



Legacy Flag Football

5v5 Rules of the Game

(Updated 09/10/21)

Flag Football is not tackle football or “power” football. Rather than trying to defeat or crush the opponent, teams should strive together to challenge each other by using speed, quickness, agility, and appropriate deception.

The basic concept for Flag Football is for the ball carrier to avoid bodily contact with the defense and for the defense to avoid bodily contact with the ball carrier. Emphasis is placed on participants learning the basic fundamentals, developing teamwork, and demonstrating good sportsmanship at all times.

Basic Information

Number of Players: 5v5

Field Size: 50 yards long X 30 yards wide with 10-yard end zones

Football Sizes:

- Middle School: Junior/Youth (offensive team decides)
- High School: Youth

Playing Time & Substitutions

- Free substitution is not allowed. Changes to the lineup can only be made at the end of each period except under special circumstances such as injury or player disqualification. This means the players on the field will be playing both offense and defense for the entire period.
- Every player must play at least three (3) full periods of the game. No player should sit out for two (2) consecutive periods. Also, no player should play more than two (2) consecutive periods (unless a team is short on players).
- In order to ensure all players receive an equal amount of playing time, players must be “rotated” properly at each period break. For more details, refer to the tips and examples on Page 6 of this document.
- All players should be included in the flow of the game.
- Coaches who cannot abide by these playing requirements will be asked to step down from their responsibilities.

Game Duration & Timeouts

All games will consist of six (6) periods – three (3) per half – each being ten (10) minutes in length. Substitutions should be made promptly at the end of each period. This is not a timeout; think hockey line change or a basketball player checking into the game.

Each team will have one (1) “stop the clock” timeout in the first half and two (2) “stop the clock” timeouts in the second half. In addition, if the game is close (within 2 scores), a regulation clock will be used in the final thirty (30) seconds of the first half and the final sixty (60) seconds of the second half. This means the clock will stop for incomplete passes, when the ball carrier runs out of bounds, on a first down, if there is a change of possession, and on extra point attempts.

Play Clock

Once the ball is spotted the offensive team has **thirty seconds (30)** to snap the ball.

Scoring

Coaches and players are encouraged to keep score but there will usually be no scoreboard available. The score should not become the sole focus of the game at any age level. There will be no overtime play. League standings will not be kept and no league champion will be recognized.

First Downs

In order to get a first down, the offensive team must cross the midfield line in four (4) downs or less. Once across the midfield line, the offensive team will then have four (4) downs to try and score (no more first downs). In short, there is only one opportunity to gain a first down per possession. NOTE: The offensive team can get a first down at any time on a defensive penalty if applicable.

4th Down Punt Option

On 4th down, the offensive team has the option to either go for it or "punt". If the offensive team decides to punt, no play is run and the defensive team automatically takes possession of the ball on their own 5-yard line. If the offensive team decides to go for it and fails, the defensive team takes possession of the ball where the 4th down play ends.

No Running Zones

When the offensive team is within five (5) yards of getting a first down or scoring a touchdown (inside the designated line)

- A forward pass must be thrown meaning the ball must cross the line of scrimmage before an offensive player can catch it
- No handoff of any kind is allowed (first person to get the ball on the snap is considered the QB and must attempt a forward pass)
- No blitzing is allowed which also means the QB cannot run the ball
- The purpose of this rule is to "force" teams to pass the ball in short yardage situations rather than always running the ball
- NOTE: Teams are free to run the ball inside their own five (5) yard line and in the five (5) yard "zone" just passed the first down line.

Extra Point Attempt

The offensive team will select one of the following extra point conversions to attempt. NOTE: The defensive team cannot score on any extra point attempts (no points awarded for interception that is run all the way back).

- 1-Point Conversion – from the five (5) yard line, "No Running Zone" applies (offense must pass, defense cannot blitz)
- 2-Point Conversion – from the twelve (12) yard line, "No Running Zone" does not apply (offense may run the ball, defense may blitz according to rules)

Center/QB Exchange

There must be a Center/QB exchange where the QB lines up directly behind the Center (regular snap or shotgun). The first player to receive the ball from the Center is considered the QB (no direct snaps to designated Running Backs). The Center is permitted to snap the ball in any appropriate manner (between legs, from the side, etc.).

Fumbles

Any time the ball is fumbled or touches the ground after being in a player's possession it is considered down and the play is dead. In all cases, the team that fumbled retains possession at the spot of the fumble. If a fumble occurs on the Center/QB exchange, the play will be immediately considered dead and will result in the loss of a down. The ball will be spotted at the original line of scrimmage (no loss of yards).

Blocking/Screening

No form of blocking, screening, shielding, or running with the ball carrier is allowed. This is a tricky rule that causes much confusion. Neither offensive nor defensive players are permitted to initiate contact with opposing players. Offensive players may complete their "route" and act as decoys to draw the attention of the defense but should not be instructed to block in any form for the ball carrier.

6-Second Pass Clock

- The quarterback has six (6) seconds to pass the ball. Referees will use a stopwatch to track the time making it fair for everyone. Referees will NOT verbally count up/down but rather simply blow the play dead as soon as the pass clock beeps. QB's must learn to "count in their head" and get a feel for when the time is about to expire. If the quarterback is not able to throw the ball in time, the result will be a loss of down and the ball will be spotted at the original line of scrimmage.
- As soon as the quarterback hands off the ball to another player or a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage (legal or illegal), this rule no longer applies. The player can wait as long as he/she wants to throw or run the ball according to the rules.
- The quarterback cannot run the ball unless blitzed by the defense.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive a pass – including center and QB. The QB can only receive a pass from another player (cannot throw a pass to himself/herself).
- Players must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch
- Only one player is allowed to be in motion at a time

Handoffs

- The Center is eligible to receive an initial handoff provided there is a clear exchange between the Quarterback and the Center.
- The QB is not eligible to receive an immediate "return" handoff (simply touching another player with the ball without giving up possession of the ball). In order for the QB to regain possession of the ball, he/she must completely release possession of the ball to another player. In other words, the QB is eligible to receive a pitch back or forward pass after giving up the ball to begin the play.
- Handoffs, passes, laterals, and pitches of any kind behind the line of scrimmage are allowed.
- Once the ball has been handed off from the QB to another player, then all defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage.

When Running with the Ball

- Runners are not allowed to stiff-arm, flag guard, or use any other means to physically keep the defender from attempting to pull the flag belt (penalty will be assessed).
- Ball carriers are permitted to spin but *cannot* jump (both feet in the air) to avoid a defender. However, offensive players are permitted to jump when attempting to catch a pass.
- If a player is in possession of the ball and he/she has to get up off the ground in order to continue the play, then the play is dead regardless of whether the flag has been pulled or not.

Safety

If an offensive player is tackled in his own end zone, it will be ruled a safety. The defense will be awarded two (2) points and also receive possession of the ball on their own five (5) yard line.

Defensive/Flag Pulling Rules

- If the flags of the ball carrier or any other player fall off during a play, then the “one-hand touch” rule applies to only the player(s) without flags. Play continues until the whistle is blown.
- Defensive players are permitted to jump and dive (have both feet in the air) when attempting to pull an opposing player's flag belt.
- Defensive players are permitted to jump when attempting to break up or intercept a pass.
- Defenders are not allowed to strip or take the ball out of the hands of a player who has possession (penalty will be assessed).

Spotting the Ball

- The offensive team will always start with the ball on their own five (5) yard line except after an interception in which case the ball should be spotted at the spot of the flag pull.
- No Run Zone and First Down rules apply (just need to get to midfield regardless of where you start).
- The end of period three (3) will trigger a halftime break. The team that did not start with the ball at the beginning of the game will start with the ball in period four (4) on their own five (5) yard line.
- At the end of all other periods, the team with the ball retains possession and play continues from where it was left off after substitutions have been made (no change in field position or possession and no new set of downs).
- The ball is spotted at the **location of the player's hips** when the flag belt is pulled NOT where the ball ends up. Therefore, players should avoid trying to reach the ball forward in order to gain additional yardage (or stretch across the first down or goal line). In addition, “forward progress” does not apply.

Blitzing/Rushing the Quarterback

- Rushing the quarterback will be allowed on all downs EXCEPT when the offensive team is in the “no running zone” (see No Running Zones section).
- Only players who are behind the designated rush line when the ball is snapped will be eligible to rush the quarterback. The rush line will be ten (10) yards from the line of scrimmage and marked by one of the referees on each play. Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
- As soon as any defensive player intentionally or unintentionally steps across the line of scrimmage with any part of their body, the quarterback is eligible to run the ball. The quarterback cannot run on a “fake” rush or no rush. If an ineligible defensive player is the one who steps across the line of scrimmage, the quarterback is eligible to run and the offense will then have the option to either accept or decline the *Illegal Rush* penalty.
- The quarterback can throw a legal forward pass while on the run as long as he/she releases the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Offensive players cannot purposely impede/block any defensive player attempting to rush. However, offensive players are permitted to “run their route” which may create an obstacle for rushers to maneuver around.
- 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.

- If no defensive player rushes the quarterback (meaning crosses the line of scrimmage), the six (6) second pass clock applies. However, the pass clock still applies on a “fake” rush by the defense (no player crosses the line of scrimmage).

Penalties

Teams may **decline all “live ball” penalties** (meaning the result of the play stands). Dead ball penalties must be accepted. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.

Offensive

1. **ILLEGAL MOTION** (more than one person moving, false start) --- loss of five (5) yards, replay down
2. **OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE** --- loss of down and loss of five (5) yards from the original line of scrimmage
3. **ILLEGAL RUN** (quarterback crosses line of scrimmage without being rushed, handoff occurs in No Running Zone) --- loss of down, ball spotted where the play began
4. **ILLEGAL CONTACT** (blocking, illegal pick, holding, etc.) --- if happens before ball crosses the line of scrimmage then loss of down with the ball being spotted where the play began; if happens after ball crosses the line of scrimmage then loss of down and ball spotted ten (10) yards back from where the penalty occurred
5. **FLAG GUARDING** --- play counts, ball spotted five (5) yards back from the spot where the penalty occurred
6. **DELAY OF GAME** --- loss of five (5) yards, replay down, clock stops if under two (2) minutes in the second half
7. **PASS CLOCK VIOLATION** --- loss of down, ball spotted where the play began

NOTE: If an offensive penalty occurs on a play that begins in the No Running Zone and results in the offensive team being pushed back out of the No Running Zone, the No Running Zone rules still apply until the offensive team scores or achieves a first down.

Defensive

1. **ILLEGAL RUSH** --- gain of five (5) yards, replay down
2. **DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE** --- automatic first down with ball spotted at the point where the penalty occurred OR gain of ten (10) yards from the spot of the penalty; NOTE – if the interference occurs in the end zone, the offense will be given an automatic first down and the ball will be spotted on the one (1) yard line.
3. **ILLEGAL CONTACT** (blocking, holding, or pushing a player out of bounds) --- automatic first down with ball spotted at the point where the penalty occurred OR gain of ten (10) yards from the spot of the penalty
4. **ILLEGAL FLAG PULL** (before the receiver has the ball) --- automatic first down with ball spotted at the point where the penalty occurred OR gain of ten (10) yards from the spot of the penalty
5. **ILLEGAL STRIP OF THE BALL** (defensive player tries to strip the ball from the ball carrier) --- automatic first down with ball spotted at the point where the penalty occurred OR gain of ten (10) yards from the spot of the penalty
6. **ROUGHING THE PASSER** results in automatic first down PLUS a gain of ten (10) yards from the spot where the play began

Creating Good Matchups – Substitution Tips

1. Be prepared with a potential lineup before coming to the field and then be ready to make changes once you get to the field (bring a blank sheet along with the examples below). You will most likely make some kind of change after connecting with the opposing coaches and seeing their lineup.
2. When both teams have the same amount of players, place players with similar abilities in the **same place** on the rotation chart.
3. When teams do not have the same amount of players, place players with similar abilities in **different places** on the rotation chart that allow them to be on the field at the same time the most.
4. Players can be placed in different positions from week to week BUT try to make sure all players are getting the opportunity to play “extra” periods. At times some players will play one more period than others during a single game (shouldn’t be your best player every game).
5. This system is not perfect so keep that in mind when working with the opposing coaches to setup the best on the field matchups as often as possible.

10 PLAYERS

Player	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	1		1			1
B	2		2			2
C	3		3			3
D	4		4	H		4
E	5		5	A		5
F		1		L	1	1
G		2		F	2	2
H		3			3	3
I		4			4	4
J		5			5	5

9 PLAYERS

Player	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	1	5			4	3
B	2		1		5	4
C	3		2			1 5
D	4		3	H		2
E	5		4	A		3
F		1	5	L		4
G		2		F	1	5
H		3			2	1
I		4			3	2
J	OUT					

8 PLAYERS

Player	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	1	4			2	5
B	2	5			3	1
C	3		1		4	2
D	4		2	H	5	3
E	5		3	A		1 4
F		1	4	L		2 5
G		2	5	F		3
H		3			1	4
I	OUT					
J	OUT					

7 PLAYERS

Player	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	1	3	5			2 4
B	2	4			1	3 5
C	3	5			2	4
D	4		1	H	3	5
E	5		2	A	4	1
F		1	3	L	5	2
G		2	4	F		1 3
H	OUT					
I	OUT					
J	OUT					