



7-on-7 Youth Flag Football Rules and Standards

Equipment

1. Every player **MUST** wear a mouth guard at all times.
2. Gym shoes or rubber cleats are allowed. Metal cleats are NOT permitted.
 - a. *Cleat and mouth guard checks will be done prior to every game.*
3. Players must have shirts tucked in at all times, so not to cover or interfere with the flag belts.
4. Pants/shorts with no pockets are highly recommended and encouraged.
5. Players must remove all jewelry and baseball caps. Stocking hats are allowed.
6. Two flag belt system will be worn, with one flag on each child's hip.
7. FIELD DIMENSIONS
 - a. 1st-2nd grade field
 - i. Must be a 60x25 yard field with 5-yard end zones (70x25 total).
 - ii. 3 first down zone lines, 15 yards apart.
 - iii. Fields must have a small hash mark at 10 yards, and 5 yards away from the end zone, in the center of the field to mark spots for extra point conversion, and change of possession
 - b. 3rd/4th-grade field
 - i. Must be a 70x30 yard field with 10-yard end zones (84x30 total)
 - ii. 3 first down zone lines, 17.5 yards apart.
 - iii. Fields must have a small hash mark at 10 yards, and 5 yards away from the end zone, in the center of the field. These marks are for extra point conversions, and change of possession after a score
 - c. *Fields must be maintained as best as possible, with all lines clearly painted.*
8. **Game ball** will consist of a "Peewee" size ball for 1st-2nd and "Junior" size ball for 3rd-4th grade.
9. **Host team will provide referees, game balls, neutral zone markers, and accessible restrooms facilities.**

General Rules

- 1) To begin a game, captains from each team will meet at midfield for a coin toss to determine first possession.
 - a) The away team will call heads/tails on the flip of the coin.
 - b) The winner of the coin toss will have the option to kick or receive. The loser determines which end zone they wish to defend. *There will be no option to defer to the second half.*
- 2) **SCORING (It is the responsibility of each Head Coach to collaborate and keep track of score)**
 - a) **Touchdown:** 6 points

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- b) **PAT:** 1-point attempt from the 5 yard line **OR** 2-point attempt from the 10-yard line.
 - i) Interceptions on PAT cannot be returned
 - c) **Safety:** 2 points, and possession is awarded to the defense at their own 10-yard line.
 - i) **If score is tied at the end of regulation, a maximum of 2 OT's will be played**
 - ii) Each team is allowed an equal number of possessions
 - (1) First possession goes to the loser of the regulation coin toss
 - (2) No time-outs allowed in OT
 - (3) Each possession starts at the closest zone line to the end zone, and the offensive team four (4) downs to score.
 - (4) After a score on the first possession of OT, teams have the choice to attempt a 1 OR 2 point conversion.
 - (5) If teams are tied after both teams have their 1st OT possessions, each team will get a 2nd possession.
 - (6) Teams scoring in the 2nd OT **MUST** attempt a 2-point PAT
 - (7) If the score is still tied after the 2nd OT, the game will end in a tie.
- 3) Games will consist of four quarters (continuous clock) with a 5-minute break at halftime.
 - a) **1st-2nd grade: Ten (10) minute quarter length**
 - b) **3rd-4th grade: Twelve (12) minute quarter length**
 - c) An effort will be made to keep coaches informed of remaining time with a two-minute warning during each half, **but the clock will only stop for timeouts or injuries.**
 - (1) If the clock stops in the event of an injury, it will resume once the injured player is cared for and coaches can .
 - d) Each team is allowed two (2) 60 second timeouts per half.
 - 4) Teams change sides after the first half and possession is given to the team that started the game on defense.
 - 5) Each team will play with a maximum of seven (7) players and a minimum of five (5). In the event that a team cannot field five (5) players, the game will be rescheduled (if possible).
 - 6) Coaches may be on the field with the players, but must make every effort to not disrupt game flow once the offense gets set.
 - 7) Substitutions may only occur during a dead ball.
 - 8) Players may not play more than two (2) quarters per game at the Quarterback and/or Running Back position.
 - a) Every effort should be made to rotate players through all positions throughout the season.
 - 9) **The REFEREE is in charge of each game, and has final say on any decision made during the game.** Unsportsmanlike conduct toward the referee, or any other spectator, coach, or player, will **NOT** be tolerated, and can be grounds for removal from the premises. Please encourage good sportsmanship at all times.
 - i) **Remember:** These are KIDS; this is a GAME; the coaches VOLUNTEER; the referees are HUMAN.
 - 10) *A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation.* If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged, and the proper ruling will be enforced.

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Offense

- 1) Prior to the snap, 3rd/4th grade level may have one offensive back in motion. **No motion allowed at the 1st-2nd grade level.**
- 2) 3rd/4th grade can go on one (1) or on two (2) count to signify a snap of the ball. **1st-2nd grade can go on a one (1) count only.**
- 3) After the ball is spotted, the offensive team will have 35 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one (1) warning before delay of game is enforced.
- 4) There must be a center-quarterback exchange to begin each play. (A side snap is permitted).
 - a) NO center sneaks are allowed.
- 5) When a player is running with the ball, **flag/belt guarding, stiff-arming, jumping, or spinning is NOT allowed** and will result in a penalty.
- 6) Ball carriers must make an attempt to avoid defenders with an established position. Do not try to “run over” any defender.
- 7) **Offensive blocking**
 - a) **K-2nd grade:**
 - i) Blocking will consist of horizontal forearms, parallel to the ground (*A simple cue is to grab the center of your shirt, elbows out*).
 - (1) Hands are not to extend out from the body.
 - (2) No grabbing, holding, or throwing of the elbows will be permitted.
 - ii) *The main objective with this style of blocking is to “pick” the defender, not knock him/her to the ground. Excessive force could, at the discretion of the referee, result in a penalty.*
 - b) **3rd/4th grade:**
 - i) Hand blocking is allowed.
 - (1) The blocker MUST keep his or her hands below the shoulders and above the waist of the defender.
 - (2) Any contact of the neck or head/face, holding, or pancake blocking (knocking defender to the ground intentionally) will result in a penalty. There should be no “punching”, or while blocking, and will also result in a penalty.
 - ii) Blockers may not leave their feet. **ABSOLUTELY NO CUT BLOCKING IS ALLOWED, AND WILL BE GROUNDS FOR EJECTION.**
 - iii) The purpose of this is to help make a smooth transition into pads, and introduce the fundamentals of coupling good footwork with hand blocking technique. (*Cue players to touch thumbs, and make a W with their hands*)
- 8) A **minimum of three (3) players** must be on the offensive line of scrimmage and must be in a 3 or 4-point stance.
- 9) At least two (2) players must be in the backfield. This number includes the quarterback.
- 10) A change of possession after a score, or to begin a half, will begin from the 10-yard line.
 - a) A team is given four (4) consecutive downs to advance through each line-to-gain zone. If after four consecutive downs, a team has failed to advance the ball to the next zone, it is considered a turnover on downs, and the defense takes over from the spot of the ball.
- 11) PUNTS: Offense must declare, before the play, if they intend to punt. **NO FAKE PUNTS ALLOWED.** The ball will be placed next to the punter, and will be picked up and kicked on the referee’s command.

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- a) The play is dead until the ball is punted.
 - b) After the punt is away, the receiving player has ONE attempt to catch or pick up the ball from the ground. If the player is unsuccessful in securing the ball on the first attempt, and it hits the ground, the whistle is blown, and the play is over.
- 12) All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass.
- 13) At least one foot in bounds with control of the ball constitutes a legal catch.
- 14) After each successful score, the referee will pull the scoring player's belt to prevent tampering.
- 15) Coaches must communicate after a score if they wish to attempt a 1 or 2 point conversion.
- 16) OFFENSIVE PENALTIES (unless noted, penalties will be spot fouls and the down will be repeated)
- a) False start/Illegal motion: 5 yards
 - b) Offensive holding: 5 yards
 - c) Clipping: 5 yards
 - d) Delay of Game: 5 yards
 - e) Illegal forward pass: 5 yards and loss of down
 - f) Flag guarding: 10 yards
 - g) Unnecessary roughness (throwing elbows, hands to neck/face, punching): 10 yards
 - h) Unsportsmanlike Conduct (including foul language): 10 yards

Defense

- 1) In order to declare a ball carrier down, the defensive player must remove one flag from the player's belt and **immediately stop and raise the flag above their head to signal the referee.** After the play is dead, the defensive player should return the flag to the runner.
- 2) Situations considered "down" in Illinois High School football, apply, as well as the following:
 - a) Inadvertent whistle
 - b) On a "fumble", the ball is dead where it hits the ground.
 - c) During the snap to the quarterback, if the ball hits the ground, the play is considered dead. The ball is then spotted where it first hit the ground after the snap.
 - d) If a flag falls from the belt without another player grabbing it, the player is considered down at the spot in which they lost the flag.
 - i) In the instance that they lost the flag BEFORE receiving the ball, they will be considered down at the spot in which they first took possession of the football.
- 3) Defenders may not impede the progress of the runner in order to grab a flag.
- 4) Defenders should NEVER push the ball carrier to knock them out of bounds, or knock them to the ground in order to get them down. This will result in a 10 yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
- 5) Defensive players should not try to strip or slap the ball from the carrier. The defense must make an attempt to go for the flag of the runner.
- 6) A neutral zone will be marked, extended from the nose of the football. Defensive players must line up behind the marker, and play cannot begin until the marker is removed from the field of play by the referee
 - a) 1st/2nd grade – 2 yards
 - b) 3rd/4th grade – 1 yard

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- 7) Defenders should not “look for contact” with offensive players. They should attempt to avoid or shed blockers, utilizing rip/swim/spin/etc. techniques, rather than running through them to get to the ball carrier. No bull rushing allowed.
- 8) All interceptions not returned for a touchdown result in a change of possession with the offense starting from the spot that the returner’s flag is pulled.
- 17) DEFENSIVE PENALTIES: (unless noted, penalties will be spot fouls and the down will be repeated)
 - a) Offside/encroachment: 5 yards
 - b) Pass interference (includes pulling of the flag before receiver catches the ball): 5 yards
 - c) Defensive holding (impeding runner in order to pull flags): 5 yards
 - d) Tripping: 5 yards
 - e) Unnecessary roughness (running through blockers, hands to neck/face): 10 yards
 - f) Unsportsmanlike Conduct (including foul language): 10 yards

Other

- 1) If any GYSA member, Program Coordinator, or Game Referee witnesses any malicious acts including, but not limited to, intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any act deemed unsportsmanlike by the board or its members, the offender will be ejected from the game, and asked to leave the grounds. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AT ANY LEVEL.**
- 2) Foul language will not be tolerated. One (1) warning will be given. If it continues, that individual will be ejected and asked to leave the grounds.
- 3) Please respect the parks, and the people who volunteer their time. Throw away any trash and clean up after your team before leaving. *Please leave the park cleaner than how you found it!*