

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES – 8/28/09

UPDATED – Changes and clarifications within the last year are in red italics

SECTION 1 – THE FIELD AND TEAMS

- A. Flag football is played with two (2), seven (7) men teams on the field at a time. Any number of extra players may be on the bench.
- B. A maximum of two adults may be on the field for a team at any time. ***An adult is defined as anyone who has graduated from high school or is 19 or older. All people on your team must be members of your church that attend weekly. To allow for evangelism and outreach, teenage non-members may play, but will then count as an adult. The purpose for recruiting non-members should be evangelism and outreach!***
- C. The game may be played on a field that is 30 yards wide by 60 yards long with 10-yard end zones. The 20 yard lines from each end zone are considered the “line-to-gain” or first down lines.
- D. The team in possession has a series of four (4) downs to advance the ball to the next line-to-gain. Points are scored by touchdowns, successful extra points after the touchdown, and safeties.
- E. Only the head coach and/or the team captains may question an official as to an official decision. A player complaining to a referee can result in a penalty.

SECTION 2 – PLAYER’S EQUIPMENT

- A. Each player must wear the flags that we provide. These are “triple threat” flags that have three flags and a belt sown together as all one unit. Flag color must contrast with the color of pants. The belt must be worn about the waist and flags shall hang on each side of the body below the waist. ***Anyone who ties their flag belts or loops their flag belts in order to make them harder to detach will be ejected from the tournament and the team will receive a 15 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.***
- B. Players must wear shoes at all times. They may be regular football shoes, soccer shoes, or other athletic shoes such as tennis shoes. However, **NO metal cleats or spikes are allowed.**
- C. Sweat bands on wrists and head are acceptable, but no hats or helmets.
- D. No hard protective equipment may be worn by a player.
- E. Shirts must not hinder access to flags.

SECTION 3 – THE CLOCK

- A. The game consists of two 20-minute halves with a running clock. The clock shall only stop and start (according to football rules) ***during the last minute of each half*** except for time outs and unusual delays. At other times, the clock runs continuously. ***There will also be a time out to notify teams of 1 minute remaining in each half.***
- B. ***Starting the game:*** the game shall start with one team kicking off to the opposing team. The winner of the coin toss shall have the choice of either goals or possession. ***The winner of the coin toss can choose to defer this decision until the start of the second half.***
- C. The clock stops during the ***last minute*** of each half for the following dead balls and resumes when the ball is legally snapped:
 - 1. Time outs.
 - 2. Any score.
 - 3. Incomplete pass.
 - 4. Live ball out of bounds.
 - 5. Any penalty.
 - 6. Change of possession
 - 7. Extra points.

- D. The clock may be stopped for an official's time out and started again by the official's signal during the game for the following reasons:
 - 1. Injured player (if the clock is stopped for an injured player that player must leave the game for least 1 play).
 - 2. Player equipment repair.
 - 3. Any unusual delay in getting the ball in play or other similar reasons which are not listed.
- E. The offense will have 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it has been spotted. The official will announce 10 seconds and 5 seconds remaining on the play clock.
- F. Each team is allowed three (3) time outs per half, **limited to 30 seconds per time out**. After 20 seconds into the time out, the official will give a warning whistle that time out is about to expire.

SECTION 4 – THE KICKING GAME

- A. All kickoffs are from the 20 yard line. All kick-offs are from the ground or from a player's toe with a player holding the ball, no punting.
- B. A touch back will be spotted at the 10 yard line.
- C. A kick off going out of bounds will allow the receiving team to bring the ball into play at mid-field (the 30 yard line).
- D. After a touchdown and extra point try, the scoring team kicks off.
- E. ***There are no onside kicks allowed. The kicking team will always take possession of the ball, unless the ball is somehow fumbled or lateraled and it is intercepted in the air. We do NOT want heads cracking together as people dive for a loose kick.***
- F. After a safety, the team that was safety'ed must punt or kick from its 10 yard line.
- G. All punts and kicks MUST be announced. The defensive team may not rush. The ball must be kicked within 3 seconds after reaching the punter. A loose ball is alive until it touches the ground after touching a runner.
- H. Standstill Pass: There are no standstill passes, but laterals are allowed (of course).

SECTION 5 – FORMATIONS AND PLAYS

- A. The only player that needs to be on the line of scrimmage for the offense is the center. All other players must be on or behind the line of scrimmage.
- B. ***A center must snap the ball through the legs (not on the side).***
- C. Free substitution is allowed as long as the ball is not in play.
- D. After the ball is ready for play, and before the snap, no false start shall be made by any offensive player. A false start includes a shift or a feigned charge which simulates actions at the snap.
- E. After the ball is ready for play and before the snap, each offensive player must momentarily be within 10 yards of where the ball has been spotted (no sneaking in from the sidelines).
- F. Any player that is going to rush into the offensive backfield must start 5 yards back (towards the end zone he is defending) from the spot of the ball. Once one or more rushers have entered the offensive backfield after starting 5 yards off, any defensive player may enter the offensive backfield. ***This rule must be followed even if the QB is under center. Reaching into the backfield to grab a flag is considered entering the offensive backfield.*** Failure to abide by this rule is considered off sides.
- G. Off-sides denotes the position of ANY player, except the center's right to be over the ball, who breaks the plane of the line of scrimmage.
- H. Every member of the team is eligible to receive a pass.
- I. A single forward pass is permitted as long as the passer has not passed the line of scrimmage.
- J. An unlimited number of lateral passes are permitted.
- K. ***Center sneaks are permitted (the center may keep the ball) as long as the ball is snapped through the legs and touches the hands of another player.***

SECTION 6 – CONTACT AND STOPPING A BALL CARRIER

- A. A player is downed by detaching a flag from the ball carrier. If a flag or flags are missing, the player may receive the ball, but it is down at the point of reception.
- B. A fumble shall be dead and belongs to the team that last had possession at the point where possession was lost or the spot the ball touches the ground, if behind the spot of lost possession. (A fumble can not advance the spot of the ball). On a kick, it is not considered a fumble until the ball touches a player (a ball on the ground can still be in play if untouched).
- C. A dead ball occurs when:
 - 1. Flag is legally detached,
 - 2. Ball-carrier touches the ground with any part of his body other than his feet or hands,
 - 3. Ball touches the ground, except when kicking.
 - 4. Ball leaves the playing field.
 - 5. Ball is whistled dead. (Note: If a whistle is inadvertently sounded the team with the ball may either accept the ball where it was blown dead or replay the down).
- D. The defense may not **detain** the ball carrier by physical contact with the body or clothing of the ball carrier. Some minor, incidental contact when going for the flags is expected. The key is that it should not detain the ball carrier (holding type contact) and it should not be with any force. The defense may not push the runner out of bounds. These fouls constitute a 10 yard penalty and an automatic 1st down. Sliding into the ball carriers legs while going for the flags will also draw the penalty.
- E. Any deliberate attempt by the ball carrier to stiff arm, shield his flags, **make no effort to avoid the defensive player**, or lower his head when running, once he has possession of the ball, constitutes a 10 yard penalty. The ball carrier may not hurdle over another player. The ball carrier can not dive as this is impossible to stop without contact. A ball carrier is considered down at the point he STARTED the dive.
- F. Blocking is prohibited and is a 10 yard penalty.
- G. Offensive players may protect the ball carrier by screening (as is done in basketball). A screen is defined as an offensive player taking up a still and upright position before a defensive player is within one step of the screener. **The screener must keep his hands within his elbows. Reaching the hands out to contact the defensive player is illegal.** No part of the screener's body, except his feet, shall be in contact with the ground throughout the screen. Movement of the screener's body in any direction which causes bodily contact shall be considered blocking. (As in basketball)
- H. Defensive players must go around an offensive screener. **Defensive players are responsible to avoid contact with a passer's head at all times.** Violation is 10 yard penalty. It is **not** a penalty if the defensive player hits the passer's arm or shoulder in an attempt to block a pass.
- I. In general, the above rules on contact can be summed up this way: It is the responsibility of the defensive player to avoid contact unless that player has position (feet planted) in which case it is the responsibility of the offensive player to avoid contact.
- J. Spinning is defined as an act in which the ball carrier makes greater than a 270 degree turn. 180 degree turns are fine. Spinning constitutes a 5 yard penalty from the point of infraction and a loss of down.
- K. Two feet are required in bounds for a completed catch.
- L. ***You may not take possession of the ball by ripping it out of the hands of another player. If you do, it is just as if the player's flag was pulled. They retain possession of the ball at that spot. This obviously does not apply to batted passes, laterals, a WR and a DB fighting for the same pass, etc. This rule is to protect people who clearly have possession of the ball so that defenders do not ignore flags and go for the ball instead (especially against younger teens).***

SECTION 7 – SCORING

- A. Scoring: A touchdown is 6 points and the point after is attempted from the 5 yard line.
- B. For the extra point attempt after a touchdown: one point is awarded for passing plays (a passing play is any where the ball is thrown forward) and 2 points for a running play. ***An extra point try that is intercepted and run back to the opposite endzone by the opposing team is worth 2 points.*** The team that scored the touchdown still kicks off.
- C. A safety is 2 points and the team that was safety'd kicks off.
- D. Tie Breakers: If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, a sudden-death game over-time period will determine the winner of the game. The first team to score ANY points will be the winner of the game.

SECTION 8 – PENALTIES

- A. Pass Interference: This infraction is called as in NFL football.
- B. When a penalty flag has been thrown, play will continue until there has been a whistle or the ball is downed. Offended teams will be notified as to their options.
- C. Offensive off sides will be assessed immediately before the execution of a play. ***Defensive off-sides will be assessed at the end of the play and can be declined as in football.*** On defense, you may not try to simulate the opponents snap count to get them to jump off-sides. If you do so, the defense is considered off-sides.
- D. Any profanity or un-sportsmanlike conduct will result in the offender being ejected from the game and a 15 yard penalty being assessed to his team.
- E. Penalties close to an end zone are assessed as half the distance, just like NFL football.

SECTION 9 – INFRACTION AND PENALTIES SUMMARY

- 1. Illegal use of hands, tackling, holding the ball carrier: 10 yards & 1st down
- 2. Stiff arm, shielding flag, charging, lowering head, leaping over players: 10 yards
- 3. Blocking or illegal screening: 10 yards
- 4. ***Offensive pass interference: 10 yard penalty***
- 5. ***Defensive pass interference: spot foul and automatic first down***
- 6. Illegal contact with passer (mostly this refers to hitting the QB in the head): 10 yds
- 7. Un-sportsmanlike conduct: 15 yds and automatic 1st down. This includes “soccer style” faking, “I’ve been shot! Throw the flag!” behavior.
- 8. ***Unnecessary roughness: 15 yards and automatic 1st down. This includes charging, illegal contact with passer, tackling, etc. that is deemed to be excessive or worse than the normal 10 yard penalty.***
- 9. Intentional grounding of ball: 5 yds loss of down
- 10. Illegal forward pass or handling of ball: 5 yards from spot of pass & loss of down
- 11. Off-sides or encroachment: 5 yds
- 12. Illegal spinning: 5 yds from point of infraction and loss of down
- 13. Delay of game: 5 yds
- 14. Intentionally removing a flag from a player not yet in possession of football: 10 yds from end of play or line of scrimmage, whichever is better for the team that was fouled.
- 15. ***All penalties offset as in NFL football, except that 15 yard penalties take precedence over all other penalties. A 5 yard penalty and a 10 yard penalty against another team will offset (down over). If a 15 yard penalty is called, it is enforced and all other non-15 yard penalties called at the same time are ignored.***