<i>Revision History</i>	25
17-Apr-2025	25
23-Apr-2025	25
17-Aug-2025.....	25
30-Aug-2025.....	25
02-Sep-2025	25
10-Sep-2025	25
13-Sep-2025	25
5-Mar-2026	25
8-Apr-2026	25
9-Apr-2026	25

Definitions

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 seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
OFFENSE	The team with possession of the ball.
DEFENSE	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
PASSER	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
BLITZER	The Identified Defensive Player that is at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
RUSHER	Any player who legally crosses the line of scrimmage.
DOWN (1-2-3-4)	The offensive team has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
LIVE BALL	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to 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 of time 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 reporting a penalty, a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
INADVERTENT WHISTLE	Official’s whistle that is performed in error.
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 the chest.
FLAG GUARDING	An illegal 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 or ball.
SHOVEL PASS	A legal pitch attempted behind the line of scrimmage.
UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT	A rude, confrontational, physical or offensive behavior or language.
RIGHT OF PLACE (ROP)	Right of place is given to any stationary players who maintains normal player posture and make no movements in any horizontal direction to change their position. A purely vertical movement, including a lift from the ground, in order to throw or catch a pass does not mean that a previously established right of place has been lost. Right of place supersedes right of way when determining who is guilty of a foul.
RIGHT OF WAY	Right of way is given to a player according to rule who has established a direction of movement in a regular manner and does not alter that direction. A player with right of way has a higher privilege when determining who is guilty of a foul than all other players except those with right of place.

Rule 1: Game, Field, Ball and Equipment

SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1. Coin Toss

- a. 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.
- 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. There is no option to defer. For the 2nd half, teams will switch sides of the field and the team that started the game with possession will begin on defense.

Article 2. Possession and Change of Possession

- a. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. Crossing midfield is the only opportunity for an offense to gain a first down within a single possession.
- b. On 4th down, the offense may choose to “punt”. A “punt” results in a change of possession and the new offensive team starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- c. Any time there is a ‘PUNT or PLAY decision on 4th or 3rd down, the referee will ask the offense’s Head Coach to declare ‘Punt or Play’. The coach MUST make an immediate decision or risk a delay of game penalty.
- d. Teams may use a timeout to change the declaration of “Play” at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
- e. If the offense fails to convert / score on 4th down, the opposing team will start a new possession from the spot where 4th down ended.
- f. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposing team will start a new possession from the spot where 4th down ended.
- g. If the defense intercepts the ball, a defensive player can attempt to return it until down or out of bounds. If the interception is in the end zone, the ball carrier has the option to down the ball in the end zone (resulting in the ball coming out to the 5-yard line).
- h. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense’s 5-yard line.

Article 3. Coaches

- a. Hamilton Flag Football recommends 2-3 coaches per team.
- b. At the Rookie level, one coach is allowed on the field to call plays and direct players according to need. The coach must be behind the deepest offensive and/or defensive players and out of the action.
- c. Above rookie, no coaches are allowed on the field of play. Coaches must be on the sideline .
- d. One coach (and one coach only) is permitted to walk the length of the field to communicate with their team.
- e. During the game, no electronic communication is permitted between coaches and/or players.

SECTION 2: ROSTERS

Article 1: Team Rosters

Teams must consist of at least five players with a recommended maximum of 10 players.

Article 2: Uniform Colors

Home teams wear dark color jerseys. Visiting teams wear light color jerseys.

Article 3: On Field Participants

Teams must start games with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field but no fewer than four.

SECTION 3: POSITIONS

Article 1. Offense

The five players on offense consist of a center, a quarterback and three eligible receivers.

- a. **Center.** This player is responsible for snapping the ball and is eligible to go out for passes, once they have snapped the ball.
- b. **Quarterback.** The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap from the center. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the line of scrimmage without first handing the ball off to a teammate and then receiving a second handoff back or receiving a pass.
- c. **Receiver/back.** Any player who does not initiate the snap nor receive the snap is considered an eligible receiver/back and can either receive a handoff or catch a pass.

Article 2. Defense

- a. **Blitzer.** A defender who lines up with all parts of their body more than 7 yards away from the scrimmage line at the snap can establish themselves as a blitzer with a legal signal by raising one hand clearly above the head prior to the snap. This grants them right of way which supersedes the general right of way for the offense, because they are pursuing the quarterback. The rush of a blitzer shall be immediately after the snap, quick and straight towards the point where the quarterback receives the snap in order to retain the right of way. If a blitzer is rushing late (delayed blitz), slowly, towards a different spot, changing direction during the rush or just does not rush the quarterback, the player loses the right of way (there will be no "impeding the rusher" called on offense). If a blitzer is forced to change direction due to an offensive foul (shielding), the blitzer will not lose their right of way for a further direct rush to the point where quarterback received the snap.
- b. **Rusher.** A defender who does not give a signal and legally crosses the line of scrimmage. Following the completion of a legal handoff, pitch, or pass behind the line of scrimmage, any member of the defense can cross the line of scrimmage. A defender cannot legally cross the line of scrimmage until the completion of a pitch and/or pass behind the line of scrimmage.

SECTION 4. EQUIPMENT

Article 1: Flag Belts

The organization provides each player with an official flag belt and team jersey. Teams will use footballs provided by their league.

Article 2: Footwear

Players must wear rubber-soled shoes. Cleats may not be allowed at certain locations. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.

Article 3: Additional Equipment

Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Players must remove any jewelry (including earrings) and head wear with a brim (e.g., baseball cap). (winter caps are acceptable).

Players may wear soft shell helmets, halos and sunglasses but they must be secured at all times while on the field. Prescription glasses are permitted without a strap.

Article 4: Uniform Standards

Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.

We recommend players wear shorts that are provided with the uniform. If one is not provided, they must wear pocketless shorts. Players may wear sweatpants and sweatshirts but they must be worn beneath the uniform.

- a. **Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.**

Article 5: Mouthguards

All players must wear mouth guards while on the playing field.

SECTION 5. FLAG SPECIFICATIONS

Article 1. General Provisions

Players of a team shall wear tightly fixed flag belts with pop-sockets and 2 identical flags. Every effort shall be made to keep one flag on each hip of the player. The sockets shall be placed facing outwards and downwards. The flags should be clearly visible, hang down freely and must not be covered in any way by the player's uniform and all colors must be contrasting with all colors on the pants. The flags and sockets may not be greased, glued or altered in any way. Any player who deliberately manipulates their flags shall be disqualified. The flags and sockets each shall be made of the same material in the same color without sharp edges.

SECTION 6. THE FIELD

Article 1: Field Dimensions

Field dimensions are 25 X 70 yards in total with two 7- yard end zones and a 50 yard field of play. No-run zones are only before the goal line. However, some locations may use smaller fields due to available field space.

Article 2: No-Run Zones

A No-run zone is in place to prevent teams from conducting run plays. While in the No-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before the end zone and before midfield), teams cannot run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. All plays must be pass plays, including plays where a legal handoff / pitch occurs before the pass.

RULE 2: LEAGUE PLAY

SECTION 1. LEAGUE PLAY

Article 1: Game Clock Settings

Games are played on a 48-minute continuous clock with two 24-minute halves unless one team gains a 30-point advantage at which point, the score is no longer kept. The clock stops for timeouts or injuries only, though officials can stop the clock at their discretion for injury, to stop a team from delaying or other unsportsmanlike conduct.

Article 2: Halftime

Halftime is two minutes.

Article 3: Delay of Game

Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive a verbal warning at the 10 second mark, with a verbal countdown from 10 seconds until a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. For the rookie division, the team has 40 seconds to snap the ball.

Article 4: Timeouts

Each team has two 60-second timeouts per half. The clock will restart upon a successful snap. Pre-snap fouls (offsides / false start) will NOT cause the clock to start.

Article 5: Injury Stoppage

In the event of an injury, the referee will use their discretion to stop the clock. The clock will restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play and the referee restarts the clock.

Article 6. Overtime (Playoffs Only)

1. Overtime will only be played in the playoffs.
2. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
 - a. If a second period of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second period of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every period of overtime.
 - b. The referee will determine on which end of the field the overtime will take place.
 - c. Each team is given one timeout in the overtime period.
3. In the first extra period, each team will have one series starting at the mid-field. On the first series, if the defense intercepts the ball and scores, then the overtime period is over.
4. Each team retains the ball during its series until it scores (including try downs for 1 or 2 points) or exhausts its series of downs. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead. The series is then ended even if there is a second change of team possession during that down.
5. If after the first period (with 2 series including tries) the score is still tied, the second and following periods consist of series with each team playing a 1-point try from the 5-yard line. The overtime ends when the score after a period is no longer a tie or the defense scores during the first series of a period.
6. The team scoring the greater number of points during overtime shall be declared the winner.

Article 6. End-of-Season Tiebreaker Rules (for Playoff Seedings)

1. Overall record is used to determine playoff seedings.
2. If two teams in the same division have the same overall record, the following tiebreaker rules will be used:
 - a. Head-to-head record (if all teams that have tied have played each other)
 - b. Point differential (calculated by total points scored in regular season minus total points given up)
 - c. If teams are still tied after the above, the seeding will be determined by a coin flip.

RULE 3: LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL

SECTION 1. LIVE BALL

Article 1: Live Ball Definition

The ball is live at the snap and remains live until an official's whistle blows the ball dead.

Article 2: Ball Spot

The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage by spotting the ball before each play and signaling ready for play with a short whistle. The ball cannot be snapped (indicating start of play) until after the "ready to play" whistle is blown. If the snap occurs early, the ball will be reset. Repeated infractions *may* lead to a delay of game penalty (referee's judgment call).

- a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding the neutral zone, an official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification prior to the snap to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.

Article 3: Pre-Snap Defense

The defense may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

Article 4: Possession

A player who gains possession of the ball is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play. If one foot is in bounds, and the second is out of bounds, and both feet made contact at the same time, the player is considered out of bounds (because the one foot needs to be "established" prior to the second foot making contact out of bounds).

Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

SECTION 2. DEAD BALL

Article 1: Dead Ball Definition

Any official can whistle the play dead.

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
- b. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
- c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
- d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- e. Any part of the body other than feet or hands touches 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. An inadvertent whistle.
- i. When a ball carrier loses possession of the ball. (regardless of whether the ball hits the ground --- for example, if the ball carrier "fumbles" the ball in the air and the defense gains possession, then the play is blown dead and the ball is spotted where possession was lost)

Article 2: Inadvertent Whistle

In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:

- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

Article 3: Ruling Challenges

- a. There are no ruling challenges by the coaches.
- b. It's a recreational league --- mistakes will be made and we need to set a good example by handling things in a calm manner.

RULE 4: GAME PLAY

SECTION 1: SCORING

Article 1: Touchdown: Six 6 points

Article 2: Extra Points

PAT (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line).

- a. Because of the No-run zone, a one point PAT is pass only; two point PAT can be run or pass.
 - i. Defense touchdown on a PAT - 2 points. (even if it was a one point PAT)
 - ii. Safety on a PAT - 2 points

NOTE: AT YOUNGER LEVELS, LEAGUES SHOULD CONSIDER WAIVING THE NO-RUN ZONE FOR TOUCHDOWNS AND POINT-AFTER TRIES.

- b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare prior to the snap whether it wishes to attempt a one- or two-point conversion. 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.
- c. During a PAT attempt, a false start or offsides will result in the PAT being tried again 5 yards back. If a false start or offsides occurs during a 1-point PAT, the PAT remains 1 point and is still pass only from the penalized line of scrimmage. Any other offensive penalties will result in the PAT being no good.

Article 3: Safety

2 points

- a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his or her own endzone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, a knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the endzone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone. A penalty in the end zone (i.e. flag guarding) can also be ruled a safety.

Article 4: Mercy Rule

- a. After one team is leading by 35 points or more, the official game is over and no PATs are attempted.
- b. If both coaches agree, the teams may continue playing without keeping score.
- c. Actual game score at the time of mercy rule will be used for record-keeping purposes.

SECTION 2: RUNNING

Article 1: Spotting the Ball

The ball is spotted where the runner's front foot is when the flag is pulled, **not the position of the ball.**

Article 2: Legal Running Plays

Direct handoffs and pitches behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must take place behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.

- a. The “center sneak” play is not allowed as centers are ineligible to receive the initial (first) handoff.
- b. Any player who receives a handoff 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, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- d. Once a pitch has been completed, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- e. If a player touches the ball behind the line of scrimmage on back-to-back plays through any means (pitch or pass), (except for the person receiving the snap (“quarterback”)), this is considered an illegal rush. A score resets this rule (for example, the same player that scored a touchdown on a handoff can receive the handoff on the following PAT). An accepted penalty does NOT reset the rule.

Article 3: No Run Zone

No-run zones are located five yards before the end zone in the direction the offense is headed. They are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage in this zone.

THE NO-RUN ZONE MAY BE REMOVED FOR PLAYERS WHO ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC PASSING AND CATCHING SKILLS.

Article 4: Flag Guarding

- a. 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 jersey
- b. Spinning and jump cuts are allowed, however runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- c. Players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
- d. 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.
- e. 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.

Article 5: Blocking / Screening

No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.

Article 6: Running With the Ball-Carrier

Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. There is no running with the ball-carrier.

SECTION 3: PASSING

Article 1: Forward Pass

A pass is considered a forward pass if the ball first touches anything beyond the spot where the ball is released. All other passes are backward passes, even if it is lateral (parallel to the scrimmage line).

- a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. If the ball hits the ground or goes out of bounds *before the line of scrimmage*, the ball will be marked at the spot the ball hit the ground.
- b. Any player who has received a legal handoff can throw the ball forward as long as they are still behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. Players may only throw a forward pass in one half of the game. A player that throws a forward pass in the first half is NOT eligible to throw a forward pass in the second half. Overtime is considered the second half for the purposes of this rule.

Article 2: Shovel Pass

Shovel passes are allowed. A legal blitz is eligible to intercept a shovel pass.

Article 3: Seven Second Clock

A seven-second pass clock begins upon the snap and continues until there is a handoff or pass. If the seven-second clock expires while the quarterback still has the ball, the play is blown dead with a whistle, a down is lost and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage as if an incomplete pass occurred. The seven-second pass clock will be counted down verbally by an official. If the quarterback is in throwing motion, it is still a violation (the ball must have left the quarterback's hand prior to the whistle).

SECTION 4: RECEIVING

Article 1: Eligible Receivers

All players – are eligible to receive passes.

Article 2: Legal Reception

A player must have at least one foot inbounds to make a legal reception.

Article 3: Simultaneous Possession

In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, the play is dead, and possession is awarded to the offense. As the play is dead, the receiver cannot advance the ball.

Article 4: Interceptions

Interceptions are returnable and are the only changes of possession that do not result with starting on the 5-yard line.

Article 5: Pass Interference

Defensive pass interference is when a defender significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball. Offensive pass interference is when an eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball.

SECTION 5: BLITZER AND RUSHER

Article 1: Blitzzer

All Blitzzers must be a minimum of seven yards behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped and must declare themselves by raising their hand and getting the attention of an official. Players not blitzing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. No more than two players may establish themselves as Blitzzers on a given play. A legal blitzzer is eligible to intercept a shovel pass / pitch behind the line of scrimmage.

Article 2: Rusher

Once the ball is handed off or a pitch / shovel pass is completed, the 7-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. At this point players crossing the line of scrimmage are Rushers.

Article 3: Legal Blitzing

A marker, or the official, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position and identify themselves before every play. A legal blitzzer is eligible to intercept a shovel pass or a pitch.

- a. A legal blitz is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. If a blitzzer leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), they are no longer eligible to blitz.
 - iii. If a blitzzer leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush.
- b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The Blitzzer leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff 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 line of scrimmage and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line or declared crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - iv. A maximum of 2 players may establish themselves as a blitzzer. If more than 2 players establish themselves as a blitzzer by raising their hand – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
- c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to blitz.
 - ii. Teams are required to identify their Blitzzer before the play.
 - iii. If a team is leading by 18 points or more, blitzing is not allowed.

Article 4: Roughing the Passer

Players blitzing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback/passer in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.

Article 5: Impeding the Blitz

The offense cannot impede the Blitz in any way. The Blitzers have the right to a clear path to where the quarterback originally receives the snap, regardless of where the Blitz lines 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 Blitz. Any disruption to the Blitz's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the blitz penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the Blitz's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

Article 6: Quarterback Sack

A sack occurs if the quarterback's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.

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

SECTION 6. HOLDING, SHIELDING, CONTACT AND AIMING

Article 1: Holding

Holding is grasping an opponent or their equipment, not releasing immediately and impacting the opponent.

Article 2: Shielding

Shielding is obstructing an opponent without contact by moving into their path. A moving player without right of way who impedes an opponent from running a pass route, getting to the runner or impedes a legal blitz is guilty of shielding. A player standing still (with the right of place) is not shielding, even if the player is obstructing an opponent.

Article 3: Contact

Contact is touching an opponent with impact. Touching with no impact is not a foul. It is official's discretion to determine what constitutes touching with impact.

Article 4: Aiming

Aiming is to target and initiate contact with an opponent or to run into an opponent on purpose, even with right of way. Aiming is any deliberate or avoidable contact with excessive force, even in an attempted flag pull or while playing the ball during a pass. Aiming is to attack a ball in possession or take away the ball from the runner. Aiming is considered unsportsmanlike conduct.

SECTION 7. FLAG PULLING

Article 1: Legal Flag Pull

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

Article 2: Diving and Holding

Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

Article 3: Stripping

It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.

Article 4: Inadvertent Loss of Flag

If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.

Article 5: Illegal Flag Pull

A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.

- a. If a defender makes a good-faith flag pull while a receiver bobbles or juggles what will be a completed catch, the ball is down where possession is made.

SECTION 8. FORMATIONS

Article 1: Offensive Formations

Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and any number of players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.

- a. One player at a time may go in motion at least 1 yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
- c. Players lined up in the neutral zone at the time of the snap will be offsides.

Article 2: False Start

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.

Article 3: Legal Snap

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.

SECTION 9. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

Article 1: Intentional Contact

If the field monitor or official witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player may 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!

- a. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- b. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- c. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

RECOMMENDATION: FOR TEAMS STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS, REMOVE ANY PLAYER WHO COMMITS AN UNSPORTSMANLIKE OR DANGEROUS ACT FROM THE FIELD TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTION FROM A COACH AND A COOLING OFF PERIODS. OFFICIALS CAN EJECT THE PLAYER AT THEIR DISCRETION IF THERE ARE CONTINUED INFRACTIONS THAT ARE DEEMED INTENTIONAL.

Article 2: Offensive Language

Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed by players or coaches. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. A warning is applicable to the entire team. If offensive language is used again, the coach(s) / player(s) will be penalized and may be ejected from the game.

Article 3: Spectator Conduct

Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

- a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
- b. Coaching from the sidelines is not permitted and may result in a penalty against your team. Coaching includes, but is not limited to, calling out the opposing team's plays and positioning players.
- c. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
- d. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.

Article 4: Field Safety

Fans, players, and coaches are required to keep fields safe and kid-friendly:

- a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 5 yards off the field in the end zone area.
- b. The use of e-cigarettes, vape pens, and tobacco products (including chewing tobacco) is NOT permitted by fans, players, coaches, or officials.
- c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
- d. Team bench / sideline is for the use of the team and coaches ONLY. Parents, fans, and players from other teams are not to be on the sideline with the team.

Article 5: Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty

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

Article 6: Coach Conduct

Arguing with officials or staff is not permitted.

Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations.

Players may not question calls.

The referee's decision is final and arguing calls is not permitted. Referees reserve the right to address the situation as follows:

- a. First violation is a warning.
- b. Second violation is an unsportsmanlike penalty.
- c. Third violation results in an ejection.

RULE 5: ROSTERS AND PLAYING TIME (REGULAR SEASON & PLAYOFFS)

SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1: Playing Time — General

- a. In every division, teams should have a roster of ten (10) players (five (5) for offense and five (5) for defense). At halftime, players switch from offense to defense and defense to offense. Every player must play at least one uninterrupted half on offense and one uninterrupted half on defense.
- b. Substitutions during the half are not permitted, except for injury, equipment issues or in cases where a player arrives late or leaves early.

Article 2: Regular Season — Missing Player Substitutions

Regular season substitutions are designed to ensure extra playing time is distributed equitably during the season.

- a. If a team has fewer than 10 players present in the regular season, each missing player must be replaced by TWO players - one to play the missing player's snaps on offense and one to play the missing player's snaps on defense. Every other player on the roster will still play one half on offense and one half on defense.
- b. Each player on each roster has been assigned a number corresponding to the round they were selected in the draft.
- c. Extra playing time will be apportioned starting with the player whose number corresponds to the equivalent week of the season.

Example: If it is the fourth game of the season and two players are missing. Extra playing time will be given to #4, #5, #6 and #7. If one of those players is missing, the extra playing time goes to #8, #9, etc.

If a player is injured or has an equipment issue, the player will be replaced by an individual with the next draft round. (for example, if draft order #4 is injured --- replace that individual with draft order #5. For #10, replace with #9.)

Article 3: Playoffs — Missing Player Substitutions

- a. If a team has nine (9) or fewer players present for a playoff game, the Head Coach will select TWO present players to replace EACH missing player(s) as outlined by the chart below.

Each Replacement Player will play EITHER the missing player’s half on offense OR the missing player’s half on defense.

Remaining players will still play one half on offense and one half on defense.

Draft Round of Missing Player	Draft Rounds of Replacement Players to Use
1	#2 for an extra half and #3 for an extra half
2	#1 for an extra half and #3 for an extra half
3	#2 for an extra half and #4 for an extra half
4	#2 for an extra half and #6 for an extra half OR #3 for an extra half and #5 for an extra half
5	#3 for an extra half and #7 for an extra half OR #4 for an extra half and #6 for an extra half
6	#4 for an extra half and #8 for an extra half OR #5 for an extra half and #7 for an extra half
7	#6 for an extra half and #8 for an extra half OR #5 for an extra half and #9 for an extra half
8	#7 for an extra half and #9 or an extra half
9	#8 for an extra half and #10 for an extra half
10	#8 for an extra half and #9 for an extra half

- b. If a player is lost due to injury or equipment malfunction DURING the game, (s)he will still be replaced by the player chosen in the round AFTER them in the draft.

Example: A #3 player is injured. (S)he will be replaced by the team’s #4 player (or, if the #4 player is not available, then the #5 player).

- c. The coaches of each team must exchange line-up cards before the game. These line-up cards will then be given to the referee prior to the game. **If a coach has any questions about whether he or she is using the proper substitutions, they should ask the head of the league and/or head referee BEFORE THE GAME.**
- d. Violation of these playing time rules in the playoffs can result in penalties up to and including the game being ruled a forfeit.
- e. Any disputes will be resolved by the head of the league.

Article 4: 11 Player Rosters

In the event a roster has 11 players:

- a. If a team has 11 players at gametime, prior to the game they will designate 1 player to be the "Flex" player.
- b. The Flex player will be identified to the officials and opposing coaches prior to the start of the game.
- c. The Flex player can be substituted in and out of the game as needed, but for at least for a full series (or more) each time (i.e. - **not** in/out for individual plays). The goal should be to get the Flex player involved at least 50 percent of the plays in each half
- d. The Flex player should not be repeated throughout the season, so as to promote equal playing time
- e. The player being rotated out when the Flex player comes in, should also be rotated throughout the season, so as to promote equal playing time

Playoffs

- a. Flex player usage resets at the start of the playoffs
- b. Coaches are responsible for designating the flex player on lineup cards prior to the start of the game

RULE 6: ROOKIE DIVISION GAMEPLAY

SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1: No Run Zone

The "No Run Zone" is not in play.

Article 2: No Blitzing

Defense cannot cross the line of scrimmage until a legal handoff occurs.

Article 3: One Coach on Field

One coach is permitted on the field during gameplay.

Article 4: One Bad Snap per Down

The offense is allowed one bad snap per down. Two consecutive bad snaps results in a loss of down. (Snap 'Do Over' once per down if snap touches the ground.)

Article 5: Defense Lines Up 5 Yards Off Line of Scrimmage

The defense lines up at least 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. When the ball is inside the opposing team's 5 yard line, the defense lines up 3 yards from the line of scrimmage.

RULE 7: OFFICIAL DUTIES

SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1: Jurisdiction of Officials

Jurisdiction of Officials - The officials' jurisdiction begins with the coin toss and ends when the Referee declares the score final.

Article 2: Number of Officials

Number of Officials - The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 (R and RJ), 3 (R, RJ and LJ) or 4 (R, RJ, LJ and SJ) officials. Under certain circumstances, 1 official may only be available.

SECTION 2. REFEREE (R) (also known as "HEAD REFEREE")

Article 1: Position

The initial position of the Referee is behind and to the side of the quarterback in the offensive backfield. On a 2-man crew, the Referee is positioned and working like Line Judge.

Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Referee has general oversight and control of the game, has final authority for the score and their decisions upon rules and other matters pertaining to the game are final.
- b. The Referee conducts the pre-game instructions and coin flip.
- c. The Referee has jurisdiction over player equipment.
- d. The Referee shall indicate that the ball is ready for play, award new series of downs and administer penalties.
- e. The Referee is responsible for communication with coaching staff, including the administration and announcing of penalties.
- f. Before the snap, the Referee scans the backfield for proper shifts of formation and motion.
- g. After the snap, the Referee shall be responsible for ruling on the play behind the scrimmage line around the ball. (e.g., illegal rush, roughing the passer, impeding, legal handoffs, etc.)
- h. The Referee is responsible for coverage of the quarterback, counting down the 7-second pass clock verbally.

SECTION 3. LINE JUDGE (LJ)

Article 1: Position

Line Judge initial position is on the sideline at the line of scrimmage (opposite side of the Rush Judge).

Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Line Judge is responsible for the operation of the play clock, verbally counting down (LOUDLY) at the 10-second mark. (Play clock resets when the referee places the ball on the spot and gives the “ready to play” short whistle signal).
- b. The Line Judge shall keep count of the downs.
- c. The Line Judge has jurisdiction over the scrimmage line and their sideline.
- d. Prior to the snap, the Line Judge watches for offsides, illegal motion, false starts, and ensures that the offense’s flags are in the appropriate place.
- e. After the snap, the Line Judge monitors the line of scrimmage and nearby areas for illegal forward passes, blocking/screening, illegal contact, and impeding the blitzer.
- f. Once the ball has crossed the scrimmage line, the Line Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field.
- g. For penalties, the Line Judge walks off the yardage announced by the Head Referee and places the ball.
- h. If needed, the Line Judge can be a communication link between the head coach and the Head Referee.

SECTION 4. RUSH JUDGE (RJ)

Article 1: Position

The initial position of the Rush Judge is 7 yards deep at the sideline opposite the Line Judge.

Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Rush Judge has jurisdiction over their sideline.
- b. Prior to the ready to play signal, the Rush Judge marks off the 7-yard “blitz beanbag”.
- c. Prior to the snap, the Rush Judge monitors the defense for flag placement, and acknowledges which players are legally eligible to blitz.
- d. Once the ball has crossed the scrimmage line, the Rush Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field.
- e. If needed, the Rush Judge can be a communication link between the head coach and the Head Referee.

SECTION 5. SIDE JUDGE

Article 1: Position

On a 4-person crew, the initial position of the Side Judge is 7 or more yards deep on the same sideline as the Line Judge.

Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Side Judge has general responsibility for monitoring gameplay, serving as an additional observer for all penalties.
- b. The Side Judge shall be responsible for observing receivers on deep routes for ruling on long passes and the status of the ball and forward progress in their area.

RULE 8: PENALTIES

SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

General Provisions

The officials will call all penalties.
Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls. The referee's decision is final and arguing calls is not permitted. Please see Rule 4, Section 9 Unsportsmanlike Conduct for more detail.
Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
Officials will use their discretion as to when the clock should be stopped for officials to discuss a call.
If the same penalty is committed 3 consecutive times, the officials will use their discretion on whether the clock needs to be stopped and an untimed down will be played.

SECTION 2. DEFENSIVE SPOT FOULS

Defensive Spot Fouls

Holding	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from the spot and automatic first down
Illegal Contact	+5 yards from the spot and automatic first down
Pass Interference	+5 yards from the spot and automatic first down

SECTION 3. OFFENSIVE SPOT FOULS

Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down
Offensive Holding	-5 yards and loss of down
Illegal Contact	-5 yards and loss of down

SECTION 4. DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Offsides	+5 yards from line of scrimmage (replay down)
Illegal rush (Starting blitz from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal Substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

SECTION 5. OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offsides / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (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
Impeding the Blitz	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Center Sneak	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Rush	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

Revision History

17-Apr-2025

Original Version

23-Apr-2025

No blitzing after 18 points.

Clarified language on “impeding the rusher / blitzer”.

17-Aug-2025

- 30 second play clock for all levels except rookie (rookie remains 40 second).
- Clarified contact with quarterback to be any passer.
- Clarified “1 foot in-bounds” to establish possession
- Clarified “ready to play” whistle (ball cannot be snapped until whistle is blown)
- Clarified passer eligibility (players may only throw a pass in one half of the game).
- Clarified coach positioning (one coach allowed to walk length of field)
- Clarified definition of quarterback.
- Accepting a penalty does not reset the “same person touching the ball” rule.
- Added field safety provisions.
- Added detail to further define unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Added “Rosters and Playing Time” rule.

30-Aug-2025

Added definition of defensive and offensive pass interference.

02-Sep-2025

- Clarified penalties and added penalty cards (same cards referees use)
- No electronic communication permitted.
- Early snap will be reset --- multiple infractions will lead to delay of game penalty.
- Balls thrown behind the line of scrimmage that hit the ground --- it’s marked at where the ball hit the ground.
- Added 11th player addendum

10-Sep-2025

Clarified official / referee responsibilities.

13-Sep-2025

- Clarified mercy rule.
- Added tiebreaker rules for standings.

5-Mar-2026

- Clarify penalties for extra point attempts.
- Clarify penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Clarified mercy rule.
- Clarified when clock should start after a timeout.

8-Apr-2026

Clarified back-to-back touching of football behind line of scrimmage by non-QB is illegal rush.

9-Apr-2026

- Clarified end zone distance
- Clarified center sneak as initial / first handoff.
- Clarified ball placement when ball is thrown out of bounds *before* the line of scrimmage
- Added rule to address same penalty happening 3 consecutive times