

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

4th - 6th Grade

(May 2024)

Spirit of the Rules – Coaches, Players and Parents must remember that the Rules are intended to create the most beneficial experience for ALL players. Questions not explicitly addressed by the Rules will invariably arise, and oftentimes require immediate resolution by Coaches from opposing teams (and/or game officials); when the EAA Flag Football Director is not available to answer concerns, the Coaches must default to the Spirit of the Rules and do what is best for ALL players.

Team encouragement and support in a positive manner is urged. However, all rude or invasive forms of communication to the opponent, coaches, fans or parents will not be tolerated. This could result in a game ejection and will be reviewed by the Flag Football Leadership Team for a possible league suspension or dismissal.

THE PLAYERS

All players should be played fairly on offense and defense in a rotational manner.

OFFENSE

- Players will play the QB position in the 4th and 5th/6th grade age levels.
- Every player that would like to try QB should be provided an opportunity during the season to play QB either in a game or scrimmage.
 - It is not required that every player play QB equally
 - It is not required that every player play QB during the season
- QB can move or scramble in any direction but cannot cross the line of scrimmage
- After the initial exchange, the QB cannot receive the ball back in any method
- The QB must exchange the ball to a teammate by a handoff, pitch (lateral) or forward pass within 6 seconds.
 - **After 6 seconds, the pass rusher can attempt to sack the QB**
 - We will experiment this year with various methods of enforcing this rule other than a player counting
- Once the QB hands off or pitches the ball to a teammate the defenders can cross the LOS immediately.

- If a pass rusher does cross the LOS before a completed 6 seconds the Referee will penalize the defense by awarding the offense a new down and advancing the ball by 5 yards or half the distance to the goal.
- The 5 other offensive positions that can receive the exchange from the QB can advance the ball across the LOS.
- A team must field a roster of 5 players or forfeit that game. A team that has 5 players will play 5 on defense vs 5 on offense and 5 on offense (including QB) vs 5 on defense (the team that has 6+ players).

DEFENSE

- The team will consist of a rusher and 5 others matched up in a zone or man to man coverage pending the location on the field.
- Zone coverage must be played all the time except the following:
 - Man coverage can only be used when offense is at or inside the no running areas (2 point conversion and 5 yards before first down line).
 - For example, If the offense is 6 yards from first down line, you must stay in zone coverage.
 - For example, If the offense is 5 yards or nearer, you can stay in zone or switch to man coverage.
- Defense can blitz one time per half without waiting for the 6 second wait period. Only one per half. Unused blitzes cannot be transferred from one half to another. (use it or lose it).

THE GAME

- An official score will be kept by the Referee.
- The Referee will conduct a coin flip to decide which team will have the ball first, the team winning the coin flip can choose either the beginning of the game or the beginning of the second half.
- The game consists of two 25-30 minute halves with a five minute halftime
 - If the end of the half finishes in the middle of a drive of a team, that team will be allowed to finish the drive. The game will either end with a score or a defensive stop.
- If games start later than five minutes after the hour, the end of the team's field reservation (one hour) will override the time left on the clock.
- The clock is running time and should be kept by a parent volunteer or the Referee
- All possessions after a score or at the beginning of a game or half start on the team's own 5 yard line.
- Each **4th grade team** has four downs to make a first down or score.
- Each **5th-6th grade team** has three downs to make a first down or score.

- After a touchdown, teams try for an extra point from the 5 yard line (PAT = 2pts).
- Teams may pass the ball or run the ball on any play except the following:
 - No running plays inside the “no running zones”.
 - No running zones are as follows:
 - inside the “red zone” - 5 yards from the end zone.
 - 2 point conversions located 5 yards from the end zone.
 - 5 yards before the first down line.

CHANGE OF POSSESSION

- All possessions following a team’s failure to make a touchdown or first down after four downs results in the defending team getting the ball, **there is no punting**, prior to turning the ball over on downs.
- If the team crosses mid-field, change of possession occurs at the spot of the ball.
- If the team did not cross mid field, change of possession occurs back at mid field.
- All possessions following an interception start where the player making the interception is down or out of bounds.

DURING PLAY

- Players will need to line up in a formation that has two players on the line of scrimmage and three players off the line of scrimmage.
- The QB can either start with the ball on the line of scrimmage (LOS) or 3 to 5 yards behind the LOS, there is no center hiking the ball.
- Motion is allowed.
- Passes must be forward passes thrown from behind the line of scrimmage
 - A forward pass can be overhand, underhand or shovel pass
- A person receiving a handoff or lateral pitch can throw a forward pass if they are still behind the line of scrimmage; laterals are only allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
- No exchanges are allowed once the ball has passed the line of scrimmage.
 - The ball will be considered down at the point the exchange is made
- **What is and is not allowed during a play:**
 - Blocking an opponent is not allowed, however screening is allowed.
 - Screening consists of no contact.
 - A screener cannot move or leave his/her feet or leap to screen a defender
 - An illegal screen will be a five yard penalty from the spot of the foul and result in a loss of down for the offense.
 - No tackling or roughing is allowed, the penalty for this infraction is a five yard penalty from the end of the run and repeat the down.

- No interference with a receiver before they catch the ball, if a penalty is called the offense will get five yards and repeat the down.
 - No “flag guarding” or “stiff arming” of any kind will be allowed, if called this penalty will result in a 5 yard penalty and a loss of down.
 - No jumping over or leaping a player to avoid having your flag pulled, unless the intent is to avoid an inevitable collision, should this occur, the play is dead at the spot of the infraction.
 - Spinning is allowed to avoid a defender.
 - No covering flags with jerseys, jerseys should be tucked inside the flag belts.
- **Flag Pulling:**
 - A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
 - Defenders should NOT dive to pull flags, this is a safety / technique issue.
 - Defenders cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
 - The ball carrier cannot run through or over a defender.
 - It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier’s possession.
 - If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play is over.
 - 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 flags with the football jersey.
 - **The Referee when present is the only person who can call penalties.** The Referee can choose certain infractions as teachable moments on how to play the game correctly and not issue a penalty. However acts that are clearly committed to gain an advantage needs to be dealt with immediately by the Referee and coaches. The Referee can eject a player who has three penalties and is not adapting his play to the rules and or demonstrating poor sportsmanship.
 - **The play ends when:**
 - A forward pass is complete when a receiver has one-foot land in bounds with possession of the ball before any other part of their body touches out of bounds.

- A player running with the ball has their flag pulled, has at least one knee hit the ground, falls on the ground, steps out of bounds, crosses into the end zone or fumbles so that the ball lands on the ground (safety issue).
- Fumbles end a play, we want to avoid kids diving on the ball and each other.
- The ball is spotted where the ball is at the time when a player is ruled down.
- If a ball carrier has a flag malfunction and the belt falls off without anyone around, the ball carrier is still live. The defense only has to touch the ball carrier with 1 hand to stop the play.

THE FIELD

- Fields will be striped to be 30 yards wide by 50 yards long plus a 10-yard end zone on each end, total playing surface is 30 x 70 yards.
- A first down line splits the field in half at 25 yards from each goal line.
- Cones should be placed at the front corners of each end zone and on both sidelines at the midfield first down marker.
- No running zones are displayed by dashed lines. The only no run zone you need to obey your 5 yard line before the first down line.

FIELD DIMENSIONS

- 70 yards (210 feet) long/length by 30 yards (90 feet) across/width

