

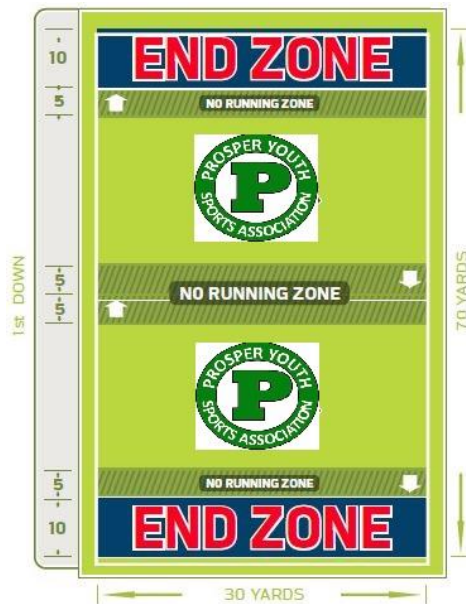
# 2023 PYSA Flag Football Rules

## EQUIPMENT

- All players must be in uniform. Jerseys must be tucked into pants or shorts if they hang below the belt.
- Teams must use league-issued flags, belts, and footballs for games.
- Pants or shorts with pockets are not allowed.
- Flags cannot be the same color as pants or shorts and must be positioned on hips.
- Players are required to wear soft helmets.
- Any eyeglasses worn by players must be made for sports and cannot contain metal.

## FIELD

- The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain.
- No-run zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
- While in the no-run zones teams cannot run the ball. All plays must be pass plays with a forward pass going beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds
- Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones on each drive.



## GAME FORMAT & ROSTERS

- Teams will play a 6 v 6 format for Kindergarten through 3<sup>th</sup> grade. Fourth grade teams will play a 5 v 5 format consistent with flag tournament play. The 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> grade levels will play standard 7on7 format and should refer to those rules.
- Rosters will consist of a minimum of eight (8) players and a maximum of ten (10) players.
- Teams can carry more than ten (10) players at their discretion.
- Returning players have the option to remain on their existing team or can choose to be part of a new team this season.
- A player's affiliation to their existing team for the coming season is the sole choice of the player.
- Coaches cannot release players from their roster.
- Players seeking a new team can either enter the draft or fill a position on a formed team.
- Beginning at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level and above, fully formed teams will be allowed to register in the Advanced division for their grade level or above.
- In efforts to create competitive matchups each week, formed teams will only play games in the Advanced division and not in the Recreational division.
- Players are not eligible to participate on more than one team in the same grade level.

## GAME

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine which team starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the coin toss.
- 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.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- On fourth down, the offensive team has the option to punt or go for the first down.
- On a punt, the defensive team will begin their possession at their own 5-yard line.
- If the offense fails to gain a first down on its fourth down attempt, the defensive team takes possession of the ball where the offensive drive ended.
- Offenses begin their drives at their own 5-yard line, except in the case of an interception or a turnover on downs.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

## TIMING & OVERTIME

- Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two 20 minute halves. The final minute of the second half will be played in a “pro clock” format, with clock stopping on an incomplete pass, out of bounds play, or penalty. Pro clock format only in effect in second half when score differential is 8 points or less.
- Clock stops for change of possession, after scoring play, timeouts and injuries.
- Halftime is 3 minutes in duration.
- Once ball is spotted by referee, the offensive team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has two 1 minute timeouts per half.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. **Overtime** format is as follows:
  - A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
  - If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
  - The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
  - 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. 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.
  - 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.
  - The third round of overtime, if needed, will determine the winning team by the longest play from scrimmage. Each team will get one play from midfield.

- The final points earned by the winning team in the final overtime will be added onto the winning team's total score. The losing team will not receive any additional points.  
Example: End of regulation time, score is 14-14. Team A scores one point and Team B score two points. Team B wins with a final score of 16-14. Points are only added to total score from final round of overtime.
- All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
- There are no timeouts.

## SCORING

- **Touchdown:** 6 points
- **PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
- Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass
- 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. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
- **Safety:** 2 points  
A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his 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.

## EXCESSIVE SCORING SITUATIONS

- If a team is winning by 24 points or more, that team must pass the ball on offense until the opposing team can narrow the scoring margin to less than 24 points or until the game is over.
- If a player scores two touchdowns and his team is up by 12 points or more, the player can no longer advance the ball on offense until the other team narrows the scoring margin to less than 12 points or until the game is over. The player can play the quarterback position, but is ineligible to touch the ball beyond the line of scrimmage until the scoring difference is less than 12 points.

## COACHES ON FIELD & SIDELINE

- For the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade divisions, two coaches are allowed on the field to direct players before the snap of the ball. Coaches must be 15 yards off the line of scrimmage and are not allowed to direct players during live ball situations.
- For the Kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade divisions, up to four (4) official coaches can participate in the game. There can be a maximum of two coaches on the field and two coaches on the sideline per team.
- For 2<sup>nd</sup> grade division, one coach is allowed on the field.
- For 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade divisions, one offensive coach is allowed on the field. This coach cannot coach after play call. If coach violates this guideline, the team will forfeit the offensive coach on the field for the remainder of the game.
- For 2<sup>nd</sup> grade divisions and above, there can be up to a maximum of three (3) coaches on the sideline for each team.
- All coaches and volunteers involved on field and sidelines will be required to complete a background check application and be approved for participation.

## LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
- It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. The official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone reminder to allow players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals to confuse offensive players while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Any official can whistle the play dead. A play is live until an official blows his/her whistle.
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
  - The ball hits the ground.
  - If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap and the quarterback does not field the ball cleanly, the ball is spotted where the ball hit the ground.
  - The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
  - The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
  - The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
  - The ball carrier’s flag falls out (referee discretion).
  - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
  - The 7 second pass clock expires.
  - Inadvertent whistle. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense can either take the ball where the whistle was blown and consume the down or the offense can elect to replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble.

- Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

## RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the runner’s hips are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is located when flag is pulled.
- The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap from center.
- Only handoffs or pitches 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.
- The center is only allowed to receive the first handoff of the play if the handoff is received from behind the quarterback.
- The ball cannot be handed off or lateraled once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage.
- No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield and are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones when the subsequent line is the line to gain. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive.
- Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball leaves the hands of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.

- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
- Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication it was done to avoid collision with another player.
- No blocking with hands is allowed at any time.
- Screening beyond the line of scrimmage is not allowed. Screening is only allowed behind the line of scrimmage.

## PASSING

- Offensive players cannot screen defensive players beyond the line of scrimmage.
- All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, and only one allowed per play.
- The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed.
- The quarterback has a 7-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. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
- If the QB is standing in his own end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.

## RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one player is allowed in motion at the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
- A player must have at least one foot in bounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions and turnovers on downs are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
- Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns.

## RUSHING THE PASSER

- 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 quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball leaves the quarterback’s hands, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- Referee will designate the rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage before each play. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
- Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the 7-second clock in effect.
- Teams are not required to identify their rusher(s) before the play.
- 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.
- The offense can screen rusher by positioning body between rusher and quarterback. The offense cannot initiate contact and must have position established to legally impede the rusher. It is the responsibility of each player to avoid contact. Any contact will be penalized and will result in an impeding the rusher penalty or an

illegal rush 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.**

- A sack occurs if the quarterback's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is spotted where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.
- A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

## FLAG PULLING

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play before gaining possession of the ball, the player is down immediately once he/she gains possession.
- If a ball carrier's flag falls off during the play while he/she has possession of the ball, then the ball carrier is down once touched with one hand anywhere by a defender.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 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, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flag with the jersey.

## FORMATIONS

- Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to five (5) players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- One player at a time may go in motion behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
- 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".
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his hands for a legal exchange.

## UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

- If the 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. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered.
- Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. The referee will give one warning, and continued use of offensive language by player or coach will result in ejection from game.
- Players or parents may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- Ball carriers must make an effort to avoid defenders with established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:  
Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down  
Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

## UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
- Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations.
- Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

### Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from LOS
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from LOS and automatic first down
Stripping	Spot foul +10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive holding (holding a receiver prior to pass)	Spot foul and automatic first down
Defensive pass interference	Spot foul and automatic first down
Defensive holding (tackling ball carrier without pulling flag)	Spot foul +10 yards and automatic first down

### Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start	-5 yards from LOS
Illegal forward pass (Any pass thrown after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Illegal motion (More than one person moving at snap)	-5 yards from LOS
Delay of game	-5 yards from LOS
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from LOS
Taunting	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Illegal screening, blocking	Spot foul -10 yards and loss of down
Charging	Spot foul -10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	Spot foul -10 yards and loss of down

## COACH'S CHALLENGE (NEW ADDITION TO RULES)

- Coach is allowed one CHALLENGE per game. A CHALLENGE of an official's call is intended to enforce the correct interpretation and application of the rule.
- Only highlighted penalties above are eligible to be challenged.
- A challenged call results in the stoppage of play and time clock. Officials will convene with both coaches, and a league director or head of officials will join. When a league director or head of officials is not available, an official from an adjacent field will join the discussion.
- Decision made by field officiating crew after consulting with league officials will be final.
- Challenges do not apply to subjective calls by officials, such as pass interference, spotting of ball, flag guarding, etc. Only highlighted calls above can be challenged.