

NYSPHSAA GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

THE GAME, FIELD, PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

General Rules

1. The game should be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. Five players are required to avoid a forfeit.
2. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game, and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

The Field

1. Field is 80 yards long by 40 yards wide
(G-10-20-30-40-40-30-20-10-G with 10 yard end zones)

Game and Player Equipment (Legal)

1. Football - The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and shall be a youth size. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion.
2. Jerseys - Players of opposing teams must wear contrasting colored jerseys, and/or pinnies.
3. Pants / Shorts - Each player must wear pants or shorts without any belt(s), belt loop(s), pockets, or exposed drawstrings. The pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags.
4. Flag belt - Each player must wear a triple threat flag belt. The flags will be supplied by the league and may not be altered.
5. Gloves - Players may wear gloves which must consist of a soft, pliable, and nonabrasive material.
6. Headwear - Players are not permitted to wear bandanas. Players may wear knit stocking caps, or elastic headbands. Hats may not have a bill. Soft headgear is allowed.
7. Shoes - Shoes with cleats must be made of soft pliable plastic or rubber. No exposed metal cleats are permitted. (See illegal player equipment).
8. Mouthguard - All players are required to wear mouthguards during game play.

Game and Player Equipment (Illegal)

1. A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. This applies to any equipment, which, in the opinion of the Referee, is dangerous or confusing. Types of equipment or substances which shall always be declared illegal include:
 - A. Headgear containing any hard, unyielding, or stiff material, including billed hats.
 - B. Jewelry
 - C. Pads or braces worn above the waist.
 - D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. Any team found wearing illegal equipment will be penalized 10 yards, and the second warning results in a forfeit.
 - E. Shirts or jerseys, which do not remain, tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt, which does not remain tucked in.
 - F. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s) or exposed drawstring(s).
 - G. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped, and any other hard substance is covered with at least 1/2 inch of closed cell slow recovery rubber or other material of similar thickness and physical properties.
 - H. Towels attached at the player's waist (flag only).

2. Players will be sent off the field during the next dead ball to permit prompt repair of equipment, which becomes illegal or defective through use (except for illegal shoes).

DEFINITIONS OF PLAYING TERMS

Catch - A catch is an act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight.

Clipping – Clipping is running or diving into the back or throwing or dropping the body across the back of the leg or legs of an opponent or pushing an opponent in the back.

Diving - a ball carrier may not dive (diving is defined as an offensive player leaving their feet without returning to their feet) in an effort to gain extra yardage. Defenders can dive to pull a flag.

Encroachment - Encroachment is a term to indicate a defensive player is illegally in the neutral zone. An entering substitute is not considered to be a player for encroachment restrictions until he/she is on his/her team's side of the neutral zone.

Fair Catch – A signal made by receiving person of a punt in which the receiver cannot run after catching the ball and the ball is immediately down when caught.

Foul – A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is assessed.

Fumble - A fumble is a loss of player possession other than by handing, passing or kicking the ball.

Goal Line – Each goal line is a vertical plane separating the end zone from the field of play. The plane of goal extends beyond the sideline.

Hurdling - Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over a player who is on his/her feet.

Interception - A catch of an opponent's pass or fumble in flight is an interception.

Live Ball - A pass or fumble, which has not yet touched the ground, is a live ball in flight and therefore can be caught and advanced by either team.

Neutral Zone - The neutral zone is the area between the offensive and defensive line of scrimmage that has been established by the spot cone markers and extends to each sideline. It is established when the ball is ready for play.

Pass (Forward and Backward) - A forward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent's end line. A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the passer's end line. A pass continues to be a pass until it is caught or strikes the ground. A backward pass that hits the ground is ruled the same as a fumble. It will be dead at the spot where it strikes the ground.

Penalty – A penalty is a loss imposed by rule upon a team that has committed a foul.

Protective Scrimmage Kick – A punt which prohibits either team from advancing beyond their scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked.

Punting - A punt is kicking the ball by a player who drops it and kicks it before it hits the ground.

Screen Blocking - Screen Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without initiating contact with him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body.

Tripping – Tripping is the use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent, including the runner, below the knee.

PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS

1. Game time is forfeit time.

2. Coin Toss – The second team on the scoresheet shall be the home team. The game will begin with a coin toss. The visiting team will have the choice before the toss – heads or tails. The team who wins the coin toss has the option to defer, select offense (a 20-yard line start), defense or direction. Between the 1st and 2nd half, the teams shall change goals; direction is NOT an option as a 2nd half choice.

3. Length of game - Playing time shall be 40 minutes, divided into two halves of 20 minutes running time with stop clock the last two minutes of each half and change of possession. The intermission between halves shall be 5 minutes.

4. Shortened Periods - Before the start of the game, playing time may be shortened by mutual agreement of the field captains and the Referee. Anytime during the game, the playing time of any remaining period(s) may be shortened by mutual agreement of the opposing head coaches and the Referee.

5. Extended Periods - A half may be extended by an untimed down when, during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:

- A. If there was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted.
- B. If there was a double foul.
- C. If there was an inadvertent whistle and the down is to be replayed.
- D. If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the second half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

6. 2-Minute Warning - Approximately 2 minutes before the end of each half the Referee informs both captains of the playing time remaining in that half.

8. Penalties - The offense should be awarded a new series of 4 downs when the penalty for defensive pass interference or roughing the passer is accepted. Dead ball fouls following a successful try will be penalized from the succeeding spot.

9. Time-Outs – Each team is entitled to 3 charged timeouts per half. (timeouts do not carry over.)

A. The Referee shall declare time-out when he/she suspends the play for any reason. Each timeout shall be charged either to the Referee or one of the teams.

B. The Referee shall declare an official's time-out when a team is illegally conserving time and administer a five-yard penalty.

C. The Referee may declare an official's time-out for any contingency not covered elsewhere by the Rules.

D. Coach-Referee Conference - When a team requests a charged time-out for a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, the Referee will confer with the team captain or coach. The request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes alive following the play to be reviewed unless the period has officially ended. At the end of the half the team has until the first snap of the second half to request a Referee conference.

E. An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has blood on the uniform shall be considered injured.

10. Delays

Delay of Game - The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is a delay of game. This includes:

- A. Failure to snap or free kick within 40 seconds after the ball is ready for play.
- B. Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play.
- C. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.

Unfair Tactics - The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair.

Penalty: Delay of Game, 5 yards from previous spot.

11. Substitutions - No substitute shall enter during a down. All substitutions must enter the game during a dead ball.

SERIES OF DOWNS, NUMBER OF DOWN, & THE TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY

1. Each team will have four consecutive downs to advance the ball into the next zone or to score a touchdown.
2. Once a team enters the next zone, it is a first down and a new series of downs begin. If the offensive team loss yardage behind the previous zone line, a first down can be achieved by reaching the second zone line; ie the one they needed to reach before the loss of yardage.
3. The forward part of the ball touching any part of the line will be the determining factor in measuring for the first down.
4. A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the opponents moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the opponents involves an automatic first down; or either team has obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, free kick, protected scrimmage kick, touchback, pass interception, or failure to gain the zone in advance of the ball.
5. To start the game, 2nd half and following scores, the ball will be placed on the 20-yard line (2nd zone front line).
6. If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated.
7. Exception: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not prior to the final change of possession and it declines all penalties for its opponent's fouls, other than unsportsmanlike.

KICKING THE BALL

Protected Scrimmage Kick - Punt

1. On fourth down, the offensive team may choose to either punt or go for the first down. They must inform the other team of their decision before the play. The following rules apply to a punt:

1. A punt is a dead ball play. There will be no blocking and no rush. No attempt may be made to block the punt.
2. The ball will be marked where it is first touched by the defensive team, or a minimum of 20 yards from the original line of scrimmage, whichever is further.
3. If team goes for it and fails, the other team will take over at the dead ball spot.

SNAPPING, HANDLING, PASSING, RECEIVING, RUNNING THE BALL

Prior to the Snap

1. Following the ready for play and until the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents or in any other way interfere with them. This includes standing in the neutral zone to give defensive signals or shifting through the zone. After the snapper has placed her hands on the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the scrimmage line plane, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball. A player initially lined up within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage, can shift to a position clearly more than 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage and then go in motion.

Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Encroachment, 5 yards from the previous spot.

2. The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play until it is snapped. An infraction of this provision may be penalized, whether or not the ball is snapped, and the penalty for any resultant encroachment or contact foul by an opponent shall be canceled.

Position and Action during the Snap

1. The offensive team must have at least 4 players within 1 yard of the scrimmage line at the snap.

Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards from previous spot

2. All offensive players must be within 15 yards of the ball.

Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards from previous spot

3. One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line.

Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards from previous spot

4. The player who receives the snap must be at least two yards behind the offensive scrimmage.

Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards from previous spot

5. In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position without movement of feet, body, head, arms for at least one full second before the snap.

Penalty: Illegal Shift, 5 yards from previous spot

Passing and Receiving

1. All players are eligible to catch a pass.

2. There is no **diving** while running with the ball. A receiver may dive to catch a ball. A defensive player may dive for to try to remove a flag.

3. A runner may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble at any time except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to conserve time or to avoid being deflagged/tagged.

4. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the last team in possession unless lost on downs.

5. A backward pass or fumble that goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the out-of-bounds spot. If out-of-bounds behind a goal line, it is a touchback or safety.

6. If an offensive player fumbles the ball prior to reaching the end zone and the ball lands in the end zone, the offensive team shall retain possession at the spot of the fumble.

A. A forward fumble out-of-bounds between the goal lines comes back to the spot where the last team in possession lost the ball.

7. A forward pass is illegal

- A. If the passer's foot is on or beyond the line of scrimmage.
- B. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage.
- C. If there is more than one forward pass per down.

8. The line of scrimmage remains throughout the play. A team may advance the ball across the line of scrimmage by backwards passes or runs, and then backwards pass the ball behind the line for a forward pass attempt.

9. If a player attempts a catch or intercept while in the air, the player must contact the ground inbounds with the ball in his/her possession prior to touching out-of-bounds, unless an opponent's contact causes him/her to first touch out-of-bounds.

A. If one foot first lands in-bounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception although a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.

B. A loss of ball simultaneously with returning to the ground is not a catch or interception.

10. A player may, while jumping in the air to attempt a catch, may pass (tip) the ball forward provided he/she has not touched the ground yet.

11. Pass Interference - Contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference unless it occurs when 2 or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass.

A. Offensive Pass Interference - after the ball is snapped, and until a receiver has touched it, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage.

Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from previous spot, loss of down

B. Defensive Pass Interference - after the pass is thrown, and until it is touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage while the ball is in flight.

Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from previous spot, automatic first down

12. Rushing the passer – The defense may rush the passer with one player once per set of downs. The rusher must declare themselves before the snap of the ball. The rusher must be at least 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. Once the quarterback hands the ball off to another player, any defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage to de-flag the ball carrier. There will be no rushing on an extra point try.

13. Roughing the passer – Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown, also there should be no attempts to hit the player's arm during a throwing motion.

Penalty: Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, automatic first down

Running and Flag Removal

1. Flag Removal – A. When the flag is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the down shall end, and the ball is declared dead. A player who removes the flag from the runner should immediately hold the flag above their head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred. The ball is spotted where the ball was when the player is deflagged.

A. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged.

B. When a runner loses their flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play continues. The deflagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees.

C. In circumstances where a flag is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.

D. A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. The official shall warn the team, any further penalty will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct.

E. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.

F. A defensive player may leave their feet when trying to remove the flag.

G. If an eligible receiver is deflagged/tagged prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the line of scrimmage.

Penalty: Early Flag Pull Foul, 5 yards; enforced from the spot of the penalty.

2. Contact - In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, defensive players may contact the body and shoulders, but not the face, neck or any part of the head of an opponent with their hands. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt.

Penalty: Defensive Holding, 10 yards from spot

3. Flag Guarding - A runner shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. A player may use a spin, jump cut, or dip, however; must keep their arms away from their flag to avoid flag guarding. There does not need to be contact by the runner for flag guarding to occur.

Penalty: Flag guarding, 10 yards

A. A runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with an extended hand or arm which includes the use of a "stiff arm" to flag guard.

Penalty: Flag guarding, 10 yards

4. Helping the runner – A player shall not grasp, pull, push or aid any teammate runner.

Penalty: Helping the Runner, 5 yards

5. Quarterback as a runner - Quarterback sneaks will not be allowed. A quarterback draw is allowed provided the quarterback takes a three-step drop.

BLOCKING

1. Offense Blocking – The offensive blocking shall take place without contact. The blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side, behind his/her back, or crossed on his/her chest. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive block is illegal.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards

2. Interlock Blocking - Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere for him/her by screen blocking but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner.

3. Defensive Rush and Use of Hands – Defensive players must attempt to go around the offensive blocker. Defensive players must not use any part of his/her arms, hands, elbows, or any part of the body to contact the offensive player.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards from previous spot.

SCORING PLAYS AND TOUCHBACKS

Touchdown

1. All touchdowns are 6 points.

2. A touchdown shall be scored when a legal forward pass is completed, or a fumble or backward pass is caught behind the opponent's goal line or when a player is legally in possession of the ball and penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line. The ball scores, not the player's hips or flag.

Extra Point Try = 1, 2, or 3 Points

1. An opportunity to score 1 point from the 3-yard line or 2 points from the 5-yard line, or 3 points from the 10 yard line shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown. While time is out there shall be one scrimmage play, unless changed by penalty. The try ends when the defense secures possession, the try is successful, or the ball becomes dead for any other reason.

2. The Referee must speak to the field captain, asking him/her whether the try shall be from the 3, 10 or 20-yard line. Once the scoring team makes the choice, he/she may change the decision only by taking a charged team time out.

3. If a double foul occurs during the down, the down shall be replayed. When a distance penalty is incurred by the offense during a successful try, the down will be repeated, if accepted. However, if the offense penalty carries a loss of down, the try has ended and will not be repeated.

Safety = 2 points

1. It is a safety when a runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his/her team's possession.

Exception: Momentum Rule

2. A safety is also when an offensive player commits a foul for which the penalty is accepted, and the measurement is from the spot of the foul that is in the end zone. 3. When a safety is scored, the ball belongs to the defending team, and they shall put the ball in play from their own 20-yard line.

CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. No player shall commit non-contact acts during a period or intermission. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A. Any acts of unfair play.
- B. Using disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offense's signals or movements.
- C. Intentionally kicking at any opposing player.
- D. Intentionally swinging an arm, hand, or fist at any opposing player.

2. Dead Ball Player Fouls

- A. Intentionally kicking the ball.
- B. Spike the ball into the ground.

C. Throw the ball high into the air.

3. Prohibited Acts - There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches or others subject to the Rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- A. Attempting to influence a decision by an official.
 - B. Disrespectfully addressing an official.
 - C. Indicating objections to an official's decision.
 - D. Holding an unauthorized conference or being on the field illegally.
 - E. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
 - F. Intentionally contacting a game official physically during the game by persons subject to the rules.
- Penalty:** 10 yards enforced from the succeeding spot

Personal Fouls

1. No player shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any act prohibited hereunder, or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player shall:

- A. Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
- B. Trip an opponent.
- C. Contact an opponent during a live or dead ball play.
- D. Throw the runner to the ground.
- E. Hurdle any other player.
- F. Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary of any nature including using fists, locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or hand, except according to Flag Rules.
- G. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
- H. Clip an opponent.
- I. Tackling the runner.

ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES

1. Captain's Choice - When a foul occurs during a live ball, the referee shall, at the end of the down, notify both captains. The referee shall inform the captain of the offended team regarding the rights of penalty acceptance or declination and shall indicate the number of the ensuing down, distance to be gained, and status of the ball for each available choice. The distance penalty for any foul may be declined. If the penalty is declined or if there is a double foul, there is no loss of distance. A captain's choice of options may not be revoked.

2. Live Ball Fouls - Any live ball foul, inclusive of those outlined in SNAPPING, HANDLING, PASSING, RECEIVING, RUNNING THE BALL - Running and Flag Removal and Blocking, is penalized according to the all-but-one enforcement principle (ABO), except:

- A. A foul that occurs simultaneously with the snap or free kick is penalized from the previous spot.
- B. A non-player foul, unsportsmanlike foul, or dead ball foul is penalized from the succeeding spot.

3. Dead Ball Fouls - When a foul occurs during a dead ball either between downs or before a snap or free kick, the officials shall not permit the ball to become live.

4. Establish Zone-line-to-gain - On a live ball foul mark off the penalty yardage first, then establish the zone line to gain. However, with a dead ball foul, establish the zone line to gain first, and then mark off the penalty yardage.

5. All-But-One Principle (ABO) - Enforcement philosophy is based on the fact that a team is given the advantage of the distance that is gained without assistance of a foul. It is assumed that the only foul that would give this aid is 13 a foul by the offense behind the basic spot. Therefore, all fouls but this one, that is a foul by the offense behind the basic spot, are penalized from the basic spot. This one foul is penalized from the spot of the foul.

6. Loose Ball Play - If a foul occurs during a loose ball play, the basic enforcement spot is the previous spot either the spot of the snap or the free kick.

7. Running Play - If a foul occurs during a running play, the basic enforcement spot is the spot where the related run ends.

8. Half the Distance - A measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway between the enforcement spot and the goal line.

9. Safety / Goal Line - If the offensive team throws an illegal forward pass from its end zone or commits any other foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from or behind its goal line which is now the basic spot, it is a safety. For a defensive team foul, if the enforcement spot that is now the basic spot is on or behind the offended team's goal line any measurement is from the goal line.

10. Foul on a Score - If there is a player foul by the offensive team other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer, during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score. If there is a player foul by the defensive team, other than unsportsmanlike or non-player, during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the penalty is automatically declined.

11. Foul Prior to a Try - When a foul occurs after a touchdown and before the ball is ready for play for the try, the enforcement is at the succeeding spot where the ball will be next snapped for the try, usually the 3- or 10-yard line.

12. Double Foul - It is a double foul if both teams commit fouls, other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer, during the same live ball period in which:

A. There is no change of possession.

B. There is a change of possession, and the team in possession at the end of the down fouls prior to final change of possession.

C. There is a change of possession and the team in final possession accepts the penalty for its opponent's foul. In all three the penalties cancel, and the down is replayed.

EXCEPTION: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul is not prior to the final change of possession and it declined the penalty for its opponent's foul(s), other than unsportsmanlike or nonplayer.

13. Multiple Live Ball Fouls - When 2 or more live ball fouls are committed by the same team, only one penalty may be chosen except when a foul(s) for unsportsmanlike or nonplayer conduct occurs. In such cases, the penalty/penalties for the unsportsmanlike conduct or nonplayer fouls are administered from the succeeding spot as a dead ball foul.

14. Multiple Dead Ball Fouls - Penalties for dead ball fouls are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. Dead ball fouls are not coupled with live ball fouls or other dead ball fouls to create double or multiple fouls. Penalize all unsportsmanlike and nonplayer fouls separately.