



Flag Football 2023

We will follow the NFL Flag Football Rules except for the included local adjustments.

- QB –
 - a. k5/1st(6U) coach or adult assigned by the coach will play Quarterback
 - b. 2/4th(8U) the game will be broken into 4 – 10 min quarters – a player will play quarterback in the 1st and 3rd quarter, the coach or assigned adult will play quarterback in the 2nd and 4th quarter. The Coach should stay behind the player QB to help call plays in the huddle and to instruct during play – must stay out of the way of the play – intentional or continual interference by positioning may result in a loss of down penalty.
 - c. 5/6th(10U) and 7th/8th (14u) group a player will play Quarterback, Coaches are encouraged to work with the QB during play and stay behind the play and out of the way to aid in play calling, decision making and in game instruction to aid in the development of these skills for the player.
- No defensive player may cross the LOS unless a handoff is made(No blitzing).
- The offense will have 5 seconds from the snap to advance the ball beyond the LOS either via pass or handoff or combination of the two. If at 5 seconds the ball is still behind the LOS the down is consumed and the ball is spotted at the previous mark.
- If one team has a 28 point lead the game will be official and score recorded at that point – gameplay will continue with the team behind maintaining possession of the ball until they score or the game clock expires – upon a score possession will change as normal.
- The game official will set the number of players on the field prior to game starting – this will be based on the number of players available to each team. (As few as the minimum present for either team and no more than 8)
- Each team should have a “Line Judge” assigned for each game to monitor out of bounds mark for their sideline during the game to help the game official spotting the ball and stopping play. This person can cheer but should do so in a fashion that does not distract from the game or their responsibility. They should be positioned near the line of scrimmage at the snap and trail the ball carrier while staying off the field of play as much as possible looking for a step out of bounds.
- Each team has 3 timeouts for the entire game and may be used throughout.
- Once the ball is spotted the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball or delay of game can be called.
- Overtime –
 - a. Coin flip decides the team who gets to choose offense or defense first.
 - b. Each team will take turns wit 1 play from the 5 yard line going in for 1 pt or from the 10 yard line for 2pts. Regardless of outcome both teams get a chance to score each overtime period.
 - c. Starting with the 3rd overtime period teams must go for 2 from the 10 yard line.
 - d. No more than 4 attempts to decide the game will be made. If after 4 attempts to decide the game by overtime rules – each team will have one offensive play from the goal line coming OUT and the team with the longest play will be the winner by 1 pt. All points scored in overtime will be added to the final score for each team.
- Once a team has a 28 point advantage the game is officially over, the game will continue in scrimmage form without adding to the official score of the game.

The first rule of flag football is pretty straight forward: there's no contact allowed. That includes tackling, diving, blocking, and screening. Instead, players wear **flags** that hang along their sides by a belt. To "tackle" the person in possession of the ball, the opposing team needs to pull one or both of their flags off.

While flag football rules are designed to keep players safe, you'll find that they also create an engaging, fast-paced version of football without the physical contact.

Here's a list of basic flag football rules:

- All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage
- Only direct handoffs are permitted—there are no laterals or pitches anywhere on the field
- The quarterback has a five-second pass clock to get rid of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback can't run with the ball unless it was handed off first
- Offensive players must avoid contact with defenders and may not screen or attempt to block defenders pursuing the ballcarrier; the ball carrier must avoid contact with defenders attempting to pull their flag – runner may not initiate contact to avoid losing a flag. Once the ball is handed off or a pass is completed all offensive players without the ball should stop to avoid possible screening/blocking.
- Defensive players may not rush the quarterback unless a handoff is made. The quarterback is considered the player who receives the center snap.
- Interceptions are returnable (even on extra point attempts)
- The ball is dead when it hits the ground, the offensive player's flag is pulled from their belt, the ball-carrier steps out of bounds, or the ball-carrier's body—outside of their hands or feet—touches the ground
- All offensive flag football penalties result in a loss of down and yardage
- All defensive flag football penalties result in an automatic first down and some are associated with yardage

NFL FLAG football is a non-contact sport. There's no tackling, diving, blocking, screening or fumbles.

The starting team begins on its own 5-yard line and has four downs (essentially four plays) to cross midfield for a first down. If the offense fails to advance after three tries, they have two options: they can "punt," which means they turn the ball over to the opposing team who starts its drive from its own 5-yard line, or they can go for it. But if they still fail to cross midfield, the opposing team takes over possession from the spot of the ball.

If the offensive team crosses midfield, they have three downs to score a touchdown. The rules of flag football only differ slightly from tackle when it comes to scoring: a touchdown is 6 points and a safety is 2 points (1-point conversion from the 5-yard line; 2-point conversion from the 10-yard line).

FLAG FOOTBALL FIELD TERMS

Boundary lines: The outer perimeter lines around the field, including the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

Offense: The team who has possession of the ball and is trying to advance to the opponent's end zone for a touchdown.

Defense: The team who doesn't have possession of the ball and is trying to prevent the other team from scoring by pulling the ball-carrier's flags down.

End zone: The two end zones, located on opposite sides of the field, are the scoring areas. The goal line, which a player must cross to score a touchdown, is the start of the end zone.

No run zone: The rules for flag football include no run zones that are located five yards before each goal line and the midfield. If the ball is spotted within a no run zone, the offensive team must use a pass play to earn a first down or touchdown. The objective is to prevent power football in tight spaces, limiting contact.

Line-to-gain: The line the offense must cross to get a first down or score.

Line of scrimmage: This is an imaginary line that expands the width of the field and runs through the point of the football. It indicates where teams can't cross until the play has begun.

Backfield: The part of the field directly behind the line of scrimmage

FLAG FOOTBALL GAME TERMS

Dead ball: This refers to the period of time directly before or after a play, when the ball isn't in motion. Flag football rules are more strict about deadlines: they commonly happen when the ball touches the ground, the ball-carrier's flag is pulled from their belt, the ball-carrier steps out of bounds, the ball-carrier's body—outside of their hands or feet—touches the ground, the pass

is incomplete, the ball-carrier's flag falls out or the receiver has one or no flags when catching the ball.

Downs: A down is the period after the ball is snapped and the team is attempting to advance down the field. In flag football rules, teams have four downs to cross midfield. If they successfully cross midfield within four downs, then they have three downs to score a touchdown.

Flag guarding: This flag football term happens when the ball-carrier prevents a defender from pulling down their flags. For example, they might stiff arm, cover their flag with their open hand, or lower their elbow. It is illegal and results in a penalty.

Lateral: A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier. Reminder: laterals are not permitted according to youth flag football rules.

Live ball: This is the period of time when the ball and play is in motion. It's generally used in regard to [penalties](#)—live ball penalties are enforced before the down is considered complete.

Passer: The passer is the person throwing the ball. This flag football term is more common in flag football because the passer doesn't necessarily have to be the quarterback.

Shovel pass: A pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback "shovels" the ball directly forward to a receiver. These are legal, whereas laterals and pitches are illegal plays, according to flag football rules.

FLAG FOOTBALL EQUIPMENT

Forget the helmet, the shoulder pads, the bulky gear. Welcome to flag football, where all you need is a few simple items to get in on the action. Here's a checklist of essential flag football equipment:

- **Flag football flags and belt.** Every player needs a flag football set, including flag football flags and belt. There are a few different kinds of flags for flag football on the market—some are held onto the belt by velcro, others by a pop socket that emits a noise when pulled.
- **Shorts.** Players wear shorts without pockets to avoid penalties and finger injuries.
- **Mouthguard.** The rules of flag football require a mouthguard, and it's the only protective gear that players wear.
- **Football cleats.** Metal cleats are not allowed in most flag football leagues.
- **Football gloves.** Not required, but definitely a plus!

FLAG FOOTBALL POSITIONS

Picture a traditional offensive line in tackle football, all 11 players. Now, remove the linemen. This is where the idea of 5 on 5 flag football comes from—it's essentially the shell of tackle football, without the linemen. In other words, from an offensive standpoint, everyone can catch the pass, creating a continuous, fast-paced game. Here's a closer look at flag football positions, and what skills are needed for both offense and defense:

OFFENSE

Typically, teams set up in a formation with these 5 positions:

- **Quarterback**
- **Center**
- **Wide receivers, running backs, or a mix of both**

At the start of a play, the center snaps the football back to the quarterback, who can either hand it off or throw it. One question we hear frequently is: Can the QB run in flag football? No, most youth flag football rules don't allow the quarterback to directly run with the ball. They must hand it off behind the line of scrimmage, or complete a forward pass. But if handed off, the quarterback can then run to receive a pass. The center is also allowed to run for a pass.

DEFENSE

Without linemen in the mix, there are really only defensive backs. Defensive backs line up to face wide receivers, or even farther back as safeties.

What is a safety in flag football? The safety is an essential defensive position who acts as a catch-all, covering deep throws and any players who get loose. They're responsible for keeping offensive players in front of them and covering players who slip through the cracks.

Coaches typically teach both man-to-man and zone defensive strategies. But the most important skill players learn on defense is the proper way to pull off an opponent's flags. This technique actually lays the foundation for tackle football. For example, when breaking down, players are taught how to

square up their opponent, where to align their head and knees, and what angles to take when pulling off flags. Essentially, it's the exact position an athlete would need to take to physically tackle their opponent. This is a transferable skill set that benefits players who eventually want to play tackle football.

FLAG FOOTBALL PENALTIES

Flag football penalties are called directly by the referee and are assessed from the line of scrimmage, with the exception of spot fouls. Spot fouls are exactly how they sound: flag football penalties that are assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred.

With more than 20 offensive and defensive flag football penalties in NFL FLAG football, understanding all of them can be a bit overwhelming at first. To make it easy, we've broken down these flag football terms into two categories: how the field is set up and how the game is played.

Defensive spot fouls

All flag football penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage, except for spot fouls. Spot fouls are penalties that are assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred.

Here are the flag football penalties categorized as 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	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	+10 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 third down results in a turnover, with the other team taking possession. Here are flag football penalties categorized as offensive spot fouls:

Type	Description	Yardage
Screening, blocking or running with the ball	The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag	-10 yards and loss of down

Defensive flag football penalties

You'll 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. Referees can also dish out a flag football penalty to fans who aren't 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 automatic first down
Illegal Rush/Blitz	Defender rushing the QB before a handoff is made – crossing the line of scrimmage is considered illegal rush.	+10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
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 automatic first down
Roughing the passer	A player makes contact with the passer after they've 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
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Offensive flag football penalties

Similar to defensive flag football penalties, offensive flag football penalties include infractions for unsportsmanlike behavior, whether it's 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 25 seconds to snap the ball. Delay-of-games penalties are enforced after one warning. Here's a list of offensive flag football penalties:

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 loss of down
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 loss of down
Delay of game	Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Screen/Block	Attempting to prevent a defender from pulling a flag of a teammate by getting in the way during a play	-10 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down
Illegal procedure	A technical rules violation, such as illegal formation	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.

In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
 - a. 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, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

1. 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.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. 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.
 1. If the field monitor or referee 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 referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
 2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
 3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
 4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
 5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
 6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
 7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
 - 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 the end zone area, not between fields.
 - c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
 8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

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