



NFL YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL BY-LAWS  
1<sup>ST</sup> – 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE (UPDATED 07/18/2022)

**Teams and Field**

Teams will consist of 8-12 players, of which five (5) players will play on the field. Play may begin with four (4) players, but four (4) will be considered a forfeit if at halftime more players have not arrived, however, the game will continue for fun and practice. **The score will be kept but there will be no overtime if the score is tied at the end of the game and no post-season tournament.** The field dimensions are 70 yds X 30 yds, with 10-yard end-zones and two 25-yard zones.

**Equipment**

Official game balls are: **Pee Wee (K2) 1712** sized leather ball for 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Graders, **Junior (TDJ) 1713** sized leather ball for 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Graders; **Youth (TDY) 1714** sized leather ball for 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> Graders. **Metal cleats or spikes are not permitted.** Small rubber cleats are recommended. No bare feet or stocking feet will be allowed. Flag length will be designated and issued by the city. Belts and flags must be visible and worn at waist level on each side. No player may tamper or alter his/her flags in any way. Shirts must be tucked in. **No shorts with pockets allowed.**

**Game Length**

The game will consist of two 20-minute halves with a running clock. The clock stops on time-outs in both halves. **The clock shall stop during the last two minutes of the second half for penalties, incomplete passes, changes in ball possession, or play going out of bounds (exception – clock will continue to run if there is a 24-point difference in the 2nd half).** Half-time will be 2 minutes in length. Each team will be allowed two (2) one-minute time-outs per half that can be used at any time during that half (1<sup>st</sup> half time-outs **cannot be carried** to the next half, and **unless your team is ahead by 24 or more points, then not time-outs allowed.**) Players must stay on the playing field during time-outs.

**Formation**

All offensive players are eligible pass receivers. The ball must be clearly snapped to and in the sole possession of an offensive player other than the center. **A legal snap can be between the legs or to the side. It must be a direct handoff and must stay outside. No laterals or pitches allowed.**

**Passer (Quarterback)**

**The passer (quarterback) isn't allowed to run forward with the ball unless it was handed off first and there's a clear separation between the passer (quarterback) and the ball.** The passer can run behind the line of scrimmage at any time before passing or handing off the ball, but they can't gain yardage.

The passer (quarterback) has 7-second pass clock to get rid of the ball.

**Also, there are no fumbles. Instead, the ball stays in possession of the offense and is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were when the fumble occurred.**

**Kickoff**

No Kickoff. The offensive team will start the game with the ball on the 5-yard line. **Offense/Defense to start the game determined by pregame coin flip.**

**Putting ball in play**

The offensive team has 30 seconds to put the ball in play.

### **Substitutions**

Substitutions shall be unlimited but may occur on dead balls only.

### **Scoring**

A touchdown is 6 points. The point after touchdown (PAT) will be attempted from the 5-yard line for one (1) point where only forward passes will be allowed, or from the 10-yard line for two (2) points where forward and handouts/running will be allowed. The coach/offensive team will be required to notify the head official of their choice. **Point after touchdown ball is dead if pass is intercepted.** Safety: two points will be awarded if the defensive team forces the ball to be downed behind the offensive team's goal line by fumbling or being downed (Ball will go back to the offence at the 10).

### **First Down**

To keep possession of the ball, the offensive team must advance the ball past the next zone line in four downs. The first offensive zone is a 20-yard zone (Mid-field), then the next zone is 25-yard zone. As soon as the ball is advanced over the zone line, the following down is a first down. A ball on the line is considered in the more forward zone.

### **Neutral Zone**

The distance between the offensive and defensive lines at the beginning of a play shall be **2 yards**, at every snap and at any place of the field.

### **Diving, spinning, Jumping, or Stripping the ball**

**No Diving of any kind is allowed.** Offensive players may not dive to advance the ball or score and defensive players may not dive for offensive players flags, being both officials' judgement. **Spinning, jumping, and stripping the ball results in immediate dead ball. The defense cannot intentionally strip the ball from an offensive player.**

### **4th down/Punting**

On 4th down the offensive team has 2 choices: **1.** Go for the 1st down, or **2.** Freeze punt the ball to the other team. 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. If punt is declared, it cannot be changed, and no fake punt is allowed. Once the ball is snapped, only the punter on the kicking (offensive) team may move and shall punt the ball. Only the receiver on the receiving team may move. All other players on both teams shall remain still. Once the ball comes into contact with the receiving player (caught) or after striking the ground and rolling to a complete stop, the ball is declared dead. The receiving team cannot lose possession during a freeze punt.

### **Forward Pass**

All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. All players on the field are eligible to receive or intercept passes. If a player has lost his/her flag(s) and catches a pass, the ball will be downed where the ball was caught. **Interceptions are returnable (live ball) on regular plays, but interceptions are dead ball on extra points attempts.** Laterals and pitches aren't allowed, only direct handoffs are permitted.

**No run zone:** no run zones are located five yards before each goal line. If the ball is spotted within or on the line of a no run zone, the offensive team must use a pass play to earn a first down or touchdown. The objective is to prevent power football in tight spaces, limiting contact.

### **Rushing The Passer**

**Any player positioned at least seven (7) yards off the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped are eligible to rush the passer,** while players who aren't rushing the passer may start on the line of scrimmage and

must steer clear of the rusher(s) and may not get in his/her way. The seven-yard rule no longer applies once the ball is handed off, and all defenders are allowed to go behind the line of scrimmage (rush) at that point.

A sack occurs when a defensive player pulls off the passer's (quarterback) flag(s) behind the line of scrimmage. The passer (quarterback), or anyone in possession of the ball, is down when their flag(s) are removed.

### **Blocking**

All offensive players are eligible to receive a forward pass and only three (3) players can be in the backfield blocking. A player may block for his/her runner or passer by using a screen block. **No contact should take place.** If a blocker uses his/her arms, elbows, legs, lowers his/her shoulder, or leaves his/her feet, it is an illegal block. Stiff-arming, spinning, and jumping are NOT allowed. A runner may not **guard/block** the flag in any manner. **Unintentional contact may occur – there is a difference between unintentional and illegal contact.**

### **Penalties**

All offensive flag football penalties result in a loss of down and yardage.

All defensive flag football penalties result in an automatic first down and some are associated with yardage.

### **Dead Balls**

The ball is “dead” every time one of these situations happen:

1. A player is down once one of his/her knees **or body** contacts the ground (**a hand on the ground to maintain balance is not a down**).
2. In removing the flag or stopping the ball, a defensive player should pull the flag and immediately set it on the ground.
3. If at any time the belt of the ball carrier falls off, the ball carrier is down at that spot and the ball is dead.
4. Any time the ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
5. All fumbles are dead the moment the ball contacts the ground. Possession of the ball remains with the team who had possession last. **Exceptions:** fumble on 4th down prior to making a 1st down is a turn-over at that spot; fumble in end zone is a safety.
6. If the ball is fumbled on the snap or on any play other than a punt, the ball is dead and the down is lost. If the ball is fumbled on a punt snap, the ball may be picked up and punted.
7. **Inadvertent whistle (ball is dead, play is over as soon as the whistle blows).**
8. **Dual possession on a pass – ball is dead and offense keeps the ball (no fighting for possession).**

### **Conduct**

No player, coach, or spectator shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner **during the game, at halftime, or after the game.** Examples are, but not limited to:

- A - Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
- B - Intentionally kicking at, swinging at, or pushing any player, spectator, coach or official.
- C - Harassing, insulting, or badgering any official, coach, spectator, or player.

### **Coaches**

All coaches must stay on their respective sidelines during all games. **Exceptions:** The 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Grade coaches can go in the field when on an offensive play to help their players position and give directions; the coach on a defensive play can step on the field to give directions but have to step out of the field before the play starts.

### **Sportsmanship**

All cities participating in this Flag Football program are committed to providing a quality recreational sport program in a spirit of sportsmanship and fellowship for all our families, friends, and neighbors. It is expected that all players, coaches, parents, and spectators will strongly adhere to all rules of play and etiquette involving the program. After each game a sportsmanship score will be given to each team. A team will be given between 1 and 5 points. If a team simply does nothing wrong, they will be given a 4. The 5th point must be earned by positive behavior (Examples: congratulating other team for a good play, helping up opposing team members,

etc.) A sportsmanship award will be given to the team with the most sportsmanship points at the end of the season.

**Home team**

Will wear light color.