

New 2023 NFLFlag Rules

- 1.) Center has freedom of movement. Meaning nobody can line up directly over Center. They can line up to the sides. But if in front, they must leave 3 yards space.
- 2.) Equipment Tampering: The only adjustments that can be made to a Flag Belt is the waist section. Anyone caught tampering with the Flags (the part that is pulled), will be expelled from the league. And if it's found during gameplay, the offending players team will be forced to forfeit the game. This rule has no exceptions. It is the Coaches responsibility to check the players flags pre-game.
- 3.) Each team will supply 1 person for Chain Gang. This can be a parent, sibling, assistant etc. Encourage your parents to help.
- 4.) Excessive Celebration. There is nothing wrong with celebrating and being happy for the kids. However if it affects gameplay or speed of game then a Unsportsmanlike Penalty will be assessed.
- 5.) CLOCK WILL STOP AFTER SCORE and Restart upon placement of ball for flipped possession.

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Game:

- 1) At the start of the game, captains from both teams will meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting teams calls the toss.
- 2) The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- 3) The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its own 5 yard line and has 3 plays + an optional 4th down to cross the midfield. Once a team has crossed midfield they have 3 plays to score a touchdown.
- 4) 4th down. If you choose to go for it on 4th down to cross midfield and do not succeed, the opposing team takes over at the spot where the play was attempted. IF you decline and "opt to punt" the opposing team receives the ball on their own 5yd line and change of possession ensues.
- 5) All possession changes EXCEPT Interceptions and failed 4th down start on the offense's 5 yard line.
- 6) Teams change sides after the First Half. Possession changes to the team the team that started the game on Defense.

Terminology:

- A) Boundary Lines-The outer perimeter lines around the field. Includes the sidelines and back of endzone line.
- B) Line of Scrimmage- An imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field
- C) Line-To-Gain- The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- D) Rush Line- An imaginary line running across the width of field, 7 yard into the Defensive side from LOS.
- E) Offense- The team with possession of the ball.
- F) Defense- The team opposing the Offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
- G) Passer- The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the Quarterback.
- H) Pass Rusher- The defensive player assigned to rush the QB to prevent him/her from passing the ball.
- I) Live Ball- Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties.
- J) Dead Ball- Refers to the period of time immediately before and after a play.
- K) Inadvertent Whistle- Officials whistle that is performed in error
- L) Charging- An illegal movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position. Includes lowering the head or initiating contact with shoulder or forearm.

Terminology Continued:

- M) Flag Guarding- An illegal act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carriers flag. This includes: Stiff arming, or using their jersey, arm, hand or ball to keep their flag from being pulled.
- N) Shovel Pass- A legal pitch attempted that goes beyond the line of scrimmage.
- O) Lateral- An illegal backwards or sideways pitch by ball carrier running downfield.
- P) Unsportsmanlike Conduct- A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

Equipment:

- 1) The league provides each player with an official flag belt and jersey. Teams will use footballs provided by the league. MOUTHGUARDS REQUIRED FOR ALL PRACTICES AND GAMES (NO EXCEPTIONS)!
- 2) Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed but they must not be metal stud nor have a toe cleat.
- 3) Players must remove all jewelry.
- 4) Jerseys MUST be tucked into shorts if they hang below the pant line.
- 5) FLAG BELTS CANNOT BE THE SAME COLOR AS SHORTS
- 6) Home Jerseys are Dark. Visitors will wear the light side of their reversible jersey.

Field:

- 1) Field dimensions are 30 yards wide by 70 yards with two (2) 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 (5 yards before midfield and before the endzone) teams cannot run the ball in any fashion unless rushed by the Defense.
- 3) Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

Rosters:

- 1) Teams must consist of at least five (5) players to start the game. Any fewer then they must forfeit.
- 2) In cases where a team in a running game doesn't have sufficient substitutions, they may finish the game with four (4) players.

Regulation Timing:

- 1) Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two, 20 minute halves (Unless a team has a 28 point advantage, which ends the game). Clock stops only for half time, timeouts, injuries and referee discretion.
- 2) Halftime is 5 minutes
- 3) Teams have 30 seconds once ball is spotted by referee to snap the ball. Failure to do so results in delay of game penalty.
- 4) Each team has two 3 minute timeouts per half (may be forced to use due to heat)

Overtime Rules:

- 1) If the score is tied at the end of regulation, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner.
 - A) Coin Flip will determine which team gets possession first
 - B) Official will determine which end of field OT will be played at.
 - C.) Ball will be placed at the 20 yard line. Each team will receive 3 plays to attempt to score a TD.
 - D.) If neither team scores in the initial OT period, the ball will be placed at the 10 yard line. Each team will then alternate turns trying to score until a winner is decided.
- 2) There are no timeouts in OT
- 3) All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.

Scoring:

- 1) Touchdown = 6 points
- 2) PAT = 1 point from 5 yard line(Pass only), 2 points from 10 yard line (Run or Pass)
 - a) A team that scores a touchdown MUST declare whether it want to attempt a 1 or 2 pt conversion. Once the ball is appropriately placed the only way to change it is by taking a timeout. Decisions cannot be changed after a penalty.
 - b) Interceptions on PATs ARE returnable and equal 2 points if successful.**
- 3) Safety = 2 points
 - a) A safety occurs the following ways: The ball carrier is declared down in his/her endzone. Runners are called down when their flags are pulled, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the endzone OR if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the endzone.

Scoring Continued:

4) Once a team has scored a 28 point advantage, the opposing team will receive 1 possession to try to score. IF unsuccessful then the game ends. Coaches may opt to scrimmage for the remainder of allotted time.

Coaches:

- 1) Rookie Level – Coaches may be on field for Offense and Defense to direct players.
- 2) Junior Level – Coach may be on field to call plays on Offense only. Defensive Coach must call from sideline.
- 3) Senior Level – Coach may be on field to call plays of Offense only. Defense must be called from sideline.
- 4) Junior and Senior level Coaches may not direct their QB once the ball is snapped.
- 5) Any on field Coach who impedes the opposing teams play will be called for a penalty.

Live Ball/Dead Ball:

- 1) Ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles play dead.
- 2) The official will indicate the neutral zone and Line of scrimmage.
 - A) 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 choose to give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow players to move back before the ball is snapped.
- 3) A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as 1 foot comes down in the field of play.
- 4) The defense may NOT mimic the offensive team cadence or signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the QB 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. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is placed where the ball hit the ground. (This does not apply to the Rookie division. If a snap is bad, they get 1 opportunity to pick it up and continue play)

- b. The ball carrier's flag is pulled OR even if flag accidentally falls out.
- c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.

Live Ball/Dead Ball Continued:

- d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- e. The ball carrier's arm or knee hits the ground.
- f. The receiver catches the ball without BOTH flags attached.
- g. The 7 second pass clock expires. (This rule is for Juniors and Seniors groups only).
- h. Inadvertent Whistle. In this case the offense has 2 options. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed. OR replay the down from the original line of scrimmage. A team may use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the ruling is correct the timeout is consumed. If incorrect, the rule may be over turned and the time out returned.

Running the Ball:

- 1) The ball is always 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.
- 2) The Quarterback can NOT directly run with the ball. The QB is defined by the offensive player who directly received the snap.
- 3) Center Sneak is not allowed. The QB can NOT hand the ball off directly to the Center on the first handoff of the play.
- 4) Laterals are NOT allowed beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 5) No-Run Zones are located 5 yards before each endzone and 5 yards on either side of mid-field. They are designed as a safety measure to stop "Power Run" plays. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones. EXCEPTIONS: If the QB is legally rushed by the Defense he can run. OR if you receive a penalty after you have already crossed midfield and received your first down. (Only 1 first down per drive for crossing midfield).
- 6) Any player who receives a handoff or toss behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball. ALL passes MUST cross the line of scrimmage to be legal.
- 7) Once the ball has been handed off in any form. All defensive players are eligible to rush no matter where they are on the field.
- 8) Ball carriers CANNOT leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding and is a penalty.

9) Spinning is allowed. However, players cannot leave their feet or continuously spin out of control.

Running Continued:

10) The ONLY time a ball carrier is allowed to leave their feet is if there is a clear indication the he/she has done so to avoid collision or running over a fallen player. In this case flag guarding will not be called. However, the play will be blown dead and the ball placed where the carrier jumped.

11) No blocking or screening allowed at any time. The OFFENSE must do everything in their power to give the defense proper room to reach the ball carriers flag.

12) Flag obstruction- All jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags MUST be on the players hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

Passing:

1.) ALL passes must be from behind the LOS, thrown forward and received beyond the LOS. Any pass that does not go beyond the LOS (received or not), will be assessed a penalty.

2) The QB is allowed to throw the ball away to avoid a sack. However, the pass must go beyond the LOS or it will be assessed a penalty.

3) Shovel Passes, Chest passes, Underhand lobs are all LEGAL passes as long as they go beyond the LOS.

4) The QB has a 7 second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown within the 7 seconds, the play is dead, down consumed and the ball is replaced at the LOS. Once the ball is handed off the 7 second rule is no longer in effect. (JUNIORS/SENIORS RULE ONLY)

5) If the QB is standing in the endzone at the end of the 7 second clock, the ball is returned to the LOS.

6) Toss/Pitch plays to a Running Back or Man in Motion are allowed. ONLY 1 MAN IN MOTION AT A TIME IS ALLOWED AND THEY MUST NOT BE MOVING TOWARDS THE LOS.

7) Crossing Routes MUST have 5 yards separation. PICK/RUB routes ARE ILLEGAL.

Receiving:

1) All players are eligible to receive passes, including the QB as long as he/she has handed the ball of behind the LOS.

2) Only 1 player is allowed in motion at a time. Motion must be parallel to the LOS and no motion is permitted towards the LOS

3) A player must have 1 foot inbounds for it to be a legal reception

4) In the case of a simultaneous possession by both the offensive and defensive players, possession is awarded to the offensive player.

5) Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions change possession that does NOT require the Offense to start at their own 5 yard line. And are returnable.

Formations:

1) Offense must have at least 1 player on the LOS (Center), and up to 4 players maximum. The QB must be behind the LOS.

2) Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the LOS while in motion is considered a false start penalty.

Rushing The Passer:

1) For a pass rush to be legal the player(s) must be behind the designated marker which is 7 yards off the line of scrimmage and cannot move until the ball is snapped. It is the defensive players job to make sure they are behind the marker before pass rushing.

2) A legal rush is defined as any player behind the line of rush (7 yards). Or any rush from anywhere on the field that occurs AFTER the quarterback handed or pitched the ball off.

3) If a pass rusher accidentally leaves early, they are able to reset back behind the 7 yard marker and then rush the passer.

4) If a rusher leaves early and the ball is handed or pitched BEFORE the rusher crosses the LOS then it is considered a legal rush.

5) A penalty may be called if:

a. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and they cross the LOS BEFORE a handoff, pitch or pass.

b. Any defensive player crosses the LOS before the ball is snapped.

c. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the LOS before the ball is passed, pitched or handed off.

d. Teams are not required to identify their pass rushers prior to play.

e. Players rushing the QB may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the QB in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the QB will result in a roughing the passer penalty.

6) The Offense CANNOT impede the pass rushers in any way. The Pass Rusher has the right to a clear path to the QB regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it's the offenses responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption by the

Offense will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. IF the Offensive player DOES NOT MOVE after the snap, then it's the DEFENSIVE rushers responsibility to go around the Offensive Players and avoid contact.

Rushing The Passer Continued:

7) A sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled behind the LOS. Ball is placed where QB'S feet are at the time of flag pull. IF that happens in the endzone then a SAFETY will be awarded.

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. However, they can NOT tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags. Ie. A defender accidentally grabs the jersey of the player instead of the flag, they must let go of the jersey and try again for the flag. They cannot use it to slow the runner or pull them backwards.

3) It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball away from the ball carriers' possession at any time.

4) A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

5) If a player's flag falls out inadvertently during a play, the player is immediately down upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is then placed where the flag lands. Ie. A players runs a route, however their flag falls out at the LOS and they catch the ball 20 yards away. The play is dead and the ball is placed BACK at the LOS where the flag fell out.

6) Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defenders access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder, moving the ball to the flag or intentionally covering the flag with the jersey.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct:

1) If the field official witnesses any acts of INTENTIONAL tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player CAN BE ejected from the game. THE DECISION IS MADE AT THE REFEREES DISCRETION. NO APPEALS WILL BE CONSIDERED. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

2) Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the official may choose to give a warning. If it continues the player, parent or coach will be ejected from the game and an on-field penalty issued.

3) Players, Parents and Coaches may not physically or verbally abuse an opponent, coach or official.

4) Ball carriers must make an effort to avoid defenders who have established position.

5) FANS, PLAYERS AND COACHES MUST ADHERE TO GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP. ALL ARE SUBJECT TO PENALTIES THAT COULD AFFECT THEIR CHILD OR CHILDS TEAM.

6) Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly. Please keep younger children and all items off the field.

Penalties:

- 1) The Referee will call all penalties.
- 2) Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- 3) Only the team captain or Head Coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Parents and Players may not.
- 4) Games may not end on a Defensive Penalty unless the Offense declines the penalty
- 5) Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed BEFORE play is considered complete.
- 6) Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal when the penalty yardage is more than the distance to the goal

Defensive Spot Fouls:

- Defensive Pass Interference = Automatic First Down
- Holding = Automatic First Down
- Stripping = +10 yards & Automatic First Down

Offensive Spot Fouls:

- Screening, blocking = -10 yards & Loss of Down
- Charging = -10 yards & Loss of Down
- Flag Guarding = -10 yards & Loss of Down

Defensive Penalties:

- Defensive unnecessary roughness = +10 yards & Automatic First Down
- Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct = +10 yards & Automatic First Down
- Offsides = +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Illegal Rush = +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Illegal Flag Pull = +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Roughing The Passer = +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Taunting = +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down

Offensive Penalties:

- Offensive unnecessary roughness = -10 yards & Loss of Down

- Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct = -10 yards & Loss of Down
- False Start = -5 yards & Loss of Down
- Illegal Forward Pass = -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Offensive Pass Interference = -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Illegal Motion = -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Delay of Game = -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down

Offensive Penalties Continued:

- Impeding the Pass Rusher = -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Illegal Procedure = -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down

Parental Penalties:

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Child on Offense) = -10 yards & Loss of Down
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Child on Defense) = +10 yards & Automatic First Down

*Depending on severity of infraction, Parents and their Child may be ejected from the game.

**These penalties are assessed and based on a League official/Referee hearing/witnessing the infraction. NOT HEARSAY.