



2026 Rule Book

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Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer lines marking the playing field's perimeter, including sidelines and end zones.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The yard line the offense must reach for a first down.
Rush Line	An imaginary line 7 yards from the line of scrimmage on the defense's side.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team trying to stop the offense and regain possession.
Passer	Any offensive player who throws the ball, not just the quarterback
Rusher	The defensive player who starts from the rush line and tries to pressure the quarterback by either pulling flags or blocking passes.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	The time between plays when no action is occurring.
Whistle	Official's signal to stop play for timeouts, end of plays, or game periods.
Inadvertent Whistle	An official's whistle that is sounded in error.
Charging	When a ball-carrier illegally runs directly into a set defensive player. This includes leading with the head or making contact with shoulder, forearm, or chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act when the ball-carrier tries to block defenders from pulling their flags - whether by stiff-arming, dropping their elbow/head, or using the ball itself as a shield.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pass across the LOS (Underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward).
Lateral	A backward or parallel toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

General Rules

- All games are played 5 on 5 (can be modified if needed to accommodate teams that may be short players or have an excess of players. No less than 4 on 4 and no more than 6 on 6 – coaches must agree)
- All Teams will have at least 7 players and no more than 10 (modified as needed)
- Fields will be a total of 25 yards in width and 50 yards in length including the 5-yard end zones
- Fields will have a minimum of 10 yards between them
- Officials are responsible for timekeeping and scorekeeping
- The game will be played in two 20 minute halves with a 2 minute halftime. The clock will run continuously while the ball is in play except for the following conditions:
 - The last minute of each half will be regulation clock stoppage (incomplete pass, out of bounds, turnover, score and conversion)
 - A time out is called by a coach or official
- Play clock is as follows:
 - 40 seconds once the ball is spotted
- If the team fails to snap the ball prior to the play clock expiration, a delay of game will be assessed
 - Officials will announce when there is 10 seconds remaining in the play clock and verbally count down to 0
- Each team will get 2 - 60 second timeouts per half. No carry over
- 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.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense
- Midfield (25 yard line) is the line to gain for a first down
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team obtains a first down, they will have three (3) new downs to score
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield on 3 downs and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive 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 its possession from the current spot
- If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive Team starts at its 5-yard line. No punts will occur after the offense crosses midfield
- Offensive Teams MUST declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", when asked by the official and prior to the Ready for Play. The coach MUST answer at that time or risk a delay of game penalty at the referees discretion. This call cannot be changed once declared
- Players may be subbed at any time. Each player shall get equal play time. The goal is for all kids to learn, play and have fun. Coaches are responsible to ensure the players are subbed.
- Only one coach is allowed on the field per team and must be 10 yards behind (offensive side) the line of scrimmage prior to the snap and cannot impede the play – exceptions can be made for K/1/2 division as long as the coach does not impede the play. If a coach impedes a play, a delay of game penalty may be assessed

Equipment

- Mouthguards are **REQUIRED**
- All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and flags
- Players may wear tennis shoes or football cleats. No metal cleats are allowed
- Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads
- Braces with exposed metals are not allowed
- Players may wear soft shell helmets, halos and sunglasses
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line
- The flag belt must be worn at waist level with the clip facing forward
- The flag belt slack must be wrapped up and secured so that it does not hang down or cut to appropriate length
- All flags must stay on the outside hips of players. Coaches and parents are responsible for ensuring their players flags are in the proper locations
- Flag belts and flags cannot be the same color as the player's shorts or pants
- We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped so that fingers do not get stuck in them when attempting to pull the flag

Scoring

- Touchdowns are 6 points
- 1 point conversions are from the 5 yard line (no running) and 2 points from the 10 yard line (run or pass). 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
- Interceptions returned for scores are worth 6 points
- Interceptions on after score conversions and returned are worth 2 points
- A safety is worth 2 points
 - 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
- If a team gains a 30-point advantage, scoring will cease until the losing team scores to close the gap. (There should never be more than a 30 point differential)
- Officials are responsible for scorekeeping

Live Ball / Dead Ball Regulations

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. The game officials may give teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage
- 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.
- Any official can whistle the play dead
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - The ball hits the ground
 - If the ball hits the ground as a result of a snap, backwards pitch or lateral, the ball will be placed where the ball hit the ground
 - The ball-carrier's flag is pulled
 - The ball-carrier steps out of bounds
 - A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
 - The ball-carrier's knee, shin, leg, forearm or arm hits the ground
 - The ball-carrier's flag falls out
 - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of 1 or 0 flag(s)
 - The 7 second pass clock expires
 - Inadvertent whistle
 - 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.

- 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
- If an IW occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options
- A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced

Offense

- Officials will mark the LOS with a cone
- 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
- Movement simulating the snap, by a player who is set, is considered a false start
- 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. Players may shift positions on offense at any time, all players must still reset for 1 second, prior to the snap.
- A center to QB exchange must occur. The center may turn and hand it to the QB or a traditional snap may occur. In each instance, the ball must remain on the ground until the QB says “hike”
 - If the ball falls to, or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled dead with a loss of down
- 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 (this includes when being rushed)
- Direct handoffs, laterals, and pitches are allowed 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 possession was lost for the next play
- Any player who receives a handoff, backwards pass, lateral, or pitch can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage
- “Center sneak” play is NOT allowed. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center. All other players are eligible to advance the ball past the line of scrimmage with a hand off, lateral, pitch, or pass
- 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
- No stiff arms, offensive charging, pushing, screening, or blocking is permitted
- Ball carriers cannot obstruct or guard their flags
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding
- 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
- No flag guarding. 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
- 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
- Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position
- The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off or a backwards, pass, lateral or pitch has occurred, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect and all defensive players are eligible to rush
 - 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
 - If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass
- There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession)
- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled
- Offensive players in close proximity to the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with or blocking for the ball-carrier. Offensive players can run up field provided they do not impede the play

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage)
- 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 of play with possession
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense
- No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these 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)
- 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
 - There is no intentional grounding. The quarterback may throw the ball anywhere across the line of scrimmage to avoid a sack
 - 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
- Shovel passes are allowed and must be a forward pass, from behind the line of scrimmage, and
- received beyond the line of scrimmage
- 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

Defense

- The defense must line up at least 3 yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap
- Rushing is allowed in all divisions except K/1/2. There is absolutely no rushing in K/1/2 division unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield
 - All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards (indicated by a sideline official/cone) 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
 - A legal rush is:
 - Any rush by the 1 or 2 designated rushers, 7 yards from the line of scrimmage
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off, pitched or thrown backwards by the player receiving the snap
 - A penalty may be called if:
 - The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff, pitch, lateral or pass – Illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down)
 - Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Encroachment (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down)
 - Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed, pitched, lateraled or handed off – Illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down)
 - If the offense draws the identified rusher(s) across the 7 yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, the rusher(s) CANNOT legally rush. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to a handoff, pitch, lateral or forward pass.
 - Teams are never required to rush the quarterback with the 7 second clock in effect

- 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
- The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear 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
- 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
- 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 once the flag is pulled
 - A 2-point Safety is awarded if a flag pull takes place in the offensive team’s end zone
- No tackling, pushing, holding, screening, or blocking allowed. Incidental or unintentional contact may occur and will not be penalized
- Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flag
- Players cannot attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier’s possession at any time
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball
- Interceptions are returnable

Overtime

- If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. Overtime format, when applicable, is as follows: Home team will call the coin toss
- The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on
- For regular season games, only one overtime period will be played and a tie game is still possible
 - Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense’s 5-yard line for one point or the defense’s 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own
 - 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 team that went first wins
- For playoff games regular season rules apply with the exception that if both teams fail to score or tie after the first drives, the game will continue until a winner is determined
 - Starting with the 2nd overtime, both teams must "go for two" from the 10-yard line.
- All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect
- Interceptions are returnable in OT and worth 2 points. Interceptions returned for a score in the overtime period, the game is over

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- If the field monitor or game officials' witnesses 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!**
- 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
- Players or Coaches may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or game official
- Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position
- 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
- Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - Fans should cheer on their players only, not harass officials or opposing team
 - Comments must be clean and profanity free
 - Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team
- Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly and adhere to league requirements for seating:
 - Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents as far off the sidelines and endzones as possible
 - Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans
- Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - Defensive penalty +10 yards from the dead ball spot and an automatic first down
 - Offensive penalty -10 yards from the dead ball spot and a loss of down
 - Two (2) unsportsmanlike penalties on any player or coach in a game result in a disqualification and may lead to additional discipline

Penalties

- The official will call all penalties
- Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (Spot fouls)
- Spot fouls are penalties that are assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred
- 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)
- **Defensive spot fouls:**

Type	Description	Yardage
Defensive pass interference	The player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball	Automatic first down
Holding/Illegal contact	The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	A player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession	+5 yards and automatic first down

- **Offensive spot fouls:**

- Offensive spot fouls are also assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred. All of these flag football penalties result in a loss of down. But any loss of down on the fourth down results in a turnover, with the other team taking possession

Type	Description	Yardage
Screening, blocking	The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag	-5 yards and loss of down
Holding/Illegal Contact	The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball	-5 yards and loss of down

- **Defensive flag football penalties**

- You will find that many defensive flag football penalties are behavior-oriented and can take on several definitions. Unsportsmanlike conduct, for example, can include any physical acts, like intentional tackling, elbows, or cheap shots, as well as verbal, such as confrontational language. Officials can also dish out a flag football penalty to fans who are not keeping the field safe and kid friendly. Bottom line: these flag football penalties are designed to teach youth players the importance of respect and good sportsmanship

Type	Description	Yardage
Unnecessary roughness	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent	+10 yards and automatic first down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching, or kicking an opponent	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and down is replayed
Illegal rush	The rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and down is replayed
Illegal flag pull	A player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and down is replayed
Roughing the passer	A player makes contact with the passer after they have thrown a forward pass	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down

- **Offensive flag football penalties**

- Similar to defensive flag football penalties, offensive flag football penalties include infractions for unsportsmanlike behavior, whether it is physical or verbal. On offense, there are also penalties for improper movements on the line of scrimmage, such as moving before the play starts or delaying the game. For example, each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball. Delay-of-games penalties are enforced

Type	Description	Yardage
Unnecessary roughness	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent	-10 yards and loss of down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching, or kicking an opponent	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside/false start	A player charges or moves in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and down is replayed
Illegal forward pass	A player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Pass interference	The eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion	Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and down is replayed
Delay of game	Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

*All rules are subject to change at any time

Impeding the rusher	The rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal procedure	A technical rules violation, such as illegal formation	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and down is replayed
Taunting	A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

Revision Log

<u>Date</u>	<u>Change Description</u>
October 24, 2025	<p><i>These rules will take effect for the 2026 seasons</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added multiple rule clarifications in various sections • Reduced halftime to 2 minutes • Added last minute of each half is regulation clock stoppage • All division play clocks are now 40 seconds • Added 30 point differential rule • Added Live Ball/Dead Ball section • Added any time rushing rules for all divisions except K/1/2 • Added Unsportsmanlike Conduct section
May 20, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interceptions on after score conversions and returned are worth 2 points • Mouthguards are REQUIRED
February 23, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified rules to align more with official NFL Flag rules with the exception of rushing and age specific rules.
May 12, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added overtime rules
April 8, 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed timing rules to running clock with the exception of timeouts and 2 minute warning in 2nd half