



FLAG FOOTBALL

Officials Rules

Rule 1: The game, field, players, scoring and equipment

Section 1: Field

- For 3rd and 4th grades, 10 yards will be needed to obtain a first down in four or less plays. For 5th and 6th grade and 7th through 9th grade, 20 yards will be needed to obtain a first down in four or less plays.

Section 2: Players

- Eight (8) players are allowed to play per team on the field at one time. A team must have at least six (6) players to play the game. Anything less than six (6) players is considered a forfeit.
- Offense must have at least five (5) players on the line of scrimmage (LOS) every play with at least three (3) interior lineman at all times, a right and left guard and a center, lined up foot-to-foot or shoulder-to-shoulder.
- Defense must have three (3) defensive lineman, a right and left tackle and a noseguard. Tackles cannot line up wider than the outside shoulder of the offensive guards.
- Pass rushers: Only four (4) pass rushers, three (3) defensive lineman and one (1) linebacker, are allowed while the QB is in the pocket. Once QB leaves pocket, anybody is allowed to pursue QB. LB's that are going to pass rush must be lined up no closer than one (1) yd behind defensive lineman and no wider than the outside shoulder of the defensive tackles.
- Once the QB exchanges the ball with someone else or leaves the pocket, all defensive players are allowed to cross LOS and pursue ball carrier.
- For 3rd and 4th grade only, one (1) coach is allowed to be on the field at a time per team. All coaches, subs, and parents must stay off the field, unless in case of injury, during the game.
- All players must be registered and must appear on the roster for their team. If a league has a tournament, players must participate in at least 2 regular season games in order to be eligible to play in the tournament.

Section 3: Equipment

- All players must wear closed toed shoes or cleats. Metal cleats are not allowed.
- Flags must be worn by all players on the field with one (1) flag on each hip and the last flag down the middle of the backside. Shirts must always be tucked into shorts/pants. Flags should be on a player before play of down begins.
- **Ball Size: 1st & 2nd, 3rd & 4th - Pee Wee size, 5th & 6th - Junior size, 7th-9th - Youth size**

Section 4: The Game

- Game time is forfeit time. If a team doesn't have at least six (6) players, they forfeit the game.
- A game is two (2) halves of 20 minutes. Half time is **three (3)** minutes long.
- Each team receives two (2), one-minute timeouts per half. Timeouts do not carry over. In overtime games, each team will receive one (1) one-minute timeout per overtime and do not carry over.
- 5th through 9th grade games will play with a 40 second play clock. 3rd & 4th grade games will play with a 50 second play clock. Referee starts the play clock when umpire places ball.
- Game clock is a running clock and does not stop with the exception for timeouts and injuries. During the last minute of the first half, and the last two minutes of the second half, game clock will stop on all timeouts, incomplete passes, **turnovers, penalties**, out of bounds (game clock will start on the snap of the ball) and injuries (game clock will start on the ready of play whistle from the referee). **Clock will also stop upon completion of the 3rd down (clock will begin again when ball is placed if running a normal play, or will begin when ball is punted if the team chooses to punt).**
- Mercy rule timing: If one team is ahead by 17 points or more in the second half, the game clock will not stop unless there is an injury or timeout (game clock will start on the ready of play whistle from the referee). **If one team is up by 21 points by the half, the other team will receive the kickoff even if it wasn't their turn.**
- During the regular season, games can end in a tie. In post-season, overtime rules will apply.
- Overtime rules: A coin flip shall determine which team gains first possession. The ball will be placed on the 20 yd line and each team will have four (4) plays to score a touchdown, unless there is a penalty that forces another play. If a team scores, they are allowed to go for an extra point or a two point conversion. If a team scores or doesn't score, the opposing team will then have four (4) plays to score a touchdown following the same rules. If both teams score or neither team scores, another overtime will take place with the team having second possession in the first overtime taking first possession in the second overtime. Play will continue as described above alternating first possession in each successive overtime until a winner is achieved. Starting in the third overtime, teams must go for two point conversions after scoring a touchdown.

Section 5: Scoring

- A touchdown is worth six (6) points; a safety is worth two (2) points; one (1) extra point is awarded when a team scores after the original LOS starts on the five (5) yd line; a two (2) point conversion takes place when the original LOS starts at the 10 yd. **When a team in attempting a PAT/conversion, if the other team intercepts the ball, the ball is dead. It cannot be returned for additional points.**

Rule 2: Kick Offs and Punts, Passing, Blocking and Rushing

Section 1: Kick Offs and Punts

- **3rd & 4th grade doesn't kick off.**
- On all kicking plays, only the kicker is allowed to move until ball is kicked. Kick offs are from the 30 yd line unless penalty from previous play carries over to kick off. On kick offs, returning team must line up 20 yds from LOS. Ball must travel 20 yds and stay in bounds. If after two attempts ball does not travel 20 yds and stay inbounds, ball is placed on the midfield line.

- If a team leads by 21 points or more, they will not receive a kickoff and will begin on their own 20 yd line.
- A punt has to be declared by the offense before the offense lines up for the fourth (4th) down play.
- No rushing the punter. All kicking rules apply. Deep snapping is encouraged. Ball is not dead if ball hits the ground after the snap if the punter misses the snap.
- Receiving team can have two (2) players deep to catch the kick off or punt, all other defenders must be in a defensive position along the LOS. Muff rules apply. **This is a judgement call by the referees. Referees can call the play dead if worried about player safety.**
- During the last two minutes of the game, the clock will stop at the completion of 3rd down. The offensive coach will then be asked whether they are going to punt or go for it. If they are going to punt, game clock will start after the ball is punted when the ball is received/possession is gained by the receiving team. If offensive team is running a normal play, clock will be started immediately, unless there is a penalty on the previous play, or play ended out of bounds then clock will start on regular protocol.

Section 2: Passing

- Any number of lateral/backward passes are allowed. Only one forward pass is allowed per play. A forward pass must originate behind the LOS otherwise it is an illegal forward pass.
- Intentional grounding is called when either of the following occurs
 - a) QB throws ball out of bounds and no offensive player within 10 yds or
 - b) QB is out of the pocket and throws ball into ground and ball does not make it to LOS
- All players are eligible receivers for the offense.
- A muff is the unsuccessful attempt of a player to secure possession of the ball.
- A fumble is the loss of the ball after having possession other than by kicking or passing. All fumbles are dead balls at the spot of where the ball touches the ground. If the ball is fumbled, but is caught before the ball hits the ground, ball is live and play continues and possession belongs to the team who recovered the ball before it hit the ground. Ball may not be fumbled forward.
- You may muff the ball on the snap and recover it and continue play. **This is a judgement call by the referees. Referees can call the play dead if worried about player safety.**

Section 3: Blocking

- Blocking shall consist of “checking” with the hands above the belt in a standing position or a semi-crouching position. Hands of blockers must remain parallel with the frame of his body. If hands go outside of the blockers frame it is holding. Players may not grab jersey during blocking.
- A blocker contacting a non-ball carrying member of the opposing team from behind and above the waist is a block in the back.

Section 4: Rushing

- The defensive player is restricted to the use of hands to the side of his opponent (not the head). Defensive man must go around the blocker. He cannot grab, bull rush, or head slap, but may push his opponent to the side in order to make a play on the ball carrier or passer.

- Behind the LOS, defensive players cannot make any contact with the QB above the waist. Play will continue until ball is dead. Roughing the passer will be a 10 yd penalty from LOS; automatic first down.

Rule 3: Ball Carriers, and Tackling

Section 1: Ball Carriers

- The ball carrier may not run through the defensive man. He must at all times attempt to evade the tackler. It is illegal for a ball carrier to stiff-arm, or swat the hands of the defensive player away from their flags. If a ball carrier does not attempt to evade the tackler and makes unnecessary contact, unnecessary roughness will be called.
- If the ball carrier is held, tackled, or pushed out-of-bounds within 10 yds of the goal line at any time during the game, the offensive team will be awarded an automatic touchdown.
- In order for the player to go in motion he must run one (1) yd off the line of scrimmage and parallel to it. A man in motion does not count as one of the five on the LOS. Only one man can be in motion at a time.
- The center/snapper may not advance the football past the LOS until a player in the backfield takes possession of the ball.

Section 2: Tackling

- Each player shall wear flags positioned correctly at the waist.
- A ball carrier is considered down when his flag is pulled by an opponent or anything other than hand or foot touches the ground. Ball shall be placed on the ground directly beneath the position of the ball at the time ball carrier is considered down.
- If a flag of a potential ball carrier is pulled or lost before they obtain possession of the ball, once they gain possession of the ball, they must be touched by two hands simultaneously between the shoulders and knees of the ball carrier.
- Body tackling or tripping is illegal.
- A tackler may not hold onto a ball carrier to pull the flag. They must make a play on the flag, not the player.
- A defensive player may not hold onto a potential ball carrier at any time during the play.

Rule 4: The Officials and Site Supervisor, and Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Penalties

Section 1: The Officials and Site Supervisor

- Officials and/or site supervisor shall have the authority to rule on any point not specifically covered by the rules.
- Judgment calls are not to be questioned or protested.
- The officials and/or site supervisor shall have the authority to eject any player, coach, or fan for unsportsmanlike conduct.

- If there is an inadvertent whistle, offensive team has the option to replay the down over with no loss of down, or take the ball at the spot it was in at the time the whistle was blown.

Section 2: Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Penalties

- If a player, coach, or fan receives an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, they are automatically ejected from the game and must meet with the Program Director/Site Supervisor before they may return to the field to play, coach, or watch another game. If two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties occur in the same game on the same team, that team automatically loses the game. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties can be called on players (on and off the field), coaches, and fans.
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct is considered when a player, coach, or fan commits
 - a) Flagrant foul
 - b) Abusive language to any individual
 - c) Threatening officials or other players
 - d) Fighting
 - e) Taunting
 - f) Excessive touchdown celebrations
- Penalties:
 - a) Five (5) yd penalties; all penalties will be enforced from LOS.
 - i) Offsides
 - ii) False Start
 - iii) Delay of Game
 - iv) Illegal Shift, Illegal Motion, or Illegal Formation
 - v) Extra Time-outs
 - vi) Illegal Forward Pass (Loss of Down)
 - vii) Intentional Grounding (Loss of Down)
 - b) Ten (10) yd penalties called as Personal Fouls
 - i) **Flag Guarding or Stiff Arming (enforced from SOF)**
 - ii) Runner illegally wearing flags, i.e. tying them or wearing them in front (enforced from LOS and Loss of Down)
 - iii) Roughing the Passer (enforced from LOS and Auto 1st Down)
 - iv) Tripping or Tackling (if in backfield, from LOS; if downfield from SOF and Auto 1st Down)
 - v) Offensive and Defensive Holding (if in backfield, from LOS; if downfield from SOF)
 - vi) Excessive Yelling or Screaming (enforced from LOS and Auto 1st Down)
 - vii) Illegally rushing the quarterback (enforced from LOS, Auto 1st Down or Result of Play)
 - viii) Unnecessary Roughness (SOF)
 - c) Fifteen (15) yd penalties
 - i) Offensive Pass Interference (enforced from LOS)
 - ii) Defensive Pass Interference (enforced from LOS and Auto 1st Down; if with 15 yds of endzone, ball will be placed half the distance to the goal from original LOS and Auto 1st Down)
 - iii) Unsportsmanlike Conduct (enforced from LOS, Auto 1st Down, and ejection from game)

Referee Penalty Sheet and Quick Reference Sheet

Points of Emphasis

- Sideline Management and Control, Professional Communication Between Coaches and Game Officials
- Responsibility on Players to Avoid Illegal Contact
- Creating a Positive, Learning Environment for Athletes, Parents, and Coaches

5 yd Penalties

- 1) Offsides
- 2) False start
- 3) Delay of Game
- 4) Illegal Shift, Motion, Formation
- 5) Extra Time Outs
- 6) Illegal Forward Pass
- 7) Intentional Grounding (+LOD)
- 8) Sideline Warning (1st is Warning, 2nd 5yd, 3rd UC and Ejection of HC)

10 yd Penalties = Personal Fouls

- 1) **Flag Guarding or Stiff Arming (SOF)**
- 2) Wearing Equipment Incorrectly
- 3) Roughing the Passer
- 4) Tripping or Tackling (if in backfield from LOS; if downfield SOF; + Auto 1st)
- 5) Offensive and Defensive Holding (if in backfield from LOS; if downfield SOF)
- 6) Excessive Yelling or Screaming (LOS + Auto 1st)
- 7) Illegal Rush (LOS + Auto 1st or Result of Play)

15 yd Penalties

- 1) Offensive Pass Interference (LOS)
- 2) Defensive Pass Interference (LOS + Auto 1st; if w/in 15 yds of TD, ½ distance to goal +Auto 1st)
- 3) Unsportsmanlike Conduct (LOS, + Auto 1st and Ejection from game)

