



2025

**High School
Flag Football Team
Division Rules**

High School Division

I. Game Rules

- **High School Team Division Flag Football may switch to a pass only league if determined necessary by the league coordinator. Flag Football should be minimal physical contact**

1. At 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 visiting team shall call the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction (end zone to defend). Teams may not choose to defer the second half.
3. 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.
4. The offensive team takes possession at their 5 yard line to start the first and second halves, and following all touchdowns. They have four (4) plays to cross midfield. If a team crosses midfield (the line to gain), it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
 - All possession changes begin where the ball is spotted. On the 4th down the offensive team has 3 choices: 1. Go for the 1st down. 2. Punt the ball to the other team. 3. Move the ball to midfield, and the opposing team begins play there. The 4th down decision must be announced to the official prior to beginning the play. The official shall then notify the other team of the decision, so they may get into the appropriate formation. On a punt, neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. (NO fake punts are allowed) Punts may be returned only on a ball that is caught in the air. If the ball touches the ground it will be down at the spot where it originally touches not where it rolls to.

II. Equipment

1. High School League will use an intermediate size football.
2. The city provides each player with an official NFL Flag belt which must be worn during games.
3. Flags must be worn on each side of the player's hips in line with the hip joint.
4. The league provides each player with a Jersey which must be worn during games. Jerseys MUST be tucked in AT ALL TIMES.
5. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets are discouraged and pockets must be taped if worn.
6. Players must wear shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are NOT allowed.
7. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
8. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the official deems hazardous. No hats and do-rags are allowed. Winter beanies are allowed.
9. All offensive players must have both flags on while on the field of play and jerseys tucked in or face an improper equipment penalty (5 yards from the original line of scrimmage and loss of down). If the flag falls off while in the field of play, this penalty will not be assessed.

Teams and eligibility

1. All players must be listed on the roster and have a parent/guardian signature if under 18 years old. Players should be added to the roster before the 3rd game. Playing with unlisted players may result in immediate forfeiture of all games in which the ineligible player participated. Players need to play in 2 games to be eligible for the post season tournament. Players can only play on one team in the league.

2. Teams are required to report to their assigned field of play by the scheduled start time or face possible forfeiture.

Regulation Play and Clock

1. Games consist of two 20- minute halves. Halftime will be 3-5 minutes. Teams change ends to begin the second half.
2. The clock runs during the first 18 minutes of each half unless a time-out is called. During the last 2 minutes of each half, the clock stops when there is an incomplete pass, a penalty, touchdown (doesn't run on the extra point conversion), change of possession, or when a ball-carrier runs out of bounds, unless a team is up by 21 points or more.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams may be issued a delay-of-game penalty by the officials if the ball is not snapped on time.
4. The offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball once it has been spotted. The offense may snap the ball at any time after the line judge has signaled the start of the 30 second snap count whether the defense is ready or not.
5. Each team has one 60 second time out per half.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. If the score is tied at the end of regulation the game will be go into overtime and the rules will be as follows:
 - i. Captains will meet at midfield for a coin toss. Winner can choose whether to go on offense or defense first. The side of the field will be chosen by the official.
 - ii. Overtime is a one point or two point conversion competition. Teams will take turns attempting to score one or two point conversions until one team has scored more points than the other team and both teams have had a turn.
 - iii. If the score remains tied after the first overtime period, the team that lost the overtime coin toss has the choice of offense or defense at the start of the second overtime. The choice of possession will alternate in each subsequent overtime period.
 - iv. During overtime, an interception may be returned.
 - v. All applicable regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - vi. There are NO time-outs in overtime.

Coaches

1. Coaches are volunteers whose role is to help young people learn to play and enjoy football. Parents are encouraged to support their youth and their coach at all times. **Each team is required to have a parent on the sideline at all times for each game. This is mandatory to help with good sportsmanship.**
2. Coaches may not come onto the field of play during a game unless a player is injured. Coaches who come on the field of play anytime during a game will be penalized. One sideline warning per game will be issued after which the following penalties will result:
 - i. Coach on the field during live action: unsportsmanlike conduct
 - ii. Coach on the field during a dead ball: delay of game
3. Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines, ONLY the head coach can address the game officials.
4. Coaches are expected to adhere to all NFL FLAG powered by USA Football philosophies, coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.

Conduct

1. Any and all physical contact is limited to incidental contact that is a normal part of flag football.
2. Players are expected to behave in a civil manner. Flag slamming, flag throwing, or other uncivil acts will result in a verbal warning for the first offense and possibly an unsportsmanlike penalty. An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for each subsequent offense will be given.
3. Taunting, trash talking, cursing or other offensive language or behavior by players, coaches or their fans will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for the first offense and forfeiture for second offense.
4. Reckless play deemed by the referee to be potentially dangerous or harmful (e.g., tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, roughing, pushing, etc.) will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Two such acts committed by one player during a game will result in automatic ejection.
5. Play that is deemed by the referee intentionally malicious (e.g., clothes lining, blatant tackling with no effort to pull flags, etc.) will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and immediate player ejection. Two such acts by one team during a game will result in immediate forfeiture and potential league sanctions.
6. Players, teams, or coaches who are found to have intentionally cheated will be suspended indefinitely.
7. Players, coaches, or spectators who are ejected from a game, must vacate the premises. Failure to do so will result in game suspension and forfeiture.
8. Field supervisors and game officials have the authority to suspend play and declare a forfeit if players, fans and/or coaches behave in a manner that is threatening or dangerous. One "game suspension" warning will be issued.
9. In addition to the penalties assessed during a game, conduct violations may carry additional penalties associated with league participation, and will be determined by league and city officials.
10. For safety reasons, spectators must be seated a minimum of 5 yards from the sidelines.

Dead Ball

1. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
2. Play is ruled dead when:
 - a. The ball touches the ground
 - b. Ball carrier's flag is pulled
 - c. Ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - d. Ball carrier's knee, elbow, hip or backside touches the ground
 - e. When a touchdown or extra point is made

Spotting the ball

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled. The ball has to break the plane of the goal line for it to be considered a touchdown.
2. If a ball carrier's flag falls out while running, the player will be considered down where the flag falls out.
3. Defensive players that start a play without a flag can intercept a pass but cannot advance it. The ball is spotted where the interception occurred.
4. A team with a lead of 28 points or more cannot advance an interception. The ball will be spotted at the point of the interception and possession will be awarded to the intercepting team.
5. The play is ruled dead when the ball makes contact with the ground. In the case of a fumble or muffed snap, the ball is spotted where it touches on the ground.

Hiking

1. The ball may either be snapped in between the center's legs or the center can turn and pitch it back to the quarterback, but the play will start when the ball moves, not when the quarterback gets the ball.

2. Center sneak plays are not allowed. Note: A center sneak is any play in which the ball is transferred immediately to the center from the player receiving the snap. A center must take at least one step forward to receive a legal forward pass or one step backward to accept a legal handoff or pitch.
3. The ball can be hiked from the center to any offensive player.
4. The ball must be snapped from the spot where the referee places it.
5. Any number of players may shift prior to the snap but only one player on offense is allowed in motion when the ball is being snapped. There is no minimum number of players on the line of scrimmage, only a center to hike the ball. The player in motion must be moving parallel to the line of scrimmage or in a backward direction. All other players on offense must be set prior to the snap.

Running

1. Any player receiving a hand-off or a pitch behind the line of scrimmage is eligible to run the ball.
2. A player receiving a backwards pitch or backwards throw can then attempt a forward pass and throw the ball down field, as long as they're still behind the line of scrimmage.
3. The player receiving the snap is eligible to run only after a rusher crosses the line of scrimmage. Whomever receives the hiked ball is the QB. Running is never allowed when a play starts in a no-run zone, unless a 1st down has occurred at midfield and a team has been moved back behind the midfield 1st down line.
4. Once the ball has been handed off or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush the ball carrier regardless of their position prior to the snap. If the quarterback who receives the ball from the center allows any offensive player to touch the ball the defense is allowed to rush at that time.
5. No pitches or handoffs are allowed once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage (no laterals).
No-Run Zones are located in the 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards before the midfield line. A running play toward the goal line or mid-field line is not allowed when the ball is spotted in the No-Run zone. The only way to advance the ball from the No-Run zone is with a forward pass.
If a player missing a flag takes a handoff they will be marked down where they received the ball.
6. Unlimited amounts of spin moves are allowed by the ball carrier.
7. **New Rule for 2025 – Once the ball is hiked to the QB (whoever receives the snap from the center is considered the QB) a 7 second count begins to pass the football –even if the ball is pitched again- it has to be thrown within 7 seconds or it is a dead ball and automatic loss of down.**

Passing

1. All forward passes can be received behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Note: a forward pass is any ball tossed or thrown overhand or underhand to a player standing in front of the player throwing it.
2. Once a legal forward pass is completed, no other passes, pitches or handoffs are allowed.
3. A player receiving a backwards pitch or backwards throw can then attempt a forward pass and throw the ball down field, as long as they're still behind the line of scrimmage.
4. Shovel passes are allowed and subject to all the rules pertaining to forward passes.
5. The quarterbacks have 7 seconds to handoff or pass the ball. A violation will result in a loss of down.
6. Interceptions may be advanced including those made during extra point attempts and during overtime with one exception. Interceptions can be made but not returned when the point differential is 28 points or greater. The intercepting team is awarded possession at the spot of the interception.

Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive forward passes or pitches.
2. If a player missing a flag catches a ball, the player is automatically down where the catch was made.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. An offensive player who voluntarily runs out of bounds during live action may not return to the field of play until the ball is dead.

5. If a defensive player pulls a receivers flag prior to a legal reception of a pitch or forward pass, the defense will be flagged for illegal flag pull, but the play will not be whistled dead. If the receiver catches the pass or pitch, the play will remain live until the receivers other flag is pulled. If both flags are pulled illegally and the catch is made, the play remains live until a defender touches the ball carrier with two hands (penalty will be assessed after the play).
6. When a pass is thrown, any player from either team has a right to catch the ball. If in attempt to catch the ball, a player hinders an opposing player by physical contact (pushing, shoving, slapping, etc.) pass interference will result. Referees will determine incidental contact that is a normal part of flag football.
7. If a ball is simultaneously caught by 2 opposing players, possession will be awarded to the offense with the ball being dead at the spot.
8. Receivers are not allowed to be impeded when going out to receive a pass.

Rushing the Quarterback

1. A player(s) who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. 2 is the maximum of defensive players who can rush the passer. An official on the field will place a marker 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. Any player who wants to rush the quarterback must start behind that marker. Rushers are not allowed to be impeded until they reach the line of scrimmage.
2. Blockers can block for the quarterback from the rushers (blocking would be a screen – no extension of arms, no initiating contact) as long as the blockers remain behind the line of scrimmage. No downfield blocking
3. Rushers of the QB can't rush over players, they need to maneuver around players. Wide receivers that cross the line of scrimmage to go out for a pass cannot be impeded.
4. Up to 2 players can rush the quarterback.
5. Rushers may jump to block a pass but may not make contact with the QB
6. If a rusher leaves the rush line prior to the snap, he/she may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
7. Once the ball is handed off or pitched, the seven yard rushing rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders are eligible to rush.
8. The player receiving the snap is eligible to run when the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage except in the No-Run zone. If the rusher crossing the line is not an eligible (didn't start behind the 7 yard line) the play will continue, the referee will throw a flag, the player receiving the snap can pass or run. The penalty will be assessed after the play and can be declined by the offense in case of advantage.
9. The quarterback can run the ball when rushed except in the No Run Zone.

Scoring

1. Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
2. Extra points are worth 1 point from the 5 yard line or 2 points from the 12 yard line.
3. A safety is worth 2 points.
4. The defense may return an interception including extra point attempts during regulation and overtime. An interception returned for a score on an extra point attempt is always worth 2 points. The exception is when the defensive team is ahead by 28 or more points in which case the ball is spotted at the point of interception.

Rule Violations

1. All penalties will be assessed at the end of the play.
2. Spinning is allowed.
3. Diving or leaping to advance the ball is not allowed. If a player dives or leaps, the ball will be marked where the player left his/her feet.

4. Blocking is allowed, but the blocker may not run into or grab the defender in any way. The blocker may not extend his/her arms to impede the defender. No pushing, 'trucking', or grabbing is allowed. It is up to the referee to determine how much contact is too much contact.
5. Any player that steps out of bounds during play must return to the field of play immediately or be penalized for illegal participation.
6. Any player that comes onto the field from out of bounds (on the sidelines before the play) after the play has begun will be penalized for illegal participation.
7. Referees will determine incidental contact that results from normal play. Players must go for the flag; no pushing out of bounds, and no grabbing the ball carrier to enable easier flag pulling.
8. The head coach (or the on-field coaches in kindergarten-2nd grade divisions) may ask the referee for a rules clarification or interpretation but the request must come immediately after the play in question. Any stoppage of play by a coach to question a call or rule pertaining to a play other than the one just played will result in a delay of game penalty.
9. Players may not question calls. Coaches may not question judgement calls.
10. Penalties may be declined.
11. In the case of offensive and defensive penalties occurring on the same play, the down will be replayed unless one of the infractions was a personal foul. In that case, the personal foul would take precedence over the non-personal foul. Example: a defender interferes with a pass and, following the whistle the offensive player turns and pushes the defensive player in anger. While both the defense and offense are flagged respectively for pass interference and unsportsmanlike conduct, the offense alone would then be penalized for the personal foul of unsportsmanlike conduct.
12. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the defense declines it.
13. If a team calls a time-out when it has none left, the official will acknowledge the timeout request but a penalty will be assessed. For the losing team, the penalty is 5 yards and 15 seconds run off the clock. If the game clock has less than 15 seconds when such a time-out is called, the game clock will expire and will result in either half time or game over. For the winning team, the penalty is 5 yards.
14. The ball may not be stripped from the runner. Players need to go for the flags.
15. Flag guarding is when the player with the ball intentionally guards his/her flag by hitting or slapping the defensive players hand away from their flag. Flag guarding can also be hiding the flags under an un-tucked shirt, or tying the flags to the belt so they don't come off.

General Penalties

1. Roughing/Unsportsmanlike conduct= 10 yards from end of play
2. Delay of game= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage
3. Too many players on the field= 5 yards from line of scrimmage
4. Illegal pitch= 5 yards from original line of scrimmage or point of infraction if beyond the line of scrimmage.
5. Improper equipment= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage and loss of down.

When the listed penalty yardage is in excess of half the distance between the goal line and the spot from where the penalty yardage is to begin, the penalty will be "half the distance to the goal line." Example: The original line of scrimmage is 7 yards from the goal line. The defense is flagged for being off-sides. The ball will be moved toward the goal and spotted at the 3 ½ yard mark.

Offensive Penalties

All offensive penalties result in an automatic loss of down

Note: Loss of down means no repeating of down. An offensive penalty on 1st down costs the offensive team yardage plus the 1st down play during which the penalty occurred. The next play run by the defense would be 2nd down. Penalties on 2nd down are followed by a 3rd down play. Penalties on 4th down plays result in a change of possession. You choose the play or the penalty.

1. Illegal Hike/Illegal Motion/False Start= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.

2. Illegal Run in No-Run Zone= 5 yards from original line of scrimmage.
3. Illegal forward pass= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
4. Offensive pass interference= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
5. Flag Guarding/Blocking= 5 yards from spot of foul.
6. Center sneak= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
7. Failure to pass within 7 seconds= loss of down only.
8. Illegal participation (player enters the field of play after the ball has been snapped) = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage and loss of down.

Defensive Penalties

ALL Defensive penalties result in an automatic first down

You choose the play or the penalty

1. Offside/Illegal rush= 5 yards from the original of scrimmage.
2. Pass interference= Ball placed at spot of the foul. In the case of pass interference in the end zone, the ball will be spotted 1 yard from the goal line.
3. Holding/Illegal contact/Illegal Flag Pull= 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
4. Holding an offensive player with the ball= 5 yards from the spot of the foul.
5. Illegal participation (player enters the field of play after the ball has been snapped) = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage and automatic first down.

Field Dimensions:

The field is 70 yards (could be subject to change) in length with two 10 yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run-zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards. Also going toward each end zone at the 5 yard line is a No-run zone where it is a pass only.