

NFL FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

1. GAMEPLAY

- a. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield to determine who gets the ball first. The winner of rock-paper-scissors will get the pick of offense or defense first.
- b. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- c. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
 - i. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
 - ii. Offensive Teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", before lining up on the ball.
- d. All substitutions should be made during a dead ball.

2. EQUIPMENT

- a. All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and flags. (3rd-4th Grade Division)
- b. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.

3. FIELD

4. GAME TIMING

- a. Games will consist of four 10-minute continuous clock quarters.
- b. Halftime is two minutes.
- c. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball.
- d. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half. They do not carry over.
- e. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

5. SCORING

- a. **Touchdown** = 6 points
- b. **PAT** (point after touchdown) = **1 points** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
- c. After scoring a touchdown, teams must declare whether they are going for 1 point or 2 points. Any change after the decision is made requires a charged timeout.

6. LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL

- a. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- b. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - i. The ball hits the ground.
 - ii. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled
 - iii. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
 - iv. The 8 second pass clock expires.

- c. Substitutions can be made at any dead ball.
- d. **There are NO fumbles.** The ball becomes a dead ball. If the ball is fumbled forward, the ball will be placed where the ball-carrier lost possession.
- e. If there is a bad snap or the snap is dropped, the ball is dead, and the down is replayed.

7. RUNNING

- a. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.
- b. The quarterback can handoff or toss behind the line of scrimmage. Handoffs or tosses may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. No “center sneaks”.
- d. Any player who receives a handoff behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball from the line of scrimmage.
- e. Once the ball is handed off, in front, behind, or to the side, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- f. **No run zones are located five yards prior to the line to gain and five yards prior to the endzone in the offense’s direction.**
 - i. 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.
- g. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
 - i. Play will continue if a player leaves their feet to avoid a collision.
- h. Spinning and “juking” are legal moves.
 - i. No blocking or “screening” is allowed on any play.
- j. Offensive players close to the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
- k. The quarterback is able to scramble if being rushed.

8. PASSING

- a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- b. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
- c. Flea flickers, reverse passes, and WR passes are allowed, so long as the initial pass is backward.

9. RECEIVING

- a. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball was handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- b. Only one player is allowed to be in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the LOS, with no motion permitted towards the LOS.
- c. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds to count as a catch.
- d. **Interceptions are returnable.**

10. RUSHING THE PASSER

- a. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB. Players not rushing can defend on the LOS.
- b. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is eliminated and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.
- c. The referee will designate the seven-yard rush line on each play. Player's rushing should check with the referee to make sure they are in the correct position.
- d. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line before a handoff or pass.
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off.
- e. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- f. Players rushing the QB may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB can result in a penalty.
- g. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be placed where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled.

11. FLAG PULLING

- a. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- b. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle or hold.
- c. It is illegal to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
- d. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off while in possession of the ball, the player is down after a single hand touch by a defensive player.
- e. A defensive player may not intentionally pull off the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

12. FORMATIONS

- a. Offenses must have at least one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line.
- b. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
- c. Required positions include: center, quarterback, running back (1), wide receiver (2), and one flex position (RB or WR)

13. PENALTIES

- a. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
- b. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty.
- c. **Defensive Spot Fouls**
 - i. Defensive Pass Interference = Automatic first down
 - ii. Holding = +5 yards and automatic first down
 - iii. Stripping = +5 yards and automatic first down
- d. **Offensive Spot Fouls**

- i. Screening, blocking, running with the ball = -10 yards and loss of down
- ii. Flag guarding = -10 yards and loss of down
- e. **Defensive Penalties**
 - i. Offside = +5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
 - ii. Illegal Rush (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker) = +5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
 - iii. Illegal Flag Pull (before the receiver has the ball) = +5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
 - iv. Roughing the Passer = +5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
- f. **Offensive Penalties**
 - i. Offside/False Start = -5 yards from LOS
 - ii. Illegal Forward Pass = -5 yards from LOS and loss of down
 - iii. Offensive Pass Interference = -5 yards from LOS and loss of down
 - iv. Illegal Motion = -5 yards

14. OVERTIME

- a. If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. Overtime format is as follows:
 - i. The winner of rock-paper-scissors gets to choose if they are on offense or defense. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that started on defense in the first overtime will be on offense to start.
 - ii. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team.
 - iii. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.

Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the 5-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win.

- iv. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
- v. If a 2nd overtime is reached, it will be the same format as the first overtime period, with the opposite team starting on offense.
- vi. In a 3rd overtime, the team that the won the opening coin toss gets the choice of offense or defense. There will be ONE (1) play from the 5-yard line. If the offense scores, they win. If the defense holds, they win.