

# YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

## ELIGIBILITY

Ages 8-11

## Playing Time

Roster limit is 15 players. There are free substitutions for the entire game and overtime. However, each player on the team is required to play at least one half (twenty minutes) of the game.

## Field

The playing field is approximately 70 yards long from goal line to goal line and 26 yards wide. End zones are approximately 8 yards deep. First down lines are approximately 16 yards apart.

## Equipment

For the purpose of play, the following equipment shall be deemed **illegal**:

1. Shoulder, arm, hand or thigh pads (knee & elbow pads are okay).
2. Casts of any kind.
3. Metal, ceramic cleats.
4. Football pants with pads in.
5. Any slippery or sticky, foreign substance on any equipment on the body (except in the case of an injury).
6. Players shall not wear jewelry (rings, bracelets, watches, earrings, necklaces, etc.).
7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets.

The following types of equipment are **legal** and **encouraged**:

1. Tennis, gym or soccer/football shoes (molded rubber cleats). **ALL PLAYERS MUST WEAR SOME TYPE OF SHOE – NO SANDALS OR OPEN TOE SHOES.**
2. Gym shorts, Bermuda shorts or long pants (no belt loops or pockets are allowed).
3. A Youth Sports jersey is required and must be tucked in. The Youth Sports jersey must be intact (no cut-off sleeves or half tops).
4. A junior sized leather football will be used.
5. A one-piece belt with 3 flags must be worn.

## **Teams**

A team shall consist of 7 players. Teams must have at least 6 players to start and/or continue the game.

Substitutions are allowed only when the ball is dead. A substitute must stay in the game for one play or until the next dead ball.

Each team will occupy a separate sideline. All players, coaches, and spectators will remain on that sideline during the game except during halftime. Teams listed first on the schedule are considered the Home Team. Home teams will wear white jerseys and have choice of sideline.

Coaches and players must remain within the designated "coaches box" (inside 20-yard lines) during game situations, with the exception of time-outs and halftime. An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be assessed. Spectators MUST stay on team's sideline, outside of the coaches/players box, at all times.

## **Pre-Game**

A pre-game meeting with the coaches, officials and team captains will be held prior to the coin toss. The coin toss will determine who will kick off and/or receive the ball. The visiting team will call the coin toss. The captain winning the toss will have the choice of options for either the first or second half. These options are:

1. To Defer (You get the choice to kick or receive in the second half)
2. Receive (You get the ball to start the game and forfeit your choice in the second half)
3. Kick (You kick the ball to start the game and forfeit your choice in the second half)

The loser of the coin toss will have the choice of options the winner did not accept, except to defer. This includes the end zone they want to defend. If the winning team defers, they will get to choose which end zone they want to defend after the losing team's decision.

## **Game Time**

Game time is forfeit time. The site supervisor may grant a grace period at his/her discretion.

Each team will have two time-outs per half. No time-outs will carry over into the second half. Each team will have one (1) time-out per overtime or "shoot out" period. Injured player and equipment repair time outs will be charged to the officials.

When the ball carrier is downed the position of the ball determines LOS or a score.

The ball is dead when:

1. Any part of the ball carrier's body other than his/her hand(s) or foot (feet) touches the ground.

2. The ball carrier steps on or outside the sidelines or end lines.
3. The ball carrier is legally de-flagged/touched by an opponent.
4. An official whistles the end of the play.
5. A pass lands incomplete on the field or out of bounds.
6. A ball fumbled touches the ground (including shotgun center snaps).

The ball is dead on a kickoff or punt when the ball:

1. Is muffed or fumbled by the receivers.
2. Goes out of bounds without being touched.
3. Is FIRST touched by any player and then downed.
4. Carrier is legally downed or de-flagged/touched.
5. Receiver declares a fair catch.

The offensive team has 4 downs to advance the ball past the indicated first down line. Failure to do so results in loss of possession.

If a team is losing by 17 points or more at the “2-minute warning” of the fourth quarter, the game will be declared over unless the trailing team has possession of the ball, in which case the game will end when the trailing team scores, gives up possession or when time expires. A quarter or half may be shortened by mutual agreement of the coaches and the referees with respect to the score of the game.

### **Timing**

The game will consist of four, 10-minute running quarters. The ball must be put in play within 25 seconds from the time the ball is spotted. The clock will only stop for time outs, injuries, and official time outs in the first 38 minutes of the game. The last two minutes of the fourth quarter will have different timing rules for the different leagues.

### **Seven-Play Procedure:**

At the “2-minute warning” of the fourth quarter, the “Seven-Play Procedure” will be in effect. No game clock will be kept from this point. There will be 7 plays remaining in the quarter. The Down and Distance situation will remain the same. EXAMPLE: If the offense has 2nd down and 10 yards to gain at the 2-minute warning, they will now have 2nd down and 10 yards to gain and play number one (of seven). If they do not gain a first down, the defense may gain possession on downs or a punt, which will also count as a play of seven. That team will have the remainder of the seven plays to score unless they run out of downs. P.A.T. tries do not count as one of the seven plays. Punts do count as a play. Teams still must put the ball in play within 25 seconds of when the ball is spotted.

Advantages of the seven-play procedure are:

1. It allows the officials to concentrate on the field of play – not the clock.

2. It allows the teams to know exactly how much play is left.
3. It allows the team that is behind and on defense an opportunity to gain possession and score.
4. It eliminates the need for a “hurry up” offense and increases the quality of play.

## **Kicking**

A punt or kickoff that is received, lands, or rolls into the end zone will be an automatic touchback. If a kickoff is received outside the end zone but the receiver runs into the end zone with the ball and is de-flagged/downed, that is a safety.

## **Kickoff**

The ball will be kicked off from the 30 yard line at the beginning of each half ONLY. The ball will be kicked off a tee. If a kick goes out of bounds, the receiving team will put the ball in play at their 30 yard line. No on-side kicks. The kicking team may not take possession of the kick. The receiving team must be allowed to field the ball. The receiving team must have at least four players line up on the 40 yard line.

If the ball goes out of the end zone or becomes dead in the end zone, it will be put in play at the 15 yard line. After a touchdown, the ball is put in play, from the 15 yard line.

## **Punting**

A team may punt on any down if the official has been notified prior to the ball being snapped. The opposing team should also be notified. The kicker must be lined up directly behind the center. There will be no rush. All players on the line of scrimmage must remain motionless until the kick is made. The center may motion so as to avoid being struck by the punted ball. The receiving team must have at least four players within 15 yards of the line of scrimmage prior to the kick.

## **Offense**

All players must report to the huddle and there must be at least six players within 15 yards of the ball. There must be at least four players on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. Only ONE offensive player at a time may shift positions prior to the snap. Only ONE offensive player may be in motion at the snap. **NO CENTER SNEAKS!**

A pass must be thrown prior to the passer crossing the line of scrimmage and must have some direction towards the opponents' goal line. All other passes are considered laterals. A forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage is illegal and will result in an illegal forward pass. **ALL PLAYERS ARE ELIGIBLE RECEIVERS.** Only one-foot is required to be inbounds for a legal catch. **NO SIDELINE TRICK PASSES!**

Ball carrier must try to avoid the defensive player. A ball carrier that inadvertently loses his flags may be downed by tagging him/her with one hand below the neck. Straight-arming, flag guarding, hurdling and diving are illegal.

Flag guarding includes:

1. Swinging the hand or arm. This includes straight-arming.
2. Placing the ball in a position over the flag belt.
3. Lowering the shoulders in a manner that places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.

Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is contacting the ground with no part of his/her body, except one or both feet.

### **Blocking**

A blocker may use their hand or arm to break a fall or retain balance. A player must be on their feet before, during, and after blocking a defender.

Unnecessary roughness is strictly enforced and can include illegal use of the hands, drive blocking, and/or extending the arms.

This league will **only** use screen blocking. The screen block shall take place without initiating contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at their side or behind their back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact during a players screen block is illegal.

### **Defense**

The defense may line up in any formation. Defenders may not hit, strike, or slap. Defenders may not push a ball carrier out of bounds. Defenders may not push, tackle or hold any offensive player. They may not bat, slap, or steal a ball in the legal possession of another player. Pass rushers may not touch the passer except when attempting to pull a flag. If a defensive player blocks a pass and touches the passer above the waist, it will be roughing the passer. Passes can be knocked down at the line of scrimmage by a defender. Defensive players may not bump pass receivers in the open field or at the line of scrimmage unless the receiver attempts to block the defender.

An interception in the end zone may be run out. If the player is de-flagged/downed in the end zone, a touchback will be awarded. If the player exited and re-entered the end zone and is then de-flagged/downed, it is a safety.

A defensive player may not use his/her hands at any time. Defensive players must go around the offensive players' screen block. The arms, shoulders and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. A player may use their arms or hands to break a fall or retain balance.

**NO THREE OR FOUR POINT STANCES ARE ALLOWED.**

**Scoring**

All touchdowns are worth six points. After scoring, a team may elect to attempt a 1-point conversion from the three yard line or a 2-point conversion from the ten yard line. If an extra point attempt is intercepted and returned for a touchdown, the defense will be awarded two points.

**Safeties**

All safeties are worth two points. The team who gets the two points will start with the ball from their own 15 yard line. There will not be any free kicks for safeties.

**Tie Games**

In the case of a game ending in a tie score, the field captains shall be brought together and a coin toss will be held to determine the options (same as the start of the game). The visiting team captain shall call the toss. The winner of the toss shall be given the option of offense or defense. The loser of the toss will decide which direction to go. Both teams will go the same direction. Each team will be given 4 downs from the same 20-yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. If the first team who is awarded the ball scores, the second team will still have 4 downs to attempt to score a touchdown. Tries for extra points will be as mentioned before.

If both teams are still tied after a series of downs, the teams will play a "shootout." The team who started the first overtime on defense will start the "shootout" on offense. The offensive team will get the ball and attempt an extra point from either the 3 yard line (1 point) or the 10 yard line (2 points). The defensive team follows with the same options. The "shoot outs" continue for two periods. The teams will rotate starting on offense for each additional "shootout" period.

If the defense intercepts the ball, it may be returned for a 2-point conversion.

**Coach/Player Conduct**

Coaches should designate 2 co-captains: one on offense, one on defense. Only these players may speak to the officials. Tampering, such as tying or using foreign materials with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage, is illegal. No trick plays will be tolerated.

Plays ruled illegal will be based on the judgment of the officials, upon review with the site supervisor.

**THE LEAGUE COORDINATOR HAS THE AUTHORITY TO INSTITUTE NEW RULES OR CHANGE OLD RULES TO MAINTAIN CONTINUITY OF THE OVERALL YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAM. HIS/HER INTERPRETATION OF THE RULES SHALL BE FINAL.**

## **Penalty Descriptions**

A dead ball penalty will result in the stoppage of play. The official will blow the play dead to enforce the penalty. If a player or coach is assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty, he/she could be forced to sit out or be ejected from the game based on the severity of the incident. The officials will determine the best course of action.

### **Offensive Penalties**

1. Delay of Game (Dead Ball) - 25-second play clock runs out.
2. False Start (Dead Ball) - a set offensive player moves prior to the snap.
3. Less Than 4 Players (Dead Ball) - there are less than 4 players on the line of scrimmage.
4. Illegal Motion (Dead Ball) - player in motion moves towards line of scrimmage during the snap or there is more than one player in motion at the time of the snap.
5. Illegal Forward Pass - quarterback throws a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage.
6. No Flag On - player plays a down without a flag on.
7. Pass Interference - player uses hands or body to gain an advantage over a defender in order to make a play on the ball.
8. Leaving Feet to Block - player jumps or dives to block a defender.
9. Illegally Secured Belt - player has tied or altered the belt to gain an advantage.
10. Trick Plays - a deceiving play that was not cleared by an official prior to the start of the game. (Center sneak, Sideline play, etc.)
11. Diving with Ball - ball carrier dives with the ball in any direction.
12. Illegal Use of Hands - player uses hands or extended arms to gain an advantage over a defender.
13. Flag Guarding - ball carrier blocks an attempt to pull his/her flag by straight-arming a defender, covering the flag with the ball, and/or dipping of the shoulder in a way that prevents a defender from attempting to pull the flag.

### **Defensive Penalties**

1. Neutral Zone Infraction (Dead Ball) - player crosses the offensive line of scrimmage.
2. Offsides - player is lined up in the neutral zone at the time of the snap.
3. Holding - player holds an offensive player for any amount of time after the offensive player has crossed the line of scrimmage.
4. Pass Interference - player uses hands or body to gain an advantage over an offensive player in order to make a play on the ball.

Updated 9/18/2014

5. Roughing the Passer - player runs into, hits above the waist, and/or hits the ball in the possession of the quarterback while he/she is in the throwing motion.
6. Illegal Use of Hands - player uses hands or extended arms to gain an advantage over an offensive player.

### **Player/Coach Penalties**

1. Excessive Time Out - a team calls a time out they do not have.
2. More Than 7 Players - there are more than seven players on the field for one team.
3. Unsportsmanlike Conduct - taunting, foul language, spiking the ball, unnecessary roughness, etc.