



FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Rules of play as published by the National Federation of State Athletic Associations will cover all play with the following exceptions:

Field and Markings

- The field dimensions shall be 80 yards (goal line to goal line) x 40 yards (sideline to sideline) with the end zones 10 yards long. The field from goal line to goal line shall be broken up into four (4) equidistant zones of 20 yards each.
 - If necessary, the field may be shortened to no less than 70 yards (from goal line to goal line) x 35 yards (from sideline to sideline)
- Lines shall mark all boundaries and zones.
- Zone markers may be placed along both sidelines but not on the field and shall be constructed of a soft, pliable material.
- The team box is the area between both 20 yard lines on the same side of the field.
 - Non-players, coaches and players must remain in the team box at all times.
 - Spectators are not allowed between the 20 yard line and the goal line.

Timing

- The game shall be four, 12-minute quarters with running time.
 - Half Time – 5 minutes.
 - After first and third quarter – 1 minute
- During regulation, the clock shall stop for:
 - Time-outs
 - Touchdowns, PAT and Safety
- During the last two minutes of the game, the clock will stop for:
 - Incomplete pass
 - Run Out of bounds
 - Time-outs
 - Penalties
 - Scores
 - Upon declaration of a punt. Clock does not start until the ball is punted.
- During the last two minutes of the game, the clock will restart:
 - On first touch by receiving team on kickoffs and punts.
 - On snap after time-outs.
 - On snap on kickoffs that go out of bounds.
 - On snap after kickoffs or punts that go out of bounds after a time-out.
 - On snap after the first delay of game penalty that is called.
 - On the official's spot of ball after penalties.
- Time-outs
 - Each team shall be granted **4 timeouts per game** and can be used at anytime during the game.
 - Each time-out shall last 1 minute.
 - No additional timeouts will be granted for tiebreakers.
 - Timeouts remaining from regulation may be carried over to the tiebreaker.
- Coaches may agree before or during the game to changes in timing due to the competition level.

Flag Football - Equipment

- Ball
 - The ball shall be a "Youth" or "Intermediate" size 7 ball and made of composite/leather material.
 - *Some manufacturers use different names for their version of the ball. It is one size below the official high school sized ball.*
- Player Equipment
 - Helmets, shoulder pads, rib pads, hip pads, hand and arm pads, gloves, and any other hard surface materials are illegal and not allowed. Knee pads are permissible.

- Soft shell helmets with Velcro tightening straps are permitted.
 - No Metal or hard plastic is allowed on the soft-shell helmet
- Knee braces are legal provided they are deemed safe by the official.
- No cast of any kind (even padded) will be allowed on the playing field.
 - Players with casts may not play.
- Jewelry is not permitted.
- Shoes are required for play.
 - Molded cleats are allowed to be worn
 - No Metal or detachable cleats are permissible.
- Mouth Guards
 - Required for play – players without a mouthguard may not play
- Jerseys
 - Each player must have jerseys of the same color and shorts (without pockets or belt loops) or pants of the same color. Each jersey should have identifying numbers on the front and back.
 - Undergarments may not extend below the shorts.
 - All Jerseys must be tucked in so that the entire flag belt is visible.
 - Referees should inform players to tuck in shirts if they notice it before a play. If the ball carrier's shirt is untucked, the ball is dead at the spot of the first legitimate flag-pull attempt made by the defense. This does not apply if a defender pulls the shirt out of the shorts of the ball carrier.
- Flags:
 - All players must wear a flag belt of a color that contrasts the uniform shorts (i.e. blue and black are not contrasting colors)
 - Flags belts must have 3 flags attached to the belt and worn with one flag on each side and one in the rear.
 - The flag belt must be clipped in such a manner that it will come off with one pull.
 - It is illegal to create loops and knots with the belt to make it more difficult to pull off. Any player in violation will be warned, penalized and will be ejected from the game on a 2nd offense.

Scoring

- Touchdown = 6 points
- Extra Points: 3 yards out = 1 point; 5 yards out = 2 points
- Safety = 2 points (the ball is placed on the 20 yard line. There is no free kick.)
- Field Goals are not permitted.

Home Team Responsibilities

- The team hosting is responsible for providing two officials
- A down marker is optional
- Home teams must adjust its uniform if the team colors are similar or wear pennies.
- Whenever an electronic scoreboard is not available the official shall be the timekeeper.

Rules of Play

- Jr. High Delphic League Flag Football is a game played with 8 players.
- Any formation or alignment of players is allowed on offense or defense.
- Substitutions are unlimited.
- Pre-game Coin flip procedure
 - A coinflip will be conducted with team captains prior to the game.
 - The visiting team shall call the pre-game coin flip. The winner of the flip may choose one of the following
 - Kick or receive,
 - Which goal to defend
 - Defer choice until the second half.
 - The other captain that lost the coin flip will then get to choose one of the remaining two choices
 - Prior to the start of the second half, the captain of team that lost the coinflip is now given the choice, unless the team winning the toss chose to defer. The opponent is then granted the choice.
- Teams shall switch directions after each quarter.
- The ball shall be placed in the middle of the field for all downs and kicks.
- The team in possession has a series of four downs to advance the ball into the next zone.
- All players on offense are eligible to receive a pass
- A team has thirty seconds from the officials' spot signal to put the ball in play.

- Flag football is intended to be a finesse sport. While a certain amount of contact is allowable, dangerous and/or excessive contact and collisions must be avoided. Referees are to pay special attention and penalize and warn the player(s) responsible. The second warning to a player will result in ejection.

Kickoffs

- Kickoffs will be from the 30-yard line on a 70 yard or 80 yard field.
- The kicking team may move prior to the kick without crossing the line of scrimmage before the ball is kicked.
- The receiving team will line up 10 yards from the kicking team and must have at least 3 players in a reasonably stationary position on the front line. Remaining players can be positioned in any formation the front 3 players.
- On-side kicks are not allowed. Once the kicking or punting team touches a live ball, it becomes dead at that spot and becomes the possession of the receiving team.
- A kicked ball may bounce or roll until touched by a player.
- If the receiving team touches the ball and then the ball touches the ground, the ball is dead at the spot it touched the player or where it hit the ground, whichever is less advantageous to the receiving team.
- The kicking/punting team can never gain possession on a kick/punt.
- A ball entering the end zone untouched is declared a touchback and will be spotted at the 20 yard line.
- If the ball goes out of bounds without traveling the required distance, the receiving team may:
 - Take possession of the ball where it was declared dead.
 - Force a re-kick after a five-yard penalty is assessed.
- All players in the game for a kickoff must be inbounds and behind the kicking or receiving line.
- A kicked ball which is possessed by the player who makes the first touch is considered live if it does not strike the ground or any other player after the touch. That player becomes a legal ball carrier and is subject to all rules governing the ball carrier. If the ball does strike the ground or another player after the touch, it is declared dead at the spot of the first touch.

Punting

- Punts may be declared on any down. There are no fake punts. On fourth down, the offense must announce to the referee its intention to either punt the ball or attempt a play to try and maintain possession of the ball or score. If the decision is to punt, the announcement must be made within the 30 second time limit to run a play.
- The defense must have 3 players on the line of scrimmage for a punt.
- Players may not move until the ball is punted. No rushing the punter. Defensive linemen may raise hands to block the ball but may not move in any way.
- A ball that is punted “out of bounds” will be placed at the spot it went out of bounds.
- If the ball touches the ground after it is snapped but before it is punted, the ball is dead at the spot it touched the ground and counts as a down.
- A ball that strikes the ground after the first touch (muff) shall be declared dead at the spot of the first touch.
- A kicked ball that hits a player and is caught by another player on the same team before it hits the ground is live.

Snapping the Ball

- A legal snap occurs when the:
 - Center has his shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - Ball travels between the center’s legs.
 - Ball is released by the center in a continuous backward motion.
 - Ball is not lifted for adjustment.
 - One player may be in motion during the snap provided he is moving parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- Center sneaks are not permitted

Ball Carrier

- The ball carrier must attempt to avoid the defense using his agility. No Ramming.
- The ball carrier may not run within one yard of the offensive center.
 - On the direct snap, the initial move cannot be directly up the middle.
 - Once the ball has gone beyond the tackles/guard and reverses directions, the rule no longer applies.
- The ball carrier may not guard his flag.
 - No intentional move with the hands, elbows, or shoulders shall be made by the ball carrier to prevent the defender from removing his flag.

- The ball carrier may not hurdle or dive to avoid a flag pull or advance the ball.
- The ball carrier may spin one time per defender.
- If the flag falls off the ball carrier the play will be dead where flag comes off.
- If the ball returns to a player whose flag has been removed, the play is dead at the spot.
- If ball carrier loses ball, by accident, and is caught before it hits the ground by either team, the ball is live.
- In order for a ball carrier to earn a first down or score, the ball must be on or over the line they are attempting to cross. The ball always must cross line.
- A fumbled ball is dead, unless caught in the air by a trailing teammate (lateral). The ball is spotted at the spot of the fumble or where the ball hit the ground, whichever is less advantageous to the offensive team. Reminder: for the play to be considered a fumble, the offensive player must first establish possession.

Passing

- A player must have possession of the ball and one foot inbounds to complete a pass.
- If both feet are off the ground and a defender causes the receiver to go out of bounds the pass is considered complete.
- A receiver who runs or steps out of bounds is ineligible unless he was forced out of bounds by a defender.
- A receiver may be bumped at the line of scrimmage until he makes a break in either direction.
- A team may make as many forward passes as they wish so long as the passes are from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball advances past the line of scrimmage, no further forward passes may be made.
- An offensive player may not intentionally ground the ball.
 - Exception: In the last two minutes of the game, an offensive player who directly receives the snap from the center may intentionally ground the ball to stop the clock.
- A defensive player may not make unnecessary contact with the passer or ball while the ball is in possession of the passer.
 - If the contact is caused by the passer's forward motion there is no infraction.

Rules – Offense

- Downs: If the offense fails to advance the ball to the next zone in 4 downs, it shall lose possession of the ball at the spot where the ball is blown dead after the fourth down.
- Any formation or alignment of players is allowed on offense.
- Offensive players may move around before the snap as they wish. However, all offensive players must be set for at least one second before the snap. An exception to this would be if the offense has a player in motion at the time of the snap. One player may be in motion moving parallel or backwards from the line of scrimmage.
- There will be a 30-second time limit between plays. Exceeding this time is Delay of Game (penalty).
- Hideouts are not permitted.
 - The offense cannot intentionally try to hide a player on the field near the sideline. (All players must be five yards from the sideline.)
- On a fumbled snap, a handoff that is fumbled or backward pass or lateral, once the ball hits the ground, it is immediately dead and put in play where the ball hits the ground.
- Any player who loses his flags while in possession of the ball will be allowed to retain the ball. The ball will be declared dead at the spot where the flag was lost.
- No running plays are allowed directly over the center or 1 yard to the left or right.
 - Defenders may not rush through this area as well. Referees are to place a bean bag type device 1 yard away from the ball on both sides.
 - Once the ball has gone beyond the tackles/guard and reverses directions, the rule no longer applies.
- A forward pass may be thrown by the team which has the ball in play from the line of scrimmage. There may be more than one legal forward pass during a down, but each must be thrown behind the original line of scrimmage.

Rules - Defense

- Any formation or alignment of players is allowed on defense.
- A defensive player may use his hands
- Defensive players shall not impede the progress of the ball carrier to remove the flag.
- It is illegal to dive at the ball carrier from the forward plane.
 - Diving to pull a flag from the side or behind is legal.
- Defensive players may not use forearm shiver techniques or canning the center.
- Defensive players attempting to block a pass may not contact the passer (roughing the passer). A passer may be contacted if the defender is attempting to remove the passer's flag belt.
 - If the contact is caused by the passer's forward motion there is no infraction.

- It shall be a foul to tackle, hack, straight-arm, trip, push, hold or rough another player.
- Defenders may not contact an offensive player with extended arms.
- Bump and run defense on wide receivers is not permitted at any time.
- A defensive player may not:
 - Strike a player on the head
 - Hold an opponent
 - Push a teammate into another player
 - Push the ball carrier
 - Pull a flag prematurely
 - Touch the offensive center until the center stands up or takes a step
 - Pull an opponent's shirt provided the shirt is not hindering the pulling of the flag
 - Strip or attempt to strip the ball
 - Cross the line of scrimmage prior to the snap
- A ball intercepted in the end zone may be run out or downed
- If the last defensive player with a chance to make a play on the ball carrier commits a penalty on the ball carrier the play will be ruled a score

Blocking

- Downfield blocking on a passing play is not permitted until the ball is caught or is thrown behind the line of scrimmage.
- Blocking from the side or rear is always clipping in flag football.
- Blocker must have one foot on the ground.
- A teammate of a runner may block with any part of the hands, shoulder, or outer part of the arm provided the blocker's hands are:
 - In advance of the elbow.
 - Inside the frame of the opponent's body.
 - The elbows are entirely outside the shoulders.
 - Between the shoulders of the blocker and the opponents
 - Apart and never in a locked position
 - Open with the palms facing the frame of the opponent.
 - Never used in a striking motion.
 - Arms may not be bent at the point of contact and then extended:
 - above the waist of the opponent.
 - not in the back of the opponent.
 - below the neck of the opponent.
- Arms may not be extended while blocking.
- **A note to coaches:*
 - Blockers should be taught to get in the way of the defensive player and stay in his way or perhaps turn or move the defensive layer in a particular direction. Defensive players should be taught to go around the blockers. In the same spirit, warm-ups before games should be appropriate to Middle School flag football.

Flag Football Tiebreaker Rule

Tiebreaker rules are for breaking ties in regular season and playoff games are as follows:

- A coin flip will be administered.
- The winner of a coin flip will have the option of starting on offense or defense.
- The ball will be placed on the 20-yard line.
- Each team will have four (4) downs to score.
- If a team scores, it then has the option to try for one (1) or two (2) point after touchdown points.
- Each team's possession ends with a score, four (4) downs without a score, or a loss of possession.
- An interception by the defense may be returned for a score. An interception that is not returned for a score by the defense counts as a loss of possession for the offense.
- All rules and penalties apply and are assessed in overtime.

If neither team scores after one (1) possession:

- The winner of a second coin flip will have the option of starting on offense or defense.
- Each team will have one (1) down to run a one (1) or two (2) point conversion play.
- The ball will be spotted at the three (3) yard line for a one (1) point conversion and at the five (5) yard line for a two (2) point conversion.
- Interceptions by the defense are counted as a loss of possession for the offense and may not be returned for points.

- If neither team scores in its possession, the process of running conversion plays repeats with the order of possession reversed.
- The team with the most points after an equal number of possessions shall be declared the winner.

Penalties – Defined

- 5 Yards and Repeat Down from Line of Scrimmage:
 - Delay of Game
 - Illegal Participation
 - Running up the Middle
 - Violation of Team Box
 - Encroachment*
 - False Start*
 - Illegal Motion*

*Play is dead on snap immediately.
- 5 Yards and Loss of Down from Spot of Foul:
 - Illegal forward pass, handoff, or pitch
 - Intentional grounding
- 10 yards from Spot of Foul and Repeat the Down:
 - Clipping
 - Holding
 - Illegal Block
 - Flag guarding (If during an attempt by the defense to pull the flag of the ball carrier, any part of the arm or the ball impedes the flag from being pulled.)
 - Helping the Runner or Steering Blockers
 - Diving Note: If the succeeding spot of the ball is still behind the first down line then the down will remain the same. *Live ball penalty
- 10 Yards:
 - Holding ball carrier (spot of foul and repeat of down or result of the play) Note: If hold occurs behind the line of scrimmage, administer from the line of scrimmage.
 - Pass Interference
 - Offensive (loss of down, from line of scrimmage)
 - Defensive* (automatic first down, from line of scrimmage)
 - Passing or Running after a Declared Punt (loss of down, from line of scrimmage)
 - Roughing the Passer or stripping the ball from passer (automatic first down, from line of scrimmage)
 - Stripping ball from runner (from spot of foul & repeat the down)
 - Pushing ball carrier (from spot of foul & repeat the down))
 - Charging/straight arm (loss of down, from the spot of the foul.) Note: On a fourth down “loss of Down” penalty play, should the walk off of the penalty result in a succeeding spot not beyond the first down line, the defense will take possession of the ball.
- 15 yards from Line of Scrimmage
 - Unnecessary Roughness
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct
 - Pull a flag prematurely (automatic first down) *If in the opinion of the official, flags are intentionally pulled prematurely, then 15 yard penalty from the spot of the foul.
- Official’s Discretion
 - Altering of the flag.
 - Minimum Penalty: (Ten yards, loss of down.)
 - Maximum Penalty: (Player ejection and/or forfeiture of game.)
 - No distance penalty shall exceed half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team’s goal line.
 - When a live ball foul by one team is followed by a dead ball foul by an opponent or by the same team the penalties are administered separately and in order of occurrence
 - In the event of an inadvertent whistle during a pass, snap, or kick, the down will be automatically replayed. When a player has possession, the team may choose to take the ball at the point it was blown dead or to replay the down.

Special Circumstances

- Play may be shortened in any emergency by agreement of the coaches and officials.
- Any game interrupted by an emergency shall be continued from the point of interruption unless otherwise agreed to by the coaches and officials
- Weather Conditions (Heat, Fire, Smoke, Rain)

- A game may be delayed or suspended due to weather by the coaches, officials or Athletic Directors.
- Suspended Games
 - If a game is suspended during the third quarter while one team holds a lead of twenty-five points or more the game shall be ended with the leading team declared the winner.
 - If a game is suspended during the fourth quarter while one team holds a lead of seventeen points or more the game shall be ended with the leading team declared the winner.
 - Suspended games, which do not meet the above criteria, shall be continued from the point of interruption.

Overly Physical Play

- Officials have the responsibility and discretion to manage overly physical play.
- Officials shall monitor the level of physicality of players, especially in games featuring mismatched teams.
- Officials have the discretion to enforce penalties and enact any disciplinary action against the Player(s) or Coach.
- The severity and frequency of overly physical contact may result in a players' ejection from the game.
- Any malicious act of aggression will result in the players' ejection.
- Disregard of Officials direction by the offending Coach or Players may result in Coach Ejection and/or forfeiture of the game.
- Ejections
 - If a coach or player is ejected from a game by an official, he/she will be required to miss the next contest and may not be in attendance at the contest as well. If an ejected coach does not have an assistant coach to take over, a time out is charged while the coach finds an admin., school employee or other acceptable adult to continue as coach.
 - An ejected player must be reported to the Sport Commissioner. Issues involving ejected coaches, parents or AD's should be reported to the Sportsmanship Committee.

Sportsmanship Guidelines for Flag Football (anytime during the game)

- When a team is up 28 points or more
 - Pull Starters
 - Running Clock except for timeouts, injuries & scores
 - Limit passing plays