



TWIN CITIES FLAG OFFICIAL RULES



Introduction:

Welcome to the exciting world of youth flag football! We created these rules to ensure that players, coaches, parents, and officials have a shared understanding of the game's structure, rules, and goals. Flag football is a fast-paced, team-oriented sport that prioritizes skill development, sportsmanship, and above all, fun.

Whether you are new to the game or a seasoned participant, this guide provides everything you need to know to enjoy and succeed in flag football. By focusing on collaboration, fairness, and respect, flag football creates an environment where young athletes can grow both on and off the field.

This rule book outlines key aspects of the game, including team composition, game play rules, scoring, and safety regulations. While the rules are designed to ensure consistency and fairness, they also emphasize the importance of fostering a love for the sport in a safe and supportive setting.

We encourage all participants to embrace the spirit of the game - compete with integrity, celebrate teamwork, and respect one another. Thank you for being part of the youth flag football community, and we look forward to seeing you thrive on the field!

Let's get started!

Purpose:

Twin Cities Flag League created these rules to safely develop a competitive atmosphere. Competition is a powerful tool that can simultaneously increase stress and promote skill development. When harnessed effectively, it provides a structured environment for individuals to test their limits, adapt to challenges, and achieve personal growth.

Physical Development

Promoting physical fitness, strength, coordination, and overall health. Encouraging lifelong habits of staying active and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Social Development

Fostering teamwork, cooperation, and communication. Developing friendships and connections with peers. Learning to handle competition, including winning and losing gracefully.

Emotional and Mental Growth

Building self-confidence and self-esteem. Encouraging goal setting, focus, and resilience. Teaching stress management and emotional regulation during challenging situations.



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Character Building

Instilling values such as sportsmanship, respect, fairness, and integrity. Developing leadership skills and accountability.

Enjoyment and Fun

Providing an enjoyable experience that fosters a love for sports and activity. Allowing kids to explore their interests and passions in a safe, supportive environment.

Lifelong Lessons

Teaching life skills such as time management, perseverance, and dedication. Helping young people understand the importance of hard work, teamwork, and resilience, which apply beyond sports.

Community Engagement

Encouraging involvement in the community through team activities and events. Fostering a sense of belonging and contribution.

Skill Development

Tackle football is a dynamic, high-impact sport that demands a combination of physical ability, mental sharpness, and teamwork. Developing the necessary skills to excel in flag football requires dedication, consistent practice, and a focus on fundamentals.

The purpose of competition in youth sports is to foster personal growth, build essential life skills, and promote healthy physical and mental development in young athletes. It serves as a platform for children to learn teamwork, discipline, and resilience while developing their athletic abilities.

Competition teaches valuable lessons in handling both success and failure, encouraging a growth mindset and perseverance. Additionally, it creates opportunities for social interaction, building friendships, and fostering a sense of community.

Above all, competition in youth sports should focus on fun, inclusivity, and character development, rather than just winning.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a positive experience that contributes to the overall well-being and development of young participants, both on and off the field.



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Definitions:

Boundary Lines - The perimeter lines around the field; the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

Charging - An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with defensive player.

Dead Ball - Refers to the period of time immediately before or after the Whistle.

Defense - The team preventing the Offense from advancing the ball.

Flag Guarding - An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, arm or ball.

Lateral - A backward or sideways pass of the ball by the ball-carrier.

Line of Scrimmage - (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.

Live Ball - Refers to the period of time that the play is in action, before the Whistle.

Mid-Field Line - The line the offense must pass to get a first down.

Offense - The team with possession of the ball.

Passer - The offensive player that throws the ball.

Rush Line - An imaginary defensive line seven yards back from the line of scrimmage running across the width of the field. The Rusher must begin the play behind this line.

Rusher - The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent a pass by pulling the Quarterback's flag.

Whistle - Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.

Inadvertent Whistle - Official's Whistle that is performed in error.



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Game Overview

1. The game begins with a toss of the coin by the referee. Captains from both teams meet with the referee at midfield to determine who wins the coin toss. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss begins on Defense, the loser chooses the direction of play. The winner of the coin toss must start the second half on Offense.
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.
4. If the offensive team can elect to “punt” on the 4th down. Possession of the ball changes and the defending team’s Offense starts its drive from its 5-yard line. If the offensive team does not elect to punt and does not cross mid field, the defending teams’ Offense will start its possession from the dead ball spot.
5. If the offense crosses midfield and does not score, the ball changes possession and defending team’s Offense starts at its 5-yard line
6. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of “Play” at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

Equipment Rules and Minium Requirements

1. Footballs will be provided.
2. Football Sizes
 - a. 2nd Grade and under Pee-Wee Size 5
 - b. 3rd - 6th Grade Junior Size 6
 - c. 7th - 8th Grade Intermediate/Youth Size 7
3. All players must wear league provided belts and flags on the hips.
4. All players **MUST** wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.
5. Players must wear shoes or cleats. Confirm with your league organizer if cleats are allowed at your location. Cleats with metal are never allowed.
6. Braces or pads with exposed metals are not allowed.
7. Players must remove all jewelry.
8. Beanies, no bill caps or sort shell helmets are allowed.
9. Sunglasses must be secured.
10. Prescription glasses are permitted without a strap.
11. Players’ jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
12. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
13. Flag cannot be the same color as the shorts or pants.

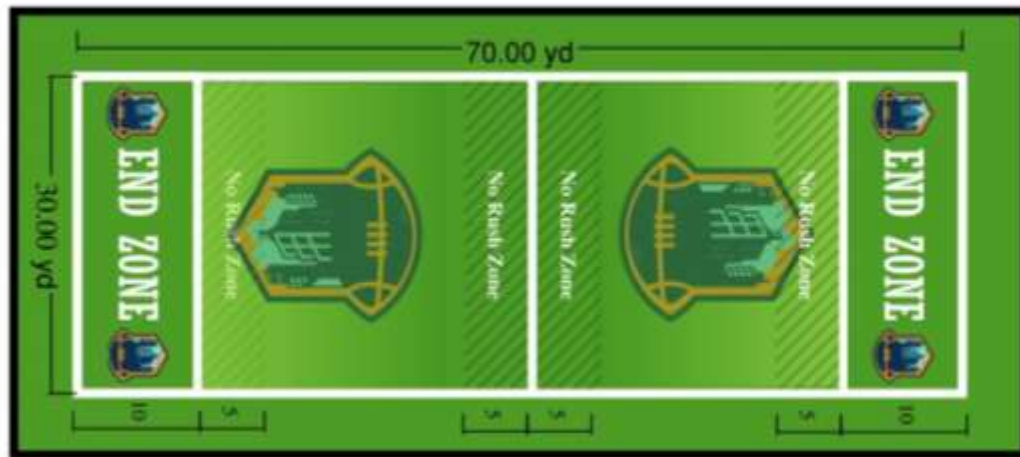


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Field Dimensions

1. 30 yards wide by 70 yards with two 10-yard endzones
2. Midfield line to gain with no run zones five yards before the midfield line and endzone in the offense's direction.
3. The referee will place the ball in the middle of the field prior to the 'Ready to Play'.



Game Clock and Overtime

1. Games consist of two continuous 25-minute halves, with a 5-minute halftime.
2. The game will end if one team gains a 35-point advantage.
3. The clock stops for halftime, injuries and the Officials' discretion.
4. The play clock is 40 seconds.
5. Each team has two 60-second timeouts per half.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. An Injury will stop the clock.
8. Overtime format, when applicable, is as follows
 - a. Home team calls the toss to determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
 - b. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
 - c. Each team will take turns with the ball and scoring will follow the PAT format.
 - d. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - e. There are no timeouts.
 - f. Interceptions are returnable in OT, and worth 2 points.



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Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - a. 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
 - b. Interceptions are worth 2 points
 - c. Once a decision is made a change requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
3. Interceptions returned for scores during regular game play are worth six points
4. Safety: 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone.
5. Forfeits are scored 35-0 for the winning team. TOURNAMENT PLAY 28-0
6. The coaches must verify the score sheet at the end of the game.

Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to the code of conduct.
2. Coaches are permitted to coach on the sideline.
3. All others must remain in the viewing areas, this is the coach's responsibility.
4. Electronic communication of any form is prohibited

Formations

1. A maximum of five (5) players are allowed on the field at the snap of the ball.
2. A minimum of one player is required on the line of scrimmage to snap the ball.
3. Players must be set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
4. Only one player is allowed in lateral motion at a time. No motion toward the LOS is allowed at the snap.
5. The ball must completely leave the hands of the center.



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Game Play

1. At the snap the ball is live until the official's Whistle.
2. The official will spot the ball in the middle of the field and will indicate the line of scrimmage.
3. All players must be behind the Rush Line at the snap of the ball. The official may give notification to move behind the Rush Line.
4. A player only needs one body part other than a hand in bounds to complete a catch.
5. If the Offense makes a substitution on a dead ball, the Defense must be allowed to make a substitution.
6. The defense cannot call out offensive signals.
7. Play is Whistled:
 - a. The ball hits 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. a ball-carrier's BODY part other than a hand hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball without two flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle
 - j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet diving or jumping to hurdle a player.
8. If inadvertent or erroneous whistle occurs the offense has two options:
 - a. Take possession where the play what Whistled and the down is used.
 - b. Replay the down from the original spot.
9. If the clock expires the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.
10. Officials should all agree upon all calls in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
11. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.

Running

1. The ball is spotted at the point of the flag pull.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.
3. Direct handoffs, pitches, and laterals are permitted behind the line of scrimmage only.
4. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center.
5. The QB has 7 seconds to pass, handoff or pitch the ball.
6. Runners are not permitted to leave the ground by jumping or hurdling defenders.
7. Ballcarriers may leave the ground to spin or jump cuts.
8. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
9. Offensive players may not run with the ball-carrier.



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Passing

1. A forward pass is any pass that travels forward from the point it was released.
2. Any player can throw the ball forward from behind the LOS.
3. Only 1 forward pass from behind the LOS is allowed per possession.
4. There is no intentional grounding.
5. The quarterback may throw the ball away beyond the LOS to avoid a sack.
6. The QB has 7 seconds to pass, handoff or pitch the ball or the play is dead.
7. If the QB is in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the LOS.

Receiving

1. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
2. A player only needs one body part other than a hand in bounds to complete a catch.
3. At simultaneous possession, the offense is awarded the ball.

Rushing The Passer

1. All rushers must be behind the Rush Line at the snap of the ball.
2. Two players can rush the QB and must raise their hand to identify before the snap.
3. Players must rush immediately at the snap.
4. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled all players may immediately rush the ball.
5. Rushers should verify they are behind the Rush line the official before the play.
6. Rushers are allowed to attempt to block a pass but must not contact the QB unless incidental.
7. An offensive player cannot move to block or impede the rusher, It is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher.
8. If the offensive player does not move the rusher must avoid the offensive player.
9. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's

Flag Pulling

1. Defenders cannot grab or hold any part of the runner other than the flag.
2. Defenders may not grab or strip the ball from the runner.
3. Defenders cannot remove flags from a player without possession of the ball.
4. Defenders may dive to pull the runner's flag.



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Penalties

1. General
 - a. The referee will determine incidental contact and call all penalties.
 - b. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions.
 - c. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
 - d. Spot fouls in the end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down)/Offensive (Safety)
2. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
 - a. Tackling, elbowing, physical contact, blocking or any other unsportsmanlike act will not be tolerated, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game.
 - b. Offensive or confrontational language is NOT allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. The officials may give a warning or immediate ejection if warranted.
 - c. No contact is allowed, this includes a free release from the LOS or contact with defenders when running passing routes. All players must try to avoid other players with an established position.
 - d. Two unsportsmanlike penalties are automatic disqualification from that game and may lead to additional discipline.
3. Penalties

Defensive Spot Fouls	
Defensive pass interference	+5 yards and automatic first down
Holding/Illegal Contact	
Stripping	
Offensive Spot Fouls	
Screening / blocking / impeding the rusher	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	
Flag guarding	
Holding/Illegal Contact	
Defensive Penalties	
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside / illegal substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush/ flag pull	
Roughing the passer	
Taunting	
Offensive Penalties	
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
False start / illegal substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass	
Offensive pass interference	
Illegal motion / procedure	
Delay of game	
Taunting	



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Rule Adjustments

The following adjustments to the rules will be made for select grades levels.

1. 2nd & 3rd Grade
 - a. 'No Run' zones are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.
 - b. Defenders may NOT rush the passer at any point.
 - c. Defenders may NOT cross the LOS unless there is a handoff, lateral or pass.
 - d. One Coach for each team is always permitted on the field.
2. 1st Grade and K/PK
 - a. 'No Run' zones are eliminated. Teams may run the ball anywhere on the field.
 - b. Defenders may NOT rush the passer at any point.
 - c. Defenders MUST be five yards from the line of scrimmage until there is a
 - d. handoff, lateral or pass.
 - e. Two Coaches for each team are always permitted on the field.
 - f. If the ball touches the ground during snap, the play replayed one time per down, on the second time the down is consumed