

# Flag Football Rules

**NUMBER OF PLAYERS:** Each team should start the game with 8 players; a minimum of 5 is needed to avoid a forfeit.

**LENGTH OF GAME:** Playing time shall be 40 minutes, separated into two halves of 20 minutes. Half-time shall be 5 minutes. There will be a running clock for the entire first half, and the first 18 minutes of the second half (Time outs will stop the clock). The last 2 minutes of the second half, the clock will stop after every dead ball and during timeouts. A coin toss will determine who shall receive the choice of possession or side at the beginning of the game. In the case of overtime, there will be a 3-minute intermission prior to starting overtime. Each half will begin with a punt from the kicking teams 10 yard line.

**GENERAL PLAY:** Each team has 4 plays to reach the half line and 4 plays to reach the endzone. A first down is obtained after reaching the half line. On 4<sup>th</sup> down the offensive team must declare their intention (Play or Punt). After each score the opposing team will begin their set of downs at their own 10 yard line.

**MERCY RULE:** If a team is 25 points or more ahead when the Referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over. If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 25 or more points, the game shall end at that point.

**OVERTIME (TIE GAME):** If the game score is tied after regulation time, then a coin toss will determine who will get the ball & side. The sudden death system of determining the winner shall prevail when score is tied at the end of the regulation playing time. The team scoring first during overtime play will be the winner and the game automatically ends upon any score (by safety, field goal, or touchdown).

**FREE KICK:** There will be no free kicks, only punting.

**PUNTING:** Quick punts are illegal. On fourth down the Referee must ask the Offensive team if they want a protected scrimmage kick. Once the offense has declared their choice, the Referee will inform the Defense of the offense's choice. The only way the Offense can change their decision is to call a time-out, or if a foul occurs anytime prior to or during the down and the down is to be replayed. In the later case the Offensive team will be asked if they want a protected scrimmage kick or not. The kicking team must have all of its players, except for the punter, on the line of scrimmage. No kicking team players may move until the ball is kicked. There are no restrictions to the number of players the defensive team must have on the line. Defensive players MAY attempt to block the punt by jumping straight up in the air. They may not, however, penetrate the line of scrimmage. If a punt crosses the scrimmage line and touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the receiving team.

**LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:** The offensive team must have a minimum of 5 players set the line of scrimmage at the snap. Players in motion do not count as players on the line of scrimmage. Once the center has placed his hands on the ball no offensive player may

# Flag Football Rules

enter the neutral zone. The defensive line must line up no closer than 1 yard from the line of scrimmage. The Quarter back can scramble beyond the line of scrimmage.

**BACKWARD PASSES AND FUMBLES:** Any ball that is fumbled during a down will be dead by rule once it has touched the ground. A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted by any player inbounds and advanced. A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed (this includes a lateral pass). *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.* Once a ball has touched the ground the ball is considered dead.

**FORWARD PASSES AND INTERCEPTIONS:** 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 team that snapped the ball. If the ball is intercepted, the possession changes and the ball can be run back.

**SCORING:** After a score the offensive team chooses to go for 1 point from the 3 yard line or 2 points from the 10 yard line Only one play is conducted. The offensive team notifies the Referee which one they choose to do.

Touchdowns = 6 points

Extra Points = 1 point if successful from the 3 yard line

Extra Points = 2 points if successful from the 10 yard line

Safety = 2 points

Once a team has made their choice on the extra point, they can only change their decision by taking a time-out.

**SAFETY:** If a player carries the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead while in their team's possession, it is a safety.

Exception- Momentum Rule - When a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage kick between their five yard line and their goal line and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.

**PERSONAL FOULS:** Any act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is

# Flag Football Rules

a personal foul. Players shall not :

- Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
- Trip an opponent.
- Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
- Throw the runner to the ground.
- Hurdle another player.
- Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
- Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
- Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
- Clip an opponent.
- Position themselves on the shoulders of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
- Tackle the runner. (**WARRANTS EJECTION**)

**BLOCKING:** Contact between offensive and defensive line should be minimal. The defensive line must line up no closer than 1 yard from the line of scrimmage.

**STIFF ARMING:** Stiff arming is not allowed; a personal foul will be called, and if warranted an unsportsmanlike conduct or ejection will result.

**OBSTRUCTING THE RUNNER:** A defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt.

**THE FLAG BELT:** 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 (one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made. 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, play should continue with the option of the penalty of the play (Penalty: Personal foul, 10 yards).

**GUARDING THE FLAG BELT:** 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. Flag guarding includes but is not limited to:

- Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that flag guards.