



2026 Youth NFL FLAG Football Rule Book and Coaching Manual



LINCOLN
Parks and Recreation

www.teamsideline.com/lincolnne
www.nflflag.com



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NOTE: Rules specific to Lincoln Parks and Recreation are shaded.
New rules for 2026 are highlighted in Yellow.

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RULES



LINCOLN
Parks and Recreation

I Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss gets the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone they wish to defend. Teams may NOT choose to defer their choice to the second half. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. **The ball will be placed in the middle of the field to start every play. The ball may be moved toward the boundary by the referee if asked by the offense before the 'ready for play'. The ball may not be spotted less than 10-yards from either boundary.**
4. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
 - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield on three downs, and elects 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, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot the 4th down play ended.
 - b. Offensive teams MUST declare 4th down intent: "Play or Punt," when asked by the referee and prior to the "Ready for Play."
 - c. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - d. If the declaration is "Punt," the ball changes possession and be placed at the opposing team's 5-yard line, 1st down, with **NO** option to change the declaration.
 - e. If the offense failed to score after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts at its 5-yard line.
5. **ON-SIDE KICK -- In the SECOND half, a team that scores and is still BEHIND may choose to declare an onside kick. The ball will be placed at their own 5-yard line, and they will be given one (1) play to get a first down. If they fail, the opposing team takes over at the dead ball spot, first and goal from there.**
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, unsuccessful 4th downs, and unsuccessful "onside kicks" start at the offense's 5-yard line.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.



II Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) An imaginary line that extends the width of the field and runs through the point of the football. It indicates where teams can't cross until the play has begun.
Line-to-Gain	The line the offense must pass to get a first down to score.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage. Any player who is positioned seven yards of the line of scrimmage is eligible to rush.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball. The passer doesn't necessarily have to be the quarterback (who receives the snap).
Rusher	The defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass. Offensive players must steer clear of the rusher(s). When the ball is handed off, any defender may rush.
Downs (1-2-3-4)	A down is the period after the ball is snapped and the team is attempting to advance down the field. Teams have four downs to cross midfield. If they successfully cross midfield within four downs, then they have three downs to score a touchdown.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time when the ball and play is in motion. It's generally used in regard to penalties . Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play when the ball isn't in motion. Dead balls happen when the ball touches the ground, the ball-carrier's flag is pulled from their belt, the ball-carrier steps out of bounds, the ball-carrier's body – outside of their hands or feet – touches the ground, the pass is incomplete, the ball-carrier's flag falls out or the receiver has one or no flags when catching the ball.
No Run Zone	Zones are located five yards before each goal line and the midfield. If the ball is spotted within a no run zone, the offensive team must use a pass play to earn a 1 st down or a touchdown. The object is to eliminate power football in tight spaces.
Inadvertent Whistle	Official's whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This included lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-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. It is illegal and results in a penalty.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand, or by pushing the ball forward.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier. Laterals ARE permitted behind the line of scrimmage.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

III Eligibility

1. All players must register with Lincoln Parks and Recreation either online at www.teamsideline.com/lincolne or submit a registration/waiver form signed by a legal guardian or parent.
2. Players may play up one grade with parental permission. **Players may NOT play down a grade.**

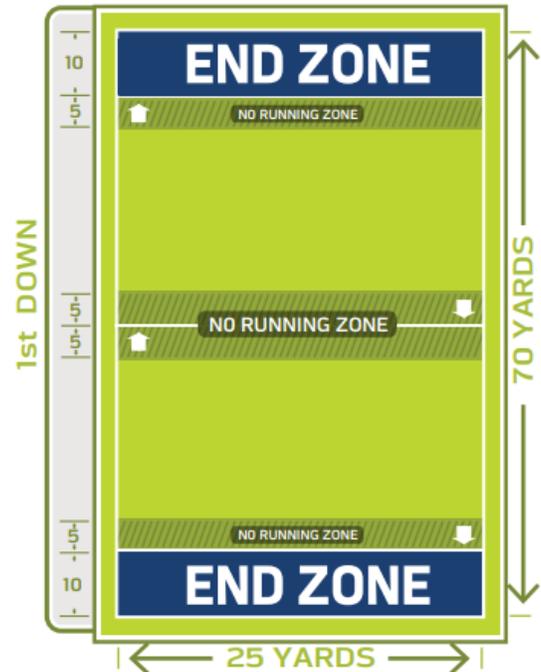
IV Equipment

1. The league provides each player with an official NFL FLAG flag belt and NFL FLAG team jersey. Teams will use game footballs provided by Lincoln Parks and Recreation.
 - a. Kindergarten-3rd grade will use the **peewee size ball**.
4th-8th grade will use the **junior size ball**.
2. All players **MUST** properly wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.
3. Players must wear shoes. Rubber/plastic cleats are allowed, however, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
4. Flag belt TONGUES may be adjusted and sized to fit the individual player. Trimming off the end TONGUE of the of the belt is permitted. The FLAGS themselves **MAY NOT** be altered or taped to the belt in any way.
5. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers, and they are allowed to wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are **NOT** permitted, and any casting material must be covered.
6. Players must remove all jewelry, hats, do-rags, hard-billed hats, or other equipment the officials deem hazardous. Winter beanies are allowed.
7. Players may wear soft shell helmets and sunglasses but they must be secured at ALL times while on the field.
8. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line. Official NFL FLAG jerseys must be worn during play.
9. It is recommended players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will NOT be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.
10. Flags and belts cannot match the color of players' shorts or pants.



V Field

1. The field dimensions are 25 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Running Zones are located five yards prior to the line to gain and five yards prior to the end zone in the offense's direction.
2. No-Running Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Running 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 those that begin with a handoff.



***K-1st and 2nd-3rd grade leagues only:* No-Running Zones are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.**

3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. 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).

VI Rosters

1. **Home** teams wear **dark** color jerseys. **Visiting** teams wear **light** color jerseys.
2. Teams consist of five players on the field at one time.
3. Teams must **field a minimum of four (4) players at all times.**

VII Timing

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. Clock stops only for timeouts, halftime, or after a touchdown. TOUCHDOWN CLOCK STOPPAGE: The clock will stop after a touchdown is scored. Once the ball is spotted for the extra point, the clock will start again. The official will signal and blow the whistle to designate the restarting of the clock.
2. Halftime is two (2) minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has one, 60-second timeout per half. Timeouts CANNOT be carried over to the second half.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game shall be declared a tie.
8. If a full contest cannot be completed due to weather, etc., an official game shall be considered one that has concluded at least the first half of play.



VIII Scoring

1. **TOUCHDOWN:** 6 points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown conversion)
 - a. 1-point PAT from 5-yard line PASS only
 - b. 2-point PAT from 10-yard line either RUN or PASS
 - c. 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 10-yard line). Any change once a decision is made to try for the extra point requires a charged timeout. A decision **CANNOT** be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions **CAN** be returned by the defense for 2 points.

K-1st and 2nd-3rd grade leagues only: No-Running Zones are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.

3. **SAFETY:** 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
 - b. 20-point difference or less: The team scoring the safety (defensive team) will get the 2 points and awarded possession of the ball at their own 5-yard line.
 - c. 21-point difference or more: A safety scored by a team ahead by 21 points or more will get the 2 points and the ball will be awarded to the team that is behind.
4. A player may only score 3 **offensive** touchdowns per game but not more than 2 per half. If a player scores more than twice in a half or three times in the game, the play will be called back to the original line of scrimmage and a loss of down will be assessed.
5. **INTERCEPTIONS** returned for scores during regular game play are worth six points, intercepted conversions returned for scores are worth two points.
6. **MERCY RULE:**
 - a. 21-point difference: After one team is ahead by 21 points or more, the trailing team receives **two** (2) offensive series to score starting from their own **5-yard line** before the team in the lead receives the ball on offense. If the score falls below a 21-point difference, the game returns to alternating possessions.
 - b. 28-point difference: After one team is ahead by 28 points or more, the trailing team receives **two** (2) offensive series to score starting at the **mid-field line**. If the team behind scores and the point differential is still 21 points or more, the team behind will still receive a second offensive series before the team ahead receives the ball on offense.

IX Coaching

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to Lincoln Parks and Recreation philosophies, coaching guidelines, and code of conduct.
2. 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 times.
3. Coaches are allowed on the field for all games.
 - a. Each team may have a maximum of **one (1)** coach on the field at any time.
 - b. All coaches (both offensive and defensive) **must stop coaching once the offensive line becomes set.**
 - c. All coaches must stay back a minimum of 15 yards from the line of scrimmage and not interfere (physically or verbally) with the play at any time.
4. All team photographers, managers, coaches, team parents, fans, etc., are required and must remain a minimum of 10 feet off the field in the designated league viewing area. Coaches, this is your responsibility to keep your fans and any other team-associated members in the designated area.
5. **Electronic communication of any kind is prohibited and will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.**



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 defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground in the field of play with possession.
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. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

7. Play is ruled “dead” when:

- a. The ball hits the ground. (If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground).

***K-1 leagues ONLY:* If the ball falls to or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled a “Do Over” with no loss of down, once per down. On a second consecutive occurrence, the down is consumed.**

- b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
- c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds
- d. A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
- e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
- f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
- g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- h. The seven (7) second clock expires.
- i. The offense runs an illegal play where the defense has no chance to gain possession of the ball (i.e. illegal forward pass).
- j. Inadvertent whistle: In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options: 1) Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed; 2) Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage. If on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.
- k. Ball-carrier leaves their feet diving or to hurdle a player.
(Exception: A player can dive to catch a pass or pull a flag.)

NOTE: There are no recoverable fumbles, and ground contact has to be made. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble. If the ball is fumbled forwards, then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession. Loss of possession is a DEAD BALL. **CLARIFICATION: Ground contact must be made for the play to be dead.**
“A fumble is loss of possession by a player resulting in the ball contacting the ground.”

8. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged, and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call, in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
9. Officials should all agree in order to change a call on the field that is in dispute.

XI Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offensive may use multiple handoffs.
Definition of a “Legal Handoff”- Total loss of possession directly from one offensive player to another.



4. The “center sneak” play is **NOT** allowed. The quarterback is not allowed to handoff to the center on the **FIRST** handoff of the play. The center may be involved in any other handoff during the play.
5. **Pitches, laterals, and backwards passes ARE permitted behind the line of scrimmage.**
6. No-Running Zones are located five (5) yards before each end zone and five (5) yards on either side of midfield are designated to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

K-1st and 2nd-3rd leagues only: No-Running Zones are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.

7. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
8. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated, and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
9. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. Runners may only leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
11. **NO** blocking, “screening” or **setting of picks** is allowed at any time.
12. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
13. Flag obstruction – All jerseys **MUST** be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XII Passing

1. All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and the ball out of the hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
 - a. There is no intentional grounding.
 - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
 - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a seven (7) 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 line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.

NOTE: If the quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS). This is **NOT** a safety.

 - a. If the quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
 - b. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.



XIII Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot or other body part inbounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start at the 5-yard line.
6. All interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversion attempts.



XIV Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Only two (2) players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.

***K-1st and 2nd-3rd leagues only:* Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless the quarterback releases the ball in the backfield.**

2. Once the ball is released by the quarterback, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven (7) 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:
 - i. Any rush from a point seven (7) yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been released by the quarterback.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is released by the quarterback before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offside (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and a first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the LOS and a first down).
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
 - ii. **Rushers must identify themselves by raising their hand pre-snap. Maximum of two (2) rushers per play. Any rush MUST be immediate by the rusher/s. NO delayed rushing permitted for safety concerns.**
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush 7-yard line before the snap but does not pass the line of scrimmage, they may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass, however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty. **The passer must have completely released the football for it to be batted down.**
5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. **If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.**
6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when the flag is pulled. 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 cannot dive, 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 play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. 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.
8. A runner is down if a defender pulls the excess of the flag belt or "tail." Tails should be tucked into shorts or wrapped around the belt to avoid this issue.



XVI Formations

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.
 - a. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap, as long as they are set for at least one (1) second before the ball is snapped.
 - b. One player at a time may go in motion one (1) yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - c. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. 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.
4. Shotgun/pistol snaps are permitted at every grade level.
 - a. A fumbled snap will be a loss of down and the ball spotted at the point of the fumble.
 - b. A fumbled snap in the end zone is a safety.



XVII Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the site supervisor or 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 will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
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.
3. Berating of officials by a coach, player, or parent is considered unsportsmanlike. Individuals could be ejected from the game or removed from the complex if the official or site supervisor deems it flagrant.
4. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official.
5. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
6. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players.
7. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
8. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - 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.
9. Any ejected player, coach, or spectator must leave the facility immediately and will not be permitted to play/coach/attend their team's next scheduled game.
10. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - a. Keep younger children and equipment such as coolers, chairs, and tents in the approved area and away from the field of play.
 - b. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
11. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense – 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down.

XVIII Penalties

General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls).
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
8. Spot fouls in the end zone. **Defensive** (ball on one-yard line, first down); **Offensive** (safety).

SUMMARY OF PENALTIES ON FOLLOWING PAGE

DEFENSIVE SPOT FOULS	Description	Yardage
Defensive pass interference	The player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball.	Automatic first down
Holding	The player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball.	5 yards & automatic first down
Stripping	A player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession.	5 yards & automatic first down
OFFENSIVE SPOT FOULS	Description	Yardage
Screening, blocking or running with the ball carrier	Player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent	- 5 yards & loss of down
Charging	The player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows	- 5 yards & loss of down
Flag guarding	The ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag	- 5 yards & loss of down
DEFENSIVE PENALTIES	Description	Yardage
Unnecessary roughness	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag of the opponent	10 yards & automatic first down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Examples include excessive celebration, abusive language, kicking an opponent	10 yards & automatic first down
Offside	A player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped	5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
Illegal rush	The rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage	5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
Illegal flag pull	A player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of ball	5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
Roughing the passer	A player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass	5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
Taunting	A type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams	5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
Illegal contact	A player makes contact and impedes a receiver prior to a forward pass being thrown	5 yards from the LOS & automatic first down
OFFENSIVE PENALTIES	Description	Yardage
Unnecessary roughness	Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent	- 10 yards & loss of down
Unsportsmanlike conduct	Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, kicking an opponent	- 10 yards & loss of down
Offside / false start	Player charges or moves in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped	- 5 yards & loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass	A player throws the ball once they are past the line of scrimmage	- 5 yards & loss of down
Pass interference	The eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball.	- 5 yards & loss of down
Additionally New for Spring 2026:	Offensive players may not screen, pick, or block defenders on passing plays. Offensive players must keep running their routes and may not stop, slow, or step into the path of a defender covering another receiver. If an offensive player takes away a defender's path, offensive pass interference is called.	
Illegal Motion	Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped or more than one player in motion at a time	- 5 yards & loss of down
Delay of Game	Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play	- 5 yards from LOS & loss of down
Impeding the rusher	The rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player	- 5 yards from LOS & loss of down
Illegal procedure	A technical rules violation, such as illegal formation	- 5 yards from LOS & loss of down

XIX Program Principles & Guidelines

If there is reasonable suspicion that a player has sustained a concussion or brain injury they must be removed from practice and games. Notification shall be made to the parents and the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Team Sports Office. The player shall not participate in games or practice until written clearance is provided by a licensed health care professional to the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Team Sports Office.

XX Coaching Tips

1. Coaching an NFL FLAG Football Team

As an NFL FLAG coach, your main goal should be to create a fun and safe learning environment for your players. Whether you are an experienced coach or a novice taking the reins of your first team, there are several things to keep in mind as you begin your NFL FLAG season. One of the fun parts of NFL FLAG is that the skills your players will practice and play with are just like those of their NFL heroes; passing, catching, defending, etc. The connection to the real-life game they see every week is one you should feel free to emphasize.

2. Everybody Plays

NFL FLAG games were designed specifically to make it easier for every player to have a role in a team's success. Your coaching should emphasize the "working together" aspect of the games.

3. Tackle Tackling Early

Don't let your practices dissolve into a giant pile of rambunctious kids. For both safety and sanity, make sure to discourage any tackling or roughness early on. Remind them they won't help their team in a game by tackling or being rough.

4. Sportsmanship Rules!

Help your players be good sports. After a game, shake hands with or do a cheer for the other team. Applaud good play by both sides. Treat officials with respect. While imitating you, your team won't even know it is being taught a good lesson.

5. Let Them Play Football!

While teaching football skills and strategies is important, keep your lessons as simple as possible. As your team grasps the basics, move on to more advanced ideas. Overloading young players with too much information too early can cause them only confusion . . . and you, headaches.

6. Have Fun!

We thank you for your volunteer service. NFL FLAG couldn't happen without you. We appreciate your hard work and strive to make this fun for you as well.

XXI Coaching Principles

1. General Youth Coaching Principles

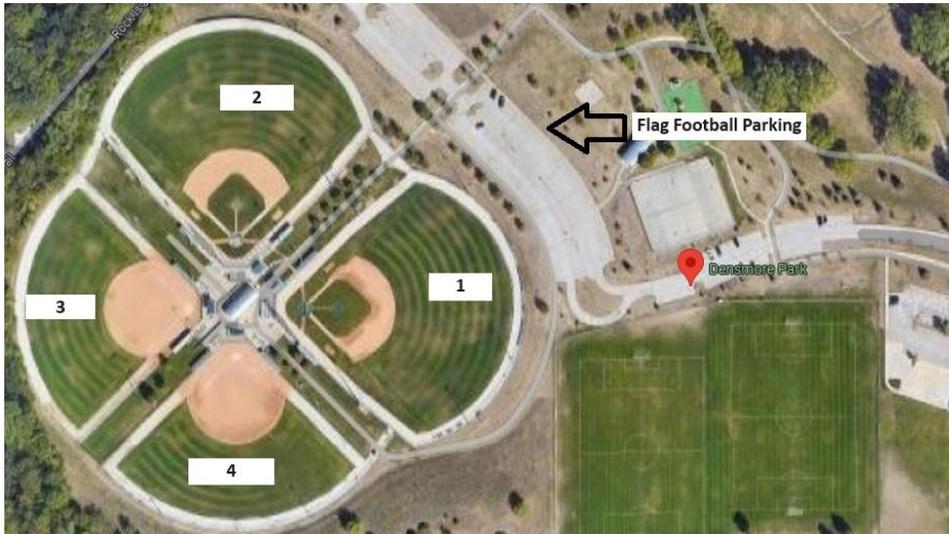
- a. Coaching is an extremely important responsibility. A good coach always places the best interest of a player before winning.
- b. The players and parents have placed you in a position of leadership and you have a responsibility to give them your best effort. Additionally, this football experience will play a significant factor in determining whether the players continue participating in football in the future.
- c. Coaching youth sports is a difficult job because some parents expect professional results from people who mostly are volunteers.
- d. If you follow the coaching guidelines and general principles below, the players and their parents will be better served.

2. Ten Coaching Guidelines

- a. **RESPECT THE GOLDEN RULE** Treat your players, their parents, and the officials in the same manner you want to be treated. That means no yelling, no sarcasm, and no embarrassing anyone in front of others. To gain respect, you must give respect.
- b. **BE EVERYONE'S COACH** As the saying goes, "there is no *I* in TEAM." Let everyone contribute. That goes for your own kids, too. If you coach your own child, be sure not to shine the light too bright or too low on them. Treat everyone the same.
- c. **APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANTS** No youth flag football coach can do it alone. Find a good assistant or two, give them responsibly and never stop thanking them.
- d. **FOCUS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS** Help your players master the flag football basics. Wins and losses come and go but you only get one chance to develop a player's skills. Don't waste that opportunity. And remind your players that hustle is a fundamental skill.
- e. **TEACH – AND ENFORCE – GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP** Spend time at practice and before games explaining to your team how to behave after a win or a loss. Good sportsmanship means no trash talking or taunting. Teach your players to develop a positive relationship with the officials. Have the courage to enforce sportsmanship if one of your players misbehaves. That's the key.
- f. **UNDERSTAND THE RULES OF THE GAME** Read the rulebook. Identify any special policies your league has adopted. You can't expect your players to know the rules if you do not.
- g. **HAVE A POSITIVE RAPPORT WITH THE OFFICIALS** Officials will not respond positively if you try to bully or intimidate them. Instead, act like an adult. Ask questions if necessary. Seek clarification if it's warranted. Set the right tone for your team by never arguing a call or disparaging an official.
- h. **PROMOTE FUN** Avoid getting too serious. Don't get crazy about winning. Make sure you smile. Above all else, make sure kids are having fun. If they aren't then you are doing something wrong.
- i. **BE PATIENT** Young players are going to make mistakes. They need the freedom to make mistakes. It's your job to help them learn from those mistakes. This takes time and patience.
- j. **TALK TO THE PARENTS AND UNDERSTAND THEIR GOALS** From the first practice, talk with the parents. Explain your coaching philosophy. If a parent has a particular concern, give them the opportunity to discuss it with you. Parents come to games to see their kids play. Make sure every player has the opportunity to make a contribution.

XXII Field Locations

1. Densmore Park



- Located off of 14th St. south of Old Cheney and north of Pine Lake Rd.
- There is a concession stand on site.
- Pets are **NOT** allowed in the complex.

2. Lewis Ball Fields



- Located at about 22nd St. and Capitol Parkway across from McDonald's and Lincoln High School.
- There is a concession stand on site.
- Pets are welcome in the complex but **NOT on the fields**. Pets will have to remain on the walkways and paths only.

XXIII Weather

Be sure that everyone on the team signs up for our text alert system. It's free and easy. Go to teamsideline.com/lincolnne, click on the "**Text Alert Sign Up**" icon at the top of the main page and follow the prompts to register. This is our main form of communication when games are canceled.

Game Rescheduling Policy:

The Team Sports Office **only reschedules games canceled due to weather**. We do **not** reschedule individual game/s when a team is unable to meet the minimum player requirement of **4 players**.

If you (the coach/es) know in advance that your team **cannot make a scheduled game**—due to a **school program, other conflict, or lack of players**—please **contact our office as soon as possible**. This allows us to try and find your opponent another matchup for that week.

1. Cold Weather

If the latest game of the evening is to start with a projected wind chill (real feel) of below 32 degrees by 3:00 p.m. of game day, **ALL** games that evening will not be played. Our plan is always to attempt to reschedule and play every game of the season.

2. Extreme Heat

We will refer to The National Weather Service website and follow the standards for the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) for extreme heat. We will cancel games if the WBGT number is 88 or greater at the beginning of game time. <http://www.weather.gov/oax/wbgt>

3. Rain, Thunderstorm Warnings, Lightning, and Tornado Warnings

It is difficult to predict the weather, especially when rain or inclement weather is forecasted for the evening. Lincoln Parks and Recreation cannot always cancel due to predictions but will in the case of warnings or ongoing lightning. The following are standard practices for NFL FLAG football. In all cases, an alert will be sent out.

a. Rain

1. If it rains between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. the field technicians will make the call if the field is too wet to play.
2. If it rains after 4:30 p.m. – when the Team Sports office closes: The site supervisor will make the decision when they arrive at the location. This decision may not be made until a half hour before the first game as that's when the supervisor arrives.

b. Thunderstorm Warnings

1. Thunderstorm warnings **between** 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. If the warning goes into effect during the time that the Team Sports office is open and it encompasses multiple game times, games will be rescheduled.
2. If the warning goes into effect **after** 4:30 p.m. or during the games players, coaches, and fans will be pulled off the field and a 30-minute delay could be implemented **or** the games could be canceled for the evening depending on the time of night and predicted duration of the storm.

c. Lightning

Lightning warnings that go into effect after 5:45 p.m. or during the playing of games: Lightning within 10 miles will mean that players, coaches, and fans could be pulled off the field and about a 30-minute delay could be implemented **or** the games could be canceled for the evening, depending on time of night and predicted duration of the storm.

d. Tornado Warnings

1. Tornado warnings between 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.: If a tornado warning goes into effect during the time that the Team Sports office is open and it encompasses multiple game times, games will be rescheduled.
2. If a tornado warning goes into effect after 4:30 p.m. or during the play of games: Players, coaches, and fans will be pulled off the field and games will be canceled for the evening.