

Flag Football Rules

I. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The play is live when the ball passes through or next to the center's legs. Dropped snaps are a dead ball and loss of down.
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 regards to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back beyond the line.
3. 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.
4. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. 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, PAT or safety 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 flag.
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. An inadvertent whistle is performed (at the spot where the ball was whistled dead).
7. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where the whistle blown made the play dead.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.

II. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. If one foot precedes the other, the forward foot marks the spot.
 - a. For Line-To-Gain and Goal Lines, the ball AND feet must cross the line.
2. The quarterback can rollout, but must pass, pitch, handoff or lateral while in the backfield. The QB CANNOT ADVANCE the ball for positive yards.
3. QB can pitch the ball or hand off behind the line of scrimmage to a running back. Offense may use multiple handoffs or pitches, behind the line of scrimmage.
4. "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. The QB can hand off or pitch the ball BEHIND the scrimmage line. BUT the FINAL allowable play is a forward PASS ONLY from the last player in possession of the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive - one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD, removed for 5-6 year olds).
5. The player who takes the handoff or pitch can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off or pitched in front or behind the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Ball carrier cannot flagguard.
9. 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.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players not with the ball, must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier as a shield.
12. Flag Obstruction – All shirts 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.

III. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward or behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed, and received behind or beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a (7) second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown or handed-off, lateral, pitched within the 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, pitched or lateral off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect. 9-second "pass clock" for 5-6 year olds. 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) for the next progressive down. (This is NOT a safety)

IV. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes.
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
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 can be returned and result in a change the possession. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions on an extra point either (1) or (2) points that is ran back for a touchdown count towards the opposing team's score in the same amount as the points attempted.

V. Rushing the Passer

1. Rushing can only begin once the ball has left the center's hands. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of ten yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, lateral, pitched, or passed the (10) ten yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage to pull a flag.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line (10) yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play, where possible.
4. A legal rush begins when the ball leaves the center's hands.
 - a. Any player can rush from a point (10) yards beyond the LOS.
 - b. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off or pitched by the quarterback.
5. A penalty will be called if:
 - a. The rusher crosses the scrimmage line before the ball has passed through or next to the center's legs.
 - b. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Off-sides (5 yards LOS)
 - c. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed –Off-Sides and (5 plus yards for the offense from the original LOS).
6. Special circumstances:
 - a. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock in effect.
 - b. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
 - c. If rusher leaves the 10-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.
7. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way.
8. Offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. If the rusher has a CLEAR PATH to the QB and a defensive player deliberately positions themselves that would impede his/her path to the QB, will be considered screening and assessed a penalty. The defense may attempt to block a pass provided they do not strike the passer.
9. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 5-yard penalty
10. A Sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the QB's feet are when the flag is pulled.
 - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

VI. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders cannot tackle or hold or interfere with the ball carrier in the pursuit of pulling a flag.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
4. Any player whose flag or flags fall off cannot be eligible to make a defensive or offensive play.

5. If the ball-carrier's flag, while carrying the ball, inadvertently falls off during the play, the play is dead at that point. Specifically, if a running back is in the process of receiving a hand-off without a flag, that play is called dead. If a pass receiver's flags fall off while running a pass pattern and catches the ball, the play is called dead the catch nullified.

6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of players who are not in possession of the ball.

7. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally covering flags with the football or jersey.

VII. Formations

1. An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the Center). The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage, behind the center or in a 'shot-gun' distance. NO WILD-CAT.

a. Only one player at a time may go in motion and must be positioned one yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.

b. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.

2. No handoffs are allowed back to the center from the quarterback during the set formations. However, following the hike, the center may position themselves behind the LOS for a play.

a. Hiking: 1st and 2nd may use either: side swipe to the QB, or under the legs. 3rd and up will only use under the legs snaps from the center (under center or shotgun).

3. Movement by a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.

4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between or side of his/her legs to the QB only. (Depending on the age group)

VIII. 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! 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, coach, or fan will be ejected from the playing field.

3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent 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:

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 kids friendly:

a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents away from the sidelines.

b. Stay out of end zone areas.

Penalties Offensive

All penalties are 5 Yards.

- Illegal Equipment
- Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.)
- Offensive-pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) • Screening, Blocking or Running (along with the ball carrier)
- Delay of game (after the ball is spotted, exceeding the 30 second limit)
- Flag guarding (hindering the pull of a flag by the ball carrier) • Charging (not attempting to avoid the defense)

Defense All penalties are assed for 5 Yards.

- Off-sides
- Interference
- Illegal contact (Holding, blocking, etc)
- Defense Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)
- Defense Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 10-yard marker)
- Roughing the passer Stripping the ball (attempting to cause a fumble)

Team – Below penalties are assessed as automatic first downs (if against defense) or loss of down (if against offense) and carry an individual warning to the player committing the penalty (one warning to the player and team before ejection).

- Unnecessary Roughness
- Taunting
- Unsportsmanlike conduct

