

Flag Football

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Section 1: The Game

- Brief Overview
 - Flag Football is a non-contact sport.
 - First downs are established by crossing over the 20, 40 and 20 yard markers. There are no field goals.
- The Field
 - The playing field will be divided as follows
 - There will be four (4) 20 yard zones to gain.
 - End zones are ten (10) yards unless changed due to field dimensions.
 - Play begins on the 14 yard line at the beginning of a period and after touchdowns.
 - Following a safety, play begins at the 30 yard line.
 - Extra point tries will be from the 3, 10, or 20 yard lines.
 - Fans are required to be on the opposite side of the field from the players benches.
 - Team Captains are responsible for controlling their fans and discouraging harassment/heckling towards Officials and Supervisors
 - It is asked that players and fans allow officials at least five (5) yards along the sidelines to reduce potential injuries and allow staff room to complete their assignments.
 - Interfering with an Official or Supervisor can result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct Foul.
- Beginning Play
 - Captains' Meeting
 - Prior to the start of play, each team's captain will be required to meet with the Officials.
 - Follow the Officials' instructions and ask any desired rule clarifications at this meeting.
 - The coin toss (below) will occur to determine possession and field position.
 - Coin Toss
 - Either a coin toss or even/odds game will determine the first choice.
 - The visiting team captain will be designated to make the call.
 - The captain winning the toss or game shall choose one of the following options:
 - Take the option in the first half.
 - Take the option in the second half (also known as deferring the option).
 - The options available to the first choice include:
 - Starting on offense or defense.
 - The remaining captain will choose which goal their team will defend.
 - Choosing which goal their team will defend.
 - The remaining captain will choose between starting on offense or defense.
 - Upon completion of the coin toss, the receiving team will begin play on the 14 yard line.

Section 2: Equipment and Attire

- Equipment Provided
 - Men's divisions must use a regulation size ball, women's/co-ed divisions may use regulation, youth, or junior size
 - Players may use their own footballs; each side may use their own ball of the same sizes if desired.
 - Footballs used must be properly inflated, as per the Official's judgement.
 - Flag belts will be provided for each team at the field.
 - Flag belts must have three (3) flags positioned at each side and centered at the back along the waistline.
 - Shirts must be tucked in to avoid interference with flag belts.
 - Players are prohibited from tying their flag belts in knots and/or tucking flag belts into their shorts/pants
 - Flag colors cannot match the color of the player's shorts.
- Illegal and Required Equipment
 - Shoes
 - Athletic shoes are REQUIRED for play.
 - Shoes with rubber or rubber-like synthetic cleats are acceptable; cleats shall not contain any metal spikes.
 - Pockets
 - No pockets may be exposed. This rule stands as a safety precaution
 - Pockets may not be taped shut and cannot contain any "bunny ears" as a result of turning them inside out.
 - Attire
 - It is required that teams wear uniformly colored shirts to help distinguish one team from another.
 - Teams will pick their color in FusionPlay during registration and should wear that color all season.
 - It is suggested teams also bring an alternating color (white for dark team colors, black for light colors) in case team colors are too close.
 - Players must wear athletic shorts or pants and shirts. Jeans are not permitted.
 - No jewelry, baseball hats, hoods, wristbands, watches, rings, belts or handwarmers, headbands or bandanas with exposed knots, or anything that would be considered potentially harmful may be worn.
 - Competitive Sports Supervisors have the authority to declare what constitutes legal and/or illegal equipment/attire.
- Recommended Equipment
 - Mouth guards are highly recommended but not required.

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Section 3: Players

- Team Composition
 - Each team will be made up of seven (7) players on the field.
- Minimum Team Requirements
 - Games may start with a minimum of five (5) players.
 - Once the game has started, it may not continue with fewer than the min. number of eligible players on either team.
 - The game shall be terminated, and a default (results in a loss) shall be declared if a team has fewer than the minimum number of eligible players due to any reason, including, but not limited to:
 - a player being required to complete documentation due to misconduct.
 - an injured player being attended to or no longer able to continue.
- Substitutions
 - Teams may substitute an unlimited number of eligible players during each dead ball period from their own sideline.

Section 4: Timing

- Periods
 - A regulation game will consist of four (4) 10 minute periods
 - Teams will switch sides after each period
 - The clock will not stop during the first half but will stop withing the last two (2) minutes of the fourth period.
 - The Back Judge will be the only Official responsible for keeping time.
 - Halftimes will be a maximum of five (5) minutes long and teams will switch sides at the start of the second half.
- Play Clock
 - Offensive teams have 25 seconds to initiate play after the Referee's ready whistle has been blown.
 - It is the offense's responsibility to retrieve the ball after each play.
- "Stop Time" in the fourth period.
 - The following will cause the game clock to stop and resume on the next **snap**:
 - An incomplete or illegal forward pass hits the ground
 - A player runs out of bounds with ball possession
 - A touchdown, touchback, safety, or extra point occurs
 - A team timeout is called
 - A change of possession
 - Certain penalties occur (See Penalties section below)
 - The following will cause the game clock to stop and resume on the Referee's **ready whistle**:
 - A first down is achieved
 - An Official's' timeout occurs
 - Certain penalties occur (See Penalties section below)
- Timeouts
 - Teams will receive two (2) one-minute timeouts PER GAME
 - Injury timeouts may be determined only by the Officials and/or Intramural Supervisor.
 - No timeouts carry over from regulation into an overtime period.

Section 5: Scoring

- Safety
 - A Safety occurs in the following situations:
 - A ball carrier is de-flagged in their own endzone
- The rule does not apply when the ball is intercepted or received after a punt.
 - A player punts, passes, fumbles, snaps, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play across their own goal line and that ball subsequently becomes dead in the endzone.
 - A player commits *any* penalty in their own endzone.
- Points
 - Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
 - A safety will be worth 2 points.
 - Teams will have the following extra point options:
 - A 1 point try from the 3 yard line.
 - A 2 point try from the 10 yard line.
 - A 3 point try from the 20 yard line.
 - The ball shall be declared dead if there is a change in possession during a try or overtime
- Mercy Rule
 - Games will end if a team is ahead by 19 or more points when the Back Judge call the two-minute warning in the fourth period, or any time thereafter.
- Forfeit Scoring
 - In the event of a Forfeit, a score of 1-0 will be given.
 - Double Forfeits will result in a score of 0-0.
 - Any team the Forfeits their game will receive a 3 for Sportsmanship.

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Section 6: Live Ball, Dead Ball, and Out of Bounds

- Live Ball
 - A dead ball may only become live after a legal snap.
- Dead Ball
 - A live ball becomes dead with the Official's signal when:
 - The ball or ball carrier goes out of bounds
 - Any part of the ball carrier, besides their hands or feet, touches the ground.
 - The ball carrier's flag belt is successfully removed.
 - If the ball carrier's flag belt inadvertently falls off, any touch between the shoulders and knees will designate that player as down and the ball dead.
 - A touchdown, touchback, safety, or extra point try is completed.
 - A fumble of muffed punt occurs.
 - A forward pass hits the ground or is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams.
 - If this occurs, the ball is awarded to the offense at the spot of the catch.
 - An backwards pass or lateral touches the ground.
 - An inadvertent whistle is blown.
 - During a run, the offensive team can either accept the yardage gained and begin the next down or replay the down.
 - During a legal forward pass or punt, the offense will replay the down.
 - During any loose ball due to fumble, backwards pass, illegal kick, or illegal forward pass, the team with last possession can take the spot where possession was lost or replay the down
 - An extra point attempt results in a turnover.
- Out of Bounds
 - A player who steps on the out of bounds line is considered out of bounds.
 - If part of the player or ball touches anything besides an Official or other player that is out of bounds, that player is considered out of bounds
 - If a player unintentionally fumbles or laterals the ball out of bounds, the ball is then spotted even with the vertical plane at the point it crossed out of bounds.

Section 7: The Snap and Pre-Snap

- Minimum Players on the Line
 - The only offensive player required to be on the line of scrimmage prior to the snap is the Snapper.
 - All remaining players must at least be behind the line of scrimmage.
 - All players on offense and defense must have legally secured flag belts at the start of the snap
 - Any time on or after the ball is marked "ready for play", each *offensive* team member must momentarily be at least 5 yards in bounds before the snap.
- Motions and Shifts
 - One offensive player may be in lateral motion at the time of the snap, but not in motion towards the opponent's goal.
 - A shift occurs when 2 or more players do not come to a complete stop for at least 1 full second prior to the snap.
- Illegal Snap
 - The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive line of scrimmage.
 - The ball must be snapped in a continuous motion from the ground (not the cone)
- Encroachment and False Start
 - Encroachment occurs if any player enters the neutral zone prior to the snap of the ball
 - Offensive players may not advance past the line of scrimmage prior to the snap or simulate a charging motion.

Section 8: Blocking

- Offensive Screen Blocking
 - All blocking will be limited to screen blocking which legally obstructs an opponent without physically contacting them with any part of the body.
 - A screen blocker shall have their hands and arms at their side or back.
 - Any use of hands, arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact is illegal.
 - Defensive players must go around an offensive player's screen block.
 - If an offensive player has been beaten to a spot by a defensive player, they may not move into that spot.
 - Players may only use arms/hands to break a fall and/or retain balance.
 - Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere by screen blocking but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner.

Section 9: Running the Ball

- Flag Guarding
 - Ball carriers are prohibited from denying their opponents an opportunity to remove their flag belt. Examples include:
 - Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt.
 - Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt.
 - Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt.
 - Intentionally batting a defender's hands or stiff arming.

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- Contact
 - The ball carrier may not charge into an opponent in their path.
 - If a defensive player has established position, it is the ball carrier's responsibility to change direction.
 - An offensive player, other than the ball carrier, may not aid the ball carrier in any way during their run.
- Diving
 - Diving is permitted on either side as long as the player attempts to avoid contact.
 - Once a player leaves their feet, any contact made by an individual in the act of diving will be considered the fault of the person diving
 - Hurdling, or any similar act, over another player is prohibited.
- Quarterback
 - The quarterback may run, pass or handoff the ball.

Section 10: Handing, Passing, and Receiving the Ball

- Handing the Ball Off
 - Any player may hand the ball off backwards or forwards at any time.
 - When the ball is handed off, the offense retains the option to attempt a legal forward pass.
- Backwards Pass (Lateral)
 - The ball carrier may pass the ball backward given that its initial direction is parallel with or towards the defenders end line
 - When the ball is passed backwards behind the line of scrimmage, the offense retains the option to attempt a legal forward pass.
 - A backwards pass that hits the ground is considered a fumble and will be dead on the spot it touches the ground.
 - Should a backwards pass go out of bounds, the team last in possession receives the ball at the spot of the dead ball.
 - If out of bounds behind the goal line, it is a touchback or safety.
 - It is illegal to throw a backwards pass out of bounds intentionally to conserve time.
- Legal and Illegal Forward Pass
 - During a down, 1 forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball leaves their hand.
 - A forward pass is considered illegal if:
 - The passer has a foot beyond the scrimmage line when the ball leaves their hand.
 - The pass is thrown after team possession has changed during a down.
 - The pass is intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds to save a loss of yardage.
 - A passer catches their own untouched pass.
 - There is more than 1 forward pass per down.
 - A player may pass the line of scrimmage, return behind the line of scrimmage, and still be eligible to complete a legal forward pass.
- Eligible Receivers
 - All players, except the quarterback, are eligible to touch or catch a pass
 - An offensive player forfeits their eligibility once they go out of bounds.
- Legal Catch
 - A pass is considered a catch as long as the first part of the player to make contact with the ground, after the catch, is in bounds.
 - Only one foot is required to touch in bounds to be considered a catch.
- Pass Interference
 - A defensive player may not interfere with an offensive player's opportunity to make a catch.
 - No physical contact may occur while the ball is in the air.
 - An offensive player may not interfere with a defensive player's opportunity to make a play on the ball.
 - The same restrictions apply to both defensive and offensive players.
 - Offensive Pass Interference may occur before a pass is thrown, whereas Defensive Pass Interference may only occur while the pass is in the air.

Section 11: Defense

- Flag Belt Removal
 - When the clip of the ball carrier's flag belt is clearly and intentionally detached from the belt, the down shall end, and the ball declared dead at the spot of the ball when the flag belt is removed.
 - If the flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, the ball carrier must be tagged between the shoulders and knees to be considered down.
 - It is a penalty to remove the flag belt of a player who does not have possession of the ball.
- Legal and Illegal Defensive Contact
 - In an attempt to remove the ball carrier's flag belt, defensive players may inadvertently contact an opponent with their hands, except for the carrier's face, neck or head.
 - A defensive player may not hold, grab, push or knock down the ball carrier in an attempt to remove the flag belt.
 - Defensive players must make a clear attempt to avoid contact with a passer; any contact with the passer, including contact on the follow through, will be a penalty.
 - Defenders must go around an offensive players screen block. Arms/hands may not be used to displace the opponent.

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Section 12: Punting

- Punting Prior to the Snap
 - On fourth down, the offensive team must first verbally announce to the officials if they are going to attempt to “go for it” or punt the ball.
 - There are NO fake punts. Should a timeout be called, or a foul occur, the offensive team has the right to announce a new decision to the officials.
 - The punt begins with a snap like all other downs.
- Kicking the Ball
 - After receiving the snap, the kicker must punt the ball immediately and in a continuous motion.
 - No one on offense or defense may cross into the neutral zone until the ball has been kicked.
 - The defense may block a punt only if they are behind the yellow cone.
- Receiving the Punt
 - A punt that touches the ground may still be picked up by the receiving team and advanced at any time, even if the ball has come to rest.
 - A muffed punt is considered down at the spot the player initially contacts the ball.
 - Should the receiving team choose not to field the punt, the ball is considered down when touched by the defensive team.
 - If the punt goes behind the goal line:
 - Once the punt breaks the plane of R’s goal line, it is a touchback
 - There are no fair catches. Any reception off a kick is live unless dropped by the receiver.
 - It is illegal for a defensive player to interfere with an offensive player’s opportunity to receive a punt.

Section 13: Co-Ed Modifications

- Players
 - Co-Ed games shall be played with 2 teams of 8 players on the field, with a minimum of 3 men and 3 women and no more than 4 of any gender on the field for a single team.
 - Game may start with a minimum of 5 players on either team
 - When playing with fewer than 8 players, there shall not be a gender difference of more than 2.
 - No restrictions exist for players advancing a punted ball.
- Open Play
 - When a play is open, a male passer may throw the ball to anyone in the field.
 - After a male-to-male completion, the next play is considered “Closed”
 - Two male-to-male completions in a row is considered an illegal forward pass.
- Closed Play
 - For a Closed play to become Open, a non-male player must be involved as a passer, runner, or receiver.
 - To Open a play, all of the following must be met in play:
 - Non-Male involved
 - Legal Forward Pass
 - Positive Yards Gained
 - All plays will remain Closed until these criteria have been met.
- Scoring
 - All touchdowns in Co-Ed divisions will be scored the same as in Men’s and Women’s division.

Section 14: Penalties, Personal Fouls, and Misconduct

- Penalty Enforcement
 - The officials will throw (a) yellow flag(s) to mark the spot(s) of a penalty.
 - Once a penalty is committed, the opposing captain is given the opportunity to accept or decline a penalty and its resulting effect(s).
 - Should penalties occur by each team, all penalties offset, and the down is replayed.
 - The zone line-to-gain shall be established after all penalties are administered and prior to the ready for play signal.
 - A penalty enforcement measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team’s goal line; thus, the ball is placed halfway between the enforcement spot and the goal line.
- Personal Fouls
 - Personal fouls include but are not limited to:
 - Attempting to strip the ball carrier’s ball by striking or punching it.
 - Throwing the runner to the ground.
 - Hurdling another player.
 - Contact with another player during a dead ball period.
 - Positioning oneself on another teammate to gain an advantage.
- Misconduct
 - Violations of unsportsmanlike conduct include but are not limited to the following:
 - Persistent rule infringement throughout the game.
 - Shows dissent by word of mouth or action to decisions given by the Official.
 - Is guilty of any incidental vulgar or profane language.
 - Is guilty of unsporting conduct.

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- Commits excessive incidental contact.
- Violations resulting in an immediate ejection include but are not limited to the following:
 - Is guilty of violent conduct or serious foul play.
 - Is abusive in language or gesture towards a player or Official.
 - Persists in misconduct after receiving caution.
 - Intentionally harms another participant.
- A team's captain is responsible for their fans; it is possible for fans supporting a team to receive unsportsmanlike conduct penalties.

Section 15: Official Game and Overtime

- Official Game
 - If a game has reached halftime and inclement weather stops play, the game will be over, and its score will be considered official.
 - If a game has not yet reached halftime and inclement weather stops play, the game will be considered cancelled.
 - Cancelled games will not count toward playoff qualification.
 - Cancelled games will only be made up if time and space permits.
- Overtime
 - During league play, there are NO overtime periods, and games will result in a tie.
 - During the playoffs, each team will receive four (4) downs starting from the ten (10) yard line.
 - A new coin toss will be used to determine possession but not field position since all overtime periods will be played at one (1) endzone for both teams.
 - Teams will still have the option to choose their extra point try location
 - If scores are still tied at the end of an overtime period, (an) additional period(s) will be played until a winner is recognized.
 - If teams are still tied at the end of the second or subsequent overtimes, teams are required to go for a two (2) or three (3) point try.
 - A turnover in overtime immediately makes the play dead.
 - The 25 second play clock will still be enforced, but there will be no game clock.
 - Teams will receive one (1) timeout per overtime period. Timeouts do not carry over from regulation time or from previous overtime periods.

Section 16: Penalty Yardage

- Loss of 5 Yards
 - Failure to Wear Required Player Equipment – *previous spot*
 - Delay of Game – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Substitution – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Procedure – *previous spot*
 - Encroachment – *previous spot*
 - False Start – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Snap – *previous spot*
 - Disconcerting Act – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Formation – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Motion – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Shift – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Advancement (Co-Rec) – *previous spot*
 - Illegal Backwards Pass (Loss of Down) – *spot of the foul*
 - Illegal Forward Pass (Loss of Down) – *spot of the foul*
 - Intentional Grounding (Loss of Down) – *spot of the foul*
 - Illegal Reception (Co-Rec) – *previous spot*
 - Help the Runner – *spot of the foul*
- Loss of 10 Yards
 - Illegal Kicking – *spot of the foul*
 - Kick Catching Interference – *spot of the foul*
 - Two or more Encroachment Fouls during the Interval Between Downs – *previous spot*
 - Pass Interference – *previous spot*
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct – *succeeding spot*
 - Personal Foul, Illegal Contact – *spot of the foul*
 - Personal Foul, Roughing the Passer (Automatic First Down) – *end of the run*
 - Personal Foul, Interlocked Blocking – *spot of the foul*
 - Illegal Flag Belt Removal – *spot of the foul*
 - Flag Guarding – *spot of the foul*
 - Holding – *spot of the foul*
 - Illegal Batting – *spot of the foul*
 - Illegal Participation – *previous spot*

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- Disqualification Associated with Certain 10 Yard Penalties
 - Personal Foul, Tampering with Flag Belt (Loss of Down/Automatic First Down) – *previous spot*
 - Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct – *succeeding spot*
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct, Intentionally Contacting an Official – *succeeding spot*
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct, Leaving the Team Box and Entering the Field during a fight – *succeeding spot*
 - Flagrant Personal Fouls – *previous spot*
 - Personal Foul, Tackling the Runner – *previous spot*
 - Personal Foul, Fighting – *previous spot*
 - Personal Foul, Non-Player De-Flagging or Interfering with a Runner – *previous spot*