

# Flag Football League Rules

- Youth Ages 15-17
- Men's Ages 18 and Over



## Rules of the Game

**Field of Play** - (6) six offensive players versus (6) six defensive players. All offensive players are eligible to catch a pass. Away team takes first possession at the start of the game at their 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross mid-field. Once a team crosses mid-field, they will have three (3) plays to score a touchdown or kick a field goal. Each player on the field must wear a 'league supplied flag', unaltered in any way.

If the offensive team fails to convert a "third" down attempt into a first down by gaining the required yardage (mid-field) or scoring, possession of the ball changes and the defensive team switches to offense. The ball is spotted at the point of last play with turnover on downs. However, if the offensive team informs the referee that they wish to "punt" on 3rd down, the opposing team takes possession of the ball at their 10-yard line. No actual "punt" is made.

Each game consists of (1) 5-minute warm up and (2) 20-minute halves. There will be a halftime period of 2 minutes. Teams change sides at half time. Final 2 minutes of game- NFL rules regarding clock stoppage apply. If the game is tied at the end of the regulation time, a match score, 5-minute overtime will be played with a running clock until the final 1 minute where NFL rules apply regarding clock stoppage. If the game remains tied after the end of the match score 5-minute overtime period, the game will end in a tie. For playoffs, consecutive match score 5-minute overtime periods will be played until a winner is determined. A referee will toss a coin to determine first possession. The visiting team captain will call the toss. Each possession in overtime will start at mid-field.

**Scoring** - Touchdown = 6 points, Field Goal = 3 points, Extra Point = 1 point (5 yard line conversion or successful extra point kick); 2 points (10 yard line conversion), Safety = 2 points, interception and return to end zone of a 1 point conversion = 1 point and interception and return to end zone of a 2 point conversion = 2 points.

**Mercy Rule:** If the spread is 50 or more points at any time in the second half, the official game will end. At the referee's discretion, the remaining time will be played as a scrimmage.

**Timeouts** – (2) time outs per team during the first half. (2) time outs per team during the second half. Timeouts do not carry over. However, there will be (1) time-out per team in overtime.

**Uniforms** - All players are required to wear matching jerseys with numbers. Jerseys are not provided by the league. Each player must wear turf shoes, molded cleats or sneakers. Screw in or metal cleats are not allowed. No article of clothing may cover any portion of a player's flag (excludes belts) - this means shirts are required to be tucked in and tight. If your clothing covers any portion of the flag, the referee has the right to make you down upon touch.

## Offensive Rules of the Game:

No contact or blocking allowed. However, since unavoidable/incidental contact does occur, referees have discretion in assessing penalties. Offensive formation: To start the play: the ball must be snapped by a center. The offense can have players in the backfield. The Quarterback cannot run a sneak. In order for the Quarterback to cross the line of scrimmage, he may either pass the ball, be blitzed by the defensive team or after 5 seconds have elapsed (counted off by the referee). Direct snaps to a player other than the player representing themselves as the Quarterback constitute that player receiving the snap to be considered the Quarterback and must conform to the above rules. The center cannot take a direct handoff back from the quarterback (no center sneak play). Once a ball is spotted: the team will have 20 seconds to get a play off. Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed as are running plays; The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage; The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.

A ball carrier must attempt to avoid contact with a defender. Offensive charging occurs when a ball carrier runs into a stationary defender. Accidental brushing/unavoidable contact is not charging. A ball carrier may not hurdle or jump over a defensive player (whether standing or fallen down). Officials will not allow any vertical leap by a ball carrier. However, officials will tolerate moderate spinning and lateral movements as long as the ball carrier does not commit a foul during play.

No Flag Guarding/Stiff Arming - players are not allowed to use stiff arms or to chop down with the arms or in any way guard the flag from being taken by the defense. Some spinning can be a form (perhaps accidental) of flag guarding.

No Diving - an offensive player may not dive anywhere on the field once he has possession of the ball (no diving for 1st downs or touchdowns). A defensive player may not dive to remove a flag.

Offensive players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be de-flagged. A flag removed inadvertently (not removed by grabbing and pulling) does not cause play to stop. It should continue as if the flag had not been removed. In all situations where a play is in progress and a ball carrier loses his flags either accidentally or inadvertently, the de-flagging reverts to a (1) one-hand touch of the ball carrier between the armpits and knees. It is unsportsmanlike conduct and penalized as such for a player to remove his own flags before or during a live ball period. A player may not leave his feet to remove opponents' flags. A referee may signal a player down with a one-hand touch. A player while in possession of the ball who touches the ground with any part of his body other than his hands or feet is down at the spot of such touching.

Interceptions change the possession of the ball. Ball is spotted at the end of runback; Interceptions that occur in the end zone can be returned or downed.

Unlimited number of legal laterals, pitches and hand-offs are permitted anywhere on the field. If the ball carrier's flag falls off, the player will be down upon any one hand 'touch'.

All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage). Players can be in motion, along the lines of regular football rules. There is no stripping of the ball. There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's feet were when the fumble was made. I.e. a bad snap will be blown dead and the ball will be spotted at the center's feet.

A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception on the sidelines and two feet in bounds in or entering the endzone. Players cannot return on to the playing field and make any play on the ball from an out of bounds position (unless they were pushed out of bounds and immediately come back in).

A fumble, muff or dropped ball that lands in the playing area is immediately dead at that spot. The ball belongs to the team that last had possession unless; the ball lands on or behind that team's goal line (safety is charged), the ball lands on or behind opponent's goal line (touchback; opponents ball on their 10-yard line), or if the ball is fumbled on a 3rd down that does not gain a 1st down. Fumbles are dead to avoid two players diving after the ball. Exception: If a player intercepts a ball behind their own goal and then fumbles the ball behind their goal, it is a touchback. Note: If a player pretends to fumble and causes the ball to go forward, it is a forward pass and may be illegal.

## **Defensive Rules of the Game:**

All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of ten yards from the line of scrimmage. 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 or tossed, the ten-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. A special marker, or the referee, will designate ten yards from the line of scrimmage. There is a 5 second count before a rush can be made from the line of scrimmage. The count is communicated out loud by the official on each offensive play.

The defender may use his hands only to maintain balance while going around an opposing player. The defender may not push, pull or initiate contact with any opposing player. A defender may not rough the passer. Roughing the passer is defined as any contact with any part of the passer, with or without contact of the ball. If the defender is trying to block the ball, he may not touch the passer's arm or run into the quarterback.

A "tackle" is made when a defender detaches the ball carrier's flag belt. The location of the ball at the time of the tackle determines where the ball is to be marked for the next play. When a flag belt is detached (but not cleanly pulled by a defender and does not fall to the ground for several yards down the field) the ball is marked at the spot of the initial pull (where the clip was broken).

A defender must use a one-hand touch between the shoulders and knees to "tackle" a ball carrier that loses his flag belt. Note: A defender may not touch the head of the ball carrier. A defender may not hold or grab any part of a ball carrier's body or uniform. He may not detain a ball carrier by any physical contact when "tackling". He may not slap at, bump or knock the ball from a ball carrier's arms. He may not try to steal a ball.

## **Penalties:**

All penalties can be declined; Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage; Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play; All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage unless noted below; Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

## **Sportsmanship:**

All players are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship at all times. Foul play will not be tolerated - If the referee witnesses any acts of flagrant contact, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game.

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

The officials have the final say on all judgment calls. No protest of a referee's judgment call will be permitted. Only the captain of the team may approach the referee on a rule interpretation. The referee has authority to rule promptly and, in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referee decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.

Penalties of an intentional manner to stop the clock, at the referee's discretion, will not stop the clock.

## OFFENSIVE

<b>5 Yard Penalty &amp; Repeat Down</b>	False Start
	Too Many Players on the Field
	Delay of Game
<b>5 Yard Penalty from Spot of the Foul</b>	Flag Guarding
<b>5 Yard Penalty &amp; Loss of Down</b>	Illegal Forward Pass (pass received behind the line of scrimmage & in front of QB)
<b>10 Yard Penalty &amp; Loss of Down</b>	Offensive Pass Interference
<b>15 Yard Penalty</b>	Unsportsmanlike Conduct

## DEFENSIVE

<b>5 Yard Penalty</b>	Diving
<b>5 Yard Penalty &amp; Repeat Down</b>	Offside
	Too Many Players on the Field
	Illegal Rushing
<b>Spot at Line of Scrimmage, 5 Yard Penalty &amp; Automatic First Down</b>	Holding
<b>5 Yard Penalty &amp; Automatic First Down</b>	Roughing the Passer
<b>Spot at Foul Location &amp; Automatic First Down</b>	Pass Interference
<b>Spot at Foul Location, 5 Yard Penalty &amp; Automatic First Down</b>	Interference
<b>15 Yard Penalty</b>	Unsportsmanlike Conduct