



# Flag Football Rules

Updated 6/1/16

## I. Illegal equipment consists of:

1. **Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material,**
  - this includes billed hats, or items containing exposed knots
2. **Jewelry.**
  - Stud earrings are ok. *No hoops or dangling earrings.*
3. **Pads or braces worn above the waist.**
4. **Metal cleats**
5. **Shirts or jerseys that do not remain tucked in.**
  - Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt that does not remain tucked in.
6. **Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material**
  - unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped.
7. **Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body.**
8. **Exposed metal on clothes or person.**
9. **Towels attached at the player's waist.**

## II. NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

1. **Each team should start the game with 6 players**
  - *A minimum of 4* is needed to avoid a forfeit.
  - There must be at least *2 females* and *2 males* on the field the entire time.

- If a team only has one female they must play one player down.

### III. LENGTH OF GAME:

- 1. Playing time shall be split into two halves of 24 minutes.**
- 2. Half-time shall be 3 minutes.**
- 3. There will be a running clock for the entire game except during the last two minutes of the second half**

- The clock will stop on out-of-bounds and incompletions.

- 4. Rocks-Paper-Scissors will determine who shall receive the choice of possession or side at the beginning of the game.**

- If only one team is ready to play at game time, they will automatically have the choice.

- 5. Should darkness threaten the completion of a game, periods can be shortened by the referee.**

- The referee may call a game at any time.

### IV. TIMEOUTS:

- 6. Teams are allowed (1) 30-second time out per half.**

- It can be used before the ball is snapped or after the ball is downed.

### V. 1st DOWNS:

- 1. The field is split into four quarters.**
- 2. Progressing from one quarter into another quarter yields a first down regardless of when the line of scrimmage was.**
  - The only exception is if a team loses yardage and ends up in the previous quadrant and then crosses back over.

## **VI. PERSONNEL CHANGES:**

- 1. Teams may substitute players after the ball is downed and before the ball is snapped.**
  - Having too many players on the field yields a 5-yard penalty.

## **VII. MERCY RULE:**

- 1. If a team is 25 points or more ahead when the Referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over.**
  - If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 25 the game shall end at that point.

## **VIII. FIELD GOALS:**

- 1. There will be no field goals or kicked extra points, only punting.**

## **IX. KICKOFFS:**

- 1. On a kickoff the ball is dead as soon as it touches the ground.**
- 2. The only time a kickoff can be returned is when the ball is fielded by the receiving team in the air.**

## **X. PUNTING:**

- 1. Fake punts are illegal.**
- 2. On fourth down the Referee must ask the Offensive team if they want a protected scrimmage kick.**
- 3. Once the offense has declared their choice, the Referee will inform the Defense of the offense's choice.**

4. The only way the decision can be changed is if *the Offense calls a time-out*, or if a *foul occurs anytime prior to or during the down* and the down is to be replayed.
  - In the latter case the Offensive team will be asked if they want a protected scrimmage kick or not.
5. The kicking team must have all of its players, except for the punter, on the line of scrimmage.
6. No kicking team players may move until the ball is kicked.
7. There are no restrictions to the number of players the defensive team must have on the line.
8. Defensive players **MAY** attempt to block the punt by jumping straight up in the air.
  - They may **NOT**, however, cross the line of scrimmage.
9. If a punt crosses the scrimmage line and touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the receiving team.

## XI. LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:

1. The offensive team must have a *minimum of 4 players* set on the line of scrimmage at the snap.
2. After the ball is placed a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
  - a. These 30 seconds includes any time spent in a huddle.
3. Players in motion do not count as players on the line of scrimmage.
4. Once the center has placed his hands on the ball no offensive player may enter the neutral zone.
5. Following the ready for play whistle and until a legal snap, **NO** defensive player may encroach, touch the ball, stand in, or in any other way interfere with the offensive team.

- a. *Penalty - Dead Ball foul, encroachment, 5 yards from succeeding spot.*
6. **Upon the ball being snapped, the referee will start a 3-second count.**
7. **At the end of the 3-second count, any defensive player may cross the line-of-scrimmage and attempt to deflag the quarterback.**
8. **Defensive players may only cross the line-of-scrimmage prior to the 3-second count being completed if there's a hand off.**
9. **After the snap, *the center may go out for a pass.***
  - a. **There is no rule requiring players to stay and block.**

## **XII. BACKWARD PASSES AND FUMBLES:**

1. **Any ball that is fumbled during a down will be dead by rule once it has touched the ground.**
2. **A backward pass may be intercepted by any player inbounds and advanced.**
3. **A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed.**
  - a. *This will be penalized as an Illegal pass: loss of 5 yards, loss of down and the clock will start on the ready for play.*
4. **Once a ball has touched the ground the ball is considered dead.**

## **XIII. FORWARD PASSES AND INTERCEPTIONS:**

1. **If a player is in the air attempting to catch a ball, the player must contact the ground with at least one foot in-bounds with the ball in their possession prior to going out of bounds**
  - o **This is only unless there is contact by an opponent that causes the player to first touch out-of -bounds.**

- If possession of the ball is lost simultaneously when they hit the ground, *it is not a catch*.
- If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and *belongs to the team that snapped the ball*.

2. **If a receiver goes out of bounds, they must establish both feet inbounds before making a catch.**

#### **XIV. PASS INTERFERENCE:**

1. **Any contact that, in the view of the official, interferes with the attempt to catch a pass (offensive or defensive player) is pass interference**
  - Unless, in the view of the official, it occurs when two or more eligible *receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass*.
2. **It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or touched prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offense's line of scrimmage.**
3. **If the pass interference by the defense is intentional and/or unsportsmanlike, the defense may be penalized an additional 10 yards.**
  - Pass Interference is enforced at the spot of the foul and is an automatic 1st down.

#### **XV. SCORING:**

1. Touchdowns = 6 points
2. Extra Points = 1 point if successful from the 3 yard line, 2 points if successful from the 10 yard line.
  - Extra points can be returned for points if intercepted.
3. Safety = 2 points
4. Losers DO NOT walk once points have been scored. You defend your defensive half the entire half regardless of where the touchdown was scored.

#### XVI. SAFETY:

1. If a player carries the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead while in their team's possession, it is a safety.
2. If a team commits a foul in the end zone where the spot of enforcement is designated as the spot of the foul, it will be declared a safety.
  - **A team recording a safety will receive two points, and the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their own 1st quarter line, unless moved by penalty.**
3. One Exception = *The Momentum Rule* –
  - When a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage kick between their five yard line and their goal line and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, *the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.*

#### XVII. PERSONAL FOULS:

1. Any act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul
2. For defensive infractions, the result will be a 5 yard penalty and an automatic 1st down for the offense.
3. For offensive infractions, a loss of 5 yards and a loss of down will be enforced.
  - In the case of an offensive infraction on 4th down 5 yards will be added to the end of a punt or a loss of down will occur on a 4th down conversion try.
4. **Players shall not:**
  - Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
  - Trip an opponent.
  - Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
  - Throw the runner to the ground.
  - Hurdle another player.
    - unless player is down, and the hurdle is used as a safety measure
  - Contact an opponent after the ball is declared dead.
  - Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
  - Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
  - Clip an opponent.
  - Position themselves on the shoulders of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
  - Tackle the runner.
    - this warrants an ejection

XVIII. SCREEN BLOCKING:



1. **Screen Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without using any part of the body to initiate contact.**
2. **Screen blocking shall take place without contact.**
3. **A screen blocker cannot use their hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact.**

- If they do use contact it will be called a Personal Foul.

**4. Screen blockers may NOT:**

- Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
- Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
- Take a position so close to an opponent that they cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction.
- This applies to linemen blocking a blitz as well as players blocking on a running play.

**XIX. STIFF ARMING:**

1. **Stiff arming is not allowed; a personal foul will be called, and if warranted, an unsportsmanlike conduct or ejection will result.**

**XX. OBSTRUCTING THE RUNNER:**

1. **A defensive player is not allowed to hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt.**

**XXI. THE FLAG BELT:**

1. All shirts must be tucked in, and are not permitted to hang over the flag belt.
2. Should a player lose their flag belt legally or illegally during a down and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag is made.
  - Legal tag = one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm
3. When a player scores they must immediately raise their hands and allow an official to remove their flag belt.
  - This is done to *insure that the flag belt has not been illegally secured.*
  - If the belt has been illegally secured, then *the score is disallowed, the player ejected and a 10 yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will be administered from the previous spot.*
4. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged.
  - It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who is not in possession of the ball.
  - In cases where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty of the play
    - (Penalty: Personal foul, 10 yards).

## XXII. GUARDING THE FLAG BELT:

1. Runners shall not flag guard by using any part of the body or ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt.
2. Flag guarding includes but is not limited to:

- Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that flag guards.

### **XXIII. PLAYOFF TIES:**

- 1. In the event of a tie at the end of regulation in a playoff game, captains will be called to play Rocks/Paper/Scissors.**
- 2. The winning captain can choose if they will start with the ball or start on defense, or what side they want to defend.**
- 3. Teams will each get three attempts to convert 2-point conversions, alternating offense and defense after every attempt.**
  - If it is still tied after three attempts, teams will continue until one team converts and the other does not.
    - i. Think soccer shootout, but with Football.

### **XXIV. OFFICIAL'S AUTHORITY:**

- 1. The officials have the authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in the rules.**
- 2. His/her decision is final. The official has the right to eject players or have them sit out of part or all of the game.**