



# ***2017 Flag Football Rule Book***

*First Edition*



## GAME

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield in three plays they have the option to attempt to make the first down or punt. If the offensive team does not make the first down, the opposition will receive the ball where the 4<sup>th</sup> down play was called dead. Punting the ball will result in a change of possession and the other team will get the ball on its own 5-yard line.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

## EQUIPMENT

- Players must wear football cleats.
- Players must wear mouthpieces.
- Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line.
- Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.

## FIELD

- The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
- No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

## ROSTERS

- Home teams wear dark color jerseys; visiting teams wear light color jerseys.
- Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.

## TIMING AND OVERTIME

- Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two twenty minute halves. The clock stops only for coach timeouts, referee timeouts, or player injury.
- Halftime will last five minutes.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 45 seconds to snap the ball (60 seconds for PW division). Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has two 60-second time outs per half.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, overtime rules apply.
- OT format is as follows:
  - Each possession starts at midfield.
  - First possession choice goes to the winner of regulation coin toss.
  - Each team gets a minimum of one possession to score. After each team has had one possession, possessions continue until there is a winner. (Example: Team A and Team B do not score on their first possession. Team A scores on its second possession and also scores its 2 PAT (Point After Touchdown); Team B must score on their next possession AND score a 2 PAT in order for another round of possessions to begin.)
  - All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
  - There are no time-outs.

- Multiple OT periods:
  - First OT period – shown above:
    - Scoring teams can go for 1 or 2 point PAT.
  - Second OT Period:
    - Scoring teams must go for 2 point PAT.
  - If there is no winner after the second overtime, the game will be considered a tie.

## SCORING

- Touchdown: 6 points
- PAT (Point After Touchdown): A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 12-yard line).
  - 1 point (5-yard line) Pass only.
  - 2 points (12-yard line) Can be run or pass.
  - Interceptions can be returned for 1 or 2 points.
- Safety: 2 points
  - A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

## COACHES

- Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players regardless of age group. Offensive coaches must move back at least 5 yards from the QB before the snap of the ball. Multiple coaches can be on the field for PW teams.
- Once the ball is snapped, coaches on the field are not allowed to coach or direct players in any manner. Doing so will result in a 5 yard penalty.
- All discussions with referees about calls will be conducted in a respectful manner. Shouting or arguing will result in a 10 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty at the discretion of the referee.

## LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- 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 regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- 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. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
  - The ball hits the ground.
  - The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
  - The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
  - The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
  - The ball carrier’s flag falls out.
  - The ball carrier receives the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
  - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- There is no recovery of a fumble. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble.
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
  - Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed.
  - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
- A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

## PASSING

- All passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

## RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- 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.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions are returnable.

## RUNNING

- The ball is 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.
- The quarterback can run the ball.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
- "Center Sneak" play – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
- Absolutely NO laterals of any kind.
- "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. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

- Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players inside the 7-yard rush line are eligible to rush.
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
- 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.
- A basketball screen is the only legal form of blocking. No other form of blocking is allowed.
- Flag Obstruction – All jerseys 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.

## **RUSHING THE PASSER**

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven 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.
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
- Any defensive player, for any reason, crossing the line of scrimmage will allow the quarterback to run the ball even if the offense is in the pass only zone.
- A legal rush is:
  - Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
  - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
  - If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
  - If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.

- A penalty may be called if:
  - The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
  - Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offside (5 yards LOS and first down).
  - Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off.
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled.
- A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

## FLAG PULLING

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- Defensive players may not intentionally grab and hold the ball carriers uniform to make a flag pull.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

## FORMATIONS

- Offense must have a minimum of two players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- One player at a time may go in motion behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.



- No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

## **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT**

- 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 will be considered.
- FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
- 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 or players will be ejected from the game.
- Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- Parents/fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship, as well the conduct listed above.
- Parents/fans should also adhere to the following:
  - Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
  - Keep comments clean and profanity free.
  - Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
  - Parents/fans are not allowed on the field at any time during the game.

## **PENALTY INFORMATION:**

- The referee will call all penalties.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (spot fouls)

- Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgment calls.
- Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- All penalties that are spot fouls and result in a loss of down mean the following:
  - The loss of down is technically the down that was just played. As an example: if the penalty occurs on first down, the offense receives the yards gained minus the penalty yards. The next down would be second down.
- Teams cannot be penalized into or out of the pass only zone.
  - If the offensive team is penalized and the possession is moved out of the pass only zone, they are still considered in the pass only zone; they must pass until they move themselves out of the pass only zone.
  - If the defensive team is penalized and the offensive team's possession is moved into the pass only zone, the offensive team is not considered in the pass only zone; they may run or pass.

## DEFENSIVE PENALTIES:

Offside	+ 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+ 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+ 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+ 10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+ 10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	SPOT FOUL, Automatic First Down
Holding (holding jersey to make flag pull or holding offensive player without ball)	SPOT FOUL + 5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	SPOT FOUL + 10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL + 10 yards & Automatic First Down

Tackling	SPOT FOUL + 10 yards & Automatic First Down
Coaching During Play	SPOT FOUL + 5 yards
Game Misconduct	+ 10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down

## OFFENSIVE PENALTIES:

False Start	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Forward Pass (Pass received behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass beyond the line of scrimmage)	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offensive Pass Interference	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion (More than one person moving)	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Run	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Delay of Game	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Impeding the Rusher	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Blocking or Running with the Ball Carrier	SPOT FOUL, - 5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Coaching During Play	- 5 yards from line of scrimmage
Game Misconduct	- 10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down