

Flag Football Rules



2024

Game

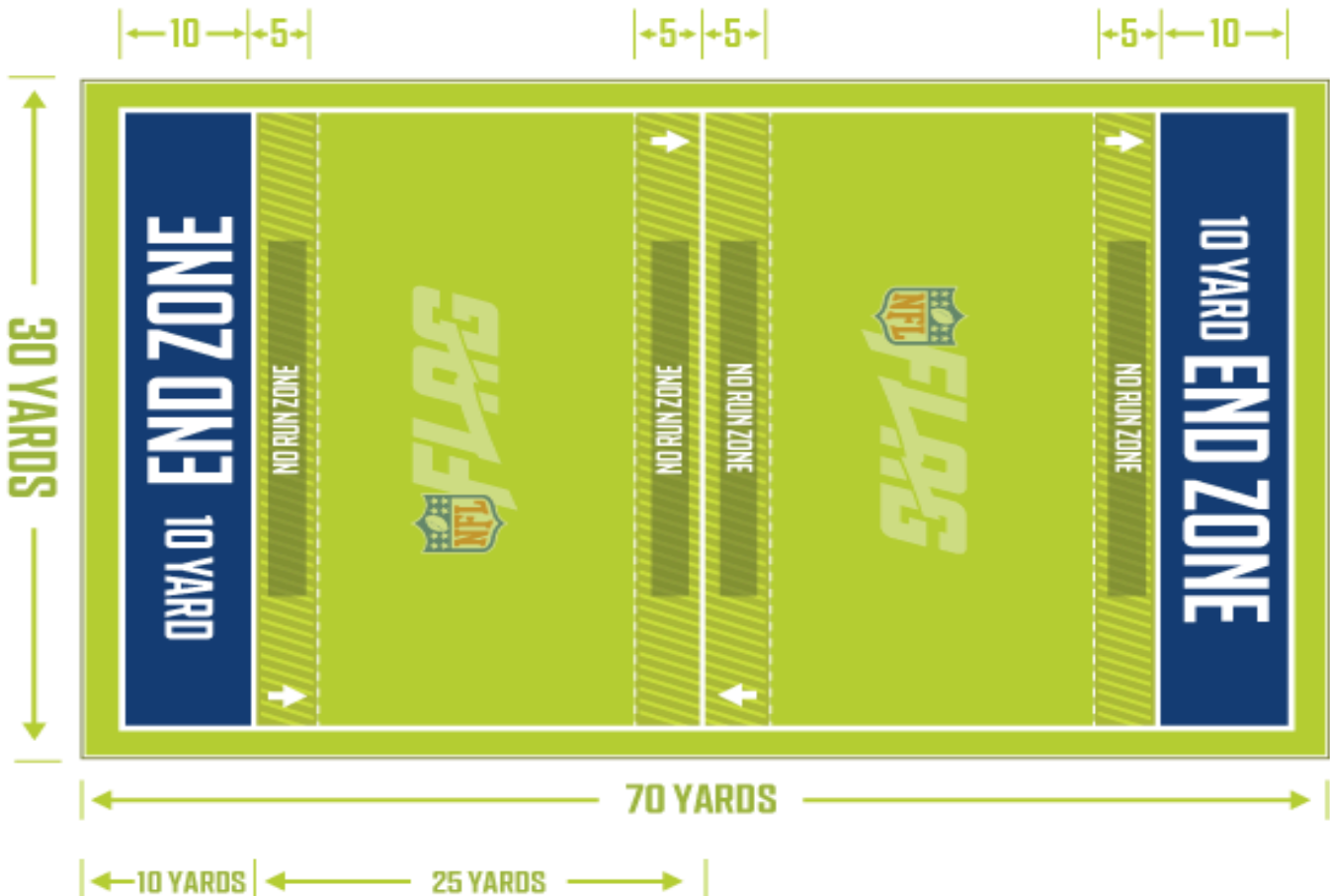
1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has **four (4)** downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has **three (3)** downs to score a touchdown.
 - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5 yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
 - b. Offensive Teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent; "**Play or Punt**", when asked by the referee and prior to the 'Ready for Play'.
 - c. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - d. If the declaration is "Punt" the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing Team's 5-yard line, 1st down, with **NO** option to change the declaration.
 - e. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive Team.
4. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
5. Coaches are allowed and encouraged to be on the field for 1&2 grade but must remain on the side line for 3rd-8th grade.

Equipment

1. Game balls 1&2 grade PeeWee, 3-6 grade Youth size, 7&8 grade standard size.
2. Cleats are recommended, Tennis shoes are fine, No Crocs.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags.
5. Players may wear soft shell helmets but they must be secured at ALL times while on the playing field.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
7. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets.
8. Footballs will be provided. Flags will be brought by coaches to the field each game.

Field

1. Field Dimensions:
 - a. 25 yards wide by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones with a midfield line to gain.
 - b. No Run zones are located five yards prior to the line to gain and five yards prior to the endzone in the offense's direction.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches only **TWO** no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).



Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. The clock stops for halftime, injuries and the Officials' discretion. After 28 point advantage game continues in scrimmage play no additional scorekeeping is made. Score is not kept for 1st-4th grade levels.
2. Halftime is three minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
4. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half. They do not carry over.
5. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop at the discretion of the referee then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
6. If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner for 5th-8th grade only. **No Overtime for 1st-4th grade** (No score is kept for these levels)

Overtime format is as follows:

1. Home team calls the toss to determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first. If additional overtimes are needed the loser of the coin toss will then choose offense or defense.
2. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime.
3. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
4. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
5. Each team will take turns getting **one (1) play** from the defense's **5-yard line for one point** or the defense's **10-yard line for two points**. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one or two-point play of their own. Interceptions just stop the ball and are not returnable.
6. Starting with the **2nd** overtime, The loser of the first coin toss now goes first, both teams must **"go for two" from the 10-yard line**. Interceptions just stop the ball and are not returnable.
7. Starting with the **3rd** overtime, the winner of the first overtime coin toss chooses offense or defense. Each team will get **1 play** from the **5 yard** line going out from the endzone. The team with the **most yards** will be awarded 1 point added to their final score and declared winner.
 - a. Final Score will be recorded to include all points scored for each team
 - b. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.

- c. There are no timeouts.
- d. Interceptions are returnable in 3rd OT, and worth 2 points
- g. Each team has one rules challenge for the entire overtime session

Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
3. Safety: 2 points
 - a. A 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 out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
4. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change once a decision is made to try for the extra point requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
5. Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.
6. The coaches, officials and scorekeeper must sign the score sheet. If a coach does not sign the score sheet before leaving the field, the scorekeeper will note on that score sheet and the score will be FINAL.

Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground in the field of play.
4. 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. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle
 - j. Ball carrier leaves their feet other than jump cuts, spinning or to avoid a downed player on the field of play.(no hurdling or diving)
- NOTE:** There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.
8. If inadvertent whistle occurs the offense has two options:
 - a. take the ball where the whistle blew and the down is consumed
 - b. replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
 9. If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.
 10. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
 11. Officials should all agree in order to change a call on the field that is in dispute.

Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The **quarterback cannot directly run with the ball**. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. 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. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. “Center sneak” play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the
 - b. center on the first handoff of the play.
 - c. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

- d. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
4. Absolutely **NO** pitches or laterals of any kind.
5. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
6. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
7. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
8. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
9. Ball carriers may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB's passing progression or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player and the play will continue without stoppage.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players in close proximity to the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
12. Flag obstruction – All jerseys **MUST** be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
13. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

Passing & Receiving

Passing

1. All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and ball out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
 - a. There is no intentional grounding
 - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
 - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
 - b. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

Receiving

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 or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass.
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped –offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off.

- iv. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.
- c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- 4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- 5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. Path does not move once the quarterback moves. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
- 6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where the runner’s flag was pulled.

Pulling the Flag

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 a play while that player has possession, it becomes one hand touch. Player is down by being touched anywhere on his/her body by the defense.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. 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, ball, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

Formations

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. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
 - b. One player at a time may go in motion.
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.

Penalties

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more
8. Spot fouls in the end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down)/Offensive (Safety) then half the distance to the goal.

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards and loss of down

iv. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush <small>(Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull <small>(Before the receiver has the ball)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

v. Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass <small>(Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion <small>(More than one person moving)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Conduct

III. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

Any person verbally and/or physically attacking, or making gestures towards a referee, Supervisor or City Personnel may be suspended from all Hurricane City Sports Programs for at least one year. All teams are responsible for their spectators. Teams may be ejected for unruly spectators.

1. Conduct - Any player, coach, or spectator who fails to act in a sportsmanlike manner before, during or after a game will be ejected from the game and/or premises and may be suspended from further participation by the Recreation Department. Any Recreation Personnel has the right and responsibility to ask a person to leave the field and possibly the park. Unsportsmanlike actions include, but are not limited to: casual profanity, inappropriate language and gestures, behavior that is dangerous or obnoxious to others, throwing equipment, intimidation, unnecessary roughness, trash talking, taunting, or any kind of negative actions directed towards an opponent, spectator, referee, Supervisor, Scorekeeper, or City Personnel are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

2. Player Ejection - A player or coach ejected from a game will be automatically suspended from the next game (including tournament games). If an individual is ejected from a game for unsportsmanlike behavior he/she must arrange an interview with the Recreation Department to request reinstatement into the program. It is the responsibility of the coach to arrange the interview. Anyone ejected twice during the season will be suspended for the remainder of the season. Fighting will be a minimum of a 1-year suspension. The ejection includes the playing facility and Hurricane City Park property. Depending on the severity of the action a warning may or may not be issued by the Site Supervisor. The warning is left to the discretion of the Supervisor. On the first- or second if a warning is given- occurrence the player will be ejected from the game. If the behavior continues after the player has been ejected, that player's team will forfeit the game. All players should understand that if they are ejected, and that team does not have a substitute to take his/her place, the game is ruled a forfeit. If the player/coach does not leave the field/premises immediately the game will be stopped and declared a forfeit. Additional action may be taken including, but not limited to: probation or total suspension.

VI. PROTEST PROCEDURES

All protests must be made by the head coach and must be done in an appropriate manner.

Protests: League game protests are discouraged and will not be accepted on judgment decisions. The site supervisor will settle protests. If protests cannot be settled at that time, complete the following:

1. **Protests must be written** and submitted to the Hurricane Community Center by 3:00 pm the next business day.
2. A \$10.00 hearing fee will be required and must accompany a written protest, refundable if honored.

Complaints or Evaluations: Only written complaints will be received by the Recreation Office:

The Hurricane City Recreation Department reserves the right to make rulings not specifically covered herein which are deemed to be in the best interest of the youth flag football program. All decisions rendered by the Recreation Department are final.