

2026 FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Hoxie, Quinter, Hill City, Plainville, & WaKeeney

INTRODUCTION: The Flag Football League Rules are adopted from a combination of policies and procedures set forth by USA Football, NFL FLAG, and our local recreation guidelines. The basis of these rules is the development and teaching of the elements of good sportsmanship and fair play, all while teaching aspects of the game of football.



PLAYERS/TEAM:

- A. Age Divisions....1st -2nd grade AND 3rd-4th grade
 - 4th grade athletes cannot play in both tackle football and flag football...they must choose!
- B. Players may only play on ONE (1) team in the league.
- C. Teams will be made up of players in their respective grade levels. Players can be moved up to a higher division if needed to complete a team.
- D. Teams will consist of five (5) to ten (10) players per team
 - If a team only has 5 players, then an emergency sub may be utilized for that game.
- E. Teams must have at least 4 players to begin the game.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT: This is a NON-CONTACT LEAGUE. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. If the referee witnesses any acts of flagrant tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, clipping, tripping, shoving or any unsportsmanlike penalty, the player will be assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty of 15 yards and automatic first down from the spot of the foul (live ball) or line of scrimmage (dead ball). If the referee feels a warning can be made for first offense, the penalty must be enforced on the 2nd offense (this will be at the discretion of the referee based on the intent shown by the player). Once the player has received an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty (not warning), the next offense that day will result in the player being removed from play the remainder of that day.

Any manager, coach, or player who displays flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct can be ejected from a game and can be asked to leave the complex. If a manager, coach, or player is ejected from a game, that manager, coach, or player will be suspended from attending their next scheduled Saturday games played. If a manager, coach, or player is ejected from a game a second time, that manager, coach, or player will be suspended from participation and play for the remainder of the season. Any spectator who displays unsportsmanlike conduct can be asked to leave the complex. Note: Foul and/or profane language is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and is grounds for ejection. Trash talking, taunting and/or baiting the opponent is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and is grounds for ejection. **FOUL OR ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!!** All suspended people should be reported to the league directors to ensure suspension is put in place at the next community.

EQUIPMENT: Flag Tag pop flags are required. Metal-tip spikes are not allowed. Each team is responsible for providing their own jerseys & flags. The football size for both leagues will be a pee-wee size ball. Referees should check the flags of all players before the game starts to ensure proper installation.

THE BALL: The size of the ball used for both divisions is the pee-wee football.

THE FIELD:

3rd-4th grade

70 yards x 30 yards

(10-yard end zones included in 70-yard total)

1st-2nd grade

50 yards x 20 yards

(5-yard end zones included in 50-yard total)

- A. Fields have a midfield line-to-gain with no-run-zones preceding each line-to-gain by 5 yards
- B. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run-zone, teams cannot run the ball in any fashion, and all plays must be passing plays.
- C. Stepping on the boundary or out of bounds line is considered out-of-bounds.
- D. Each offensive team approaches only two no-run-zones in each drive
 - 1st is located 5 yards before midfield line-to-gain
 - 2nd is located 5 yards before end zone

LENGTH OF GAME: Games will consist of two 20-minute halves. A continuous clock will be used except for time-outs, delay-of-game penalties & in the case of an injury. Teams will switch sides after half-time, with the other team receiving the ball to start the second half. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 45 seconds to snap the ball. Each team will receive 1 warning per game, before a Delay of Game penalty is called. Each team will receive two 60-second time outs per half. Officials can stop the clock on their own discretion. Half-time is 5 minutes.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS: Teams consist of 5 players on the field at any one time. If a team plays with less than 5 players, the opposing team can still play with 5 if they choose. Substitutions may be made at any time during dead ball play. Coaches are encouraged to play each player for at least 10 minutes each half or be in a scheduled rotation.

SCORING:

- A. Touchdowns = 6 points
- B. Point-after-touchdown (PAT) will be held from 5-yard line (pass only) or 10-yard line (open play call)
 - 1 point awarded for successful 5-yard conversion
 - 2 points awarded for successful 10-yard conversion
- C. Safety = 2 points
 - 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 off, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone, or if the ball is snapped out of the back of the end zone.
- D. No official scorekeeping will be kept, therefore, games end at the time no matter what the score is in the minds of the players, coaches, & parents.

OFFENSIVE RULES:

- A. Prior to the game
 - Captains will meet at midfield to determine who gets the ball.
 - o (Rock, Paper, Scissors)

B. Start of the game

- The offensive team will take possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and will have four (4) plays to cross midfield.
- Once the team crosses midfield, they will have a fresh set of downs and will have 4 plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- All possession changes (EXCEPT FOR INTERCEPTIONS) start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- Teams will change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

C. Live Ball/Dead Ball

- 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 the line of scrimmage
 - o It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone.
 - o The official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Play is ruled dead when:
 - o The ball hits the ground
 - If the ball hits the ground on the snap, the ball will be placed in the spot that it hit the ground.
 - o The ball carrier's flag is pulled
 - o The ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - o A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
 - o The ball carrier's knee or arm hits the ground
 - o The ball carrier's flag falls off
 - o The receiver catches the ball without a flag on
 - o The seven (7) second pass clock expires
 - o Inadvertent whistle
 - In the event of inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage

D. Running

- The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball.
- Ball carriers must make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- The quarterback may not directly run with the ball.
 - o Quarterback is defined as the offensive player who receives the snap.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage.
 - o Offense may utilize multiple handoffs

- o Center sneak play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to hand the ball to the center on the first handoff of the play.
- NO laterals past the line of scrimmage.
- No-Run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield.
- Teams are not allowed to run in these zones.
 - o If a penalty on the defense takes a team into the No-Run Zone, then they are allowed one (1) open play call.
- Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. This includes diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull.
 - o Penalty is considered flag-guarding
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to do so
 - o Players spinning wildly out of control...penalty will be flag guarding
- Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she is attempting to avoid collision.
- NO blocking/screening is allowed at ANY time.
 - o Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage.
 - No running with the ball carrier.
- Flag obstruction
 - o All jerseys must be tucked in before the play begins.
 - o Flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction.
 - Penalty for obstructed flag will be considered flag-guarding.

E. Passing

- ALL passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Intentional Grounding
 - o Quarterback can throw the ball away to avoid a sack as long as ball crosses the line of scrimmage in the air.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a seven second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, the play is dead, and the down is consumed. Ball will be placed at original line of scrimmage.
 - o Once ball is handed off, the 7 second clock is no longer in effect.

F. Receiving

- All players are eligible receivers including the quarterback once he/she hands it off.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time.
 - o All motion must be parallel with the line of scrimmage.
- A player must have at least one foot in bounds to receive a pass successfully.
- Interceptions are returnable for touchdowns.
 - o Rule does not apply on PAT's

G. Formations

- Offenses must have a minimum of one (1) player up to maximum of (4) players on the Line of Scrimmage. Quarterback must be off the LOS.
 - o 1 player may go in motion
 - Must be parallel with LOS
 - No motion allowed toward the LOS

- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the LOS while in motion is considered a false start
- The center must snap the ball in a rapid, continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

DEFENSIVE RULES:

A. Rushing the Passer

- All players who rush the passes must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage on the snap.
 - o Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
 - o Players not rushing the QB can defend on the LOS.
- Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- Referee will designate a rush line 7-yards from the LOS.
- A legal rush is defined as:
 - o Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive LOS
 - o A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback
- An illegal rush is defined as:
 - o The rusher leaves the rush line early before the snap and crosses the LOS before a handoff is made
 - Penalty-ILLEGAL RUSH: 5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
 - o Any defensive player crosses the LOS before the ball is snapped
 - Penalty-OFFSIDES: 5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
 - o Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the LOS before the ball is passed or handed off.
 - Penalty-ILLEGAL RUSH: 5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down.
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass, however NO contact can be made with the QB in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass & making contact with the passer will 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 QB, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. It is the OFFENSIVE PLAYERS responsibility to avoid contact.
 - o Exception being if the offensive player never moves after the snap, then it is the rushers responsibility to go around the offensive player to avoid contact.
- A sack occurs if the QB's flag is pulled behind the LOS. The ball is placed where the QB's feet are when the flag is pulled.
 - o A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

B. Flag Pulling

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders are NOT allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but not tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possessions of the ball and the play ends

- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 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 intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

PENALTIES:

- The referee shall call all penalties.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the LOS, except as noted.
- Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about the rule clarification and interpretations. Players may NOT question calls.
- 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 penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

DEFENSIVE SPOT FOULS

DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE	AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
HOLDING	AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
STRIPPING	+10 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN

OFFENSIVE SPOT FOULS

SCREENING OR BLOCKING	-10 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
CHARGING	-10 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
FLAG GUARDING	-10 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS	+10 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT	+10 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
OFFSIDES	+5 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
ILLEGAL RUSH	+5 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
ILLEGAL FLAG PULL	+5 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
ROUGHING THE PASSER	+5 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN
TAUNTING	+5 YARDS & AUTOMATIC 1 ST DOWN

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS	-10 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT	-10 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
OFFSIDES/FALSE START	-5 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
ILLEGAL FORWARD PASS	-5 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE	-5 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
ILLEGAL MOTION	-5 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
DELAY OF GAME	-5 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN
IMPEDING THE RUSHER	-5 YARDS & LOSS OF DOWN