



**Official League Rules  
Version 5.3  
Revised March 25, 2018**

## **I. PLAYERS AND ROSTERS**

### **A. Divisions**

Play is open to boys and girls in grades Pre-School through 8th grade who are organized into divisions by grade:

- Pre-School / Kindergarten
- 1st Grade
- 2nd Grade
- 3rd Grade
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade
- 6th Grade
- 7th Grade / 8th Grade

Some leagues may have divisions that combine multiple grades. In these instances, rules will be geared to take into consideration the lowest grade level participating.

Proof of current grade level must be provided upon request by the League.

### **B. Team Rosters**

A roster of eligible players will be maintained by the League and may only be modified at its discretion.

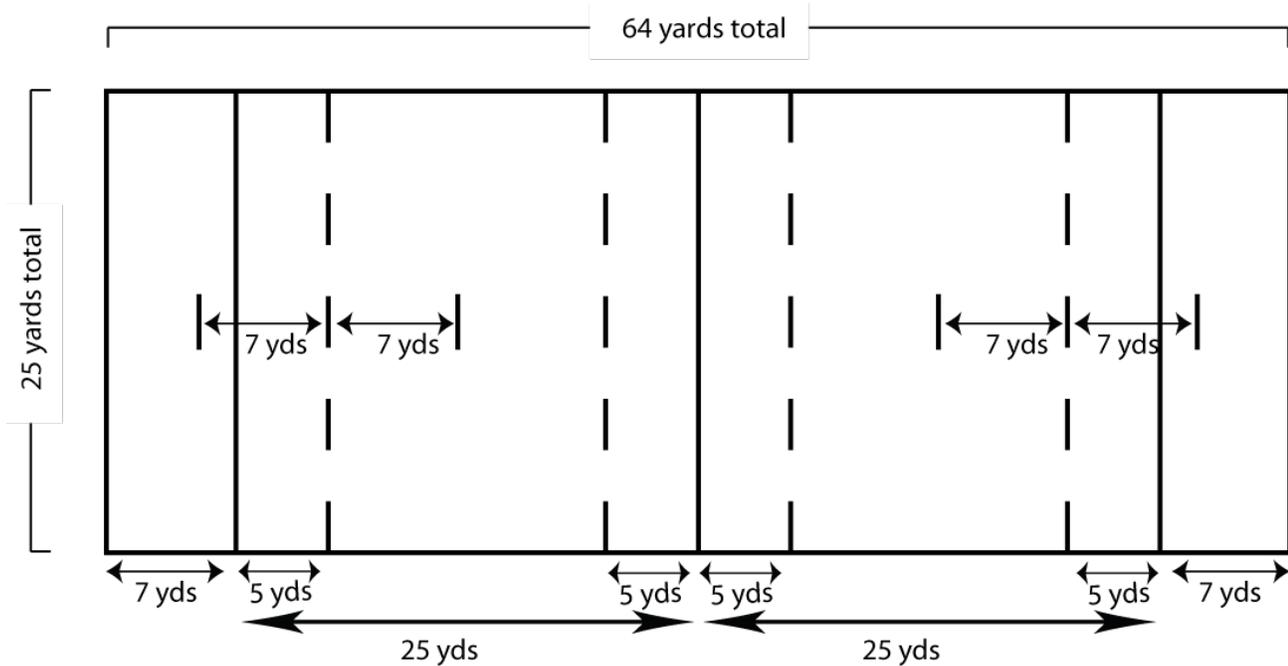
Only players on the official roster may be used in games. Use of non-roster players is prohibited, and at the League's discretion, may result in forfeit of all games in which the player participated. Use of a non-roster player also may result in disciplinary action, including suspension of the coach.

Teams rosters typically consist of between 8 and 10 players.

## **II. PLAYING FIELD**

As depicted in Figure 1, the field is 25 yards wide, 64 yards long and is divided lengthwise into two zones of 25 yards each, which lie between two end zones of 7 yards each. The field also includes extra point markings at 5 and 12 yards from each end zone.

Figure 1: Playing Field



### III. EQUIPMENT

#### A. Uniforms

The uniform consists of:

- An official Play Flag Football Sports flag football jersey
- Shorts or pants *with no pockets*
- Shoes
- A protective mouth guard
- A flag belt

**This uniform must be worn at all times on the field of play.** Uniforms may not be modified without consent from the league. In the case of a jersey color conflict, a separate coin toss shall determine which team will wear league provided pennies.

Players who do not have their uniforms are not eligible to play unless they have explicit permission from the site director. If a player has lost their uniform and can not procure a replacement before their game, they must either contact the office or communicate directly with the site director at their location. That player will only be allowed to participate without a jersey if they have been issued and are wearing a Play Flag Football temporary wristband.

Mouthpieces are recommended but not required.

Uniforms are subject to the following restrictions:

- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times.
- Pennies, undershirts, sweatshirts and any other article of clothing that could impede the defender's access to the flags must also be tucked in.
- Footwear must be sneakers or cleated shoes with no exposed metal parts.
- Flag belts must be of the type provided by the League
- Flag belts must remain snug and unimpeded by clothing at all times.
- Flag belts must be of a color that contrasts (in the official's judgment) with underlying clothing.
- Flag belts must be in good condition and have two unaltered streamers attached.
- Flags must be worn on the sides with the flag holder pointing outward.

## **B. Game Ball**

The game ball shall be a conventional football constructed of leather, rubber, or similar material. The ball must be inflatable and have seams.

The allowable sizes vary by age group:

Pre-K through 2nd Grade: PeeWee (ie, Mikasa Model 5505)

3rd Grade through 6th Grade: Junior (ie, Mikasa Model 5506)

7th and 8th Grades: Youth (ie, Mikasa Model 5507)

In the event that 2 grade levels are combined (i.e. 2nd and 3rd grades), coaches can use the ball size for the younger grade level (in the 2nd and 3rd grade example, they could use the 2nd grade ball)

The offensive team has the option of substituting another ball in place of the standard one, subject to approval by the League. In general, a conventional football which is no smaller than the standard one will be approved. Unconventional balls will not be approved; this includes Nerf balls and others constructed of unusual materials.

## **C. Prohibited Equipment**

- **Soft helmets are NOT allowed.**
- Shorts or pants with pockets, belt loops, belts, or exposed draw strings
- Shoes with exposed metal
- Padding of any kind, including hard surface padding such as shoulder pads, hip pads, or helmets.
- Any hard substance on a player's clothing or person
- Hard casts, even if covered by soft material
- Sticky substances such as grease or glue on a player's clothing or person
- Jewelry of any kind, except for medical alert bracelets

- Barrettes or other hard objects worn on the head
- Eye glasses, unless of athletically approved construction and containing shatter-proof lenses
- Anything that the official feels could endanger or confuse players

## **IV. RULES OF PLAY**

### **A. Game Timing and Flow**

- A game consists of two halves, each of 16 minutes in duration, separated by a two minute halftime period.
- The game clock runs continually, except:
  - When an injury occurs
  - During a timeout
  - When an official deems it appropriate to stop the clock

Each team is entitled to one timeout per half, each of which lasts for 30 seconds.

The offense must put the ball in play within 30 seconds of the “ready for play” whistle.

A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense or defense. The team that begins on offense in the first half will begin on defense in the second half.

The team that begins on defense is allowed to choose which goal to defend.

Teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half.

### **B. Playing Time**

It is the goal of the League to provide every child the opportunity to develop as an athlete. With this in mind, it is required that all players receive at least one half playing time during each game and that each player be actively utilized. Coaches are required to abide by the spirit of this rule.

The league provides tools to help coaches with the rotation of players. Please visit the Play Flag Football web site at [www.PlayFlagFootball.com](http://www.PlayFlagFootball.com) to obtain these tools.

### **C. Number of Players**

Play shall be five on five. In the event that only four players are present for a given team, they shall be allowed to play with four, although the opposing team shall still be allowed the option to play with five.

## D. Player Substitutions

Players may be freely substituted after any dead ball.

## E. Location of Coaches

Pre-K/K: Two coaches per team are allowed on the field to instruct players. The coaches must move at least 15 yards away before the ball is snapped. Coaches on the field must remain on his/her team's side of the line of scrimmage.

1st Grade - 5th Grade: One coach is allowed on the field to instruct players. The offensive coach must move at least 10 yards away and near the sideline before the ball is snapped. **The defensive coach must move to the sideline before the snap of the ball.** Any coach on the field must remain on his/her team's side of the line of scrimmage.

6th Grade - 8th Grade: **Coaches are not allowed on the field during play.** Coaches can participate in the huddle, but must move to the sideline before play starts. Players may also choose to huddle at the sideline before each play.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the coach to avoid interfering with play. Officials may take appropriate action, including issuing a warning, re-playing a down, imposing penalties, or removing a coach from the field, if he/she believes the coaches' presence has interfered with play.

Also, **coaches are not allowed to make contact with their own players during the course of a play** (ie, giving them a nudge in the right direction). This will be considered coach's interference, and will be penalized.

## F. Coach's Conduct

All coaches are required to abide by the Play Flag Football Coach's Code of Conduct.

## G. Offense

### Snapping the Ball

The offense must wait for the referees to be in position and for the ready for play whistle to be blown by the official before they snap the ball.

After a change of possession, the defense must be given a reasonable amount of time to get into position before the offense is allowed to snap the ball.

The center must snap the ball between the legs and must release the ball to the quarterback for a legal play to begin. Shotgun snaps are allowed but not required. Prior to the snap, the ball must be resting on the ground.

Handoffs to the center are **not** allowed.

If the ball hits the ground on a snap, the play is called dead, and the ball is spotted at the point where it hit the ground -- **except in the Pre/K through 2nd grade divisions**. In these divisions in the event of a bad snap, teams will be given a second chance to snap the ball successfully. The re-try must take place immediately -- no huddle or other meeting is allowed. If the second attempt results in a bad snap, then the ball will be marked dead at the spot where it hit the ground.

### **Number of Downs**

Each team will have three downs to advance the ball across the first down marker or into the opposing end zone. After a team crosses the first down marker, it receives three more downs in which to score.

### **Ball Position**

The location of the runner's hips (not the ball) at the end of the play determines where the ball is to be spotted.

### **Running**

The player who receives the snap (the quarterback) may not run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage until it has been given to another player. After the ball has been handed off to another player, then this restriction no longer applies; the quarterback becomes eligible to run, pass, or receive the ball. The hand-off may occur in front of or behind the ball carrier -- the player receiving the hand-off is eligible to pass as long as they have not crossed the line of scrimmage.

The offensive team may run the ball after performing a **valid** hand-off, so long as the line of scrimmage is not located within a no-running zone. The offensive team **may not** hand the ball off to the center.

Spin moves are allowed.

If the ball carrier's hand touches the ground, play will continue. If the ball carrier's elbow or knee touches the ground, the play will be whistled dead at the spot where they touched the ground.

It is the ball carrier's responsibility to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact shall not be penalized, provided the ball carrier makes an effort to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) will be penalized, even if it does not result in a collision. **Intentional contact will not be tolerated**, and may also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and/or player ejection.

Once the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, his/her teammates must stop running. Any offensive player who continues running and impedes the progress of a defensive player who is attempting to pull the ball carrier's flag will be called for illegal blocking.

### *Restrictions*

- Ball carriers are prohibited from using hands, arms, or the ball to impede access to the flag belt.
- If the ball carrier impedes access to the flag belt, even if it is in his/her "natural running motion", a flag guarding penalty shall be assessed.
- The ball carrier shall not lower his/her head to charge or run into a defensive player.
- No intentional contact of any kind is allowed. This includes charging or running directly into a defensive player or stiff-arming.
- The ball carrier is not allowed to dive. If he/she dives into the end zone, it is not a score; a diving penalty shall be imposed from the goal line.
- Players are allowed to jump to gain possession of the football, but are not allowed to jump after gaining possession of the football. Players can spin to avoid a flag being pulled, but cannot jump and spin simultaneously. The ball carriers still prohibited from intentionally initiating contact with defensive players while spinning

### **No-Running Zones**

There are five yard no-running zones on the near side (from the offensive point of view) of the first down marker and end zone. When the line of scrimmage lies within one of these zones, no running plays are allowed. This means that the offense must attempt a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage. Handoffs are allowed, but must lead to a pass attempt. The one-point extra point line is within the no-running zone.

*No running zones do not apply in the Pre-K/K divisions.*

### **Laterals and Pitches**

Neither laterals nor pitches are allowed.

### **Handoffs**

Handoffs may occur only behind the line of scrimmage. There is no limit on the number of handoffs that may occur during a given play. Handoffs may be forward or backward and do not limit the offense's option to throw a subsequent forward pass.

Handoffs may not occur after a completed forward pass.

### *Special Cases: Running Eligibility After Multiple Handoffs*

In order for a handoff to be considered legal, the player with original possession of the ball (Player A) must completely relinquish control of the ball to another player (Player B). By *completely relinquishing control of the ball*, it is meant that Player A would not have any contact with the ball whatsoever after handing the ball to Player B. Therefore, in order for Player A to gain the ability to run the football, he or she would have to hand the ball to Player B, clearly ceasing all contact with the ball, and then Player B could hand the ball back to Player A, giving Player A the ability to run.

The act of placing the ball on the center's back and retrieving it is not considered a legal handoff.

### **Seven Second Rule**

After the ball is snapped, the quarterback has seven seconds to pass or hand-off the ball. If this time expires without a pass or hand-off, the ball shall be returned to the line of scrimmage and the down shall be lost. As soon as the quarterback no longer has possession, the seven second rule ceases to apply, even if the quarterback gains possession of the ball again.

### **Passing**

No more than one forward pass is allowed on the same play. All players (including the quarterback) are eligible receivers.

In all divisions *except the 4 to 5 year old division*, forward passes must be completed beyond the line of scrimmage. If the pass is completed behind the line of scrimmage, the play will be whistled dead, the offensive down will be consumed, and the ball will be spotted at the previous line of scrimmage.

### **Blocking**

Blocking is not allowed. Once a ball carrier has possession of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, the other offensive players must stand still. If an offensive player moves and impedes the progress of a defender who is making an attempt to pull the ball carrier's flag, an illegal blocking penalty shall be assessed.

### **Receiving**

A completion results when the receiver has control of the ball with at least one foot in bounds. If a receiver catches a pass while not wearing a flag belt, the ball shall be down at the point of the catch.

Offensive players are not allowed to intentionally bat a passed ball forward to a teammate. A pass that is intentionally batted forward (in the referee's judgement) that is caught by an offensive player shall be ruled as an incomplete pass.

## **Motion**

No more than one player at a time is allowed to be in motion, and a player in motion may not move toward the line of scrimmage while the ball is being snapped.

## **G. Defense**

### **Flag Pulling**

- To stop the ball carrier, the defensive player must remove the flag or force (without contact) him/her out of bounds.
- No intentional contact is allowed. This includes tackling, pushing, grasping, and bumping. This also includes touching the face or head in any way or contacting a passer's arm or the ball while he/she is holding the ball.
- Incidental contact to the ball carrier's body while reaching for the flag belt is not a violation.
- If a ball carrier's flag falls off without being touched, he/she is down at the spot it touched the ground.

### **Rushing the Quarterback**

Any defensive player is eligible to rush the quarterback if he/she is **behind the rushing line** when the ball is snapped. The rushing line is marked by the official and is seven yards from the line of scrimmage. This seven-yard distance applies even if the first down line or goal line is less than seven yards from the line of scrimmage.

**The rusher can not make an attempt to block the pass once they cross the line of scrimmage.** Once they pass the line of scrimmage, the rusher must make an attempt to pull the quarterback's flags and must rush with their hands below their shoulders. They are allowed to block a ball in self defense with their hands in front of their face.

Any number of players may rush the quarterback, provided they comply with the listed restrictions.

When the ball leaves the quarterback's hands (for a handoff or pass), then all defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of whether they lined up behind the rush line.

For the Pre-K/K divisions only, rushing is not allowed. Defensive players may NOT enter the backfield.

## **H. Change of Possession**

A team failing to advance beyond the first down marker or into the end zone after three downs loses possession of the ball. The opposing team takes possession on its own five yard line.

In most divisions, an intercepted pass results in a change of possession and may be returned until the ball is dead. The line of scrimmage then moves to the point at which the ball was ruled down.

In the Pre-K through 2nd Grade divisions, interceptions are marked dead at the spot of the interception, and can not be advanced.

### **I. Dead Ball**

The ball shall be declared dead when:

- The ball touches the ground
- Any part of the ball carrier other than hands or feet touches the ground
- A run is attempted from a no-running zone
- The ball carrier's flag belt falls off or is removed
- The ball carrier scores
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds
- The seven second clock expires

### **J. Score Values**

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Point after touchdown
- From 5 yards: 1 point
- From 12 yards: 2 points
- Safety: 2 points
- Extra point attempt (whether from 5 or 12 yards) returned to opposing end zone: 2 points

### **K. Tie Games**

**During the regular season, games ending in a tie will remain a tie game.**

During the playoffs, games ending in a tie will be settled by a *longest-yard tie-breaker*. A coin toss will take place to determine which team will go on offense first. The winner of the coin-toss will have the right to choose offense or defense. Each team will have one play from their own five yard line to gain as many yards as possible. The team gaining the most yards will be declared the winner.

In the event that a team loses yardage or is assessed a penalty on their play, their yardage will be marked as zero. A team can not have negative yardage on their play. If the defensive team a safety, this counts as two points, and the game is over. If both teams have negative yardage on their plays, a second overtime tiebreaker will take place.

## **L. Ejections**

At the official's discretion, a player may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules. To eject a player, the official shall notify the coach, who is responsible for removing the player within two minutes to avoid a forfeit.

Any player ejected may be put on probation with possible suspension, depending upon the severity of incident. The League shall have full discretion when imposing penalties.

Our league is intended to provide a family-oriented environment for the enjoyment of children. All coaches, players, and spectators are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times. The League, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to eject, suspend, or dismiss anyone for any inappropriate behavior.

## **M. Forfeits**

If a team cannot field at least four players, the game will be forfeit. If a team is more than 5 minutes late for their game start time, the game will be forfeit.

The score of a forfeited game shall be 7-0.

## **N. Penalties**

All defensive penalties are five yards, and result in an automatic first-down for the offense.

All offensive penalties are five yards, and result in a loss-of-down for the offense.

Penalties are either imposed from the line of scrimmage or from the point at which the foul occurred.

For fouls that occur before or during (prior to the catch) a legal forward pass, the foul shall be marked from the original line of scrimmage.

Otherwise, the foul is spotted from the point of the infraction.

The offended team always has the option to decline any penalty. When the penalty is greater than the distance to the goal line, it shall be assessed half the distance to the goal line.

A period of play cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense chooses to decline it. In the event of a defensive penalty that is not declined at the end of a half, the offense receives another un-timed play (along with an extra point attempt, if they score).

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties can be called at the discretion of the official. Screaming at an opponent in an effort to distract them (ie when they are trying to catch

the ball or when the rusher is rushing the quarterback) shall be considered unsportsmanlike conduct.

### **Offensive Penalties - 5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of Down**

- Delay of Game
- Off-Sides
- False Start
- Illegal Motion
- Illegal Blocking
- Attempting to Run From a No-running Zone
- Offensive Pass Interference (Loss of Down)
- Charging (depending on degree)
- Interference by a Coach on the Field
- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
  - Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
  - Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
  - Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
  - Stripping or Attempting to Strip the Ball
  - Intentionally Contacting an Official
  - Fighting

### **Offensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Infraction, consumption of down**

- Jumping
- Diving
- Flag Guarding
- Charging (depending on degree)

*Flag guarding by the Quarterback occurring in his or her own end-zone will result in a safety.*

### **Defensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Line of Scrimmage, Automatic First Down**

- Defensive Pass Interference (Automatic First Down)
- Roughing the Passer
- Removing Receiver's Flag Belt Before he/she Contacts the Ball
- Tackling, Hitting, or Shoving the Ball Carrier
- Obstructing or Holding the Ball Carrier
- Illegally Rushing the Quarterback
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Spiking, Kicking, or Inappropriately Throwing the Ball
- Spiking or Throwing Flag
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
- Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
- Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
- Stripping or Attempting to Strip the Ball
- Intentionally Contacting an Official
- Fighting
- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation

*On extra-points only, pass interference occurring in the end-zone will result in a successful extra point conversion. Pass interference occurring in the end-zone during the regular course of play will result in a five yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage, and an automatic first-down.*

### **Defensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Infraction, Automatic First Down**

- Holding

### **Last Man Rule**

In the event that the defensive player commits a flagrant holding penalty and there are no other defensive players between the offensive player and the end-zone, the referee has the discretion to credit the offensive player with a touchdown (or extra point conversion).

In the event that the defensive team intercepts an extra-point conversion attempt, and the defensive player is flagrantly held by the (original) offensive player, two points shall be credited to the (original) defensive team.

### **Possible Warnings (at Official's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty**

The referee has the ability to warn a player for unsportsmanlike conduct, and require the player to sit out a specified number of plays, or for the remainder of the half.

### **Possible Ejection (at Official's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty**

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Flagrant Personal Fouls (especially Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment

## **V. RULE REVIEW REQUEST**

There is no mechanism to challenge a judgment call by an official. **The official's judgment is final.**

However, a head coach may request a conference with the referees to review a call if he feels it is inconsistent with the current rule book. This request must be made

immediately after the play in question and prior to the time the ball once again becomes live. As soon as the ball becomes live again or the half officially ends, the call may not be changed. To request a review, the head coach must call time out and inform the head official that he is requesting a review of the rule. If the final decision is in the coach's favor, the time out will be returned; otherwise the time out is forfeited.

In response to a request, the referee shall meet with the coach on the field. Only referees, the head coach, and one assistant coach may participate in this conference. After conferring, the referee shall issue a ruling, to be communicated to the coaching staff of both teams. The official may, at his discretion, confer with the Site Supervisor, League Director, or anyone else he finds helpful. **The final ruling is to be made by the official and may not be appealed at a later time.**