

Eastern Nebraska High School Flag Football

(National Federation of State High School Associations football rules are the base rule set with the following modifications)

(Lincoln Falcons, Omaha Lightning, and West Omaha Wildcats)

Eligibility

- A Rule 13 election must have been filed for the male player for the current school year.
 - o If a player attends a private school that does not offer football, they may petition to play. The Board of the respective team must approve the petition. In this instance, no Rule 13 exemption is required for the player.
 - o If a player is unable to make the Rule 13 election because of their age (i.e. 18 years old), they are still eligible to play if they meet the age requirement. But it will be considered their final season of eligibility in this league.
 - o If a player has completed all high school requirements, i.e. graduated high school, he is no longer eligible.
- A player who is on the roster of an organized NSAA high school football team outside this league is not eligible to play.
- Varsity must be no older than 18 years as of Aug. 1st of the current season.
- Jr. Varsity must be no older than 15 years as of Aug. 1st (with opposing coach waivers for any older players).
- If a player attends a private school that does not offer football, they may petition to play. The Board of the respective team must approve the petition. In this instance, no Rule 13 exemption is required for the player.
- Roster reviews with potential exceptions to Rule 13 will be discussed and approved by team Boards.

Rule 1 Team

A team consists of eight players, five on the line and three in the backfield (including the quarterback). Backs line up at least one yard from the front line.

Rule 2 Equipment

Since no tackling is permitted, it is not necessary to use padded equipment. Soft pads may be worn on the arms, knees, hands, and thighs. Metal cleats are not to be worn; only cleats made of molded rubber are acceptable. No exposed metal is allowed, other than glasses. This includes jewelry, cleats (tips must be rubber) and splints (must be wrapped with tape). Mouth guards are mandatory. All equipment will be checked by officials prior to kickoff.

Rule 3 Flags

Flags shall be sonic, vacuum-retained socket flags. They are provided by Flag-A-Tag, Inc. Flags are to be in a color that is contrasting to uniforms (i.e. flags cannot be the same color as pants). If your team does not have a set of regulation flags, your opponents may have a set available. However, you are encouraged to order your own. **Shirts are to be tucked in, flags worn tight at the waist, and turned out.**

Rule 4 Uniforms

All teams must have uniform colors that complement each other. No blue jeans will be allowed. Numbers must be on the front and back of jerseys. Numbers should be 6" to 8" in height. It is not necessary to have two colors of jerseys, but if you do - one dark and one of a contrasting light color is needed (preferably white).

The home team has color preference; opposing team is responsible for wearing colors that contrast to that of the home team.

Shorts must be a solid (no stripes or two tones) contrasting color to the flag worn, without pockets or the pockets sewn shut. Tape over the pockets will not be allowed. Coaching shorts are permissible. However, these must be 16" long or 2" from the knees. Shorts that expose any part of the buttocks are not allowed.

Regulation football pants or full-length warm-ups are both permissible.

No jerseys that are faded or have badly worn numbers/letters will be permitted. All jerseys shall be of the same color and numbered 1-99. It is not necessary for players to be numbered according to position, as is the case for tackle football.

Rule 5 Game Ball

When weather conditions are favorable, a regulation leather or composite ball must be used. A regulation sized rubber ball approved for college and/or high school will be allowed if conditions are wet or muddy.

Each team is to provide at least two game balls, and these balls must meet the specifications of the National Federation of High School rules and approved before games.

****Rule 6 Game Play**

a. Formations – The offensive line must have a minimum of five players on the line of scrimmage at the start of each play. Linemen are not allowed in a 3-point stance. Offensive backs can be in a 3-point stance.

b. Backs must be at least one yard off the line of scrimmage.

c. Eligibility for Pass – Quarterbacks, backs, ends, or the two men on the very outside of the line are eligible to receive passes. If the center is on the outside of the line and he tells the referee of the play before the play starts, he is eligible to receive a pass as well. **Trick plays are to be reported to the referees prior to the start of the game.**

d. Ineligible Receiver – Any of the interior linemen except for the situation mentioned in Rule 6.c, when the center is on the outside of the line.

e. Illegal Linemen Downfield – An offensive lineman must maintain his position until the ball has left the passer's hand. If he goes beyond the neutral zone before it leaves his hand, he is in violation. An ineligible receiver becomes eligible when the ball hits an offensive or defensive player.

f. Lateral Pass – A lateral pass is any underhand or overhand pass thrown parallel to the goal line, or in the opposite direction from which the offensive team is advancing. A lateral pass that is dropped shall be considered a fumble and dead where it hits.

g. Illegal Motion – The offensive line must remain stationary from the time the command "set" or "down" is given until the snap of the ball. Only one back can be put in motion, and he must run parallel to the line of scrimmage. A lineman on the end line can step back a yard and go in motion, but another player must step up to replace him on the line to keep 5 players on the line. Six players can be on the line, but only the outside two are eligible unless one of the outside players steps back off the line and stays set or goes in motion.

h. Offsides – A player is offsides on defense when he is in the neutral zone before the ball is snapped. **The play will be blown dead immediately.**

i. The ball carrier is allowed to spin but no hurdling of an upright player, or intentional diving (leaving their feet). The runner may not straight arm an opponent, nor can he deliberately run over a defensive man. **The ball carrier must attempt to avoid contact with the opponent.**

j. The ball carrier may reach the ball out but must keep his feet: A ball carrier may not dive to avoid a flag pull or to gain ground. Jump passes are permitted as long as not committed to avoid tackle.

k. If a player loses his flag without it being pulled / influenced by an opponent and they are in possession of the ball, they will be deemed down at the spot where the player is subsequently touched by any player of the opposing team.

l. The official will mark the down at the **location of the flag when the flag is pulled.** (For clarity, the only exception to this is at the endzone, where, if the ball breaks the plane of the goal line, it is a touchdown.)

Rule 7 Safety

If a flag is taken from the offensive team within their end zone, or if a fumble is made within their end zone, the defensive team is awarded two points. The offensive team will have a free kick from the 20-yard line.

The kicker can punt or kick the ball from the tee.

Rule 8 Blocking / Contact

Blocking is allowed **only with open hands**. The initial block must be on the opponent's torso defined as between shoulders and waist and on their front or side. Blocking in the back will be penalized as clipping. **(Note: if defender is spinning to avoid a block this will not be considered clipping)**. Hands to the neck, face, back, and below the waist are not allowed. Defensive players shall not be allowed to grab an offensive player with closed fists, or grab the jersey and throw an offensive player.

The block must be executed in such a manner that the blow does not drive through the opponent. No part of the blocker's body, except his feet, shall make contact with the ground during the block. For offensive or defensive players, any rough tactics, such as an attempt to run over, push through with hands, the use of extended fists or elbows, or any contact to the head must be penalized as unnecessary roughness. Any lowering of the shoulder by an offensive or defensive player to initiate forceful contact must be penalized as unnecessary roughness.

Rule 9 Conduct of Players, Coaches and Others Subject to the Rules

Section 1. Deliberate Flagrant Fouls – Suspension from the game.

Whenever, in the judgment of any game official, the following acts are deliberate or flagrant, the players involved shall be suspended from the game:

- a. Using fists, kicking, or kneeling
- b. Using locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm
- c. Tackling the ball-carrier, as in regulation football
- d. Roughing the kicker

- e. Any other deliberate or flagrant act

Section 2. Prohibited Acts (First offense – 15-yard penalty and warning)
(Second offense – 15 yard penalty and ejection from the game)

There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the rules.

Unsportsmanlike conduct includes the following:

- a. Abusive or insulting language
- b. Intimidating, threatening or interfering with a coach, game officials or other players
- c. Any acts of unfair play
- d. Managers, coaches, or others on the field of play at any time without permission, or their interference of any nature with the progress of the game
- e. Players leaving the field of play other than during the intermission at half-time
- f. Using a “hide out play” by placing a player or players near the side line who were not within fifteen yards of the ball at the ready-for-play signal
- g. Attempting to substitute a suspended player
- h. Intentionally pulling or removing a flag from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player
- i. Spiking the ball, taunting opponent, or other theatrics before or after a touchdown
- j. If an ejection or suspension is incurred by a player, coach or other attending individual, during the first half of a game it will be applied only to the current game in progress. If the ejection or suspension occurs during the second half of the game, the ejection or suspension will apply to the next applicable game that this individual would normally participate in. This does not extend to the next season.

Section 3. Unfair Acts

If a team refuses to play within two minutes after being ordered to play by the referee, or if play is interfered with by an obviously unfair or unsportsmanlike act not specifically covered by the rules, or if a team repeatedly commits fouls which can be penalized only by halving the distance to its goal line, the referee may enforce any penalty he considers equitable, including the awarding of a score. For refusal to play or for repeated fouls, the referee shall, after one warning, forfeit the game to the opponents.

Section 4. Personal Fouls – Player Restrictions 10-yard penalty

Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul.

- a. No player shall block in a manner that would cause his feet, knees, or legs to strike an opponent. All blocking shall be done with the feet in contact with the ground.
- b. There shall be no high/low blocking.
- c. There shall be no two-on-one blocking, except as indicated by rule.
- d. There shall be no tripping or clipping.
- e. There shall be no contact with an opponent who is on the ground.

f. The runner shall not be thrown to the ground.

g. There shall be no hurdling of an upright player. Hurdling shall be interpreted as an attempt by the runner to jump over a player with both feet or with the knees of the runner foremost.

h. No player shall contact an opponent obviously out of the play either before or after the ball is declared dead.

If, in the judgment of the officials, fans display un-Christian behavior, it could result in the offender being restricted from game attendance and removal from premises. Any and all fans will be asked to leave the premises if they can't control themselves. Any fan's behavior that is unbecoming or un-Christlike and disruptive to the play of game will become the responsibility of the team's coach. A 15-yard penalty will be given for unsportsmanlike conduct against the team.

Rule 10 Fumble

When a fumble, misdirected snap, or dropped lateral pass touches the ground, it shall be declared dead at that point.

On a kick-off or punt return, if the ball touches the receiver and strikes the ground, it shall be declared dead at that point.

Rule 11 Touchback

A kick-off or punt becomes dead and is a touchback **if it crosses the goal line**. It will then be brought to the 20-yard line.

Rule 12 Scrimmage kicks (Punting, Field Goal and PAT's)

a. The kicker shall have the protection of two stationary players standing five yards from the line of scrimmage and two yards on either side of the kicker. These stationary players shall not move, they shall not block, may not be touched. A defensive player may not go in front of or between them.

They must stand upright with both arms fully extended above their heads. Defensive players must go around the stationary players to accomplish de-flagging of kicker.

b. During a field goal try the holder will **not** be considered as one of the stationary players. **The defense cannot rush from the side of the holder. He must go around the pillar. He cannot touch any offensive player.**

c. If a punt is to be made, it must be declared to the officials before the start of the play

The offensive team may elect to deep snap the ball to the punter or take a direct snap and run back to a punting position. If punting team elects to deep snap and the ball is dropped by the punter, the ball will be deemed a fumble and be dead at the spot of the dropped snap. If it is on 4th down, a change of possession will occur. If it is on a quick kick, the offensive team retains possession at the spot of the fumble.

d. A quick kick is allowed on any of the first three downs. (The offensive team must declare to the official that they wish to quick kick. Then the defensive team is told not to move until the ball is kicked. Once the ball is kicked, the defense may run back and try to return the ball. Encroachment penalty will be imposed if any defensive player moves before the ball is kicked.)

e. Offside penalty will be imposed for crossing the line of scrimmage too soon.

f. Fake kicks are allowed; the stationary players will lower their arms and may assume blocking postures at the snap of the ball.

g. No player of the kicking team shall touch a scrimmage kick which is beyond the scrimmage line until it has been touched by an opponent who is beyond the scrimmage line. The penalty is a spot foul (The ball is dead where touched. There is no other penalty.)

Rule 13 Kick-Offs

Section 1.

a. Kick-off shall be executed from the 30-yard line.

b. The clock shall not start until the ball is touched by a member of the receiving team. No onside kicks are allowed, except as outlined in Section 2. The kicking team cannot gain possession of a punt or a kick-off by recovering the football.

c. If the ball is kicked out of bounds the receiving team may elect to have a re-kick with a 5 yard penalty or take it where the ball exited the field of play.

d. If the kicking team has elected to kick the ball and there is a penalty, time out or other stoppage during the kickoff play, they may not re-elect to attempt an onside kick.

Section 2. (All of Section 2 is new)

a. If a team wishes to attempt an onside kick, they must notify the referees and the other team. The attempting team must be either behind or tied with the opponent.

b. The ball will be placed on their 15-yard line.

c. The kicking team will bring out their offensive unit and proceed to attempt a 4th and 15.

d. If the kicking team reaches the line to gain the play is blown dead. The ball will be spotted on the 30-yard line.

e. If the receiving team stops the kicking team it will be treated as a turnover on downs.

f. All regular rules of the game will apply except the following four.

1. The kicking team may not elect to punt.

2. If a pass is caught by the kicking team beyond the first down marker the play is blown dead. The kicking team will receive the ball at the 30-yard line. The kicking team is not permitted to score on the onside kick attempt.

3. If there is a penalty on the receiving team it shall be enforced as half the distance to the

line to gain.

4. If a safety occurs the receiving team will have the ball on the 1-yard line.

g. This will be an untimed down with a one-time 3 second run off regardless of the outcome or penalties.

h. If a team elects to attempt an onside kick they may reelect after a penalty or a timeout by either team. If a reelection occurs after a penalty, it will be enforced as intended on their selected attempt. This is a one-time decision and may not be changed after one re-election.

i. If the kicking team is out of timeouts, they may take a special delay of game penalty to reelect. This delay of game penalty will not incur a loss of down.

NOTE: Interceptions by the receiving team may be returned for a touchdown or extra yards.

Rule 14 Tie Game

a. A coin toss determines which side shall attempt to score first, and at which end zone the scores shall be attempted.

b. Each team in turn will receive one possession, starting with first-and-goal from the 10

c. The game clock does not run during overtime; the play clock, however, is enforced.

d. A team's possession ends when it scores (touchdown or field goal), misses a field goal, or turns over the ball (either on downs or by the defense otherwise gaining possession). As usual, a touchdown by the offense is followed by a try for one or two points.

e. The defense is allowed to score if it gains possession. Regardless of the position of the ball at the end of the play, the team assumes offense and will begin at the 10, if there was no score.

f. Each team receives one charged time-out per overtime procedure

g. If the score remains tied at the end of the overtime procedure, an additional overtime procedure is played. The team with the second possession in one overtime procedure will have the first possession in the next overtime procedure. A two-point conversion must be tried if a touchdown is scored.

h. If the score remains tied at the end of the second overtime procedure a final overtime will be played. In the third overtime the teams will do alternating two-point conversions until one team fails to convert.

Rule 15 Holding

a. Any action against the runner, other than pulling his flag, is considered holding.

b. If a defender forcing the ball-carrier out-of-bounds is by judgment of the officials is found to be intentional and is the last man between ball carrier and goal, a score will be awarded.

Rule 16 Hacking

Offensive:

It shall be illegal for the ball-carrier to hack, punch, or stiff-arm any defensive player (10-yard penalty from point of foul and loss of down).

Defensive:

The defensive player must play for the ball carrier's flags, he's not allowed to try to slap at or strip the football. (10-yard penalty from point of foul) [Emphasis: Defender may jump to block a pass but any contact with the Quarterback (or ball in QBs hands) during or directly after the throwing motion will be penalized.]

Rule 17 Miscellaneous Penalties

- a. Illegal use of flags – 10 yards
- b. Illegal use of offensive backs – 10 yards
- c. Offsides – 5 yards
- d. Pushing ball-carrier out-of-bounds – 10 yards from point of infraction
- e. Ineligible man down field – 5 yards
- f. Illegal procedure – 5 yards
- g. Delay of game – 5 yards
- h. Illegal forward pass or intentional grounding – 10 yards from point of infraction
- i. Unsportsmanlike conduct of any kind – 15 yards
- j. Pass interference – **10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down**
- k. Unnecessary roughness – 10 yards
- l. Hurdling into any player is prohibited in any form – 10 yards from point of infraction (the down counts)
- m. Clipping – 10 yards from point of infraction (the down counts)
- n. Tackling – 10 yards added to end of run
- o. Charging (when offensive man deliberately runs over defensive man) – 10 yards from point of infraction (the down counts) **If the defense player is set, the offensive player must attempt to avoid contact.**
- p. Offensive holding – 10 yards
- q. Offensive Pass Interference – 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
- r. Encroachment – 5 yards
- s. Lowering the shoulder to initiate forceful contact – 10 yards

Rule 18 Officials

State, high school or college-approved officials that referee regulation tackle football games will be used. All 8-man games will have 3 officials.

Rule 19 Scoring

- a. Six points for a touchdown
- b. Three points for a field goal
- c. Two points for running or passing extra point (3-yard line)
- d. One point for kicking extra point
- e. Two points for safety

Rule 20 Fair Catch

- a. When a player makes a fair catch, the ball becomes dead where it is caught and belongs to the receiving team at the spot.
- b. A valid catch signal is the extending of one arm at full arm's length above the head and waving the hand from side to side of the body more than once.
- c. A muffed fair catch shall be declared dead when the ball makes contact with the ground.

Rule 21 Playing Field

- a. The playing field shall be eighty yards in length from goal line to goal line. (If available)
- b. Each end zone shall be ten yards in length.
- c. Coaches and players are restricted to sideline area between 20-yard markers
- d. The field shall be forty yards in width from sideline to sideline.

Rule 22 Time

- a. 12-Minute quarters running clock.
- b. Clock definition
 - 1. Running clock:
 - i. During the running clock portion it will stop on time-outs, change of possessions, penalties and before the extra point after a touchdown.
There is 1 minute between the score and the kick off. The clock will start according to official high school rules.
 - ii. Two-minute Warning – Clock will be stopped and a warning given to each team captain before the end of the half.
 - 2. Last two minutes of each half:
In the last two minutes of the half and the game, regulation time is kept. The clock will stop on out of bounds, incomplete pass, scores, first downs, change of possessions and penalties. The clock starts on the ready for play whistle after officials' time out, first downs, change of possessions and penalties. For time outs, out-of-bounds and incomplete passes, it starts on the snap of the ball.
- c. 25 second play clock will be used
- d. One minute between 1st and 2nd quarters and between 3rd and 4th quarters
- e. Eight-minute half-time between 2nd and 3rd quarters (five-minute for bad weather and late games)

f. Three time-outs per team per half

g. Correctable error is charged to the officials. If ruling stands, time-out charged to team inquiring.

P L E A S E T A K E N O T E . . . Any situation not covered in these rules should be brought to the attention of the Team director.

6-Man Exceptions

Rule 1: A team will consist of 6 players, 3 on the line and 3 in the backfield.

Rule 3: Velcro flags are acceptable.

Rule 6a: Only three players need to be on the line.

Rule 6c: All players are eligible receivers.

Rule 13: Only 2 players need to be on the 40-yard line during the kickoff.

Rule 18: Only 2 Officials are required.

League Policies

Summary of Suggested Concussion Management

All coaches are required to take a concussion protocol training course.

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate health-care professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

Rules Revisions History

- 3/30/2024 Lightning AD Steve Volz, Wildcats AD Gregg Madsen and Coach Aaron, and Falcons AD Brook Berney and Coach Josh Lyon agreed to add League Policies section including concussion training and 4 step protocol if concussion is sustained.