



ARIZONA

**FLAG FOOTBALL
RULE BOOK
2022-2023**

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

The following are the approved rules for playing flag football in our league. Please familiarize yourself as a coach, parent, or other interested party with the rules. Take time to teach these rules to our players in the best manner possible so that we may continue to reduce conflict over rules during games.

The League Commissioner, or in his or her place, the Site Manager, or in his or her place, the Lead Referee, shall have and exercise final authority to interpret a rule or the application of a rule in any situation. This may also include the “overriding” of a referee on the field.

Further, the League Commissioner, or in his or her place, the Site Manager, or in his or her place, the Lead Referee may change or revise, without notice to the league and during a season or even during a game, a vague or poorly written rule.

Further, the League Commissioner, or in his or her place, the Site Manager, or in his or her place, the Lead Referee may write, publish, or establish, without notice to the league and during a season or even during a game, a rule that was not included in this list.

Further, any judgment call, which is a call that relies on the subjective declaration of the on field referee, is *supremum judicium* and is not subject to appeal or challenge.

PLAYER AGE ELIGIBILITY

The player’s age on August 1st of the current School Year shall determine the lowest or youngest division that player may play in.

No player, without express consent of the league prior to the season starting, may play down an age division.

THE RULES

SECTION ONE - **Terminology.** The following are some of, but not all, important terms used in the rules:

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.

Defense: The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

Dead Ball: Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.

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, arm or ball.

Inadvertent Whistle: Official’s whistle that is performed in error.

Lateral: A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier while behind 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.

Line-to-Gain: The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.

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.

Passer: The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may 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 flags or by blocking the pass.

Rush Line: An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the LOS.

Shovel Pass: A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward.

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.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: A rude, confrontational, violent, offensive behavior or language.

SECTION TWO – Elements of the Game. The following are various elements of the game that describe the flow and intention of the game in general.

1. Prior to the game, a referee shall inspect each team to ensure each player has a mouthguard, shorts with no pockets (or tape over the pockets), plastic cleats, and Gridiron approved flags that are securely fastened and have the flags pointed “out”. The referee shall ask each player to pull out their flags to ensure fairness.
2. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for a coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss. A coach from each team is invited to join in this opening event in the spirit of sportsmanship.
3. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. The team that did not start the game with the ball shall start the second half with the ball.
4. In a game at the 17u, 16u, 15u & 14u, levels, the offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (3) downs to achieve a first down, which is located at midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
5. In a game at the 6u, 8u, 10u & 12u levels, the offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to achieve a first down, which is located at midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
6. At all levels, if the offensive team fails to cross midfield and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5- yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield or achieve a first down by penalty, the opposing team will start its possession from the previous spot.
7. In a game at the 17u, 16u, 15u, & 14u, levels, if the offense fails to score after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
8. In a game at the 12u, 10u, 8u, and 6u level, if the offense fails to score after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its possession from the previous spot.
9. At all levels, on offense teams attempt to score by advancing the ball past the midfield and into the end zone for a touchdown. Or, on defense, teams attempt to stop the ball from being advanced by pulling the flag of the quarterback or other ball carrier. Teams may also attempt to stop the ball from being advanced by knocking down a pass or by intercepting a pass.
10. Every touchdown scored is followed by an attempt to convert a 1 or 2 point score.
11. There is no kicking of the ball at any point.
12. Physically tackling a player, blocking with any movement of the body or hands, stiff arming, or attempting to run over a player, is strictly prohibited and shall be assessed a penalty.
13. After halftime, the teams will advance the ball in the opposite direction than they did in the first half.
14. A game shall end after 40 minutes, or two 20 minute halves. The team with the most points is declared the winner. If the teams are tied at the end of the regular time period, an overtime shall declare the winner. No games shall end in a tie, unless the score is still tied after each team has had three opportunities to score.
15. No game or half will end on a defensive penalty. The offense shall be awarded an untimed down.
16. After the game, the teams shall line up at midfield, and in the spirit of sportsmanship, high five or fist bump the opposing team and exchange pleasantries. Disorderly conduct in the post-game line may result in a suspension the following game, or in extreme circumstances, multiple games, the rest of the season, some or all of next season, or indefinitely.

SECTION THREE – Equipment. The following is a description of the equipment used in a typical game.

1. **REQUIRED:** Each player must wear an official GRIDIRON FLAG belt while on the playing field. There are no other flags approved in this league. If a team or player has the wrong flags, GRIDIRON FLAGS are available for purchase or, in limited circumstances, for loan. If a player uses an unapproved set of flags after being warned by the referee, that player may be ejected. If multiple players from a team use unapproved flags after being warned by the referee, the referee has the discretion to call a forfeit by the offending team. Any tampering of the flag during the game may also qualify for an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
2. **NOTE:** Flags must be worn with the hasp facing out. Flags cannot be in the same color family as your uniform.
3. **REQUIRED:** Each player must have a mouthguard while on the playing field.
4. **REQUIRED:** Shorts, pants, or leggings that do not have pockets, or, that have pockets which are fully covered by tape.
5. **REQUIRED:** A shirt or uniform that reasonably resembles other members of the player's team. Uniforms are provided by the league or club. When that uniform is unavailable, then a reasonable replacement should be used to avoid confusion. Uniforms may not have offensive language printed on the front or back. The league owners or directors shall be the ultimate arbiter of whether a word or message is offensive. Players and Coaches are encouraged to consult with the league owners or directors if a word or message might be offensive.
6. **REQUIRED:** Players must wear shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
7. **REQUIRED:** Players must remove all jewelry
8. **REQUIRED:** Players must keep their uniforms tucked in and away from covering the flag hasp at all times. Consideration will be given to players with larger waists or ill-fitting uniforms, however, the referee may use his discretion to determine whether a uniform fitting presents an unfair advantage.
9. **REQUIRED:** No uncovered hard casts are permitted on the body of any player on the field. Soft casts are permitted.
10. **OPTIONAL:** Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed. Soft shell helmets are recommended
11. **Ball Size:** 8u and 6u - Pee Wee, 10u Pee Wee or Junior, 12u, 14u, 15u - Junior, 17u High School

SECTION FOUR – The field. The following is a brief description of the field and its role.

1. The field is a sacred place in football. It stands alone a place where preparation is rewarded and the failure to prepare is always exposed. Please treat our fields appropriately. Do not litter, spit, or dig up our fields. Do not intentionally erase lines, throw gum, or cigarette butts. Be sure to treat our cones and pylons with care, and ensure children in your care do the same.
2. **DIMENSIONS:** The field is approximately 25 - 30 yards by 65 - 70 yards including two 8-yard end zones.
3. **MARKINGS:** The end zone is normally marked with orange pylons. The midfield will be marked with an orange cone, boundary lines are painted or marked by cones when playing on a turf field
4. At the 17U, 16u, 15u, 14u, 12u, 10u, and 8u levels no-run zones precede each line-to gain (end zone/midfield) by 5 yards.
5. 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 end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
6. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

7. At the 6u level, no-runs zones are not applicable (though they may be “marked” for other games on that same field at a different time). 6u players can run after a handoff from anywhere on the field.
8. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

SECTION FIVE – Coaches, Teams, and Playing Time. The following is a brief description of our league’s perception of Coaches and how teams are organized and playing time is addressed in our league.

1. Teams in this league are either determined by the league assembling a group of similar aged players as free agents with a volunteer coach or come already as a pre formed team. The league takes great care with the assignment of free agents and the creation of schedules to ensure the fairest competition possible. Volunteer coaches are always needed and appreciated and may be eligible for a discount.
2. Playing time in this league is determined by the Coach of the team. Coaches are encouraged to distribute playing time in a fair and equitable way, and to consider whether the team is in a competitive division (generally described as the Red division) or a recreational division (generally described as White and Blue divisions). Players and parents are encouraged to discuss with Coaches concerns regarding playing time and make their best efforts to resolve those issues on their own. There are no guarantees of playing time.
3. If two teams have Jerseys that are too close in color scheme to differentiate between them the league will provide pennies for the Visiting team.
4. Teams must consist of at least five players.
5. Teams must start games with a minimum of four players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field but no fewer than four.
6. Coaches are expected to adhere to Gridiron Football philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct. Only two coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines. All team photographers, managers, position coaches, team moms, fans, etc., must remain a minimum of 5 yards off of the field.
7. Unreasonable behavior by Coaches or Spectators will not be tolerated. The league reserves the right to admonish coaches for unreasonable behavior with penalties, suspensions, forfeits, or in rare and unfortunate circumstances, expulsion from the league. Offensive language, volatile behavior, evidence of alcohol or drug influence while with athletes, threats of violence, violent acts, or any other inappropriate behavior by a Coach or spectator will not be tolerated by the league. Coaches who make disparaging comments about the league management or other teams or Coaches on social media or in person may also be disciplined.

SECTION SIX – Timing. The following is a description of the timing rules in this league.

1. Games are intended to be 40 minutes, with two 20 minute halves.
2. The game clock shall stop for timeouts. Each team shall have two 30 second timeouts for the entire game, to use at any time during the game.
3. When there is less than 2 minute left in the half and the score is within 8 points, the clock shall stop on all dead ball plays. This includes incomplete passes, when a player who has possession of the ball runs out of bounds, when a player unintentionally fumbles the ball and when the quarterback intentionally spikes the ball. *Exception:* The referee may use his discretion to determine whether the clock shall stop after a fumble if it is determined that the player intentionally fumbled the ball to gain an advantage unfairly, such as whether the player’s team is out of time outs and the player attempted an intentional fumble in place of a timeout.
4. In the second if one team gains a 28-point advantage, if the trailing team has a scoreless possession, the game will enter scrimmage mode. Once a game enters scrimmage mode, it will not return to normal play. The score shall be recorded at the time scrimmage mode began. The clock does not stop during scrimmage mode (including no time outs). During scrimmage mode, interceptions are a dead ball and there is no blitzing. Referees should use scrimmage mode to give additional information to players regarding penalties called. Referees should be prepared to end a game early if the spirit of scrimmage mode is violated to “run up the score” or if the trailing team appears emotional or volatile. Coaches should use scrimmage mode to provide playing time for

players who may be running low on playing time, to bring in back up quarterbacks, and to try new and unrehearsed plays.

5. Halftime is 5 minutes.
6. At the 16u, 14u, 12u, 10u, and 8u levels each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. At the discretion of the referee, teams may receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
7. At the 6u level, each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive a couple or few warnings, depending on the referee's feel of the flow of the game and the sophistication of the offending team, before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
8. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion but shall refrain from stopping the clock during a "hurry up" type of situation where the stoppage of the clock would unfairly prejudice the offense or unfairly advantage the defense.
9. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
10. A Coach must have a time out remaining to stop the clock to challenge or discuss a call. Coaches are advised that referees will not stop the clock under any circumstance to discuss a call without the Coach first calling a timeout. If the issue at hand is resolved in the favor of the complainant, the referee may, but is not required to, restore the timeout.
11. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner.
12. No game will end on a defensive penalty. The offense shall be awarded an untimed down. A defensive penalty may not be the immediate precursor to overtime.

SECTION SEVEN – Overtime. The following is a description of how overtime works in this league.

1. Overtime is intended to mirror, in most aspects, the college overtime, with emphasis on both teams getting an opportunity to possess the ball and both teams being required to stop the other team from scoring before being declared the winner.
2. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
3. There are no timeouts in overtime.
4. During the first overtime, the team starting on offense will have 4 downs from the 2 pt conversion line to score. After a score they can elect to go for a 1 or 2 pt conversion. The team going second in OT then has the same opportunity to equal or exceed the starting team's score.
5. Teams will alternate starts in the event that additional OT periods are needed
Interceptions during OT can be returned for points

SECTION EIGHT – Scoring. The following is a description of scoring and scoring related concepts in our league.

1. A touchdown, whether by pass, by run, or by interception during a non-extra point attempt, shall be worth 6 points.
2. After each touchdown scored, the scoring team shall elect either a 1 pt conversion from the 5 yard line, a 2 pt conversion from the 12 yard line.
3. Immediately, or within a reasonable time determined by the referee, the Coach of the scoring team must declare, by a loud voice or by a clear "1 or 2" indication using his or her fingers, whether they are attempting a 1pt or 2 pt conversion. The referee shall loudly repeat the choice and unless the Coach immediately disagrees with the assertion, the choice is made. Once a choice is made, the choice can only be changed with a timeout by the offense. A defensive timeout does not allow the offense to change its choice. A defensive penalty does not allow the choice to be changed without an accompanying timeout.
4. A 1 pt conversion from the 5 yard line is a "pass only" situation. Any penalty on the offense prior to the play or during it, shall result in a failed conversion attempt. Any penalty on the defense prior to the play or during it, combined with an unsuccessful result for the offense, shall result in

a retry of the conversion after marking the ball at half the distance to the goal (and so on if further defensive penalties ensue).

5. A 2 pt conversion from the 12 yard line is a “run or pass” situation. Any penalty on the offense prior to the play or during it, shall result in a failed conversion attempt. Any penalty on the defense prior to the play or during it, combined with an unsuccessful result for the offense, shall result in a retry of the conversion after marking the penalty. (and so on if further defensive penalties ensue).
6. A safety shall be worth 2 points.
7. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in the player’s own endzone. This includes having a flag pulled while the ball is still in the endzone. The ball carrier’s feet are not a factor in determining a safety. The placement of the ball is what determines whether a safety has been scored.
8. A safety may also be scored if the ball carrier steps out of bounds through their own endzone.
9. A safety may also be scored if the ball carrier’s flag drops out of their flag belt while the ball is still in the endzone.
10. A safety may also be scored if the ball carrier’s arm or knee or backside (or other body part that triggers the player down) touches the ground.
11. Points after touchdowns that are intercepted and returned to the opposite endzone are worth 2 pts, regardless of the amount of the conversion being attempted.
12. There are no points scored by kicking in this league.
13. Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.

SECTION NINE – Live ball and dead ball. The following is an explanation of when the ball is live and when the ball is dead.

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the referee whistles the ball dead.
2. The referee will whistle the ball dead if any player, whether on offense or defense, enters the neutral zone. The referee may, as a courtesy, assist players by identifying neutral zone infractions prior to the snap.
3. The referee will whistle a ball dead when the ball carrier’s flag is pulled or falls out or if the ball carrier receives the ball without both flags intact.
4. The referee will whistle a ball dead if the quarterback receives the ball from the center without both flags intact.
5. The referee will whistle a ball dead when the ball touches the ground, either by an incomplete pass or by a fumble (fumbles are NOT live balls, and cannot be recovered or advanced), including a fumbled snap.
6. The referee will whistle a ball dead when the ball carrier steps out of bounds.
7. The referee will whistle a ball dead if a score of any kind occurs.
8. The referee will whistle a ball dead if any part of the ball carrier’s body, except the ball carrier’s foot or hand, touches the ground.
9. The referee will whistle a ball dead if the ball, while still in the hand of the ball carrier, touches the ground.
10. The referee will whistle a ball dead if the referee counts to 7 before the quarterback releases the ball or before the ball carrier passes the line of scrimmage.
11. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
12. Any official can whistle the ball dead.
13. An inadvertent whistle, which is a whistle the referee *voluntarily admits* should not have been blown but was blown, is a dead ball. If an inadvertent whistle occurs the play will be called dead at that spot. The ball carrier’s team will have the option of taking the ball at the spot the ball was marked dead OR replay the down from the original LOS

SECTION TEN – Spotting the ball. The following shall describe how the ball is spotted in various situations.

1. The ball is spotted at the location of the ball carrier's front foot when the ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out.
2. The ball is spotted where the ball hit the ground on a fumbled snap or backwards fumble.
3. The ball is spotted where the player lost the ball if the ball is fumbled forward. There can be no score or advancement of the ball as a result of a fumbled ball.
4. The ball is spotted at the location of the ball when the ball carrier steps out of bounds.
5. The ball is spotted at the location of the receiver's foot if the receiver catches the ball with at least one foot in bounds and touching the field, but with some of the receiver's body outside of the plane of the field, including the hand or hands that caught the ball. *Exception:* The ball must cross the plane of the endzone in order to be a touchdown, regardless of where the feet of the receiver are located.
6. The ball is spotted at the opposing team's 5 yard line after a punt.
7. The ball is spotted at the offense's own 5 yard line to begin the game.
8. The ball is spotted at the previous spot should the offense "go for it" on fourth down prior to reaching midfield and fail.
9. At the 17u, 16u, 15u & 14u levels, should a team pass the midfield line and fail to score after 3 downs, the ball is spotted on the opposing team's 5 yard line, as though it were punted.
10. At all other levels, should a team pass the midfield line and fail to score after 4 downs, the ball will be spotted at the previous spot, but not closer to the endzone than the 5 yard line.
11. Interceptions in the endzone shall be spotted at the intercepting team's own 5 yard line.

SECTION ELEVEN – Running with the ball. The following shall describe rules reasonably associated with running the ball.

1. The center may not be the first player to touch the ball on a running play. This rule shall specifically forbid the "center sneak". The amount of time between the hike of the ball and the handoff to the center is irrelevant for this rule.
2. A lateral or backwards pass or toss (considered a run play), or other type of hand-off shall only occur behind the line of scrimmage. This rule shall specifically prohibit plays such as the "hook and ladder" or end of game laterally all over the field.
3. At the 17u, 16u, 15u, 14u, 12u, 10u, and 8u levels, the "no-run" zones that are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage "power-running" situations. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards prior to the midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards prior to the goal line to score a touchdown).
4. At the 6u level, there are not "no-run" zones.
5. A receiver that catches a backward pass behind the LOS may throw or run the ball.
6. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush/pass the line of scrimmage from any point on the field.
8. Jumping forward while possessing the ball is considered flag guarding. The referee has the discretion to determine what a jump is (such as resolving the conflict between a jump and large step or glide).
9. Diving with the ball is considered flag guarding. The referee has the express discretion between a dive and an attempt to reach forward to gain yardage or score and the result is a loss of balance forward.
10. An athletic spin or jump cut laterally is permitted and is not considered flag guarding.
11. A ball carrier who "runs into" a stationary or relatively stationary defender shall be penalized for charging. A ball carrier who spins or jump cuts into a stationary or relatively stationary defender shall be penalized for charging. (see definitions "Charging")

12. A ball carrier should make every effort to avoid contact with the defender. To this end, if a ball carrier jumps to avoid a fallen defender or falling defender, no flag guarding penalty shall be called.
13. Traditional football blocking is not allowed and is a penalty. A non-ball carriers may remain stationary and be used by the ball carrier as an obstacle for the defender to get around and to the advantage of the ball carrier.
14. Offensive players who do not possess the ball must stop immediately or as close to immediately as possible subject to the discretion of the referee after the ball carrier passes the line of scrimmage or after the ball is caught by the receiver.
15. Offensive players may not “run with” the ball-carrier. The referee may exercise discretion as to whether the player running with the ball carrier was so far out of the play that the running was inconsequential to the play. The referee may also take into account the age of the players or level of skill being displayed in the particular game.
16. The quarterback may not run unless he or she is rushed or “blitzed” by a defender or pursued in some other way All forward passes must originate from behind the line of scrimmage

SECTION TWELVE - **Passing**

1. All forward passes must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. A pass that goes forward, but lands on the ground behind the line of scrimmage, is an illegal forward pass. Thus, the quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack, but must throw it beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. Lateral or backward passes must originate and be received behind the line of scrimmage.
4. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
5. The quarterback must release the ball before the referee begins the word “7” of a loud and audible 7 second count. 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 line of scrimmage. **NOTE** In 17u,16u,15u and14u the pass play is dead if the QB does not pass the ball within 5seconds.
6. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second (or 5 second) clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
7. For purposes of a “roughing the passer” penalty, the referee shall consider the ball as an extension of the arm. This is to specifically say that if the ball is touched by the defender *while still in the hand* of the quarterback, it is the same as though the hand or arm of the quarterback has been touched, and a penalty shall be called.
8. An illegal forward pass penalty shall be called in the following two circumstances:
 - A. A pass that is thrown while any part of the quarterback’s *front* foot is past the line of scrimmage or “bean bag”.
 - B. A pass is thrown forward and received behind the line of scrimmage, or thrown forward and not received, but lands behind the line of scrimmage (see #3 of this section).

SECTION THIRTEEN – **Receiving.** The following describes rules reasonably related to receiving the ball.

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception. However, if the other foot is simultaneously touching the line or touching out of bounds, the pass shall be deemed incomplete.
3. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
4. A player who voluntarily and without contact leaves the playing field and comes back onto the field on the same play may not be the first player to touch or receive the ball on that play. This rule shall be applied to the sidelines and the endzone equally.

5. There is no hand checking in flag football. Hand checking, for the purposes of this rule, is an act that, in the judgment of the referee, allows a defender to gain an advantage over a receiver by slapping, holding, pushing, or otherwise impeding the hands, arms, or body at the line of scrimmage on the snap or, in certain circumstances, elsewhere on the field.

SECTION FOURTEEN – Rushing or blitzing the passer. The following describes the act of pressuring the quarterback legally.

1. All players who rush or blitz the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. (There is no rushing the passer in 6U or 7U Girls divisions)
2. Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
3. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.
4. A special marker, or the referee, will 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.
5. A penalty occurs when the rusher passes the rush line or is positioned passed the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or lateral or backward pass.
6. A penalty occurs when a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
7. A penalty occurs if the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump or pass the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, and that rusher continues on to pass the line of scrimmage. The rusher may reset behind the 7yd rush marker, and then legally rush the QB
8. Teams are not required to rush or blitz the quarterback.
9. Teams are not required to identify to rush or blitz the quarterback.
10. Rushers or blitzers are not required to start near the 7 yard marker. They must simply start behind it, essentially anywhere on the defensive side of the ball.
11. Rushers or blitzers may bat the ball down, but may not make contact with quarterback, especially above the waist. Reasonable contact with the quarterback made in a flag pulling attempt is allowed. Quarterbacks scrambling to make a pass are capable of flag guarding and should take care not to do that.
12. A sack occurs when the ball carrier's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The location of the ball is used to spot the ball or determine a safety.
13. Once the ball leaves the hands of the Quarterback (player taking the snap) all defensive players are eligible to cross the LOS. The ball must leave the hands of the QB. Fake handoffs are allowed.

SECTION FIFTEEN – Impeding the Rush. The following shall include the most comprehensive explanation of impeding the rush possible.

Impeding the rush is controversial enough to merit its own section in the rules, though it likely belongs in the previous section or solely in the penalties section.

1. The rusher/blitzer has a direct line to the quarterback as long as he or she starts one yard to the left or right of the 7 yard marker.
2. A moving receiver who makes actual contact with or appears to cause the rusher or blitzer to move off of this direct line without contact is guilty of impeding the rush.
3. A receiver may line up on the line of scrimmage and not move at all to avoid an impeding the rush call.
4. A player in motion behind the line of scrimmage can be guilty of impeding the rush.
5. A center running a “go” or “fly” route directly straight cannot impede the rush.

6. A quarterback can dissolve the rusher/blitzer's direct line by "rolling" out of an imaginary pocket, which is approximately 2 yards to the left or right of the center and extends infinitely behind the quarterback. Once the quarterback leaves the pocket, there cannot be an impeding the rush call. This is a timing and judgment call by the official.

SECTION SIXTEEN – **Flag pulling.**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders may 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 ball is located at the time the flag falls.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball. If a defensive player intentionally pulls the flags of a player who is not in possession of the ball, a penalty may be called.
6. 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 or the football itself.
7. When your defensive player pulls the flag, he/she must make every reasonable effort to drop the flag where it was pulled or hand it back to player. If the flag is thrown, he/she will receive an unsportsmanlike conduct flag.

SECTION SEVENTEEN - **Formations and Pre-snap motion.** The following shall describe the rules associated with formations and pre-snap motion.

1. Offenses 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. Up to four players may be in motion/shifting prior the snap of the ball, but at least 4 players must be set for at least one second prior to the snap of the ball. The player in motion, if any, may only move laterally or parallel to the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback may make reasonable movements with his head, clap his hands (once or multiple times), and slightly adjust his footing while initiating the snap without being called for a false start. Excessive movement, meant to draw off the rusher / blitz, may be considered, in rare occasions, as a false start on the quarterback.
4. No player may be in forward at the snap of the ball.
5. The center must snap the ball 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.

SECTION EIGHTEEN – **Penalties.** The following is a list of penalties and definitions when necessary and where appropriate.

1. In general, referees will call all penalties. The league director may assess a penalty in various circumstances (Coach or crowd unruliness, etc.).
2. Referees must distinguish, based on the age and skill level of the player and players in the game, between incidental contact and actual violations.
3. Penalties are distinguished between spot fouls and those assessed from the line of scrimmage. The referee will always identify the distinction to the Coach and players.
4. One Coach from the team may address the referee regarding penalties and calls. Players may not argue calls at any time. The Coach must have a timeout remaining to stop the clock and argue a call.

Otherwise, while the Coach may argue the call, the clock continues to roll. If the Coach is on offense, his or her play clock is running. If the Coach is on defense, the offense may start their play while the Coach is arguing. Once a successive play is run after a play in question, no change can be made to the play in question.

Judgment calls cannot be overturned.

5. Penalties are assessed live ball first and then dead ball next. Once the live ball penalty is assessed, then the play is over and a successive dead ball penalty can be applied.
6. Penalties are assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
7. DEFENSIVE SPOT FOULS:
 - a. Stripping – 10 yards and 1st down (regardless of whether the strip was successful)
 - b. Pass Interference - At the spot of the foul and Automatic First Down
8. OFFENSIVE SPOT FOULS:
 - a. Screening, blocking or running with the ball carrier – 10 yards and loss of down
 - b. Charging – 10 yards and loss of down
 - c. Flag Guarding – 10 yards and loss of down
9. DEFENSIVE PENALTIES ASSESSED FROM THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:
 - a. Unnecessary Roughness – 10 yards and 1st down
 - b. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 10 yards and 1st down
 - c. Roughing the Passer – 10 yards and 1st down
 - d. Offside – 5 yards and 1st down
 - e. Illegal Rush - 5 yards and 1st down
 - f. Illegal Flag Pull (player does not have the ball, must be deemed intentional to qualify as a penalty) – 5 yards and 1st down
 - h. Taunting (includes throwing flags) – 5 yards and 1st down
 - i. Holding – 5 yards and a 1st down
 - j. Hand checking – 5 yards and a 1st down
10. OFFENSIVE PENALTIES ASSESSED FROM THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE:
 - a. Unnecessary Roughness – 10 yards and loss of down
 - b. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 10 yards and loss of down
 - c. False Start – 5 yards Replay Down
 - d. Offsides- 5 yds loss of down
 - e. Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards and loss of down
 - f. Offensive Pass Interference (would include offensive hand checking) – 5 yards and loss of down
 - g. Illegal Motion – 5 yards and loss of down
 - h. Delay of Game – 5 yards and loss of down
 - i. Impeding the Rusher – 5 yards
 - j. Illegal procedure – 5 yards and loss of down

SECTION NINETEEN – General Behavior Guidelines. The following is the league's emphasis to create a family friendly environment and safe game for the players involved.

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player is eligible to be ejected from the game. If the penalty occurs late in the game, consideration for full or partial suspension from

the following game (this may carry over to the successive season) will be given. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals to the league will be considered. **This rule is published for the express intent to eliminate "foul play" from our league.**

2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. 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. Coaches and fans may also be subject to this rule. Coaches are encouraged to Coach with enthusiasm and not for personal achievement. Fans should cheer on players in a mature and healthy way.
3. Players who physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official will be subject to ejection or suspension or both. PARENTS may not address other parents, teams, refs, or opposing players in a negative, taunting, or confrontational way.
4. Remember, for safety concerns, ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid established defenders.
5. Remember, for safety concerns Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. Defenders may not mimic offensive calls. This is considered unsportsmanlike conduct.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
 - Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
 - **Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.**