

# Flag Football Rules And Guidelines



**\*JERSEYS, FLAG BELTS, AND FOOTBALLS WILL BE SUPPLIED BY THE YMCA\***

## EQUIPMENT & FIELD SPECIFICATIONS

TO P I C	Administration
Size of Ball	Blue Football (1 <sup>st</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> ) – Brown Football (5 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> )
Size of Field	70 YARDS X 30 YARDS
Size of End-Zone	10 YARDS X 30 YARDS
Half-Field Mark	35 Yard line
No-Run Zones	Teams cannot run the football inside 5 yards of the Endzone or Half-Field (NO 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> )

## GAME STRUCTURE

TO P I C	Administration
Game Length	Two, 20-minute halves
Team Size	6 vs 6 (1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> ) 7 vs 7 (3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> )
Extra Period(s)	No Overtime in the regular season; 1 <sup>st</sup> OT in the playoffs: Each team will attempt to score from 5 yard line and have option to go for 1pt or 2pt conversion; 2 <sup>nd</sup> OT: Each team will attempt 1pt conversion (5 yd line); 3 <sup>rd</sup> OT or more: Each team will attempt 2pt conversion (10 yd line) until a winner is decided
Scoring	Score is kept until there's a 35 point lead (losing team stays on offense until lead under 35)
Timeouts	1 60-second timeout per half (timeouts cannot be carried over)
Start of Game Possession	Decided by a coin-flip pre-game. Away team will call heads/tails.

## GAME TACTICS

TO P I C	Administration
Playing Time	Equal playing time (Every player should try every position)
Set Defense	Man-to-man or Zone
Blitzing	(1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> ) NO BLITZERS - (3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup> ) 2 BLITZERS – (5 <sup>TH</sup> -8 <sup>TH</sup> ) NOT LIMIT ON BLITZERS

## FLAG FOOTBALL EQUIPMENT

GEAR	DESCRIPTION
Cleats	Metal cleat spikes are NOT allowed
Flags + Belt	Every player needs a flag football set, including flag football flags and belt.
Jersey	Players need to wear their designated jersey from Jr. NFL.
Shorts/Pants	Players should wear shorts/pants without pockets to avoid penalties and finger injuries.
Mouthguard	The rules of flag football require a mouthguard - it's the only protective gear that players wear.
Gloves	Not required, but definitely a plus!

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND GUIDELINES

## FOOTBALL FIELD TERMS

**Boundary lines:** The outer perimeter lines around the field, including the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

**Offense:** The team who has possession of the ball and is trying to advance to the opponent's end zone for a touchdown.

**Defense:** The team who doesn't have possession of the ball and is trying to prevent the other team from scoring by pulling the ball-carrier's flags down.

**End Zone:** The two end zones, located on opposite sides of the field, are the scoring areas. The goal line, which a player must cross to score a touchdown, is the start of the end zone.

**No Run Zone:** The rules for flag football include no run zones that are located five yards before each goal line and the midfield. If the ball is spotted within a no run zone, the offensive team must use a pass play to earn a first down or touchdown. The objective is to prevent power football in tight spaces, limiting contact. **(NO 1<sup>ST</sup>/2<sup>ND</sup>)**

**Line-to-gain:** The line the offense must cross to get a first down or score.

**Line of Scrimmage:** This is an imaginary line that expands the width of the field and runs through the point of the football. It indicates where teams can't cross until the play has begun.

## FOOTBALL GAME TERMS

**Dead ball:** This refers to the period of time directly before or after a play, when the ball isn't in motion. Flag football rules are stricter about deadlines: they commonly happen when the ball touches the ground, the ball-carrier's flag is pulled from their belt, the ball-carrier steps out of bounds, the ball-carrier's body—outside of their hands or feet—touches the ground, the pass is incomplete, the ball-carrier's flag falls out or the receiver has one or no flags when catching the ball.

**Downs:** A down is the period after the ball is snapped and the team is attempting to advance down the field. In flag football rules, teams have four downs to cross midfield. If they successfully cross midfield within four downs, then they have three downs to score a touchdown.

**Flag guarding:** This flag football term happens when the ball-carrier prevents a defender from pulling down their flags. For example, they might stiff arm, cover their flag with their open hand, or lower their elbow. It is illegal and results in a penalty.

**Start of Game Possession:** Teams will line-up at midfield with the lead official and do a coin toss to decide possession. The Away team will always call heads or tails.

**Timeouts:** Managing the way timeouts are called allows for better game flow and decision-making by the player(s).

**Rusher:** The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass. Offensive players must steer clear of the rusher. When the ball is handed off, any defender may rush.

**Rush line:** An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage. In other words, any defensive player who is positioned seven yards off the line of scrimmage is eligible to rush.

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND GUIDELINES



## FLAG FOOTBALL POSITIONS

Picture a traditional offensive line in tackle football, all 11 players. Now, remove the linemen. This is where the idea of 6 on 6 flag football comes from—it's essentially the shell of tackle football, without the linemen. In other words, from an offensive standpoint, everyone can catch the pass, creating a continuous, fast-paced game.

## OFFENSE

For each offensive play, the individual players line up on the line of scrimmage. Each player then performs a **running route**. The combination of each of these routes make up a play. Mixing and matching the nine different route types and field positions allows for hundreds of unique plays. However, it is highly recommended that your team prepare a shortlist of preferred flag football plays ahead of the game. This will allow for quicker decisions in between downs and less confusion on the field.

## DEFENSE

Without linemen in the mix, there are really two kinds of flag football defensive positions: rushers and defensive backs. Rushers try to get to the quarterback as quickly as possible, while defensive backs line up to face wide receivers, or even farther back as safeties. Coaches typically teach both man-to-man and zone defensive strategies. But the most important skill players learn on defense is the proper way to pull off an opponent's flags. This technique actually lays the foundation for tackle football. For example, when breaking down, players are taught how to square up their opponent, where to align their head and knees, and what angles to take when pulling off flags. Essentially, it's the exact position an athlete would need to take to physically tackle their opponent. This is a transferable skill set that benefits players who eventually want to play tackle football.

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND GUIDELINES

## PENALTIES

### Offensive flag football penalties

Similar to defensive flag football penalties, offensive flag football penalties include infractions for unsportsmanlike behavior, whether it's physical or verbal. On offense, there are also penalties for improper movements on the line of scrimmage, such as moving before the play starts or delaying the game. For example, each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. Delay-of-games penalties are enforced after one warning. Here's a list of offensive flag football penalties:

Type	Description	Yardage
Unnecessary roughness	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent	-10 yards and loss of down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside/false start	A player charges or moves in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass	A player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Pass interference	The eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion	Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	The rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal procedure	A technical rules violation, such as illegal formation	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

### Offensive spot fouls

Offensive spot fouls are also assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred. All of these flag football penalties result in a loss of down. But any loss of down on the third down results in a turnover, with the other team taking possession. Here are flag football penalties categorized as offensive spot fouls:

Type	Description	Yardage
Screening, blocking or running with the ball	The player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag	-10 yards and loss of down

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND GUIDELINES



## Defensive flag football penalties

You'll find that many defensive flag football penalties are behavior-oriented and can take on several definitions. Unsportsmanlike conduct, for example, can include any physical acts, like intentional tackling, elbows, or cheap shots, as well as verbal, such as confrontational language. Referees can also dish out a flag football penalty to fans who aren't keeping the field safe and kid-friendly. Bottom line: these flag football penalties are designed to teach youth players the importance of respect and good sportsmanship.

Type	Description	Yardage
Unnecessary roughness	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent	+10 yards and automatic first down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking an opponent	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush	The rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull	A player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	A player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down

## Defensive spot fouls

All flag football penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage, except for spot fouls. Spot fouls are penalties that are assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred.

Here are the flag football penalties categorized as defensive spot fouls:

Type	Description	Yardage
Defensive pass interference	The player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball	Automatic first down
Holding	The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	A player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession	+10 yards and automatic first down