



YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL—OFFICIAL RULES

AGES 9—17

GENERAL RULES (AGES 9-17)

Fields will be 50 yards long and 35 yards wide.

Teams must field at least five (5) players at all times. In the event of an injury, or special circumstance, games can be played 4 on 4 at the referee's discretion.

No more than one (1) coach is allowed in the huddle. (*Coaches in the 9-11 and 12-14 year old divisions MUST BE OFF THE PLAYING FIELD when play begins.*)

There is absolutely no blocking or tackling allowed. There is also no kick-offs, no fumbles & no punts

FLOW OF THE GAME

A coin toss determines first possession.

The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield and obtain a first down. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, the ball changes possession and the opposition starts its drive from their own 5-yard line.

Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) more plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the opposition starts its drive from their own 5-yard line.

All possession changes, except following interceptions, start on the offense's own 5-yard line. Interceptions may be returned by the defense.

Teams will play two (2) 20-minute halves with a 5-minute halftime if needed. Teams must change direction and possession to start the second half

All games will have a running clock, except during the final minute of the game in which a "Pro Clock" will be used. The clock will be stopped after incomplete passes, plays that end out of bounds, during timeouts, during a change of possession, and during extra points. Officials can also stop the clock during play at any time at their discretion.

Each team will have two (2) 30-second timeouts per half.

Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30-seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.





SCORING

Touchdown – 6 points

Extra Point

1 point (**played from the 5-yard line, no running allowed**)

2 points (**played from the 12-yard line, running allowed.**)

Any interception returned for a touchdown is worth 2 points for the defense.

RUNNING

The quarterback can scramble, but cannot advance the ball past the L.O.S.

Once the offense is set, the center cannot lift or move the ball before it is snapped. (**Illegal Motion**) The ball must transfer from the center to the QB for a play to be legal. (**No center sneaks are allowed**)

Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use a shotgun formation to snap the ball, but the ball is dead where it hits the ground if muffed. Multiple handoffs are allowed, however no laterals or pitches of any kind are allowed.

“No Running Zones”, located 5-yards from each end zone and 5-yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage, power running situations.

A team may run into a no-run zone, but not out of one (**this prevents power rushing attempts to gain a 1st down or touchdown.**)

The player taking the handoff can pass from behind the line of scrimmage.

Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (**no diving or jumping allowed.**)

The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s forward foot is when the flag is pulled or falls out, not where the ball is.

RECEIVING

All players are eligible to receive passes (**including the original quarterback if the ball has been handed off and not been advanced beyond the line of scrimmage.**)

As in the NFL, only one player is allowed in motion at a time.

A player needs only to have one foot inbounds for a reception.





PASSING

The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead (**treat as an incomplete pass.**)

Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule is no longer in effect and any defender may cross the L.O.S. to pursue the QB.

All passes must be forward and cross the line of scrimmage. (No backward laterals or pitches)

Shovel passes are allowed as long as they are forward.

Interceptions can be returned by the defense. (**except during 18 point rule**)

DEAD BALLS

The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play.

Play is ruled “dead” when the ball carrier’s flag is pulled or falls out, ball carrier steps out of bounds, a touchdown or safety is scored, or the ball carrier’s knee hits the ground. The ball is spotted where the forward foot is when the flag is pulled.

There are no fumbles – the ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.

RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

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 as long as they start seven yards back.

Players not rushing the quarterback cannot cross 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 referee or marker will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.





PENALTIES

DEFENSE

Defensive penalties will be **5-yards/automatic 1st down** from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted:

- Off-sides
- Pass Interference (**15 yards/automatic 1st down**)
- Defensive Holding (**Ball still in QB's hand when penalty occurs**)
- Illegal Interference/Contact (**holding, blocking, bump & run guarding, simulation of snap, touching any part of a QB's body other than his flag belt, impeding ball carrier's progress**)
- Illegal Flag Pull (**before receiver has the ball**)
- Illegal Rush (**starting rush inside the seven-yard marker**)
- Substitution Fouls (**too many players on the field**) (**5 yards and repeat down**)

OFFENSE

All offensive penalties will be **5-yards and a loss of down** from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted::

- Illegal Motion (**more than one person moving, false start, center moving the ball before the snap, etc.**)
- Illegal Pass (**QB over line of scrimmage when throwing, laterals, pitches.**)
- Offensive Pass Interference (**illegal pick, pushing off defender**)
- Holding/Blocking (**shield blocking**) If the referee feels that you have impeded a defender from grabbing a ball carrier's flag, whether done intentionally or unintentionally, a Blocking Penalty will be called.
- Flag Guarding (**using hands to "swat" defensive hands away**) (**5 yards from point of foul and loss of down**)
- Delay Of Game (**clock stops if inside one minute in half**)
- Jumping into or over a player OR jumping forward to advance the ball or avoid a flag pull
- Substitution fouls (**too many players on the field**) (**5 yards and repeat down**)
- Charging (**running through a defender**)

If the penalized team is less than 5-yards from the end zone, the penalty will be half the distance to the goal. Referees will determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted.

All penalties will be called by the referee. Please respect their decision. Only team captains may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.

Halves cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.





18 POINT RULE

The "18 point rule" is designed to keep games close when one team starts to pull away in score. At any point in the game, if one team goes up by 3 scores (**18 points**) or more, the following 3 rules will go into effect:

- 1) *The leading team* **MUST CHANGE TO A DIFFERENT QUARTERBACK AND PASS on offense.** QB must pass, no handoffs or running plays will be allowed on offense.
- 2) Interceptions **will be returned to the offense and only be counted as an incomplete pass(Losing Team).**
- 3) Leading teams **MAY NOT RUSH THE OPPOSING QB ON DEFENSE.**

If a losing team pulls within 18 points at any time, game rules will revert back to the original form.

PLAYOFFS

SEEDING PLAYOFFS – Teams will be placed in a single elimination format with the highest seeded team playing the lowest seeded team and so on.

TIEBREAKERS FOR POST SEASON – Tiebreakers will be in the following order:

1. Head to Head Competition
2. Point Differential – points scored minus points allowed for the season (**a maximum of 15 differential points per game are allowed**) *ex: Jets-30 Giants 6 will be scored Jets-21 Giants-6 in the standings...*
3. Total points allowed
4. Coin Flip

OVERTIME (Playoffs Only) – If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, teams move directly into overtime (**There is no overtime in the regular season.**)

A Coin Flip will determine possession and direction.

Each team will get one possession (**3 plays**) starting at their own 12 yd. line. If the score is tied after both possessions, teams will move to the other end of the field and begin the 2nd OT. Game continues until there is a winner.

SPORTSMANSHIP / ROUGHING

If the referee witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the players will be ejected from the game. Foul Play will not be tolerated.

Trash talking is illegal. Officials have the right to determine language that may be considered offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators. If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.

ATTIRE

Cleats are allowed, except for metal spikes. **All players must wear a mouthpiece – no exceptions!**

No pockets, jewelry, hats, or glasses (unless prescription.)

Official Sports Arena jerseys must be worn and tucked in during play at all times.

