



**FLAG FOOTBALL
RULEBOOK**

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I. Game

1. At the start of each game, both teams will meet at midfield to be inspected for mouthpieces, no pockets, no cleats and properly tucked in flag belts. Captains from both teams shall then meet for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss. The home team as designated on the schedule will wear the color/dark jersey with the away team wearing the white jersey.
2. The winner of the coin toss decides either: (1) whether to take first offense possession or to defend first; or (2) which endzone to defend in the first half. The loser of the coin toss gets to select whichever option the winner of the coin toss opts not to select. [Example: winner of the coin toss elects to take the first offensive possession; the loser, in that circumstance, gets to select which endzone will be defended in the first half.] Teams change sides after the first half. The team that defended first gets the ball to start the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 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 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
7. XFL (15-16 Year Olds) ONLY: Each team has the option, once per game, to "go for it" on 4th down. If, after the first three downs, the ball hasn't crossed midfield or after the second three downs, the offensive team hasn't scored, that team has the option of

taking an extra down. If the offensive team, on the 4th down, crosses midfield to convert to a first down or scores, or if there is an interception, play continues in accordance with the remaining rules. If, however, the offensive team is unsuccessful and there is no interception, there is a turnover on downs and the ball is placed at the 5 yard line of the team that was unable to score or cross midfield (i.e., the ball is placed within 5 yards of a touchdown for the team that takes possession of the ball.) It is important to note that, if the team attempting to convert the fourth down is ahead at the time of the conversion, the game clock will be stopped prior to the fourth down conversion.

II. Terminology and Definitions

- **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines, and the rear end zone lines.
- **Charging** – the movement of the ball carrier (throughout these Rules “ball carrier” means any player in possession of the ball, including but not limited to a QB) directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, chest or forearm.
- **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- **Defense** – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Downs (1-2-3)** – the offensive squad has three attempts or “Downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the Line to Gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Flag Guarding** – an 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. Instances where a ball carrier leaps over a defender as to avoid a flag pull will also be considered as flag guarding. Not having flag belt completely tucked in or having shirt un-tucked so as to impede flag pulls will also be considered flag guarding.
- **Inadvertent whistle** – an official’s whistle that is performed in error.
- **Lateral** – any backwards or sideways throw or toss (overhand or underhand) of the ball by the ball carrier. It is not considered a Pass. Laterals MUST occur behind the line of scrimmage. No laterals are permitted beyond the line of scrimmage.
- **Line of Scrimmage (“LOS”)** – an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
- **Live Ball** – the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced (or

declined) before the down is considered complete.

- **Neutral Zone** – the designated one-yard area in front of the line of scrimmage (i.e., from the front nose of the football). This will be enforced and defenders will need to align themselves properly prior to the snap of the ball.
- **Offense** – the squad with possession of the ball.
- **Pass** – any forward throw or toss (overhand or underhand, including by a “shovel” motion) of the ball by the ball carrier. A forward throw or toss caught in front of or behind the LOS is a **Pass**.
- **Passer** – the offensive player that throws the ball who may or may not be the QB.
- **Rush Line** – an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line of Scrimmage.
- **Rusher** – any defensive player assigned to rush across the LOS in the course of defending an offensive play.
- **Touchback** – if a defensive player intercepts a ball in his own end zone, and the player’s flag is pulled within his own end zone (provided that the player did not exit the end zone after making the interception, it is an interception and the ball is placed at the 5-yard line.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language, including trash talking and taunting.
- **Whistle** – the sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action.

III. Eligibility

1. A player’s age must fall within the specified age-range as of September 15th of the current year. Player’s may play “up” or “down” to a different division upon request and with the approval of the Commissioner.
2. The legal guardian or parent of a player must have completed and signed a waiver in connection with both the **78 Youth Sports** and NFL Flag Football on-line registration process.

IV. Equipment

1. The League provides each player with jerseys and flag belts, and each team with two footballs. Refs will have extra flag belts but not enough to equip a team.
2. Players are to wear sneakers, turf shoes or plastic cleats. Metal cleats are not allowed.
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.
4. Players must remove all watches and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous. Notwithstanding the foregoing, players are permitted to wear earrings provided that they tape over the entire earring for the entire game.
5. Official NFL FLAG jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants at all times.
7. No pants or shorts with pockets or belt loops are permitted.
8. Players on the field of play (i.e., not on the sidelines) must wear mouthpieces at all times.

V. Field

1. No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the offensive team's scoring end zone), teams may not run the ball across the LOS. While laterals and hand-offs are permitted as otherwise permitted in these Rules, the ball may be advanced across the LOS only by means of a Pass. Rushing the passer is permitted in No Run Zones as otherwise permitted under these Rules.
2. The boundary lines are out of bounds.
3. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
4. If a run play is performed in the no-run zone, the play will be called dead and resulting in a loss of down. If this occurs in the last two minutes of the half, the time will not be put back on the clock.

VI. Rosters and Playing Time

1. Roster maximum is 10 players per team. The games are played with five (5) players on the field for each team. However, teams must field a minimum of four (4) players at all times.

2. Each player on the roster, regardless of skill or experience, is entitled to a fair share of playing time. It is the coaches responsibility to provide equitable playing time. No player should play three-possessions in a row should you have more than 8-players. Please note that should the league receive notice of unfair playing time allocation we will enforce substitution patterns for the violating team. To ensure this, while allowing for reasonable substitutions for competitive purposes and for special circumstances such as teams with 9 or fewer players attending, each head coach should adopt the following standards for governing playing time.
 - a. Coaches will organize their team into two (with each squad playing offense and defense as a unit) or four (two offense and two defense, to mix and match players and afford more flexibility) squads of 5 players each. Each player will be designated for either one squad (of two) or two squads (of four). Whether a coach uses two squads or four squads, all squads must play both offense and defense over the course of a game.
 - b. Squads should alternate evenly during the game, although coaches may choose different ordering methods so long as they amount to an even distribution of squad time. For example, without excluding other possible alternatives, with two offensive (O1 and O2) and two defensive squads (D1 and D2), both O1, D1, O2, D2 and O1, D2, O2, D1 would be permitted. Also, in the same example, playing O1 and D1 in the first half and O2 and D2 in the second half would be permitted.
 - c. If 9 or fewer players are attending a game, coaches may choose to allocate additional playing time to 1 or more players at the coach's discretion. In the spirit of fair playing time, head coaches should attempt to fairly distribute extra playing time among their players from game to game rather than giving it to the same players each time they have 9 or fewer players.
 - d. Limited situational substitutions of players on one squad into another squad are allowed. Each player on the squad on the field may only be substituted out for one down per series of plays, and after that down the player subbed in must leave the game and the player subbed for must reenter the game. A new series of plays begins each time there is a first down, and a down for purposes of the substitute remaining in the game includes the original play plus any replay because of a penalty. Pregame, a player may be designated to the referees and opposing coach as the only Designated Quarterback for a team, and if so designated, he may play an unlimited amount on all offensive squads; however, any player so designated is ineligible to play regularly on a defense squad.. If a Designated Quarterback is injured and leaves the game, another

player may, at the coach's discretion, be designated as Replacement Quarterback, and the Replacement Quarterback will then be ineligible to play regularly on a defense squad. However, Designated Quarterbacks and Replacement Quarterbacks will be allowed as situational substitutes on defense as provided above. Unlimited substitutions are allowed by both teams whenever an offensive team is in the No Run Zone approaching the opposition end zone and on any Point After Touchdown attempt, whether for 1 or 2 points.

e. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any coach has the option of reducing game time and/or benching a player for bona fide disciplinary reasons, including without limitation, on-field misconduct; lack of sportsmanship; disrespecting referees, teammates, parents and/or coaches; failing to attend practices; appearing late for games and/or practices; failing to take the time to learn plays and defenses; and/or other similar issues ("Benchnings"). Benchnings should be the exception and not the rule. Any Benchnings should be reported to the referee promptly when the misconduct occurs. If the Benching is based upon non-game related misconduct -- disrespecting teammates prior to the game, consistently failing to appear at practices, etc., such conduct should be reported both to the referees prior to the game and league so that it can be monitored and addressed in an appropriate manner.

f. Any coach who, in the opinion of the Commissioner, based on all relevant circumstances including prior history, breaches the playing time requirements in order to obtain a competitive advantage, may be suspended or replaced during the season. Similarly, for any such breach of these rules the referees may, in their discretion, assess penalties for Unsportsmanlike Conduct against the offending coach and, if violations persist, eject the offending coach from the game.

VII. Timing

1. Games are played in two 20 minute halves on a continuous clock during each half separated by a five minute halftime. Other than when an injury occurs or the referees confer to discuss a ruling, the clock stops only for timeouts.
2. However, during the final two minutes of each half of the game, the clock will also stop when: (i) there is an incomplete pass, (ii) when a ball carrier runs out of bounds, (iii) when there is a change of possession, and (iv) during extra points. If a penalty occurs in the last two minutes **of either half**, the officials will stop the clock to call out the penalty. If the team that committed the penalty would benefit from the clock being

stopped, the clock will reset once the new LOS is set. If the team that committed the penalty would *not* benefit from the clock stopping, then the clock will start again on the next snap. If the clock would have been stopped **regardless** of the penalty, then the clock will remain stopped until the next snap, no matter who it benefits. A fumble **does not** stop the clock.

3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. The offensive team does not have to wait for the defensive team to get ready, it is the responsibility of the defensive team to be ready to defend the play when the ball is snapped.
4. Each team has one 30-second time out per half and one 60-second time out per half.
5. In addition to the reasons listed in item 1 above, officials can stop the clock at their discretion at any time during the game.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is off the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will be determined a tie. There is no overtime play during the regular season. In the playoffs, overtime is played "NCAA style," with each team getting an offensive possession until someone wins the game (i.e. there is no "sudden death" – if the first team with the ball scores the other team will have an opportunity to score as well). Each team will have one timeout per overtime period. During the first overtime period the ball will be spotted at 5-yard line (same spot if the offense were attempting a 1-point conversion). If after the end of the first overtime period (in which both teams had an offensive possession) the score remains tied then the second and subsequent overtime periods will commence with the ball spotted at the 50-yard line.

VIII. Scoring

1. Touchdown: **6 points**
2. PAT (Point-After Touchdown) – a team that scores a Touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a **1-point conversion** (from the 5-yard line) or a **2-point conversion** (from the 12-yard line).
 - a. A 1-point conversion can only be a pass play (since the play is in the No Run Zone). A 2-point conversion can be either a pass or run play.
 - ALL 1-point attempts are no run, *even if* a penalty puts the team more than 5 yards out of the end zone.
 - b. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a

charged time out.

- c. Interceptions on conversion attempts cannot be returned.
- d. Decision to go for 1 point or 2 points cannot be changed after a penalty has been assessed after the initial conversion.

3. Safety: 2 points

A safety occurs in the following instances:

- a. When the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. This can occur when, if any part of the ball is in the end zone, the flag is pulled by a defensive player, or the flag falls out, or the ball carrier steps out of bounds, or when the knee, arm at or above the elbow, or any part of the upper body makes contact with the ground, it is a safety.
- b. When there is an offensive penalty committed by a player in the end zone. An offensive penalty committed by a player outside the end zone while another offensive player is in his/her end zone with the ball during the play is not a safety.
- c. When the ball is fumbled by an offensive player in his or her own (defensive) end zone or out of the back or side of his or her own (defensive) end zone. (Example No. 1: the offense begins at its own five-yard line. The Quarterback takes the snap, retreats into his own end zone and then drops the ball. The play is immediately dead and it is a safety. But, example No. 2: an offensive player crosses midfield, is heading into the opposing team's end zone, but, at the 1 yard line – 1 yard from a touchdown – he or she drops the ball forward and it lands in the opposing team's end zone. There is no safety and no touchback. The play is immediately dead at the 1-yard line because all fumbles are dead plays as soon as a player begins to lose possession of the ball and then subsequently loses it. Thus, the offense retains possession.)
- d. When "intentional grounding" is committed in the end zone. (See intentional grounding section below).
- e. It is NOT a safety if the 7-second clock expires and the quarterback still has the ball (the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage).

IX. Coaches

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
2. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need for the first three regular season games. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball. Coaches may, of course, enter the field to address an injury or other emergency situation.
3. Coaches are also expected to follow the **78 Youth Sports** guidelines and procedures, register themselves as a coach in our registration system and complete a background check.
4. Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines. One coach shall be designated the head coach prior to the game. Only the designated head coach may interact with the referees during the game.
5. Parents may not interact with referees for any reason. Any parent who refuses to abide by this rule after a warning will be asked to leave the field. If that parent refuses to leave the field, the team for which the parent's child plays will forfeit the game.

X. Live Ball / Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the "neutral zone" and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on offense enters the neutral zone. If a defensive is in the neutral zone at the snap of the ball it is a penalty but the play will continue. Upon the conclusion of the play the offense will have the choice to accept the penalty or result of the play.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot lands in bounds before the second foot lands out of bounds (i.e. "one foot in").
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. However, the defense may call its own signals if it so chooses.
5. Substitutions may be made whenever there is a dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - 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. The ball carrier's knee or arm (from the elbow and up) hits the ground (if a ball carrier's hand touches the ground in an effort to balance the play will continue).
 - e. The ball carrier's flag falls out.
 - f. The receiver catches the ball while wearing only one flag.
 - g. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - h. A dead ball penalty is called on the offensive team by the referee – either Offsides, Illegal Motion or Delay of Game.
 - i. There is an inadvertent whistle.
8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle was blown.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
9. Fumbles: There are no fumble recoveries. The play is dead when a ball is fumbled and the ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground with a loss of down. However, a lateral may be intercepted by the defensive team and returned as an interception. A pass if dropped is an incomplection and if caught by the opposing team is an interception.
10. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should agree on any controversial call. If the ruling is correct the team will be charged a time out.

XI. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is at the moment the flag is pulled. When crossing the goal line for a touchdown (or midfield for a first down), only the ball (and it need be only a portion of the ball, not the entire ball) needs to break the plane of the goal line or first down line.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball beyond the line of scrimmage unless the ball has been released in any manner to, and is possessed by, another player first.

3. Direct handoffs, passes, and laterals behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs and laterals but **only** behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Handoffs to the center, commonly known as the “Center Sneak”, will no longer be allowed and the play will be called dead resulting in a loss of down.
4. “No-Run Zones,” located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones. Passes completed to a receiver behind the LOS are permitted in No-Run Zones, as are handoffs and laterals, but no ball carrier may cross the LOS unless the ball carrier received a pass (i.e. a forward pass must be thrown after a hand off or lateral). If a run play is performed in the no-run zone, the play will be called dead and resulting in a loss of down. If this occurs in the last two minutes of the half, the time will no be put back on the clock.
 - a. If a penalty backs a team out of the no run zone, the team *is* permitted to run again because they are more than 5 yards behind the first down line/endzone, *regardless* of if they were in the no run zone the previous play.
 - i. The only exception to this is on 1-pt conversion attempts, they are always no run even if a penalty backs the team out of the no run zone.
5. The player who takes the handoff or lateral can throw the ball from behind the LOS, but there may be only one forward pass per play, even if the pass is caught behind the LOS.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front or behind the quarterback, lateraled or passed, any and all defensive players may cross the LOS.
7. Runners may leave their feet to advance the ball assuming they are not charging. Diving, jumping and spinning are permitted.
8. No blocking is allowed at any time; however, basketball-type screens are permitted provided that the screening player is not moving at the time of the screen and does not extend his hands or arms. As in basketball, “moving picks” are not permitted.
9. Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, the offensive players are prohibited from running with the ball carrier, and should generally stop where they are. There shall be no convoys (i.e. running with the ball carrier).
10. Flag Obstruction – All jerseys **MUST** be tucked in before play begins, and flag belts must be wrapped up and also tucked in. To avoid a situation in which a flag

obstruction is called based upon a runner's jersey which is actually pulled out during the play or a flag belt which is pulled out of position during the play, referees are encouraged to throw a flag immediately after the ball is snapped upon noticing an offensive player either (i) has his or her jersey pulled out or (ii) has his or her flag belt out of position. If the player whose jersey is pulled out or whose belt is out of position does not possess the ball during the play, the referee will retrieve the flag and no penalty will be called. If, however, the player with the untucked jersey or out-of-position belt does possess the ball during the play, the flag obstruction penalty shall be marked from the moment the ball is possessed by such ball carrier. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered Flag Guarding.

XII. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage. If any part of the passer's body is over the LOS when the pass is thrown, it shall be a penalty. Once passer is beyond the LOS they are no longer able to complete a pass.
2. Passes may be received either behind or beyond the LOS
3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the LOS. Once the ball is handed off, lateraled or passed, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.
 - a. If the quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the LOS and the down is consumed. There is no safety.
 - b. The referee closest to the LOS shall call out "1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, etc." to apprise the quarterback of how much time is left to release the pass, hand-off, or lateral the ball.
4. If, in the rare circumstance, the QB's pass is tipped and the QB catches the ball again, it is considered a completed pass and the QB can now run with the ball, but he can *not* make another forward pass.

XIII. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off or lateraled behind the LOS).

2. Only one player is allowed in "motion" (defined hereafter) at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage or backward; no "motion" is permitted towards the line of scrimmage. To be in "motion" means movement that begins before the ball is snapped and continues as the ball is snapped. All "motion" must be sideways or backward.
3. Prior to the snap, one or more players may move or shift individually or simultaneously in any direction behind the line of scrimmage (even toward the LOS) provided that the players must completely stop the movement or shift for at least one second before the ball is snapped. (Examples: If two players start moving before the ball is snapped and they are still moving when the ball is snapped (regardless of direction), it is an Illegal Motion penalty. If one or more players are moving toward the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, it is an Illegal Motion penalty. If two players move (in any direction behind the line) prior to the snap but then both stop for a full second, it is a legal shift and not a penalty. If one player is moving sideways or backwards and the ball is snapped, it is legal motion and not a penalty. One additional note: if two players shift before the snap and one player stops for a full second and the other does not, it is a penalty for illegal motion.
4. A player cannot run out of bounds and then re-enter the field of play and make a reception, unless the ball has been tipped by a defensive player, or another offensive player first (Illegal Touching Penalty).
5. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
6. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the spot that the flag is pulled from the player intercepting the ball.
7. Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns.

XIV. Rushing Across the LOS

1. All players who will be rushers must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush. Players not rushing may defend on the line of scrimmage, but must be lined up outside the neutral zone at the snap.
2. Once the ball is handed off, lateraled or passed, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.

3. Every play, the referees will place a special “Blitz Cone” to designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

a. A legal rush is:

- Any rush that starts behind the Blitz Cone line.
- A rush from anywhere on the field, *after* the ball has been released in any matter by the quarterback.
- If any rusher leaves the Blitz Cone line early, he may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback, provided that he resets before the ball is snapped. If he is unable to reset prior to the snap, to avoid a penalty he cannot cross the LOS on that play until the ball is handed off, lateraled or passed, after which any and all defensive players may legally cross the LOS.

b. A penalty may be called if:

- Any rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff, lateral or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS; replay the down).
- Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Defensive Offsides (5 yards from LOS; replay the down); there is no “jumping back” on sides before the ball is snapped.
- Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line, crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed, lateraled or handed off – Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS; replay the down).
- An illegal rush penalty will only be called once the illegal rusher **crosses** the LOS. If a rusher leaves early but **does not cross the LOS**, or waits to cross the line of scrimmage until after the ball is lateraled or handed off, there is no penalty.

4. Players rushing a ball carrier attempting to pass may attempt to block the pass. However, NO contact can be made with the ball carrier in any way. Any such contact shall be a “Roughing the Passer” penalty even if the pass is tipped or

blocked. Blocking the pass and then striking the ball carrier will result in a Roughing the Passer penalty.

5. On pass plays, no offensive player is permitted to run and stop in front of the defense's oncoming rusher(s) intending to impede the rusher. If the referee observes a violation of this rule, it will result in an Impeding the Rusher penalty which is 10 yards from the LOS and loss of down. Note that receivers running pass patterns may inadvertently get in the way of the rusher (e.g. crossing patterns, patterns out of the backfield) and it is the responsibility of the Rusher to avoid these receivers. It shall be the judgment call of the referee whether the receiver is purposely impeding the Rusher.
6. A Sack occurs if the quarterback's flag(s) are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled.
7. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XV. 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 hold the ball carrier when pulling flags. If a defender goes for the flag but inadvertently holds the flag belt or clothing of the offensive player, and slows the offensive player down so other defenders can reach the offensive player, it will be considered an Illegal Flag Pull penalty.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time (Stripping penalty).
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately and the play ends. It is **not** a penalty if a receiver does not have flags, or if their flags fall off, they are just considered to be down, either:
 - a. Immediately upon possession of the ball by that player if the flag fell off prior to possession of the ball, or
 - b. At the spot where the flag falls off while that player is in possession of the ball.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball (also an Illegal Flag Pull penalty).

6. Flag Guarding is a penalty that is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by (i) stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm or shoulder, (ii) leaving the flag belt untucked and creating a "phantom flag", (iii) covering flags with the jersey, or (iv) diving to avoid having the flag pulled by a defender. A runner running in the open field away from other players will not be called for flag guarding. There must be intent to stop a flag pull. The normal running motion should not be penalized unless a defensive player is trying to grab a flag.

XVI. Formations

1. An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the Center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the one player in motion.
3. The center must snap the ball from the ground with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands. Once the center lifts the ball from the ground it must be snapped. If the center snaps the ball from the air, he/she shall be given a warning and the down will be replayed. If it happens again, that team will be assessed an Illegal Motion penalty. If the center double clutches when snapping the ball, it will be ruled Illegal Motion and a penalty shall be assessed, with no prior warning.

XVII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals! FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game. No taunting or trash talking.

3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. Failure to make an effort to avoid defenders shall constitute a Charging penalty.
5. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
6. Fans are required to keep fields safe, clean and kid-friendly
 - a. Fans and equipment (such as coolers, chairs and tents) must be at least two yards away from the sidelines and the end zones.
 - b. Stay off the field of play.
 - c. Throw away trash of yours and police the sidelines after every game.

XVIII. Penalties

1. The referees will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. If a penalty is designated a "Spot Foul," the loss of yardage is marked off from the spot on the field where the penalty occurred. Otherwise the loss of yardage is marked off from the LOS.
4. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. No one can challenge or argue judgment calls.
5. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties can be declined.
7. Unless otherwise indicated above, penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
8. Penalties that occur after a play is over (i.e. taunting or other unsportsmanlike conduct) will not invalidate the play. The penalty is assessed on the next play. If an offensive penalty occurs after a touchdown, the penalty shall be assessed, at the

defensive team's option, either on the offensive teams' conversion or on the defensive team's next possession. If a defensive penalty occurs after a touchdown, the offense has the option of taking the penalty on the conversion (half the distance to the goal line) or on the other team's next possession by placing the ball half the distance to the goal.

9. Illegal Motion. Offensive Offsides/False Starts and Delay of Game on the offense are Dead Ball Penalties and are the only penalties that result in an immediate stoppage of play. Defensive Offsides, an Illegal Rush or any other penalty does not result in a stoppage of play; a penalty flag is thrown and play continues. At the end of the play the officials inform the head coaches of the penalty and a decision is made to accept or decline the penalty.
10. If there are penalties on both teams during the same play, they are offset and the down is replayed from the original line of scrimmage.
11. In connection with any penalty against an offensive or defensive player which is assessed because of contact with an opposing player, where the opposing player is then taken out of the game for injury or assessment of his condition to continue, in addition to any penalty assessed the player or players committing the foul shall be removed from the game for so long as the opposing player is out of the game. This provision is in addition to the Referee's discretion, for unsportsmanlike conduct or reckless or intentionally dangerous play, to eject players from the game permanently. If the referees, in their discretion, determine that any player or coach is using this rule to obtain a competitive advantage, by simulating injury or otherwise, the referees may determine that the opposing player committing the penalty need not be removed and may assess a penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct on the player or the coach attempting to obtain competitive advantage.

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES:

1. Defensive Offsides (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, Replay Down)

- a. When a defensive player is on, across, or within 1 yard of the LOS, when the ball is snapped. The play is not dead and the offense can choose to decline the penalty, should the result of the play be more beneficial than the penalty.

- i. If the defense is within 1 yard from the line of scrimmage in the “neutral zone” it is an *encroachment* penalty, which is the same penalty as defensive offsides.
- 2. **Illegal Rush (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, Replay Down)**
 - a. When the rusher leaves the rush cone early and does not reset prior to the snap.
 - i. It is only a penalty should the rusher cross the line of scrimmage, if the rusher leaves early but never crosses, even if it is his/her intent to cross but the ball is passed before s/he crosses, it is not a penalty.
 - b. When a defensive player who was not lined up at or behind the rush cone prior to the snap crosses the line of scrimmage.
- 3. **Too Many Men on the Field (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, Replay Down)**
 - a. When the defense has more than 5 players on the field at anytime during the play.
- 4. **Illegal Substitution (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, Replay Down)**
 - a. When a defensive player enters the field of play after the ball has been snapped, even if s/he doesn’t have an impact on the play.
- 5. **Illegal Contact (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, Automatic 1st Down)**
 - a. When a defensive player grabs or holds a receiver prior to a pass being thrown, anywhere on the field.
- 6. **Illegal Flag Pull (5 Yard Penalty from the SPOT of the foul, Automatic 1st Down)**
 - a. When a defensive player grabs or holds an offensive player in order to have easier access to their flag.
 - b. When a defensive player misses the offensive player’s flag and *holds* his or her shorts, slowing the player down.
- 7. **Defensive Pass Interference (Ball is placed at the SPOT of the foul, Automatic 1st Down)**
 - a. When a defensive player interferes with an offensive player’s ability to catch the ball, without, in the referee’s opinion, the intent to make a play on the ball.
 - i. Defensive players have *as much* right to a ball as the offensive player does.

8. Roughing the Passer (10 Yards from the LOS, Automatic 1st Down)

- a. When any contact is made with the quarterback after the ball has been released.
- b. If, in the referee's opinion, the quarterback is tackled/roughed before the ball is released.
- c. Any contact to the quarterback's head is an automatic roughing the passer penalty.

9. Stripping (5 Yards from the SPOT of the foul, Automatic 1st Down)

- a. When a defensive player swats or knocks the ball out of an offensive player's hands.
 - i. If the quarterback is passing and the ball is blocked while it is leaving the QB's hands it is **not** a stripping penalty. It will be up to the judgment of the referee whether or not the ball was swatted/stripped or blocked.
- b. The penalty is assessed from the spot of the strip.

10. Tackling (10 Yards from the SPOT of the foul, Automatic 1st Down)

- a. When a player is tackled, shoved, or intentionally knocked to the ground in the field of play.
- b. The penalty is assessed from the spot of the tackle.

11. Tackling in the Clear (Automatic Touchdown & 2PT Conversion)

- a. When a tackling penalty occurs when a player has a "clear path" to the end zone (i.e. the player would have, **undoubtedly** scored if s/he hadn't been tackled.
 - i. It is the opinion of the referee's whether or not the offensive player would have scored had s/he had not been tackled, regardless of the speed or elusiveness of the player.
- b. If this penalty occurs, **8** points will be awarded to the offense.

12. Unnecessary Roughness or Taunting (10 Yards from the LOS or END OF THE PLAY, Automatic 1st Down)

- a. When, in the referee's judgment, a defensive player taunts or attacks a member of the offense.

- b. If the penalty occurs **before** the play, the ball is moved 10 yards up from the LOS and the offense is awarded an automatic 1st down, if this penalty occurs **during** or **after** the play, the ball is moved 10 yards up from the end of the play and the offense is awarded and automatic 1st down.

** If a distance penalty, enforced from a specific spot between the goal lines would place the ball more than half the distance to the defender's goal line, the penalty shall be half the distance from that spot to their goal line**

13. Defensive Holding (5 Yards from the LOS and will automatically result in a 1st Down)

- a. When any defensive player holds or blocks the path of, or otherwise impedes any offensive player who is not in possession of the ball.

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES:

1. Delay of Game (5 Yards from LOS, Replay Down)

- a. When the offense fails to snap the ball before the 30-second play clock expires.

2. Illegal Motion (5 Yards from LOS, Replay Down, DEAD BALL)

- a. When the offense has 2 or more players in motion at the time of the snap.
- b. When the offense has 1 or more players moving towards the LOS at the time of the snap.
- c. When the offense has 2 or more players in motion, and *both* of them do not come to a complete stop for at least 1 full second before the snap.
 - i. Even though the offense can have 1 player moving in motion at the snap, if 2 or more players are moving, **both** must come to a complete stop for at least 1 full second before the snap. After the complete stop has been made, then 1 player, no matter if it's the same or a different player, can be sent in motion and be moving at the time of the snap (provided s/he is not moving towards the LOS).
- d. When the center double clutches the snaps or snaps the ball from the air, instead of off of the ground.
- e. This is a **dead ball penalty**. This means, when this penalty occurs, the play

will immediately be blown dead by the referees and the penalty will be enforced.

3. Offensive Offsides/False Start (5 Yards from LOS, Replay Down, DEAD BALL)

- a. When an offensive player jumps across the LOS prior to the snap (false start).
- b. When an offensive player is lined up in front of the LOS and the ball is snapped.
- c. This is a **dead ball penalty**. This means, when this penalty occurs, the play will immediately be blown dead by the referees and the penalty will be enforced.

4. Charging (10 Yard Penalty from the SPOT of the foul, LOSS of down)

- a. When an offensive player runs into a defensive player that has been in a set position for at least 1 second, or stiff arms/knocks over a defender to get them out of the way.
- b. The penalty is enforced from the spot of the charge.

5. Illegal Forward Pass (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, LOSS of down)

- a. When the quarterback steps in front of the LOS with ANY PART of his or her foot and goes back behind the LOS, regardless of where the pass is released from (the quarter back can **not** jump back behind the line to release the ball to avoid the penalty).
- b. When there is more than **1** forward pass per play (This includes the rare circumstance when the ball is tipped and the QB regains possession, this is a reception and the QB cannot make another forward pass).

6. Illegal Screen/Block/Running With the Ball Carrier (5 Yard Penalty from the SPOT of the foul, LOSS of down)

- a. When an offensive player, after the ball has crossed the LOS:
 - i. Commits a moving pick in order to block defenders.
 - ii. Runs alongside the ball carrier in order to block defenders.
- b. The penalty is enforced from the SPOT of the block or from the spot the

offensive player began running with and blocking the ball carrier.

7. Impeding the Rusher (10 Yard Penalty from the LOS, LOSS of Down)

- a. When an offensive player deliberately runs into the oncoming rusher in order to allow his quarterback to have more time to pass the ball.
 - i. It will be up to the referee to determine whether the offensive player was attempting to block the rusher, or whether his/her route took him/her in the path of the rusher.

8. Flag Guarding (10 Yard Penalty from the SPOT of the foul, LOSS of Down)

- a. When an offensive player guards his flag from the defender in order to avoid his/her flag being pulled. This can be called when the offensive player:
 - i. Does not have his/her shirt tucked in properly prior to the snap, and the shirt covers the flag and makes it difficult for defenders to reach it.
 1. In the event that this does happen, if the defender reaches for the flag but instead grabs the offensive player's shirt, because it was untucked prior to the snap, it is a flag guarding penalty and not an illegal flag pull.
 - ii. Blocks his/her flag with their hand.
 - iii. Stiff-arms or grabs the arm of a defender trying to grab the flag.

9. Offensive Pass Interference (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, LOSS of Down)

- a. When a receiver interferes with a defensive player's ability to catch the ball, without, in the referee's opinion, the intent to make a play on the ball.
 - i. Defensive players have *as much* right to a ball as the offensive player does.

10. Intentional Grounding (5 Yard Penalty from the SPOT of the foul, LOSS of Down)

- a. When the QB throws a pass to *no intended receiver*, and the throw fails to reach the line of scrimmage.
- b. It is the referee's opinion whether or not the QB had an intended receiver.
- c. A throw to an intended receiver that DOES end up past the LOS, is **not**

intentional grounding.

- d. An attempt to stop the clock will not be considered intentional grounding. As long as the passer is not trying to avoid a loss.

11. Illegal Touching (5 Yard Penalty from the LOS, LOSS of Down)

- a. When a receiver runs out of bounds and comes back in bounds to make the reception.
- b. The only time this penalty is not called is in the case that a defensive player or another receiver tips the pass before the ineligible receiver touches it.

12. Unnecessary Roughness or Taunting (10 Yards from the LOS or END OF THE PLAY, Automatic 1st Down)

- a. When, in the referee's judgment, an offensive player taunts or attacks a member of the defense.
- b. If the penalty occurs **before** the play, the ball is moved 10 yards back from the LOS and the offense is awarded an automatic 1st down, if this penalty occurs **during** or **after** the play, the ball is moved 10 yards back from the end of the play.
- c. If Taunting or Unnecessary Roughness occurs **after a touchdown**, the defense has 2 options:
 - i. Enforce the 10-yard penalty on the extra point attempt.
 - ii. Start their next offensive drive 10 yards ahead.
 - 1. The offense must choose whether they are going for 1 or 2 points *before* the defense decides where they will enforce the penalty.

General Notes About Penalties:

- If a penalty is a *loss of down penalty*, that means that if a loss of down penalty is committed on 1st down, that does not mean that you lose 2nd down and it goes to 3rd down. It simply means that you will not get to replay 1st down even though a penalty was enforced.
- If a team crosses midfield to get the first down, but a penalty puts them back behind midfield, they will **not** get the first down. For example, if team A is on offense and team B is on defense, and the ball is spotted 3 yards before the first down line, and it is second down. Team A runs a short pass that is completed, but the receiver flag guards 3 yards past midfield, that is a 5 yard penalty, so the ball would then be spotted 2 yards *before* midfield and it would be 3rd down since it is a loss of down penalty.