



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF COOKE COUNTY

# Flag Football Rules



## 7-ON-7 FLAG RULE BOOK



American Development Model

# Flag Football Rules

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# Flag Football Rules





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## 0 / MISSION STATEMENT & INTRODUCTION

The Boys & Girls Club of Cooke County (BGCCC) football program was established as an instructional youth football league to teach and promote the highest ideals of sportsmanship, fellowship, and teamwork. Our focus is on offering the youth of Cooke County an opportunity to participate in football while developing a range of sport-specific skills. Youth development is the goal, **not** winning at any cost. We offer athletic programs as a fun, healthy and competitive pursuit, and encourage all youth participants regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin or any other characteristic where discrimination is prohibited by federal or state law. We offer the opportunity for adult members to volunteer, coach, officiate, or otherwise participate in the activities of the BGCCC (subject to a background check).

All players in the league must be:

- 1) active members of the Boys & Girls Club of Cooke County
- 2) attending school (or being home schooled)
- 3) residents of Cooke County (non-residents require league admin approval)

Parents and spectators are required to demonstrate positive sportsmanship and respect for all participants in the league (football players, cheerleaders, coaches, officials, staff, etc). Unsportsmanlike behavior on the part of any spectator will result in one warning. Continued unsportsmanlike behavior will result in an ejection. More serious or repeat instances of unsportsmanlike behavior will result in authorities being notified and the individual(s) being permanently banned from all league events.

## 1 / TERMINOLOGY

**BOUNDARY LINES** The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include 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 a shoulder, forearm or the chest.

**DEAD BALL** Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.

**DEFENSE** The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

**DOWNS** The offensive team has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.



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**FLAG GUARDING** An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.

**INADVERTENT WHISTLE** Official's whistle that is performed in error.

**LATERAL** A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier. There are no legal laterals or pitches allowed in USA Football 7-on-7 Flag.

**LINE OF SCRIMMAGE (LOS)** An imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.

**LINE-TO-GAIN** The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score. In USA Football 7-on-7 flag, this is the midfield point.

**LIVE BALL** Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

**OFFENSE** The team with possession of the ball.

**PASS CLOCK** Offensive teams have seven seconds to throw a pass or make a handoff once the snap is made. If the quarterback still has the ball after an official counts off seven seconds, the play is dead and the ball returns to the line of scrimmage as if an incomplete pass occurred.

**PASSER** The offensive player who throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.

**RUSH LINE** An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.

**RUSHER** The defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.

**SHOVEL PASS** A legal forward pitch attempted from behind the line of scrimmage traveling beyond the line of scrimmage.

**UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT** A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

**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.



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## 2 / POSITIONS

### Offense

The seven players on offense consist of a center, a quarterback and five eligible receivers. Two of those receivers must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap – each positioned on opposite sides of the center.

1. Center. This player's responsibility is to snap the ball (between his legs) to begin the play, a critical skill at all levels of football. The center is an eligible receiver after he snaps the ball and may receive a pass so long as they are past the line of scrimmage. The center may not receive handoffs.
2. Quarterback. This player receives the snap from the center and initiates the play either through a handoff or pass. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the line of scrimmage without first handing the ball off to a teammate and then receiving a second handoff back or receiving a pass.
3. Receiver/back. Any player who does not initiate the snap nor receive the snap is considered an eligible receiver/back and can either receive a handoff or catch a pass. Two receivers must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap – on opposite sides of the center – while the other three are at least one yard behind the line of scrimmage in either a slot or running back position. Only one eligible receiver can go in motion.

### Defense

All players on defense must line up on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage, and must remain on the defensive side until either a pass is thrown or the ball is handed off to an eligible back. Following a legal handoff, any member of the defense can cross the line of scrimmage.

## 3 / GENERAL RULES

1. At the start of each game, head coaches 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. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays (downs) to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays (downs) to score a touchdown. Crossing midfield is the only opportunity for an offense to gain a first down within a single possession.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
6. If the defense intercepts the ball, a defensive player can attempt to return it until down, out of bounds or possession of the ball is lost.
7. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.



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8. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

## 4 / EQUIPMENT

1. Each player must wear uniformed shirts and flag belts with flags attached. Teams will use footballs suitable for the age division. Flag belts may not be the same color as the shorts or pants.
2. Cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
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. Players are encouraged to wear mouth pieces during practices and games.
4. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.
5. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
6. Players need to wear black shorts or pants that **do not have pockets**.

## 5 / PLAYING FIELD

1. The playing field will have an end zone at each end, and the playing field will be further divided in half.
2. Each team will be positioned on opposite sidelines.

## 6 / TIMING AND OVERTIME

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. (For 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade division, the games will be 30-minute continuous clock with two 15-minute halves.) The clock stops for timeouts or injuries only, though officials can stop the clock at their discretion for injury, to stop a team from delaying or other unsportsmanlike conduct.
2. Halftime is five minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. Officials will use their discretion with younger ages who may need more time to line up and get a play off.
4. Each team has one 30-second timeout per half.
5. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play and both teams are lined up ready to restart the play.
6. There will be no overtime for regular season games. In playoff games only, if the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. The overtime format is as follows:
  - a. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
    - i. 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. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
    - ii. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.



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- b. Each team will take turns getting one 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 its own.
  - i. Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the five-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win.
  - ii. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
- c. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect
- d. There are no timeouts in overtime.

## 7 / SCORING

1. **Touchdown:** Six points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) one point from the 5-yard line or two points from the 10-yard line. A team that scores a touchdown must declare prior to the snap whether it wishes to attempt a one- or two-point conversion. 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. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
3. **Safety:** No points are scored for a safety. For flag pulls in the end zone or runners running out of the back or sides of the end zone, the ball returns to the original spot or the 5-yard line and the down is lost.
4. After one team is leading by 28 points or more, score is no longer kept. Once a 28 or more point advantage is gained, no PATs are attempted. The game continues in scrimmage mode for remainder of the game. These games will be scored 28-0 for the winning team.

## 8 / COACHES

1. Each team will have one Head Coach, and one or two Assistant Coaches. Each coach will complete a volunteer application and a background check. Coaches names will appear on the team roster. Head coaches are required to attend the mandatory coaches clinic / preseason meeting.
2. Coaches will conduct themselves in a professional and sportsmanlike manner at all times. All coaches will be kind and respectful at all times, and towards all players, cheerleaders, parents, coaches, officials and Club staff. Coaches unable to demonstrate proper sportsmanship and respect will be suspended from further coaching in Boys & Girls Club leagues. Any coach ejected from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct is required to leave the playing area immediately, and will be suspended from all league events for one (1) week (includes practices and games). After a second ejection, league admin will determine the appropriate resolution.
3. Any complaint or grievance in reference to officials, players or the league must come from the Head Coach, via e-mail, to the league admin. The 24-hour rule will be strictly enforced – no complaint or grievance may be submitted within 24 hours of the underlying event(s).





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4. One coach is allowed on the field to call plays and direct players according to need. Once the quarterback begins his or her cadence, however, coaches can no longer speak and must be behind the deepest offensive and defensive players and out of the action.
5. Coaches will ensure that all parents/guardians are notified at least 24 hours prior to all practices and games, and will maintain regular communication on scheduling and conflicts.
6. Coaches are required to play all participants 50% of the game and each player is required to have a starting position on either offense or defense. Players are required to attend at least 50% of practices, coaches will notify league admin if this does not occur.
7. Coaches will report game scores as directed by league admin.
8. Games lost due to weather or forfeits will not be rescheduled.
9. League admin/staff will have final decision on any rule dispute.

## 9 / LIVE BALL DEAD BALL

1. The ball is live at the snap and remains live until an official's whistle blows the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the line of scrimmage by spotting the ball before each play and signaling ready for play with a short whistle.
3. The defense may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
4. A player who gains possession of the ball is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
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
  - b. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the play remains **live** but only the quarterback may recover the ball from the ground.
  - c. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled
  - d. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds
  - e. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
  - f. Any part of the body other than feet or hands touches the ground
  - g. The ball-carrier's flag falls out
  - h. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s)
8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the play is dead and the offense has two options:
  - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
  - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

## 10 / RUNNING

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's front foot is when the flag is pulled, not the position of the ball.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.
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 take place behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs. The center may not receive a handoff.



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4. No laterals of any kind are allowed, including pitches and throwbacks.
5. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
9. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. There is 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. 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, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

## 11 / PASSING

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. The passer must make a good-faith effort to throw the ball forward, beyond the line of scrimmage. A ball may be caught on the offense's side of the line of scrimmage so long as the official deems that the passer made such a good faith effort.
2. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage and be in the vicinity of a receiver.
3. Quarterbacks cannot spike the ball dead.
4. A seven-second pass clock begins upon the snap and continues until there is a handoff or pass. If the seven-second clock expires while the quarterback still has the ball, the play is blown dead, a down is lost and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage as if an incomplete pass occurred.
5. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
6. Any player who has received a legal handoff can throw the ball forward.

## 12 / RECEIVING

1. All players are eligible to receive passes.
2. A player must have at least one foot inbounds to make a legal reception.
3. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
4. Interceptions change possession at the point of the catch. Interceptions are returnable and are the only changes of possession that do not result with starting on the 5-yard line.
5. The play is blown dead immediately if an interception is made on an extra-point try. There are no returns on that play.



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## 13 / RUSHING THE PASSER

1. Defensive players are not permitted to rush the quarterback. Sacks are not permitted.
2. The quarterback may only have his flag pulled if he receives a handoff or pass.
3. The offense cannot impede defensive players in any way. The defender has the right to a clear path to the ball carrier. If the path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the defender. Any disruption to the defender's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the defender penalty.

## 14 / FLAG PULLING

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 the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball. If a defender makes a good-faith flag pull while a receiver bobbles or juggles what will be a completed catch, the ball is down where possession is made.

## 15 / PENALTIES

### General

1. The officials will call all penalties.
2. Game officials 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 head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Other players, coaches and fans/spectators may not question calls – doing so constitutes unsportsmanlike behavior.
5. Games and halves may not end on a penalty unless the opposing team 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 line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.



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| <b>Conduct penalties</b>                         |   |
| Unnecessary roughness                            | 10 yards and automatic 1st down (def) or loss of down (off) |
| Unsportsmanlike conduct                          | 10 yards and automatic 1st down (def) or loss of down (off) |
| <b>Defensive spot fouls</b>                      |   |
| Defensive pass interference                      | Automatic 1st down  |
| Holding  | Automatic 1st down  |
| Stripping  | 10 yards and automatic 1st down                             |
| <b>Offensive spot fouls</b>                      |   |
| 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                                   |
| <b>Defensive penalties</b>                       |   |
| Offside  | 5 yards from line of scrimmage and 1st down                 |
| Illegal rush (starting rush inside 7-yr marker)  | 5 yards from line of scrimmage and 1st down                 |
| Illegal flag pull (before receiver has the ball) | 5 yards from line of scrimmage and 1st down                 |
| Roughing the passer                              | 5 yards from line of scrimmage and 1st down                 |
| <b>Offensive penalties</b>                       |   |
| Offside / false start                            | 5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down             |
| Illegal forward pass                             | 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 (more than 1 person moving)       | 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 defender                            | 5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down             |



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