



# Summer '24

## Flag Football Rules

### **I. Game**

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams will meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss or it will be left to the referee's discretion who calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has choice of either direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession at the 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive where the change of possession occurs, unless it is within their 5-yard line. Teams have an option to "punt" on fourth down, then the other team will start their possession at their own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from the spot of the last dead ball.
6. Possession changes will start at the spot of the last dead ball, unless the team opts to "punt" or the ball is inside the new offensive team's 5-yard line.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

### **II. Terminology**

#### **Boundary Lines**

the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines, and back of the end zone lines.

#### **Line Of Scrimmage**

(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.

#### **Line-To-Gain**

the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.

#### **Offense**

the squad with possession of the ball.

#### **Defense**

the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.

#### **Passer**

the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback

#### **Downs (1-2-3-4)**

the offensive squad has four attempts or "downs" to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score

#### **Live Ball**

refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

#### **Dead Ball**

refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.

## **Whistle**

sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, half time, or the end of the game.

## **Inadvertent Whistle Charging**

official's whistle that is performed in error.

the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.

## **Flag Guarding**

an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.

## **Shovel Pass**

an illegal pass attempted beyond the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner

## **Lateral**

an "illegal" backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.

## **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

### **III. Equipment**

1. The Youth Connect Club's Flag Football League provides the flag belt, flags and footballs.
2. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line.
6. Mini Stars will use a Mini size football.
7. All Stars will use a Pee Wee size 5 football.
8. Super Stars will use a Junior size 6 football.

### **IV. Field**

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
2. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zone teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

### **V. Rosters**

1. Home team will be on the left side of the schedule.

2. Little Star Teams must consist of at least three players, with a maximum of 7 (unless there are special circumstances)
3. All Star and Super Star Teams must consist of at least five players, with a maximum of 9 (unless there are special circumstances)
4. Little Star Teams must start a game with a minimum of 3 players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with 2 on the field, but no fewer than 2.
5. All Star and Super Star Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four on the field, but no fewer than four.
6. If a team is unable to meet the minimum number of players, they may forfeit and continue playing the game with borrowed players.

## VI. Timing

1. Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two twenty minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts.
2. Games for Mini Stars are played on a 30 minute continuous clock with two fifteen minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts.
3. Halftime is five minutes long.
4. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
5. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

## VII. Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT (Point After Touchdown)** 1 point (automatic if coach elects for 1) or 2 points (5-yard line 2 point conversion).

## VIII. Coaches

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all times.
2. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. Up to 2 coaches can stay on the field as long as they avoid any live play on the field.

## IX. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:

- a. The ball hits the ground.
- b. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- d. A touchdown or PAT is scored.
- e. The ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
- f. The ball carrier's flag falls out.
- g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
- i. Inadvertent whistle.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.

8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
  - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed.
  - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

## X. Running

1. Each team is allowed one (1) rush play per four (4) plays to reach the line to gain either to midfield for a new set of downs, or the goal line for a touchdown.
2. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
3. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the back field, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
4. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
  - a. "Center Sneak" play – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
5. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind.
6. "No-Run Zones" located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
7. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
8. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush. If a receiver goes behind the line of scrimmage, his defender may follow, but can not pull the flag of the quarterback, and can only pull his receivers flag IF he is handed the ball.
9. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
10. Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
11. 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.

12. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
13. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
14. 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.

## **XI. Passing**

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are NOT allowed.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds, play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.
  - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).

## **XII. Receiving**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. NO MOTION
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception.
6. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.

## **XIII. Flag Pulling**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball carrier’s possession at any time.
4. If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is 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 the head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

## **XIV. Formations**

1. Offense must have (4 for All Stars and Super Stars, or 2 for Little Stars) players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped.
3. Movement by a player who is set is considered a false start.
4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

## **XV. 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 considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!



2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials 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, coaches or parents will be ejected from the game.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
  - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
  - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
  - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
  - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as chairs and canopies 10 yards off the field.

## XVI. Penalties

### **i. General**

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgment calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

### **ii. Spot Fouls**

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	+ 10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+ 10 yards & Automatic First Down
Screening, Blocking or Running with the Ball Carrier	- 5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	-10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards & Loss of Down

### **iii. Defensive Penalties**

Offside	+ 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+ 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+ 10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	SPOT FOUL, Automatic First Down
Holding	SPOT FOUL, + 5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	SPOT FOUL + 10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL + 10 yards & Automatic First Down

### **iv. Offensive Penalties**

Offside / False Start	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
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Illegal Forward Pass (Pass received behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass beyond the line of scrimmage)	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Delay of Game	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Screening, Blocking or Running with the Ball Carrier	SPOT FOUL, - 5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down