



## YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

### Section I: Game Structure

#### A. Timing/Possession

1. Coin toss determines first choice of possession. Winner of coin toss gets their choice of offense or defense to start the game. The team will start the second half of the game opposite of what they choose on the coin toss. The team that does not win the coin toss chooses the side on which they will start the game.
2. Games are two twenty-five minute halves. Clock stops on timeouts only.
3. Halftime will be 3 minutes.
4. Teams will switch ends after halftime, possession determined by opening coin toss.
5. The Offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. The football AND front foot of the ball carrier must be across the line for a touchdown as well as first down. If the offense fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown after the four plays, the defensive team takes over possession on its own 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes (except interceptions) start on the offensive team's 5-yard line.
7. No overtime will be played during the regular season.
8. Each time the ball is spotted, the offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball and the quarterback has 7 seconds to release the ball. If the ball is not released before the 7 seconds the play is dead and the offensive team is charged with a loss of down, with possession at the original spot.
9. If a team does not hike the ball before 30 seconds from the time of spotting has passed, they will be given a delay of game penalty.
10. Each team has one time-out per half.
11. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

#### B. Scoring

1. Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
2. Extra points are 1 point from the 5-yard line the offensive team can only pass, and 2 points from the 10-yard line the offensive team can run or pass.
3. Teams 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade or under are only allowed to go for 1 point.
4. Safety is worth 2 points. A safety occurs anytime the defensive team pulls a flag on the offense in the offenses' own end zone, or an offensive player runs out of bounds in his own end zone; result: change of possession, ball spotted on the 5 yard-line. A safety will not be penalized to the offense on a muffed snap or any fumble; result: loss of down, ball spotted on the 1 yard-line.
5. The football AND front foot of the ball carrier must be across the line for a touchdown as well as first down.
6. Win loss records will be displayed online for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

#### C. Running

1. The quarterback cannot run with the ball until after he has given up original possession.
2. Center sneak play is **illegal**.
3. Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offensive team may use an unlimited number of direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. **ABSOLUTELY NO LATERALS OR PITCHES.**
4. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade-8<sup>th</sup> Grade: handoffs, laterals, and pitches are permitted **BEHIND** the line of scrimmage.
5. Illegal pass plays will be ruled an automatic dead ball; the ball will be spotted at the line of scrimmage with a 5-yard loss.
6. "No-Running Zones", located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on both sides of midfield, are designed to avoid short yardage power-running situations. The offensive team must pass if they are spotted inside these "No-Running Zones." An illegal run in the no running zone results in a loss of down and a 5-yard loss from the line of scrimmage.
7. The offensive player that receives a handoff, lateral, or pitch behind the line of scrimmage without the ball being passed forward can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

8. Once the ball is handed off, lateraled, or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush the offensive player that now has the ball.
9. Defensive players may not strip the ball from offensive players; penalty is a 10-yard offensive gain with the ball spotted at the location of the penalty, repeat same down unless crossing midfield.
10. Spinning is allowed by the ball carrier, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag-pull. If a ball carrier leaves their feet to avoid a flag pull, a flag guarding penalty will be called on the ball carrier.

#### D. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off, lateraled, or pitched behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player can be in motion before the ball is snapped and cannot be moving towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have one-foot in-bounds when making a reception.
4. If a receiver's flag inadvertently falls to the ground prior to catching a pass, the ruling will be a completed catch and the ball will be dead at the point of the reception.

#### E. Passing

1. All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. **ANY FORWARD PASS MUST BE BEYOND THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE**
4. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is blown dead, and the offense will lose the down. The ball is spotted at the original spot (see A-8). Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule is no longer in effect.

#### F. Dead Balls

1. The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start the play.
2. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
3. Play is ruled dead when:
  - a. The ball carrier's flag is pulled (If the offensive player's flag inadvertently falls to the ground, the ball is considered dead.) The ball carrier's front foot will determine the spot of the ball at time of de-flagging.
  - b. The ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - c. A touchdown or safety is scored
  - d. A ball is fumbled. A fumble is when a player, who has possession and control of the ball, drops the ball and the ball hits the ground. All fumbles are dead balls, spotted at the point where the ball hits the ground (exception is if it lands in the end zone on a snap).
  - e. Pass or Play clock is violated.
  - f. Ball carrier touches the ground with any part of his body except for feet and hands.

#### G. Rushing the Quarterback

1. All players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. **The official will mark the seven yards.**
2. On a handoff, lateral, or pitch the defending team is not allowed to rush until the receiver has position of the ball.
3. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage and cannot cross the line of scrimmage. **Remember, no blocking or tackling is allowed.**
4. Players rushing the passer must attempt to pull the passer's flag once the defender(s) crosses the line of scrimmage. Jumping to block or deflect the pass will be ruled as an Illegal Rushing penalty.
5. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rushing rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may go beyond the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier.

#### H. Sportsmanship/Roughing

1. Officials will call all illegal blocks and tackles as a 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty. An illegal block is any attempt by a player to impede the progress of an opposing player with or without contact.
2. Officials will penalize offensive language and any taunting with a 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty.
3. Coaches that verbally abuse officials will be penalized with 15-yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty. Coaches that continue to verbally abuse officials will be disqualified from the game, at the discretion of the officials, and that coach will be subject to suspension up to and including one game to one calendar year. Please refer to the South Suburban Code of Conduct.

## Section II: Penalties

A. All Defensive Penalties will result in an automatic first down and the appropriate yardage loss:

<b>Penalty:</b>	<b>Yards:</b>	<b>Measured From:</b>
Offside	5 yards	Line of scrimmage
Pass Interference	10 yards	Line of scrimmage
Illegal Contact (holding, attempted stripping, pushing out of bounds, etc.)	10 yards	Spot of the foul
Illegal Flag Pull (before player has the ball)	10 yards	Spot of the foul
Illegal Rushing (Rushing inside the 7-yard zone)	10 yards	Line of scrimmage
Unsportsmanlike Conduct (includes tackling)	15 yards	Spot of the foul

B. All Offensive Penalties will result in a loss of down and the appropriate yardage loss:

<b>Penalty:</b>	<b>Yards:</b>	<b>Measured From:</b>
Illegal Motion / False Start	5 yards	Line of scrimmage
Illegal Pass/Illegal Run / Backwards Pass	5 yards	Line of scrimmage
Offensive pass interference (pick play, pushing)	10 yards	Line of scrimmage
Flag guarding (using hand, or leaving feet)	10 yards	Spot of the foul
Delay of game (slow play)	10 yards	Line of scrimmage
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	15 yards	Spot of the foul

## Section III. Equipment and Attire

- A. Athletic style cleats and shoes are allowed, but not metal spikes or sandals. Officials may inspect player's shoes.
- B. All players must wear a protective mouth guard.
- C. NO baseball hats may be worn during the games
- D. NO blue jeans or blue jean shorts may be worn during games. Players can wear athletic shorts or sweatpants **WITHOUT POCKETS**.
- E. **NO JEWELRY OF ANY KIND WILL BE PERMITTED.** This includes earrings, necklaces, watches, bracelets (rubber bracelets included), and any other item deemed unsafe by official.
- F. No casts of any kind will be permitted (soft cast, covered hard cast or otherwise).
- G. Players will be provided a flag football jersey and flags to be worn during the games. Flag belts may not be altered in any way.
- H. Shirts must be tucked in. Flag belts must be worn outside of the shirts.
- I. Teams must provide their own game ball when on offense (they must be the appropriate size for the grade division).
  1. **Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grades** will play with **pee wee size balls**.
  2. **4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> Grades** will use **junior size balls**.
  3. **7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Grades** will use **youth size balls**.

## Section IV. Player Count & Field Dimensions

- A. The game is played with 5 players on the field per team.
- B. For 4<sup>th</sup> grade and below, one coach per team is allowed on the field. The coach must be off the field before their team hikes the ball; otherwise there will be a delay of game penalty given. No coaches on the field while their team is on defense.

- C. The playing field is 50 yards x 25 yards for Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> Grades and 60 yards x 30 yards for 5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grades.
- D. There is a 5-yard “No Running” zone at both 5-yard lines and also 5 yards on each side of the midfield line. This area is to avoid short yardage running situations. Teams may only pass the ball inside these “No Running” zones.

## TERMINOLOGY

- **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and the rear end zone lines.
- **Line Of Scrimmage** – an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field
- **Line-To-Gain** – the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score
- **Rush Line** – an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of Scrimmage
- **Offense** – the squad with possession of the ball
- **Defense** – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball
- **Passer** – the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the QB
- **Rusher** – the defensive player assigned to rush the Quarterback to prevent him/her from passing by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass
- **Downs (1-2-3-4)** – the offensive squad has four attempts or “Downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the Line to Gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Live Ball** – the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- **Whistle** – the sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for timeout, half time or the end of the game.
- **Inadvertent whistle** – an official’s whistle that is performed in error
- **Charging** – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, chest or forearm.
- **Flag Guarding** – an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm.
- **Shovel Pass** – a legal pass attempted behind the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner
- **Lateral** – an underhand backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier
- **Pitch** – an underhanded throw backwards or sideways by the quarterback to the running back who is running out wide
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language