

RULES

Flag Football is not tackle football or “power” football. Rather than trying to defeat or crush the opponent, teams should strive together to challenge each other by using speed, quickness, agility, and appropriate deception.

The basic concept for Flag Football is for the ball carrier to avoid bodily contact with the defense and for the defense to avoid bodily contact with the ball carrier. Emphasis is placed on participants learning the basic fundamentals, developing teamwork, and demonstrating good sportsmanship at all times.

No intentional contact of any kind is permitted.

BASIC INFORMATION

Number of Players: 5v5; however, a minimum of four (4) players must be on the field at all times. If one team only has 4 players, the opposing team may only use 4 players on the field for that game.

Fields Sizes: 2nd-3rd grade - 50 yards long with 10-yard end zone
4th-8th grade - 70 yards long with 10-yard end zone

Football Sizes – 2nd-3rd grade and 4th-5th grade Divisions: Pee Wee
6th-8th grade: Junior

PLAYING TIME & SUBSTITUTIONS

Free substitution is not allowed. Changes to the lineup can only be made at the end of each period except under special circumstances such as injury or player disqualification. This means the players on the field will be playing both offense and defense for the entire period.

Every player must play at least four (4) full periods of the game. No player should sit out for two (2) consecutive periods. Also, no player should play more than two (2) consecutive periods, unless a team has 7 or fewer players.

In order to ensure all players receive an equal amount of playing time, players must be “rotated” properly at each period break. For more details, refer to the tips and examples on Page 28 of this document.

All players should be included in the flow of the game.

Coaches who cannot abide by these playing requirements will be asked to step down from their responsibilities.

GAME DURATION & TIMEOUTS

All games will consist of eight (8) periods (4 per half) each being five (5) minutes in length for the 2nd-3rd Grade Division: six (6) minutes in length for 4th-5th Grade and 6th-8th Grade divisions. Substitutions should be made promptly at the end of each period. This is not a timeout; think hockey line change or a basketball player checking into the game. Halftime will be 6 minutes.

Each team will have two (2) timeouts per game that can only be used in the final two (2) minutes of play in each half. In addition, if the game is close (within 2 scores), a regulation clock will be used in the final two (2) minutes of the second half. This means the clock will stop for incomplete passes, when the ball carrier runs out of bounds, a change of possession, and extra point attempts.

PLAY CLOCK

Once the ball is spotted the offensive team has thirty (30) seconds to snap the ball. The goal is to run as many plays as possible each game. Offensive coaches must be committed to calling plays as quickly as possible. Those not able to do so will be asked to take on a different coaching role for their team. There will be no timeouts except for injury or unusual circumstances.

GAME ATTIRE/GAME DAY

No jewelry is permitted, including pierced ear studs and earrings. No sunglasses are permitted to be worn on the field during game play. Jerseys must be tucked in. Team members must wear league provided jerseys unless there is a case where the player is waiting for jersey delivery. If a player loses a uniform, they will have to pay for another uniform. **There is no smoking at the fields. There are no pets allowed at the fields.**

GAME FORMAT

Referees will lead both teams in prayer before every game. This is a good time to give reminders about the game and for coaches to review their substitution cards. The visiting team will start the game on offense; the home team will start the game on defense. The home team will pick which end zone to defend. The team that plays defense first will play offense first to start the second half. Because the end of a quarter does not signal a change of possession, the team with possession at the end of the quarter will retain possession after substitutions take place. Teams will switch ends of the field at the half, not after each quarter.

SCORING

Touchdowns will be worth 6 points. Safeties are worth 2 points. The score should not become the sole focus of the game at any age level. There will be no overtime play.

USING THE WHISTLE

In order to help keep players from getting confused **coaches/referees must be committed to blowing the whistle on every play** to signify that the play has ended.

FIRST DOWNS

In order to get a first down, the offensive team must cross the midfield line in four (4) downs or less. Once across the midfield line, the offensive team will then have four (4) downs to try and score (no more first downs). In short, there is only one opportunity to gain a first down per possession. NOTE: The offensive team can get a first down at any time on a defensive penalty if applicable.

On fourth down, a team has two options: (1) they may attempt to gain a first down or a touchdown. If a team fails to convert on fourth down, either by scoring or picking up a first down, the ball changes possession at the spot of the ball or (2) A team may “punt” as its fourth-down play by notifying the referee. In this case, the ball will be placed on the opposing team’s 10-yard line, and there will be a change of possession.

NO RUNNING ZONES

When the offensive team is within five (5) yards of getting a first down or scoring a touchdown (inside the designated line), they must throw a forward pass. This is called the “no run zone”. The purpose of this rule is to “force” teams to pass the ball in certain situations rather than always running the ball (which tends to be easier for most teams). Underhand tosses/shuffle passes in the no-run zone will not be considered a “pass” in the no run zone. The QB must make a throwing motion.

EXTRA POINT ATTEMPT

The offensive team will select one of the following extra point conversions to attempt. NOTE: The defensive team cannot score on any extra point attempts (no points awarded for interception that is run all the way back).

- 1-Point Conversion – from the 6-yard line
- 2-Point Conversion – from the 10-yard line

CENTER/QB EXCHANGE

There must be a Center/QB exchange where the QB lines up directly behind the Center (regular snap or shotgun). The first player to receive the ball from the Center is considered the QB (no direct snaps to designated Running Backs). Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete possession of the ball. The QB may not touch the ball and hand right back to center. No center to QB to center run play is allowed. The ball must be snapped between the legs to begin play; either under center or shotgun. Side snap or Shotgun must be used if there is a male/female exchange at QB/C. A low-profile field cone or beanbag may be used to mark the line of scrimmage.

FUMBLES

Any time the ball is fumbled or touches the ground after being in a player's possession it is considered down and the play is dead. In all cases, the team that fumbled retains possession at the spot of the fumble. One exception to this rule is with the center/quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, **the quarterback, and only the quarterback**, may pick up the ball and continue play.

BLOCKING/SCREENING

No form of blocking, screening, shielding, or running with the ball carrier is allowed. This is a tricky rule that causes much confusion. Neither offensive nor defensive players are permitted to initiate contact with opposing players. Offensive players may complete their "route" and act as decoys to draw the attention of the defense but should not be instructed to block in any form for the ball carrier.

PASSING

- The quarterback has a four (4) second pass clock. If the quarterback is not able to throw the ball in time, the result will be a loss of down and the ball will be spotted at the original line of scrimmage. A handoff or

pitch to a RB/WR or other eligible player will end the 4-second pass count.

- All forward passes must be completed behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass can be completed per play. The QB must make a throwing motion, the ball must be leave the QB's hands (be "in the air"), the ball must be thrown in a forward direction, and the receiver must catch a thrown ball. The referees have discretion to determine if it is a "pass". Underhand tosses/shuffle passes in the no-run zone will not be considered a "pass" in the no run zone. Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the defender can make a play on the ball. The defender must avoid contact with the receiver.

RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive a pass – including center and QB. The QB can only receive a pass from another player (cannot throw a pass to himself/herself).
- Players must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch
- Only one player is allowed to be in motion at a time
- If a player catches a pass with his knee(s) on the ground, it is a completed catch, the play is dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the completion. This rule helps to keep the no contact rule intact.

HANDOFFS

- The QB is not eligible to receive a handoff as a RB, run as a RB, or advance the football as a RB. The only way a QB can advance the football is to receive a forward pass after handing off or pitching to begin the play.

- Handoffs, passes, laterals, and pitches of any kind behind the line of scrimmage are allowed.
- Once the ball has been handed off from the QB to another player, then all defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage.

WHEN RUNNING WITH THE BALL

- Runners are not allowed to stiff-arm, flag guard, or use any other means to physically keep the defender from attempting to pull the flag belt (penalty will be assessed).
- Ball carriers are permitted to spin but cannot jump (both feet in the air) to avoid a defender. However, offensive players are permitted to jump when attempting to catch a pass.
- If an offensive player with possession of the ball has to get up off the ground (jump, leap, etc.) in order to continue the play, then the play is dead regardless of whether the flag has been pulled or not.
- The quarterback **CANNOT** run the ball across the line of scrimmage.
- Anyone may pitch/lateral the ball behind the line of scrimmage. Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, no pitches or backward passes may take place. Once the pitch is received, the ball carrier can run the ball, hand-off the ball or pass the ball (pass only if behind the line of scrimmage).

DEFENSIVE RULES

- Defensive players are permitted to jump and dive (have both feet in the air) when attempting to pull an opposing players flag belt.
- Defensive players are permitted to jump when attempting to break up or intercept a pass.

- Defenders are not allowed to strip or take the ball out of the hands of a player who has possession (an illegal contact penalty will be assessed).
- Interceptions may be returned and offense will take possession at the end of the return.

SPOTTING THE BALL

- The offensive team will always start with the ball on their own five (5) yard line except after an interception in which case the ball should be spotted at the spot of the flag pull. No Run Zone and First Down rules apply (just need to get to midfield regardless of where you start).
- The end of Period 4 will trigger a halftime break. The team that did not start with the ball at the beginning of the game will start with the ball in Period 5 on their own five (5) yard line.
- At the end of all other periods, the team with the ball retains possession and play continues from where it was left off after substitutions have been made (no change in field position or possession and no new set of downs).
- **The ball is spotted at the location of the player's feet when the flag belt is pulled NOT where the ball ends up.** Therefore, players should avoid trying to reach the ball forward in order to gain additional yardage (or stretch across the first down or goal line). In addition, "forward progress" does not apply.

DEAD BALLS

Play is ruled dead when one of the following occurs: The ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out, the ball carrier steps out of bounds, the ball carrier's knee hits the ground, a touchdown or safety is scored, a pass falls incomplete, or the ball hits the ground as a fumble.

BLITZING/RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

- **Rushing/Blitzing the quarterback will not be allowed.**
- Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier. This allows the defense to react quickly to a play behind the line of scrimmage.

MERCY RULE

If a team is up by 24 or more they only have 3 downs to get a first down and 3 downs to score until that point difference is trimmed below 24 pts. Regular game rules apply.

PENALTIES

Teams may decline all "live ball" penalties (meaning the result of the play stands). Dead ball penalties must be accepted. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it. If a penalty happens near the end zone, where the penalty yardage would move the ball more than half the distance to the goal, then the yardage is half the distance to the goal. For example, ball is on the 8 yard line and there is a 5 yard penalty against the defense, then the penalty yardage will be 4 yards (half the distance to the goal).

OFFENSIVE

1. ILLEGAL MOTION (more than one-person moving, false start) --- Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage ("LOS"); replay the down.

2. PASS INTERFERENCE --- Ten (10) yards from the LOS; loss of down.

3. ILLEGAL RUN --- (quarterback crosses line of scrimmage, hand off occurs in No Run Zone) --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; replay the down

4. ILLEGAL CONTACT (intentional - blocking, illegal pick, stripping, pushing, tackling, tripping, holding, grabbing) --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; loss of down.

5. FLAG GUARDING --- Five (5) yards from the spot of the foul; Play Stands

6. DELAY OF GAME --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; replay the down

7. QB PASS CLOCK VIOLATION --- Loss of down, ball spotted where the play began

8. OFFSIDES --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; replay the down.

9. ILLEGAL PASS --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; loss of down.

10. SHIELDING --- a non-contact block that impedes a defender from making a tackle. Five (5) yards from the spot of the foul; loss of down..

11. DIVING --- Five (5) yards from the spot of the foul; loss of down.

12. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT -- Ten (10) yards and loss of down

DEFENSIVE

1. ILLEGAL RUSH/OFFSIDES --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; replay the down

2. DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE --- Ten (10) yards from the LOS; replay the down.

3. ILLEGAL CONTACT (intentional - blocking, illegal pick, stripping, pushing, tackling, tripping, holding, grabbing) --- Five (5) yard from spot of foul; replay the down.

4. ILLEGAL CONTACT WITH CLEAR PATH TO END ZONE ---
Automatic Touchdown

5. ILLEGAL FLAG PULL (before the receiver has the ball) --- Five (5) yards from the LOS; automatic first down

6. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT -- Ten (10) yards and automatic first down.

CREATING GOOD MATCHUPS – SUBSTITUTION TIPS

- This substitution system is designed to provide every player an equal opportunity for improvement. The substitution system ensures that no player sits out more than one possession at a time, every player plays offense and defense in every game, in most cases, each player will play against someone of equal ability, coaches are not able to make unfair substitutions or to be accused of doing so, coaches do not have to monitor playing time for each player, and playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season.
- Be prepared with a potential lineup before coming to the field and then be ready to make changes once you get to the field (bring a blank sheet along with the examples below). You will most likely make some kind of change after connecting with the opposing coaches and seeing their lineup.
- This system is not perfect so keep that in mind when working with the opposing coaches to setup the best on the field matchups as often as possible.