

2025 WW Parks and Recreation - NFL Flag Football Rules

I. Equipment

1. All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and flags. All players MUST wear mouth guards at all times while on the field. Game balls should be age specific.
2. Players must wear shoes. However, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.
5. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
6. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets.

II. Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. 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.
2. 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, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

III. Timing

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20 minutes halves. Game clock stops only for timeouts or injuries.
2. Halftime is five minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
4. Each team has one 30-second timeout per half. They do not carry over.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

IV. Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. 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 three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
 - a. 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. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - b. Offensive Teams MUST declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", when asked by the referee and prior to the 'Ready for Play'.

- c. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of “Play” at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - d. If the declaration is “Punt” the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing Team’s 5-yard line, 1st down, with **NO** option to change the declaration.
 - e. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive Team starts at its 5-yard line
4. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

V. Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
3. **Safety:** 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
4. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.

VI. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle
 - j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet other than jump cuts, spinning or to avoid a downed player on the field of play.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.)

8. If inadvertent whistle occurs the offense has two options:

- A) take the ball where the whistle blew and the down is consumed
- B) replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.

VII. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
4. Pitches or laterals will be allowed behind the line of scrimmage. A backwards pass to a player who is behind the line of scrimmage will also be allowed. This player can then throw a pass forward beyond the line of scrimmage.
5. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
6. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
7. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
8. Ball carriers may leave their feet, and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB's passing progression or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player and the play will continue without stoppage.
9. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
10. Offensive players in close proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.

11. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
12. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
13. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or pitched/lateraled, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

VIII. Passing

1. All forward passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and ball out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
 - a. There is no intentional grounding
 - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
 - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - d. The quarterback may throw a backwards pass to a player who may then throw a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock" on the timer tee. If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the timer will go off and the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
 - b. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

IX . Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions.

X. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 10 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
(Rushing the quarterback on a pass will not be allowed in Kinder/1st and 2nd/3rd grade divisions.)
2. Once the ball is handed off, pitched, or lateraled, the 10-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal defensive rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 10 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off, pitched, or lateraled by the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).

iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed, handed off, pitched or lateraled – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

iv. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the 10-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is 10 yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.

c. Special circumstances:

i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.

ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.

4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled.
 - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

XI. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, ball, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

XII. Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of 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 of scrimmage.
 - a. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
 - b. One player at a time may go in motion at least 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.

XIII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
2. Offensive or confrontational language is NOT allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED
6. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense - 5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

XIV. Penalties

1. The referees will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.

7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
8. Spot fouls in end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down)/Offensive (Safety)

Defensive Penalties

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down at spot foul occurred.
Holding	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unnecessary roughness	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

Offensive Penalties

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Charging	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Flag guarding	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offensive unnecessary roughness	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offside / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal forward pass	
(throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal motion (More than one person moving)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Taunting	-5 yards from line of scrimmage

XV. K-1st Guidelines

1. 'No Run' zones are eliminated. Teams may run the ball anywhere on the field.
2. Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff, pitch, or lateral executed in the backfield.
3. Defenders MUST line up at least five yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.

XVI. 2nd-3rd Guidelines

1. Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff, pitch, or lateral executed in the backfield.
2. Defenders MUST line up at least five yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.