



# 2026 OC Next Wave Spring Flag Football Rules and Guidelines



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## POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- Link to Field Map and Layout - <https://leagues.bluesombrero.com/Default.aspx?tabid=2185448>
- Age Division 6U = 5-6 / 8U = 7-8 / 10U = 9-10 / 12U = 11-12 / 14U = 13-14
  - Age division determined by the exact player age on May 31, 2026
- No BLOCKING or shielding at any age group at any time
- 5 yard no run zones established for all age groups 8U and above prior to the end zone and the half field line.
- The back line of the “Starting Zone” is considered out of bounds.
- Extra points = 1pt from the 5 yd line and 2 points from the 10 yd line.
- NO CENTER required for 6U age group.
- All players must play at least 50% of game minutes during regular season games.
- 6U all players must possess the ball at least once per game.
- 8U and above 4 different players must catch or run the ball at least 1 time per game.
- 6U & 8U, 3-yard buffer defensive line of scrimmage (not to continue into the end zone)
- No organized practices other than at the league scheduled times.
- Clock does NOT stop for out of bounds

## I. Game

1. At least 5 minutes prior to the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The “away” team calls the coin toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss gets to decide taking possession or defense, to begin the game. The opposing team will have the opposite at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at the 40-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield (20-yard line) for a first down. Once a team crosses midfield it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offense takes over on the 40-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield in 4 downs, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from the 40-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions returned for a Touch Down, start on the 40-yard line. Interceptions returned for a TD require an extra point attempt before the team that threw the interception starts again at the 40 yard line.
7. For an interception to be returned for a touchdown the ball must cross the 40 yard line.
  - If the ball is not returned for a touchdown, the intercepting team takes possession on the 40 yard line.

## II. Terminology

- **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field.
- **Line Of Scrimmage (LOS)**– the offensive/defensive line of scrimmage is an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field prior to the snap of the ball.
- **Line-To-Gain** – the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- **Rush/Blitz Line** – imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line of Scrimmage. The Rush line extends into the end zone when plays are from inside the seven (7) yard line.
- **Offense** – the team with possession of the ball.
- **Defense** – the team opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Quarterback** – the offensive player that calls the signals to start the play.
- **Rusher/Blitzer** – the defensive player(s) assigned to rush the Quarterback, must be positioned (7 yards) behind the scrimmage line and raise their hand. **Not allowed in 6U/8U age groups.**
- **Downs (1-2-3-4)** – the offensive squad has four attempts or “Downs” to advance the ball.
- **Live Ball** – the period of time the play is in action; from the snap of the ball until the referee whistle is blown.
- **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a live ball time.
- **Whistle** – the sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action.
- **Inadvertent whistle** – an official’s whistle that is performed in error.
- **Charging** – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player.

- **Flag Guarding** – the deliberate guarding of the flags by the ball carrier to inhibit the defense from making a grab. Typically, a lowered and swinging, slapping arm motion, resulting in a penalty.
- **Shovel Pass** – a legal pass made by throwing the ball behind or beyond the line of scrimmage, underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot-put type manner. Forward shovel pass must begin behind the LOS
- **Lateral or Pitch**– a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the QB or ball carrier.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language - applies to players, coaches and spectators. This results in a penalty, potential ejection from the game and from the league.

### III. Eligibility

1. All players must be registered through the OC Next Wave Spring Flag Football Program and fall within the specified age range. **Age as of May 31, 2026.**

### IV. Equipment

1. **Mouth Guard.** Every player must wear a mouthguard to each practice and each game. Players will not be able to play without a mouthguard. Mouthguards must NOT be clear in color. Not Required for 6U.
2. The League provides each player with **flag belts** to be used during games and returned to the coach at the end.
3. Players must wear athletic, closed toe shoes. Cleats are allowed; cleats with exposed metal are not allowed.
4. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers; may wear gloves; may wear “wrist coach bands”.
5. Players must remove all watches, necklaces, dangling earrings, dangling jewelry and anything around the neck.
6. Official OC Next Wave Spring Flag Football FLAG jerseys must be worn during games.
7. Player’s jerseys must be tucked into the pants, under the flags and/or not able to cover their flags.
8. Players must un-bunch their flags at all times and ensure flags are on the hips.
9. Eye black can be worn, not in an excessive or offensive manner.

### V. Field

1. The playing field area is 40 yards by 30 yards with a 10-yard end zone, a 5 yard starting zone, and a midfield line-to-gain. “No-Running Zones” precede each goal line and mid field line by 5 yards.”
2. No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays with short yards to gain situations. While in the No Run Zones (a 5-yard zone before the midfield and before the end-zone), teams cannot perform a running play to run the ball in any fashion for positive yardage. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must end up as a forward pass play, in which the ball travels in the air across the line to gain. Violation of this rule is a 5-yard penalty and LOSS of down.
  - a. No Run zones are not in effect for the 6U age group
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

### VI. Rosters

1. **All players must be registered and approved to play by OC Next Wave Spring Flag Football and conform to age-group or grade level requirements.**
2. Teams must field a minimum of four (4) players at the start of all games, and can only field less than five (5) if players are absent. Player amount is decided at the beginning of the game. Losing players to injury/players leaving the field after the start of the game does NOT require the opposing team to match.
3. A team can choose to play with less than 4 players if injuries occur during the game.
4. Opposing teams must match to 4vs4 at the beginning of the game if players are absent. If players arrive late then on the next change of possession the teams will raise to the 5vs5 player level and that is the new minimum.

### VII. Game Timing and Overtime

1. 8U and above Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock.
  - a. Consisting of two (2) 20 minute halves and one (1) 5 minute half time.
2. 6U Games are played on a 30-minute continuous clock
  - a. Consisting of two (2) 15 minute halves and one (1) 5 minute half time.

3. The clock stops only for timeouts, possession change until the ball is set, injuries, penalties, or referee timeouts.
4. **At no time in any game will the clock stop for a player going out of bounds.**
5. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
  - a. Refs are expected to warn the team of 5 seconds left with a loud count of “5...4...3...2...1”.
6. **Each team has three (3) 30-second time outs per game.**
7. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion. Coaches can request an official timeout for rules clarifications.
8. The clock will stop after a PAT (Point after Touchdown) is attempted and restart immediately when the referee sets the ball on the 40 yard line.
9. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and restart after the injured player is able to leave the field of play.
10. **If the score is tied at the end of the regulation during regular season games, the game will be determined a tie.**
11. Playoff overtime will be as follows
  - a. Coin Flip for choice same as the beginning of the game (away team calls it).
  - b. Drives start from the 20-yard line.
  - c. Both teams get equal attempts called “Rounds”.
  - d. The first time an equal attempt round is complete with 1 team having more points than the other; determines the winner of the game.
  - e. Interceptions must still be returned to the 40 yard line to count for the interception touchdown.

### VIII. 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 a pass only from the 5 yard line, 2-point PAT can be run or pass.*
3. **A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether they wish to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 10-yard line).**
  - a. **Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out.**
  - b. **The PAT decision cannot be changed after a penalty by either team.**

### IX. Coaches

1. All coaches must complete a criminal background and Child Abuse Registry background to coach.
2. **Number of Coaches on the field and/or sideline area during games.**
  - a. There will be a marked sideline area that is for players and coaches only.
  - b. 6U = 2 offense and 2 defense on the field – Maximum of 1 Assistant coach in the sideline area
  - c. 8U = 1 offense and 1 defense on the field – Maximum 1 Assistant coaches in the sideline area
  - d. 10U, & 12U/14U age groups = ZERO coaches on the field
    - i. Maximum 1 Head Coach and 1 Assistant Coach in the sideline area

### X. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The play is live when:
  - a. 6U, the QB pulls the ball in upward motion from the ground.
  - b. All other ages when the ball leaves the ground (snapped) by the center.
    - i. The center can snap between the legs or side snap. “Under Center” or Shotgun is approved.
    - ii. 8U and above, dropped snaps are a dead ball and loss of down at the spot of the drop.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and lines of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the 3 yard neutral zone for the 6U & 8U age division. 1 Courtesy warning per game.
3. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals.
4. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. Play is ruled “dead” when:
  - e. The ball hits the ground.
  - f. The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.

- g. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - h. A touchdown **or** PAT is scored.
  - i. Any body part of the ball carrier touches the ground (excluding feet and hands).
  - j. The ball carrier's flag falls out.
  - k. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one flag.
  - l. **The 7 second or 5 second pass clock expires.**
  - m. An inadvertent whistle is performed.
    - i. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
      - 1. Take the ball where the whistle blown made the play dead.
      - 2. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
7. Once the referee sets the ball and the play clock begins the offense can run a play (i.e., hurry up offense).
8. *There are no fumble turnovers. The ball is spotted where it hits the ground; the team in possession maintains*

## XI. Running with the Ball

1. **The ball is spotted where the ball is in hand, when the flag is pulled, or the player steps out of bounds.**
  - a. No diving with the ball in hands to gain yards. If a player dives to gain yardage the ball will be spotted where the ball was when the dive began.
  - b. A TEAM warning will be given for the first offense of diving with the ball. The second and following will result in a 5-yard penalty from the spot in section XI.1.a.
2. The quarterback can rollout, but must pass, pitch, handoff or lateral while in the backfield. The QB CANNOT ADVANCE the ball for positive yards.
  - a. **Exceptions 10U & above age groups QB can run if rushed/blitzed by the defense (see below).**
3. The QB can pitch the ball or hand-off behind the line of scrimmage.
  - a. There is no limit to the number of times the ball may be pitched, either lateral to or behind the ball carrier anywhere in the field of play.
  - b. Once the ball leaves the QB hands all blitzing or rushing by any player is allowed from any position.
4. "No-Run Zone," located 5 yards before the end zone and midfield is designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. The QB can hand off or pitch the ball BEHIND the scrimmage line. BUT the FINAL allowable play is a forward **PASS ONLY** from the last player in possession of the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. The ball must cross the line of scrimmage in the air.
  - a. Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches 2 No Run Zone in each drive - one 5 yards from midfield and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD.
5. The player taking the handoff or pitch can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage as long as they do not cross the line of scrimmage at any time. However once the ball is handed off or pitched the defense can blitz.
6. **Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping is considered flag guarding.**
  - a. 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 but the play is to be blown dead at that spot.
7. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Ball carriers cannot flag-guard.
8. **Blocking or "screening" is NOT allowed at any time.**
  - a. **This is a 5 yard penalty from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.**
9. Offensive players not with the ball must stop their motion, clear away, or trail behind the play once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running alongside or with the ball carrier as a shield.
10. 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.

## XII. Passing (throwing the ball)

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage and thrown forward (shovel passes are allowed).
2. The QB cannot run with the ball without handing it off first and then receiving a returning handoff/pitch; unless they are blitzed in the 10U and above ages.

- a. The ball must FULLY change possession before returning back to the quarterback for the QB to be allowed to run the ball. Full possession change constitutes the original player fully removing their hands from the ball and being at least 1 foot away from the ball.
3. **The quarterback has a five (5) second “pass or handoff clock.”**
  - a. If a pass is not thrown, ball handed-off, lateralled, or pitched within the five (5) seconds then the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the LOS.
  - b. Once the ball is handed off, pitched, or lateralled, the 5-second rule is no longer in effect; as long as the ball fully changes possession as noted above in rule “XII.2.a”
  - a. **6U and 8U have a seven (7) second “pass clock”** at all times.

### XIII. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the center).
2. Only one player is allowed in pre-snap motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage or backwards. No motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbound when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by offensive and defensive players, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions that are run back for a touchdown (to the 40 yard line) count towards the intercepting team’s score in the same amount as the points attempted. **Including an extra point attempt; either (1) or (2) points.**
  - a. If the interception run back for TD occurs on an extra point play, then the intercepting team will receive possession of the ball after the play on the 40-yard line.
  - b. If the interception run back for TD occurs on a regular offensive play, then the intercepting team will attempt an extra point and then the ball will be turned back over on the 40 yd line to the team that threw the interception.

### XIV. Rushing/Blitzing the Passer (*not allowed in 6U & 8U age groups.*)

1. **Rushing can only begin once the ball is snapped.** All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of **seven (7)** yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped **AND** raise their hand over their head.
  - a. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Hands must be raised 5 seconds prior to the snap
  - b. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend at the defensive line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, pitched, or passed, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect; all defenders may rush.
3. Any player can rush up to, not past, the offensive Line of Scrimmage after the ball is snapped.
4. A penalty will be called if:
  - a. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped –
    - i. Off-sides (5 yards Loss) - dead ball penalty
  - b. Any defensive player, not lined up at the blitz/rush line (and not having their hand raised) crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is handed, pitched, or passed –Off-Sides
    - i. 5 plus yards for the offense from the original LOS or the choice to take the result of the play.
5. Special circumstances:
  - a. NO BLITZING when the line of scrimmage is within either of the 2, five yard no run zones.
  - b. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
  - c. Teams are required to identify the rusher at least 5 seconds before the play, and until the ball is snapped.
6. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass.
  - a. **Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will still result in a 5-yard penalty**
7. Offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. If an offensive player deliberately positions themselves in a manner that would impede his/her path to the QB, it will be considered screening and a penalty will be assessed.
8. A Sack occurs if the QB’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage prior to throwing the ball.

### XV. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders cannot intentionally tackle or hold the ball carrier’s body while in the pursuit of pulling a flag.

3. If a ball carrier falls after a flag is pulled the determination is made by the referee if they were pushed in a tackling manner or if the contact from the flag being pulled caused allowable contact and the player to fall.
4. **Any player in possession of the ball, whose flag or flags fall off will be considered down where the flag falls.**
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off players who are not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally covering flags with the football or jersey.
7. The play stops when the referee blows their whistle and all players should immediately stop playing.

#### XVI. Formations

1. An offensive team must have a minimum of two (2) players on the line of scrimmage (including the center).
2. **6U & 8U age group QB cannot be in the shotgun and must be at the LOS.**
3. Only one player at a time may go in motion and must travel parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage.

#### XVII. 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 permitted during the game!
  - a. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials and league field monitors have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. **If it continues, the player, players, coach, or fan will be ejected from the playing field.**
3. If a player has a concern, they bring it to their coach. If a coach has a concern they bring it to the referee between plays, or during a timeout and in a manner where players and spectators cannot hear the discussion.
4. Players, coaches, and referees may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official, including foul language/cuss words. This can result in expulsion from the league.
5. Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. No running through defenders. Running through defenders/lowering shoulders results in a 5-yard penalty from the spot of the foul.
6. Defenders are not allowed to run through (hit with their body) the ball carrier when pulling flags.

#### XVIII. Penalties

**Offensive** - All penalties are assessed for 5 Yards unless otherwise noted.

- Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.)
- Offensive-pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)
- Screening. Blocking or Running with the ball carrier. (spot foul)
- Delay of game (after the ball is spotted, exceeding the 30 second limit)
- Flag guarding. (spot foul)
- Charging (not attempting to avoid the defense)

**Defense** - All penalties are assessed for 5 Yards unless otherwise noted.

- Off-sides
- Defensive Pass Interference - Defenders cannot run into or grab potential receivers
- Illegal contact (Holding, blocking, etc)
- Defense Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball) (spot foul)
- Defense Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 7-yards from LOS)
- Roughing the passer shall be a 10 yard penalty
- Stripping the ball (attempting to cause a fumble) (spot foul)

**Team** – Below penalties are assessed as automatic first down (if against defense) or loss of down (if against offense) and carry an individual warning to the person committing the penalty (one warning to the player and team before ejection).

- Unnecessary Roughness
- Taunting
- Unsportsmanlike conduct