

3rd Grade Flag Football Rules

GENERAL LEAGUE RULES/GUIDELINES

There will be no league standings kept throughout the year. This is a re-emphasis of the fact that this level is about learning skills/fundamentals/the game itself. Scores will be kept at the games but as mentioned – no transfer to league standings.

The season: 6 weekends of play (1 scrimmage/5 games)

August 19: practices may begin.

League Scrimmage Day: September 8 – all teams at Norwalk HS Football Field

September 15: first playing weekend

Teams may practice no more than two (2) times a week and for no longer than 90 minutes/practice once the 10 hours of conditioning is completed. To complete the 10-hour requirement – they may practice 3 to 4 days in a week until it is reached. Once that has happened – 2x a week/90 minutes.

- No practice can be held prior to the start date as determined by the governing board of the league.
- A minimum of 30 minutes each night must be spent on USA football blocking and tackling instruction with aligned drills.

Coaches in each community will determine the location of practice as determined by local league guidelines.

Players will be spread throughout each community's number of teams. Competitive balance will be the goal of this league. Any team or community that establishes an "all-star" team will have that team ineligible for participation until the changes have been made.

All players at this level will be of the same grade. There will be no playing "up" or "down" by anyone. You play the grade you are in during that season.

- I. The Game
 - a. Each game begins with captains from both teams meeting at mid-field for a coin toss. Visitors call the toss.
 - b. The winner gets to choose offense or defense.
 - c. The ball will be spotted on the 40-yard line at the start of any and all possessions by a team. Regardless of reason (change of possession, touchdown, start of the game) the possession always starts at the 40-yard line.
 - i. There will be two first downs on the playing field: at the 25 and the 10-yard line.
 1. Each team will have 4 downs to cover 15 yards to the 25 for a first down. If not, change of possession.

2. Each team will have 4 downs to cover 15 yards to the 10 for a first down. If not, change of possession.
3. Each team will have 4 downs to score from the 10-yard line. If not, change of possession.
 - ii. Once the ball is spotted, the team will have 30 seconds to run a play. There will be one delay warning given and then they will receive a delay of game penalty.
 - iii. There is no need to punt on 4th down, as the ball would return to the 40-yard line on a change of possession. Therefore, all teams will be encouraged to run at least 4 plays each possession.
- d. The playing field will be 40 yards long and width will be the top of the numbers. (40x40 field)
 - i. The field should run from the sideline closest to the bleachers to the far hash marks.
- e. Game will consist of four (4) 10 minutes quarters with continuous clock. The clock will run at all times except during the last 2 minutes of the game and after scoring a touchdown.
 - i. Huddle will last no longer than 30 seconds. Any longer than this will result in a 2-yard penalty.
 - ii. One coach is allowed in the offensive huddle and one coach is allowed in the defensive huddle.
- f. Each team is allowed two (2) 30-second timeouts/half.
- g. There are no kickoffs or kick returns.
- h. There will be a one (1) minute break between quarters.
- i. A maximum of 1 coach per team is allowed on the field during the game. They must not interfere with play. All other coaches are on the sideline during the game.
- j. Games will have 2 officials. These officials should be licensed football officials. They will be paid 60.00/game.
- k. Game Ball:
 - i. 3rd/ 4th – Pee Wee size football
 - ii. 5th and 6th – Junior size football

II. Scoring

- a. Each team will keep the game score. They must mutually agree to score throughout the game. There will however, be no league standings kept.
- b. Scoring will be as follows:
 - i. Touchdown – 6 points
 - ii. 2 point conversion from the 3 yard line – 2 points
- c. On the event of a tie, the game ends in a tie. There will be NO overtime period played.

III. Equipment

- a. Each player will wear a flag belt with two or three flags.
 - i. The host site will provide uniform flags for the four (4) teams playing on that site each Sunday.

- b. Each player will wear a protective mouthpiece.
- c. Each player will wear a soft-style helmet.
- d. Football cleats, if worn, must be molded cleats. No screw in cleats.

IV. Field

- a. The field will be 40 yards long and a width to the top of the numbers. Two (2) games on each regulation field will be held.
 - i. Field should run from one sideline closest to the bleachers to the opposite hash.
- b. The first downs will be marked with cones larger than other used to mark the sidelines on the field.

V. Players

- a. The game will be played with eight (8) players on offense and eight (8) players on defense.
- b. Players will play both offense and defense during a game.

VI. Substitutions

- a. The emphasis of this game is development and a great experience; therefore each player will play a minimum of 15 plays during a game. (Same process as teams have used in the past with previous leagues)
 - i. At the end of the third quarter, one coach from each team will meet at midfield and exchange play count sheets.
- b. Exceptions to playing time would be if a player has missed the majority of practice time leading up to the game or is coming off some type of injury.

VII. Dead Balls

- a. The ball is considered “down” when any of the following happen:
 - i. Ball carrier has their flag pulled.
 - ii. Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - iii. The ball is fumbled. When this happens:
 - 1. The ball will be spotted where the fumble hits the ground.
 - iv. The ball carriers knee hits the ground
 - v. The ball carriers flags fall off
 - vi. If the snap hits the ground, the ball is dead. Down counts.

VIII. Flag Pulling

- a. The ball carrier is considered down when flags are pulled.
- b. Defenders can dive to pull a flag but cannot tackle, hold, or run through a ball carrier to do so. (PENALTY-TACKLING/UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-RESULTS IN A FIRST DOWN)
 - i. NOTE: Coaches and parents must realize that kids will fall to the ground during the game. Not every situation where kids go down is tackling. Officials will have final say based upon their view of the play in question.
- c. The ball carrier cannot run over a potential flag puller, they must make a football move to avoid them. It is up to the game official to determine if the player did his best to avoid direct contact given the

situation. (PENALTY-UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-RESULTS IN A FIRST DOWN)

- d. A defensive player cannot intentionally pull flags off a player who does not have the ball. (PENALTY 2 YARDS-UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT)
- e. There is no flag guarding by an offensive player and the offensive player cannot stiff-arm a defender. (PENALTY-2 YARDS-FLAG GUARDING)

IX. Formations

- a. Offensive formations must have five (5) of the eight (8) players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. (3 lineman and 2 receivers).
 - i. NOTE: teams may only use league approved formations and defensive alignments in grades 3-4-5.
- b. Only one offensive player can be in motion but cannot run towards the line of scrimmage.
 - i. When in motion-the defensive player will “chase” the offensive player when he goes in motion.
- c. Defense must have two (2) players on the defensive line at the snap of the ball. They must line head up on the offensive guards on the line of scrimmage. They will wait for a 3 count by the official to rush.
- d. There are no running plays that are to be run between the guard and center. All running plays must be off the edge of the line of scrimmage or around the outside.

X. Offense

- a. The offensive team must follow the formations guidelines provided by the league.
- b. All motions must be in accordance to the rules of football. Only one person is allowed in motion at any time.
- c. Any player is allowed to block with their hands up and in an open fashion above the waist. (stalk blocking style) They may run and maintain their block as long as they do not grasp or hold their opponent.
 - i. NOTE: No offensive lineman are eligible to catch or run the ball.
- d. The center must snap the ball between his legs.
- e. Ball carriers:
 - i. Cannot hurdle, leap, or dive anywhere on the field. (PENALTY-BALL IS DEAD AT POINT WHERE THEY LEFT THE GROUND)
 - ii. There cannot be any stiff-arm by the ball carrier or guarding of their flag. (PENALTY-2 YARDS-FLAG GUARDING) Spinning is allowed but they cannot leave their feet to do so.
 - iii. Ball carriers cannot “lower their head or shoulders” to run through a potential flag puller. They must make a football move to avoid them to continue running. (PENALTY-UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN OFFENSE)
- f. QB sneaks are not allowed.

- XI. Defense
 - a. The defense must follow the formation guidelines provided by the league.
 - b. Defensive backs must be min. 5 yards off the ball, linebackers must be min. 5 yards off the ball and stacked behind the defensive lineman, and safeties must be min. 10 yards off the ball at the snap.
 - c. The two defensive line players can be lined up head up on the guards only.
 - d. Tackling is PROHIBITED! (PENALTY-UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN OFFENSE) If a player is given two (2) tackling penalties, they will be removed from the game for the remainder of that day.
 - e. The defensive line will line up on the line of scrimmage, but cannot rush the passer until a 3 count. The count is off when the ball is handed off.
 - f. No blitzing is allowed.
 - g. Pass interceptions can be returned until the player who intercepted the ball has their flag pulled or crosses the 40-yard line. The result is a 2-point play and the defense gets to go to offense.

- XII. Penalties
 - a. Flag guarding/Stiff-Arm – 2 yards
 - b. Unnecessary roughness – AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN
 - i. Examples: tackling, runner over a defensive player
 - ii. 2 unnecessary penalties = removal from game.
 - c. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 5 yards first offense, ejection 2nd offense
 - i. Taunting, excessive celebrations, swearing
 - d. False starts, offside – 2 yards
 - e. Delay of game – 2 yards
 - f. Illegal block – 2 yards
 - g. Pass interference – 2 yards
 - h. Chop Blocking – 2 yards