

SUMMER FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULE BOOK

I. Equipment Rules

- All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and flags. **All players MUST wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.**
- Players must wear athletic shoes. Cleats are allowed; **however, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.**
- Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads.
- Players must remove all jewelry and hats. Headbands or winter beanies are allowed.
- Players may wear soft shell helmets, halos and sunglasses, but they must be secured at all times while on the field. Prescription glasses are permitted without a strap.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants, if they hang below the belt line.
- **We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets or belt loops.** Games will not be delayed for a player to tape their pockets. Participants must bring their own official NFL FLAG belts and mouth guards to the field.
- Game footballs will be provided.
- **Flag belts and flags cannot be the same color as the player's shorts or pants.**

II. League Rules and Regulations

a) Field Dimensions

- i. PDLG Flag Football League will play 5v5 (& 6v6 for 5th/6th grade) Flag Football according to NFL Flag Rules and Regulations (with some minor alterations). All game fields will be 64 yards in length x 25 yards in width. End zones are 7 yards in length. There will be a "No Running Zone" line five yards from the midfield first down line as well as each end zone.

b) Pre-game

- i) At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
- ii) The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. There is no option to defer. Teams will automatically switch sides of the field and the team that started the game with possession will begin the 2nd half on defense.

c) Ball Possession

- i) **The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield.** Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
- ii) If the offensive team fails to cross midfield after 3rd down and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposing team will start a new possession from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield, the opposing team will start a new possession from the spot where the 4th down ended.
- iii) Any time there is a 'PUNT or PLAY decision on 4th or 3rd down, the referee WILL ask the offense's Head Coach to declare 'Punt or Play'. The coach MUST make an immediate decision or risk a delay of game penalty.
- iv) Teams may use a timeout to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the clock. • After crossing midfield, if the offense fails to score on 3rd down, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts at its 5-yard line.

d) Game Clock

- i) **Games will consist of two 20-minute halves, with a 4-minute break for halftime.** A running clock will be used at all times, except for halftime, timeouts, and other scenarios at the Official's discretion (ex: injuries).
- ii) Teams will have 25 seconds between plays to snap the ball.
- iii) Teams will have one 60-second timeout each half.

e) Scoring

- i) Touchdown: 6 points
- ii) PAT (Point After Touchdown)
 - (1) 1 point: play from 5-yard line
 - (2) 2 points: play from 10-yard line

- iii) Interceptions returned for scores during a regulation scrimmage down are worth 6 points. 1 and 2 pt. extra point conversions or overtime interceptions returned are worth 2 points.
- iv) Safety: 2 points
 - (1) A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her 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.
- v) 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.

f) No-Run Zones

- i) 1st-2nd Grade Leagues: Teams may run the ball within the no run zone lines.
- ii) 3rd-8th Grade Leagues: Teams within the no run zone lines may NOT run the ball. This is to limit any kind of “power football” and prevent more physical contact and plays.

g) Live/Dead Ball

- i) The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- ii) The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
- iii) A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds, as long as the first foot or a body part other than the hand, contacts the ground in the field, while maintaining possession.
- iv) Substitutions may be made during any dead ball period.
- v) The defense may not simulate the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. Other unfair acts would be; not returning five (5) eligible players to the field of play after halftime, a team or officials' time out prior to the ‘Ready to Play’ signal by the referee. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty on the Head Coach.
- vi) Any official can whistle the play dead.
 - (1) Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - (a) The ball hits the ground.

- (2) The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
- (3) The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
- (4) A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- (5) The ball-carrier's knee, shin, leg, forearm or arm hits the ground.
- (6) The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
- (7) The receiver catches the ball while in possession of 1 or 0 flag(s).
- (8) Inadvertent whistle
 - (a) If an inadvertent whistle occurs, the team in possession has two options: Take the ball where the whistle blew and the down will count Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage
- (9) Ball-carrier leaves their feet to dive, jump or hurdle a player.
(Exception: A PLAYER CAN DIVE TO CATCH A PASS OR PULL A FLAG)

NOTE: Fumbles / loss of possession: Ground contact must be made for the play to be dead at that spot. A fumble is loss of possession by a player, resulting in the ball contacting the ground.

h) Overtime

If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime period will be used to determine the winner. Overtime format is as follows:

- The team that won the coin toss pre-game calls the OT coin toss to 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 the choice to be on offense or defense to start every round of overtime.
- The referee will determine which end of the field the entire overtime will be played.

1st OVERTIME: Each team will get one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Each team has the choice to go for 1 or 2 points in the first OVERTIME PERIOD ONLY.

- 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 game is over.

Starting with the 2nd overtime, both teams must attempt a 2-point conversion from the 10-yard line. c. Starting with the 3rd overtime, each team will get 1 play from the 5-yard line going out from the endzone. The team with the most yards will be the winner. The team with the most yards will be awarded 1 point added to their final score.

III. Coaching Guidelines

- a. Coaches are required to follow league rules, guidelines, and code of conduct. (see appendix)
 - i. Background checks are required for all coaches, per NFL Flag and Park District of La Grange guidelines. Background checks are conducted through the Illinois State Police. Coaches will be sent the background check form by the Athletic Supervisor prior to the season start.
- b. 1st/2nd Grade: Coaches are allowed to go on the field with the players to help them play the game. If both coaches decide they do not want to do this, it is not mandatory, though it is recommended to help make sure the game is being played properly. Coaches may not interfere with the play or ball.
- c. 3rd-8th Grade: Coaches are permitted to coach on the sideline.
 - i. All assistant coaches, fans, etc. are required to remain off the playing field, and in viewing areas around the field.
- d. Coaches are responsible for their parents and fan conduct and behavior. If a parent, family member, or other spectator is being disruptive to the game, players, other team's coaches or referees, the coaches must step in.
- e. All coaches must sign a coaching Code of Conduct and submit it to the Athletic Supervisor before their first game.

IV. Game Distinctions

- Running:
 - i. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
 - ii. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the Line of Scrimmage. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap under center directly or in shotgun formation.
 - iii. Direct handoffs, pitches, and laterals are permitted behind the line of scrimmage only. If this takes place, after the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, the play is to be blown dead by the official. The ball shall be placed at the spot where possession was lost for the next play.
 - 1. “Center sneak” play is NOT allowed. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center.
 - 2. Any player who receives a handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - 3. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or a backward pass, pitch or lateral has occurred, the 7-second passing clock is eliminated, and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
 - iv. Definition of a “Legal Handoff” - Total loss of possession directly from 1 offensive play to another.
 - v. Teams are not allowed to run in the ‘NO RUN ZONES’ - (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
 - vi. Runners are not permitted to jump, leap or hurdle, in the officials' judgement, while advancing the ball. The play is to be blown dead and the ball spotted where the jump, leap or hurdle occurred.
 - vii. Ball carriers may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB's passing or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player. The play will continue without stoppage. However, if while leaving the ground, illegal contact is made, a penalty may be enforced by the official.
 - viii. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
 - ix. Offensive players in close proximity of the ball carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.

- x. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
 - xi. Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the current ball carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is dead.
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- Passing:

- i. Only 1 forward pass, thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, is permitted each offensive play. The ball must be released prior to crossing the line of scrimmage. There can be unlimited backward passes behind the line of scrimmage.
 - 1. There is no intentional grounding. The quarterback may throw the ball anywhere across the line of scrimmage to avoid a sack.
 - 2. All forward passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender. All forward passes must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. Shovel passes are allowed and must be a forward pass, from behind the line of scrimmage, and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - iii. The quarterback has a 7 second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, the play is dead, the down counts and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the 7 second rule is no longer in effect. Officials will track the 7 second pass clock.
 - 1. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7 second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS) and it will be the next down.
 - 2. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.
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- Receiving:

- i. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage).

- ii. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
- iii. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- iv. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

- **Rushing the Passer (Applicable only to 3rd-8th Grade Leagues)**

- i. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Up to two (2) players can rush the quarterback. Rushers MUST identify themselves by raising their hand before the snap. Rushers MUST rush the passer immediately after the snap. Delayed rush is NOT permitted. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage.
- ii. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled backwards behind the line of scrimmage, all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to defend and pull the flag.
- iii. The game official will designate a rush line 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - 1. A legal rush is:
 - a. Any rush by the 1 or 2 designated rushers, 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - b. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off, pitched or thrown backwards by the player receiving the snap.
- iv. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- v. The offense cannot impede the rusher's PATH to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to

avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an 'Impeding the Rusher' 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 avoid contact.

- vi. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is when the flag is pulled.

- 1. A 2-point Safety is awarded if a flag pull takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

- Flag Pulling:

- i. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
 - ii. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
 - iii. **It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.**
 - iv. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
 - v. If a player who has one or no flags on their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
 - vi. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flag(s) off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
 - vii. 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, ball, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.
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- Formations

- i. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- ii. Movement simulating the snap, by a player who is set, is considered a false start.
- iii. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.
- iv. Only one player is allowed in motion when the ball is snapped. The player **MUST** be in motion, off the line of scrimmage. All motion must be parallel or backwards to the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- v. Players may shift positions on offense at any time, all players must still reset for 1 second, prior to the snap.

- Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- i. If the field monitor or game officials witness any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the game officials' discretion. No appeals will be considered. **INTENTIONAL PHYSICAL PLAY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED!**
- ii. Offensive or confrontational language is NOT allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will penalize for unsportsmanlike conduct and determine if an ejection is warranted.
- iii. **Players, Coaches, or Fans may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or game official.**
- iv. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- v. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags. Offensive players may NOT initiate contact at the line of scrimmage with defenders.

- vi. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - 1. Fans should cheer on their players only, not harass officials or opposing team.
 - 2. Comments must be clean and profanity free.
 - 3. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
 - 4. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly and adhere to league requirements for seating:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
 - b. Stay in designated viewing areas
 - vii. **Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:**
 - 1. Defensive penalty +10 yards from the dead ball spot and an automatic first down
 - 2. Offensive penalty -10 yards from the dead ball spot and a loss of down
 - 3. Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties on any player or coach in a game result in a disqualification and may lead to additional discipline.
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Penalties

- The game officials will administer all penalties.
- The officials will determine incidental contact that may result from the 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 or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.

- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- Spot fouls administered in the end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down) / Offensive (Safety)

I. Defensive Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic first down
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yards and auto first down
Stripping	+5 yards and auto first down

II. Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening or Blocking	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag Guarding	-5 yards and loss of down
Holding/Illegal Contact	-5 yards and loss of down

III. Defensive Penalties

Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yards and auto first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	+10 yards and auto first down
Offside/Illegal Substitution	+5 yards from LOS and auto first down
Illegal Rush (starting rush inside 7-yards)	+5 yards from LOS and auto first down
Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from LOS and auto first down
Roughing the Passer	+5 yards from LOS and auto first down
Taunting	+10 yards from LOS and auto first down

IV. Offensive Penalties

Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / False Start / Illegal Substitution	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass (Any pass received or lands behind LOS or throwing a pass after crossing the LOS)	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down

Illegal Motion	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Delay of Game	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down
Taunting	-10 yards from LOS and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down

NOTE: There may be minor differences in calls between grade levels. 7th/8th grade games will be called more intensively than 1st/2nd grade games. Officials may need to make judgment calls on certain plays and yardage, when need be, and they will do their best to make sure that the players are learning the sport.