

Flag Football Rulebook

Players and Timing

- (1) Each team should start the game with 7 players
 - (a) A minimum of 5 players is needed to avoid a forfeit
 - (b) A speaking captain must be designated for each team. This person alone may appeal to the official, and then only on questions of interpretations of the rules (not judgement calls).
- (2) A coin toss will determine who shall receive the choice of possession or side at the beginning of the game
 - (a) If only one team is ready at the time designated for starting, that team will automatically win the coin toss
- (3) Each team will be awarded 1 time outs per half. Time outs are 45 seconds long.
- (4) Playing time shall be 40 minutes; separated into two 20 minute halves
- (5) Half time shall be 3 minutes
- (6) The first 18 minutes of each half will be running clock
- (7) The last two minutes of each half will follow NIRSA timing rules (similar to NCAA)
- (8) There will be a 25 second game clock that will begin once the ball is placed on the line of scrimmage. There will be a 10 second warning, and a 5-yard penalty if the ball is not snapped.

The Flag Belt

- (1) Shirts may not 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 wherever they make contact with the ball
- (3) Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged.
- (4) It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who is not in possession of the ball.
- (5) In cases where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option
- (6) of the penalty of the play (Penalty: Personal foul, 10 yards).
- (7) 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.
- (8) Flag guarding includes but is not limited to:
 - (a) Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
 - (b) Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
 - (c) Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that flag guards.

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, unless ruled otherwise by the supervisor on duty.
- (3) The official has the right to eject players or have them sit out of part or all of the game.
- (4) Fans, coaches, and spectators are a part of a team and any fouls they commit will go against their team.

Scoring

- (1) Touchdown = 6 points
- (2) Extra Points = 1 point if successful from the 3 yard line
- (3) Extra Points = 2 points if successful from the 10 yard line
- (4) Extra Points = 3 points if successful from the 20 yard line
- (5) Safety = 2 points
- (6) Once a team has made their choice on the extra point, they can only change their decision by taking a time-out.

Kick Off

- (1) Will be punted 10 yards up from the end zone nearest the kicking team.
- (2) If the ball is caught in the end zone and the receiving player takes a knee, it will be a 1st down on the 10-yard line.

Play

- (1) 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 or Encroachment: 10 yards from succeeding spot
- (2) The offensive team shall under no circumstances be permitted to attempt a handoff or pitch behind the line of scrimmage. All plays must be either a forward pass or a lateral (screen) pass. In the event of a lateral screen pass, the receiving player may attempt a forward pass.
- (3) The offensive team will be given 10 seconds from the time of the snap to release the ball on a pass.
- (4) The play is deemed dead at the 10 second whistle.

Screening and Rushing

- (1) There will be NO rushing by the defense across the line of scrimmage until 5 seconds has been called by the Line Judge, except for one play per set of four downs. (Infraction: 5-yard penalty and play down over)
- (2) Offensive screening: **BLOCKING IS PROHIBITED.** Offensive players may screen defensive players by getting in between the ball carrier and the defensive player. To do so legally, the offensive screener must keep his arms behind his back. Any use of the arms, elbows, or legs is illegal. A screen can be set by moving laterally or backwards in front of a defensive player in the same manner as a screen is set in basketball. The screener cannot be moving his feet at the time any contact occurs with the defensive player. (Foul: 10-yard penalty and Loss of Down).
- (3) Defensive play: Defensive players, in an attempt to get to the ball carrier, must avoid the offensive screener by going around the screen. The hands and arms may not be used to push or shove the offensive screener out of the way. (Foul: 10-yard penalty and Loss of Down - Penalty is assessed to the end of the play)

- (4) The officials shall call unnecessary roughness at their own discretion. (Foul: 10-yard penalty)

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, unless contact by an opponent causes the player to first touch out-of-bounds.
- (2) If possession of the ball is lost upon contact with the ground, it is not a catch.
- (3) If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the offensive team

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.

Fumbles

- (1) If a player fumbles, the ball is dead at the spot of the issue
- (2) If a player snaps the ball and it hits the ground it counts as a fumble.

Punting

- (1) Quick punts are illegal
- (2) On fourth down the referee will ask the offensive team if they want to punt or go for it
- (3) The kicking team must have all its players on the line of scrimmage and none of them may move until the ball is kicked
- (4) Defensive players may attempt to block the kick by jumping straight into the air, but may not penetrate the line of scrimmage

Safety

- (1) A Safety occurs:
 - (a) If a player carries the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead while in their team's possession.
 - (b) 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.
- (2) Exception- 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.

Personal Fouls

- (1) Any act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. Players shall not:
 - (a) Punch, strike, strip, steal or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession
 - (b) Trip an opponent
 - (c) Contact an opponent who is on the ground
 - (d) Hurdle another player
 - (e) Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead
 - (f) Make contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary
 - (g) Deliberately dive or run into a defensive player
 - (h) Clip an opponent
 - (i) Position themselves on the shoulders of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage
 - (j) Tackle the runner (warrants ejection)

Stiff Arming

- (1) Stiff arming is not allowed
 - (a) A personal foul will be called and if warranted an unsportsmanlike conduct or ejection will result.

Obstructing the Runner

- (1) A defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt.

Illegal Equipment

- (1) Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, or stiff materials, including billed hats or items containing exposed knots
- (2) Jewelry
- (3) Pads
- (4) Metal spikes
- (5) Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped.
- (6) Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body.
- (7) Exposed metal on clothes or person

ALL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS SHALL BE DECIDED BY THE IM COORDINATOR. THESE RULES MAY BE CHANGED BY THE IM COORDINATOR AS DEEMED NECESSARY BY OBSERVING GAMEPLAY UNDER THESE RULES.