



Department of Recreation and Parks

Flag Football Rules

Any rule not covered in this manual, revert to the NFL Flag Official Playing Rules.

1. Mission:

Rockville's NFL Flag league is committed to creating the best possible experience for every participant by focusing on:

- a. FUN – Making sure every player has a positive and exciting experience, regardless of skill level.
- b. SAFETY – Promoting a safe, non-contact version of football that emphasizes smart play and respect for the game.
- c. SKILL DEVELOPMENT – Teaching fundamentals of football, movement, and teamwork, while building good sports habits like hustle, effort and fair play.
- d. TEAMWORK – Instilling values of cooperation, communication, accountability, and respect for teammates, opponents and coaches.
- e. COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS – Strengthening bonds between families, neighbors, and players through shared experiences in youth sports.

2. Weather & Schedule Updates:

- a. Email will be the primary form of communication from the league.
- b. Weather Line: www.rockvillemd.gov/rainoutline.
Coaches can signup for text or email alerts.
- c. Updates will be provided as soon as decisions are made. If no announcement is posted, report to the field and a decision will be made onsite.
- d. The Rainout Line is updated by 3pm on weekdays and 7:30am on weekends.

3. Games:

- a. Games will be played on Sundays at Mattie Stepanek Park, first kickoff at 10:00am.
- b. Coaches should plan to arrive 15 – 20 min before game time to organize players and warm up.

4. Game Format:

- a. 5v5 non-contact (no blocking, tackling, or stiff-arming).
- b. One coach is allowed on the field for grades 3 and under.
- c. For the first game of the season 1 coach shall be allowed on the field.**
- d. Once the offense breaks huddle the coach must stand back from the players.**
- e. Position coaches, Team Moms, Photographers, Spectators etc must be 10 yards off the field in designated league viewing areas.
- f. It is the coaches responsibility to keep fans, and any other team associated members in the designated areas.
- g. Officials will mark the Line of Scrimmage with a special marker.
- h. Referee will designate a rush line of 7 yards from the LOS.

5. Field Size:

- a. 4th-8th Grades: 70 yard field.
 - 1. 30 yards wide
 - 2. 10 yard end zones
 - 3. 2, 5 yard NO RUSHING ZONES on each side of the field. (Before the goal line, and before midfield).
- b. 2nd-3rd Grades: 50 yard field
 - 1. 25 yards wide
 - 2. 5 yard end zones
 - 3. 2, 5 yard NO RUSHING ZONES. **(Before the goal line, and before midfield).**

6. Scoring:

- a. Touchdown = 6 points
- b. Extra Points = 1 point (from 5 yards- passing only) 2 points (from 10 yard line rush or pass).
- c. Safety = 2 points.
- d. Interception returned 6 Points, (regulation time) 2 points (overtime).
- e. 35 point advantage will end the game. (regular season).
- f. Forfeits are scored 35 – 0 (regular season) 28 – 0 (tournament play)

7. Game Rules:

- a. At the start of the each game, captains, and one coach from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball.
- b. The Visiting team calls the toss.
- c. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. THERE IS NO OPTION TO DEFER!

- d. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at the 5 yard line.
- e. Each team has 4 downs to advance the ball to midfield, after crossing midfield team has 4 downs to score.
- f. If the offense fails to cross midfield, the head coach must declare whether to punt or play prior to the Ready to Play. (Failure to declare = Delay of Game penalty).
- g. If Punt is declared the ball will be placed on the opposition's 5 yard line.
- h. A time out can be used if the coach wants to change the Play declaration to Punt.
- i. The Punt declaration cannot be changed.
- j. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started on defense.
- k. Interceptions may be returned. (scoring = 6 points regular game play, 2 points if returned during conversions and OT).
- l. No Fumbles can be recovered. Ball will be placed at the spot of the fumble. Once the ball hits the ground the play is dead.
- m. No Overtime during the regular season.
- n. The QB is not allowed to directly run with the ball.
- o. Quarterback has 7 seconds to throw. If in the end-zone when 7 second clock expires, the ball will be returned to the Line of Scrimmage.
- p. QB can throw the ball away. **NO INTENTIONAL GROUNDING.** The pass must go beyond the LOS.
- q. **All passes not thrown beyond the line of scrimmage shall be an illegal forward pass. (-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down)**
- r. Quarterback may handoff to another player within the No Rush Zone, but that player must throw pass.
- s. One player is allowed to be in motion but must be off the Line of Scrimmage at least 1 yard. No motion is permitted toward the LOS.
- t. Simultaneous possession is awarded to the offense.
- u. Rushing the QB is allowed, Up to 2 defensive players can rush the QB. Defensive player(s) must be 7 yds back. Rushes must identify themselves by raising their hand before the snap. Rushers must rush immediately after the snap. Delayed rush is not permitted. Once the ball is handed off the 7 second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- v. Teams can huddle on the sideline with their coaches to get the play but the play clock will not stop once the ball is placed and signaled Ready for Play.
- w. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- x. No player is allowed to jump, leap, or hurdle.
- y. No blocking or screening is allowed.
- z. Once the ball advances beyond the Line of Scrimmage, the current ball-carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is dead.
- aa. Offensive players in close proximity of the ball carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. NO running with the ball carrier.

8. Timing:

- a. 4th-8th grade Regular season games are played on a 48 min continuous clock with 2, 24 min halves. **The clock will stop in the last 2 min of the 2nd half for incomplete pass, out of bounds and scores.**
- b. 2nd-3rd grade regular season games will play 4, 10 minute quarters.
- c. 35 point advantage will end the game.
- d. The clock stops at half-time, injuries, and the officials discretion.
- e. Half Time is 2 minutes
- f. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball.
- g. Each team has 1 60 second time out per half. They do not carry over.
- h. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- i. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and the restart once the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- j. There is no overtime during the regular season.

9. Equipment:

- a. All players must wear official NFL Flag belts and flags.
- b. All players must wear mouth guards while on the field.
- c. Game balls should be age specific.
- d. All players must wear shoes, cleats. Cleats with exposed metal are not allowed.
- e. All Jewelry must be removed.
- f. Hard billed hats are not allowed. Winter beanie's are allowed.
- g. Soft shell helmets, halos and sunglasses are allowed , but must be secured at ALL times while on the field. Prescription glasses are allowed without a strap.
- h. Players Jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants, if they hang below the belt line.
- i. Recommend players wear shorts or pants with no pockets. Shorts or pants with pockets and or belt loops must be taped down.
- j. Flags belts and flags can not be the same color as the shorts or pants.

10. Penalties:

- a. The Referee will call all penalties.
- b. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- c. All penalties will be assessed from the Line of Scrimmage. Except Spot fouls.
- d. Only the Head Coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
- e. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
- f. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- g. Spot fouls in the end zone: Defense (ball is on the one yard line/Offense Safety).

Defensive Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding/Illegal Contact	+5 yards, Automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards, Automatic first down

Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening or blocking	-5 yards, Loss of down
Charging	-5 yards, Loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards, Loss of down
Holding/Illegal contact	-5 yards, Loss of down

Defensive penalties

Unnecessary roughness	+10, yards Automatic first down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10, yards Automatic first down
Taunting	+10 yards, from the LOS Automatic first down
Offside/illegal substitution	+5 yards, from the LOS Automatic first down
Illegal rush (<i>starting rush from inside 7 yd marker</i>)	+5 yards, from the LOS Automatic first down
Illegal flag pulling (<i>before receiver has the ball</i>)	+5 yards, from the LOS Automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards, from the LOS Automatic first down

Offensive Penalties

Unnecessary roughness	-10 yards, Loss of down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards, Loss of down
Taunting	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Offside/false start/illegal substitution	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass <i>Any pass received behind the Line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage</i>	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Illegal motion (<i>more than one person moving</i>)	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Impeding the runner	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down
Illegal procedure	-5 yards from LOS, and loss of down

Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines
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
Rush Line	AN imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards into the defensive side from the LOS
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or not be the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flag or by blocking the pass.
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.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after the play.
Whistle	Sound made by and official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	Officials whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball carrier directly at the defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carriers flag by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runners flags with a hand or arm or ball.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward.
Lateral	A backward or sideway toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language