TDCAA

Flag Football

Playing Regulations

PART A: SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE)

All coaches must review and follow the most recent copy of the OPASSE GUIDELINES for the sport they are coaching (under Secondary, Interschool).

Please take special note of the following requirements associated with:

- Risk Management
- First Aid
- Special Rules/Instructions
- Supervision
- Coaches' Expectations and Qualifications (for further information on sport-specific NCCP training, visit www.coach.ca)
- Excursion/Permission Forms: TCDSB OPHEA SAMPLE

Concussion Awareness and Safety

In accordance with Policy/Program Memorandum No. 158, the TDCAA will follow and support the mandates of Rowan's Law. The following must occur annually, at the commencement of the athletic season:

a) Coaches must complete online requirements. See your school principal for the link and further information.

b) Coaches will have student-athletes review and follow a Concussion Code of Conduct: TCDSB Student Code of Conduct (in section 8)

OPHEA's Sample Code of Conduct

c) Coaches will provide Ontario Concussion Awareness Resources to student-athletes and parents: Concussion Guides for Athletes and Parents

In the event of a suspected concussion, convenors, coaches, and student-athletes must follow an established return-to-play protocol.

Note: TCDSB has established concussion return-to-play protocols for its students and coaches to follow. Non-TCDSB participants should reference their board's or OPHEA's concussion protocols.

Coaches may find it useful to have a recognized Sport Concussion Recognition Tool with them for practices and competition.

Supervision – Visiting Teams

Each school and coach should be familiar with the host school's visitor policy.

When teams bring spectators (e.g., on a fan bus), each participating school must provide appropriate supervision separate from the team coach(es). Schools should coordinate these arrangements with the participating schools' administrations.

PART B: TDCAA CONSTITUTION

Junior Varsity and Senior Varsity Flag Football are official TDCAA activities. Flag football follows OPHEA/OPASSE safety standards and OFSAA playing regulations.

REGISTRATION

Schools must register for Flag Football at the designated time. A school may withdraw its team before distribution of the final schedule. The school will be charged only the $25.00 registration fee. A school that withdraws its team after the schedule has been distributed will be subject to the following:

- An automatic $100 fine.
- Automatic ineligibility for competition in flag football the following year. This may be appealed to the TDCAA Executive.

ELIGIBILITY / TRANSFERS

Eligible athletes must satisfy the By-Laws and Standing Rules of the TDCAA Constitution.

- All eligibility shall be completed electronically through the Athletic Eligibility List System (AELS) which is coordinated through the OFSAA office. Athletic Directors have the code for their schools to access the HUB.
- Eligibility must be completed before the first league game. (It is recommended that registration be completed before the first practice). In a single-day meet or tournament format, eligibility must be filed at least three days prior to the meet or tournament.
- Athletes and coaches must be listed on the HUB.
- Approved transfers are included on the eligibility form. Athletes who have not been approved must not be included until the athlete has been approved.
- All students who transfer into your school (excluding students entering Grade 9 in their first year of high school) are ineligible for competition for a period of twelve months from the date of transfer. To become eligible, transfer students must complete the “TRANSFER APPEAL FORM” fully and forward it to the TDCAA Transfer

  Chairperson (East: Maggie Carnavale – Senator O’Connor or West: Alana Driscol - Father Redmond). An athlete awaiting a transfer appeal decision is ineligible to play in any games (league or exhibition or tournament). This athlete may practice with the team until the transfer has been approved and the athletic director has been notified.
- A student who transfers into your school in the second semester is ineligible to compete in winter sports (Alpine Skiing; Snowboarding; Swimming; Jr & Sr. Girls’ Volleyball, Boys’ & Girls’ Hockey, and Jr. & Sr. Boys’ Basketball), even if their transfer is approved.
- An athlete whose transfer is denied has the right to appeal the decision to the TDCAA Transfer Appeal Board.

ELIGIBILITY / AGE

- Open to Grades 9–12
- Eligibility for the TDCAA and OFSAA is based on the athlete’s year of birth. An athlete is eligible to compete in high school sports for five years from the time they entered grade nine. Athletes must meet both requirements.

There is no appeal to this rule.

Refer to the TDCAA website for eligibility dates for each school year.

Novice – athlete must have reached their 14th birthday by January 1 prior to the school year in which the competition is held (Jan 1 , 2026) and be in Grade 9

Junior - athlete must have reached their 15th birthday by January 1 prior to the school year in which the competition is held (Jan 1 , 2026)

Senior - athlete must have reached their 19th birthday by January 1 prior to the school year in which the competition is held (Jan 1 , 2026)

ELIGIBILITY / ACADEMICS

An athlete must be a bona fide student at their school.

Students with Fewer Than 22 Credits:

-non-semester schools – must be registered in a minimum of six (6) full-day school credit courses.

-semester schools– must be registered in a minimum of three (3) full-day credit courses in the semester that Flag Football takes place (Fall).

Students with More Than 22 Credits:

-non-semester schools – must be registered in a minimum of four (4) full-day school credit courses

-semester schools – must be registered in a minimum of two (2) full-day credit courses in the semester that hockey takes place (Winter).

LEAGUE STRUCTURE

A) START TIME – Flag football has a tournament format.

B) MAXIMUM NUMBER OF GAMES – Flag Football has a tournament format

C) AWARDS – In sports with fewer than six teams, only gold medals will be presented.

D) CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL BUSES – If the TCDSB cancels buses for weather conditions, all scheduled games are automatically cancelled.

PROTEST

Any protest must be made in writing to Eva Roser (St. John Henry Newman) within 24 hours of the scheduled game or activity. A protest must be approved by the athletic director.

PART C: SPORT-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Flag football is an official TDCAA activity. It follows OPHEA/OPASSE safety standards and OFSAA playing regulations.

Uniform

1. Equipment

Each player is responsible for the equipment listed below, unless otherwise noted:

a. Mouthguard

- Mandatory at all times.

b. Shoes

- Running shoes or plastic cleats (i.e. soccer cleats).
- No metal cleats or baseball cleats allowed.

c. Shorts / Track Pants

- May not have exposed pockets, belts, belt loops, or drawstrings.
- Players can wear track pants or shorts with pockets, as long as they are inside out.

d. Shirts / Jerseys

- All teams should carry a set of pinnies in case of similar uniform colours.
- Shirts must be long enough to tuck into pants.
- Shirts must cover the player's shoulders, chest, and back.
- Players should have both a light-coloured and a dark-coloured shirt.
- Hoodies are not permitted.

e. Flag Belt

- A one-piece flag belt (i.e. Triple Threat or Flag Tag) that cannot be tied at any point.
- The belt must have three flags permanently sewn onto the webbing. The entire belt must release when pulled.
- The belt must not be rolled up, shortened, or covered by a shirt.
- All shirts must be tucked in, and are not permitted to hang over the flag belt.
- Should a player lose their flag belt legally or illegally during a down and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag (a one-handed touch by the defence between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made.
- Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be flagged. It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who is not in possession of the ball. In cases where a flag belt is removed illegally an automatic 10-yard penalty will be assessed.
- Runners shall not flag guard by using any part of the body or ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. The penalty is an automatic loss of 10 yards.
- Flag guarding includes, but is not limited to:
    - Swinging a hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent its removal.
    - Placing the ball over the flag belt to prevent its removal.
    - Lowering the shoulders to prevent an opponent from removing the flag belt.

f. Illegal Equipment

- Headwear containing hard, unyielding, or stiff material (including billed hats), items with exposed knots, and jewellery.
- Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped.
- Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body.
- Exposed metal on clothes or person.
- Towels attached at the player's waist.
- Hard braces must be fully covered with a sleeve or soft padding. Soft pads are permitted.

2. Sportsmanship and Aggressive Play

- Sportsmanship and consideration for the well-being of others are integral parts of the game.
- Participants must exhibit sportsmanship and fair play.
- Participants must consider the safety of all players in the game.
- Arguing, obscene language, and threats directed at players, officials, or spectators will not be tolerated.
- Any ejected player will not be eligible to play for the remainder of the tournament.

3. Body Contact

Body contact (blocking, picking and screening) is not permitted.

4. Scoring

- Running the ball is allowed, but only in the running zones.
- No running or rushing is permitted inside the 10-yard line. At the 10-yard line, the ball is live. A two-point convert is a live-ball play, and all players must start on the goal line.
- In this zone, the offence may throw directly into the end zone or complete a short pass that the receiver may run into the end zone after the catch.
- On no-run, no-rush plays inside the 10-yard lines, all forward passes must be completed beyond the original line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has 5 seconds to pass the ball in this zone. Officials will count aloud to five, then declare the play dead.
- There is also no rushing the quarterback in this zone, as the defence does not line up at least 10 yards from the ball. The defence may line up anywhere inside the 10-yard line.
- Points can be scored in the following manner:

Touchdown	Advancing the ball into the opponent's end zone	6 points
Convert	A team scoring a touchdown may attempt to add to its score by means of a scrimmage play from one of three distances. Note: During a convert attempt, the ball remains live, allowing the intercepting team to return the try for 2 points to the other end zone. Running plays and rushing are permitted on three-point converts because they take place outside the 10-yard line.	1 point (played from the 5-yard line) 2 points (played from the 10-yard line) 3 points (played from the 20-yard line)
Safety	Flagging an offensive player in their own end zone	2 points
Single Point (Rouge)	If the ball is punted into the defensive team's end zone by the offensive team, a single point is scored: · when the ball becomes dead in possession of a team in its own end zone or, · when the ball touches or crosses the Dead Line or a Sideline in Goal, and touches the ground, a player or some object beyond these lines. · A single point is awarded when the kickoff travels through the back of the end zone regardless of being touched or not as long as the ball makes contact on the field of play beforehand. A kickoff that travels	1 point

	through the end zone without touching the ground will not be awarded a point. ● If a kickoff hits the ground, travels to the end zone and then goes out of bounds in the end zone, it is a single point.	

Single points are not awarded in the following situations:

- if a ball is downed in the end zone after being intercepted in the end zone
- if a punted ball hits the goalposts
- when a kickoff goes into the end zone and then out of bounds without being touched
- When a kickoff travels in the air through the end zone without touching a player or the ground.

5. Number of Players

- Seven on-field players per team.
- A team must have six eligible players in team sweaters, with their flag belt and flags on the field, at the designated starting time or a default will be imposed.
- Defaulted games will be scored 21-0 in favour of the non-defaulting team.
- A five-minute grace period will be allowed.
- A team must have a minimum of six players on the field for the duration of the game or they will lose the game by a score of 21-0.
- If the non-offending team is winning when the default occurs, the existing score will stand.

6. Length of Game

- Playing time shall consist of two 15-minute halves with running time.
- At the 15-minute mark, there shall be a total of 5 more plays from scrimmage to end each half. Converts and kickoffs are not considered plays.
- Halftime shall be 3 minutes.
- Each team will have a maximum of 2 timeouts per game.
- Officials may call timeouts to deal with measurements, rule explanations, or injuries.

7. Start of Game

- The kicking team is determined by a coin toss conducted prior to the game.
- The winner of the coin toss can elect to be the Home team or the Visiting team. In the first half, the visiting team is given the option to receive the kickoff, to kick off, or to defend an end of the field. The home team then selects the remaining option. The home team has the first choice of options at the beginning of the second half.
- To begin a game, a team will kick off from their own kickoff line, which is 10 yards back from the centre of the field.
- The ball, unless touched by an opponent, must be kicked more than 20 yards (Outside of centre circle) towards the opponent's Goal Line before it may be legally touched by a member of the

kicking team. PENALTY: Kickoff repeated or receiving team may take possession at the point the ball was first touched by the kicking team.
- The ball, unless touched, shall not go out of bounds in the field of play. PENALTY: Kickoff repeated; or receiving team, may take possession at the point where the ball went out of bounds plus 10 yards up, or make the team kick it again 10 yards back.
- To begin the series of four downs, the ball is placed on the ground at the point the ball carrier was flagged on the kickoff. This marks the line of scrimmage.
- Officials shall use their discretion to ensure player safety on muffed kickoffs.
- If a player muffs the kickoff forward, they can pick it up and run it as long as it does not create a collision risk. Officials will determine whether the play must be whistled dead.

8. Possession

- The team that has possession of the ball is termed the offence and the team that doesn't is called the defence.
- The offence has 4 downs to obtain 20 yards, keep possession of the ball and attempt to score.
- If they fail to gain 20 yards and a first down, the ball goes to the defence and they, in turn, become the offence and have four downs to obtain 20 yards, keep possession of the ball and attempt to score.
- All measurements can be in yards or in metres.
- All offensive players must take a position on or behind the line of scrimmage.
- All defensive players must take a position at least ten yards from the line of scrimmage on the opposite side.
- A player designated as the centre will then begin the play by snapping the ball between the legs to the quarterback who must receive the ball at least five yards behind the line of scrimmage. Therefore, no direct snaps under centre are allowed.
- Receivers are not permitted to cross the line of scrimmage until after the snap.
- The play is terminated when a defender flags the ball carrier.
- An offensive player may not extend the ball at any point in time, including diving forward. Play will be deemed dead and a 10-yard penalty will be enforced. If this occurs while scoring a touchdown, the points will not be awarded.

9. Punting

- Punting is permitted, but must be declared to the officials and opposing team.
- The punting team does not have to snap the ball to the punter. The punter may start with the ball to initiate the kick.
- The defending team is not permitted to rush on a punting play.
- Fake punts are not permitted.
- The offensive team must not cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted.
- No rushing the punter is allowed.
- When a punted ball hits the goalpost, it is considered dead and is placed at the 20-yard line.
- Dropped punts are dead balls.
- The "no yards" rule is in effect (5-yard halo).
- A punt can travel through the end zone untouched without hitting the posts or ground and it will still count as a single point.

10. Line of Scrimmage

- The centre is the only offensive player required to be set on the line of scrimmage at the snap.
- All defensive players must begin the play at least ten yards away from the line of scrimmage.
- Players in motion do not count as players on the line of scrimmage.
- Following the ready for play whistle and until a legal snap, no defensive player may encroach, touch the ball, stand in, or in any other way interfere with the offensive team.
- PENALTY: Dead-ball foul for encroachment: 5 yards from the succeeding spot.

11. Bean Bags

- The officials use bean bags to mark the line of scrimmage, the rusher's starting point, and the first-down line.
- Officials will place these bags at the appropriate spot prior to the start of each play.
- Officials must use a different-coloured bean bag to mark the first-down line.

12. Rushers

- The defence must line up 10 yards from the ball.
- Anyone may rush from this point when the ball is lifted off the ground by the centre.
- A team may use more than one rusher on a play.
- The rusher is allowed a clear and unobstructed path to the quarterback after the ball is snapped.
- No one is permitted to block or obstruct the rusher in any way.

13. Fumbles

- Any ball that is fumbled during a down will be dead by rule once it has touched the ground.
- All fumbles are blown dead as soon as the ball strikes the ground.
- When a ball is fumbled or muffed, including an incomplete attempted lateral or hand-off, the play is blown dead and the ball is placed at the point where it first touched the ground, if in an onside direction, or at the point it was last touched, if in an offside direction, i.e. in the least advantageous position for the team that fumbled or muffed the ball.

14. Ball Carrier Contacts Ground

- If a ball carrier touches the ground with any part of their body, other than their feet, the play is whistled dead at that point.
- If the ball carrier has the ball in their hand and touches the ground with it, the play is also dead.
- The only exceptions are in the case when a quarterback is receiving a snap, or when a kickoff returner is receiving a kickoff.
- In each of these cases they may have a hand or knee down (third point down) and still be allowed to get to their feet and continue the play.

15. Passing / Receiving

- Teams are permitted only one forward pass on each scrimmage play.
- There are no forward passes permitted on kickoff or punt returns.

- Teams may lateral the ball among teammates as many times as they wish on any play.
- A lateral is a pass in which the ball travels parallel to, or in the direction of, the passer's dead ball line.
- An attempted lateral that results in the ball going forward to a teammate is illegal and is ruled an offside pass when caught by a teammate or when it strikes the ground.
- If the opposing team intercepts the lateral pass whether forward or backward, the play will continue until the ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed. This will be penalized as an illegal pass: loss of 5 yards, loss of down and the clock will start on the ready for play.
- If a player is in the air attempting to catch a ball, the player must contact the ground with at least one foot in bounds with the ball in their possession prior to going out of bounds, unless contact by an opponent causes the player to first touch out of bounds. If possession of the ball is lost simultaneously when they hit the ground, it is not a catch. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the offensive team
- Any contact that, in the view of the official, interferes with the attempt to catch a pass (offensive or defensive player) is pass interference unless, in the view of the official, it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or touched prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offensive line of scrimmage. Clarification: Hindering an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept or bat the ball is pass interference, even though no contact was made.
- There are two types of interference penalties:
- Target Zone — Foul is committed at a spot where the official deems the ball to be catchable. Ball is placed at spot of the foul no matter where on the field.
- Remote Zone — 10 yards from previous line of scrimmage and an automatic first down.

16. Personal Fouls

Any act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. Players shall not:

- Make contact with an opponent (which may warrant ejection).
- Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
- Trip, hold, clutch or grab an opponent.
- Hurdle another player.
- Position themselves on the shoulders of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.

OPHEA SAFETY GUIDELINES – INTERSCHOOL FLAG FOOTBALL

Equipment

- A fully stocked first aid kit must be readily accessible.
- A working communication device (e.g., cell phone) must be accessible.
- Determine that all equipment is safe for use.
- Use footballs appropriate to the size and ability of the group (e.g., smaller football or foam ball).
- Goalposts must be padded if they are in the field of play. Padding must be 1.8 m (6 ft) high.

Clothing/Footwear

- Appropriate clothing and footwear must be worn.
- No metal cleats to be worn.
- The wearing of jewellery during practices and competitions must meet the rules of the governing body of the sport/activity, OFSAA, and local athletic association. Where jewellery is not addressed by the governing body of the sport/activity, OFSAA or the local athletic association, refer to the Generic Section.

Facilities

- Playing surface must provide safe footing and traction.
- Determine that all facilities are safe for use.
- Playing area must be inspected regularly, free from debris and obstructions, and well removed from traffic areas.
- Holes, hazards (e.g. glass, rocks, sprinkler heads, sewer grates), and severely uneven surfaces must be brought to the attention of the coaches, convenor, athletes and officials. Notify the principal of unsafe field conditions.
- Perimeter of field must be marked (e.g., collapsible flags or soft pylons).

Special Rules/Instructions

- Determine and follow school/board emergency procedures, including accessibility to a vehicle, for transportation of an athlete to hospital.
- Fair play and rules of the sport must be taught and strictly enforced.
- Skills must be taught in proper progression.
- Games must be based on skills that are taught.
- Athletes must receive training or information on concussion prevention and awareness specific to the activity prior to participating. Athletes must not participate in the activity until this instruction has been

received.
- Parents/guardians must be made aware of any off-campus activity and the means of transportation used.
- Be aware of student-athletes whose medical condition (e.g., asthma, anaphylaxis, casts, previous concussion, orthopaedic device) may affect participation (see Generic Section).
- Any exposed orthopaedic apparatus (e.g., knee brace) that presents a safety concern to other players must be soft or padded. Such devices must be approved by the official prior to the commencement of the game.
- A student-athlete's fitness level must be commensurate with the level of competition. Body contact (blocking, picking and screening) is not permitted.
- Activities and rules must be modified to suit the age and ability level of participants.
- Rules of the game must be strictly enforced.
- Flags must not be tucked or tied to the belt and must release easily when pulled.

Environmental Considerations

- Before involving athletes in outdoor activity, coaches must take into consideration:
- · environmental conditions (temperature, weather, air quality, humidity, UV index, insects)
- accessibility to adequate liquid replacement (personal water bottles, water fountains) and athlete hydration before, during and after physical activity
- · previous training and fitness level
- · length of time and intensity of physical activity
- Athletes must be made aware of ways to protect themselves from environmental conditions (e.g. use of hats, sunscreen, sunglasses, personal water bottles, insect repellent, appropriate clothing).
- Athletes must receive instruction on safety procedures related to severe weather conditions (e.g., lightning, funnel clouds, severe winds, tornadoes [see Appendix F - Lightning Protocol]).

Supervision

On-site supervision is required.

First Aid

An individual who takes responsibility for providing first aid to injured athletes must be present during the entire practice/competition.