

City of Fort Collins Adult Flag Football Rules

Updated March 2023. Rules changes will appear in *highlighted italics font*.

League Classifications and Information

1. **Open:** There are no gender requirements. Teams may play with any combination of players totaling a maximum of 8 on the field at a time.

Flag Football Rules

1. **Playing Field:** 72 yard field, divided into fourths (18 yards) to note first downs needed, with an 8 yard end zone. Total field length with end zones is 86 yards.
2. **Teams:** Each team may have a maximum of eight players on the field at a time. Rosters are unlimited.
3. **Timing:** *Each game will consist of two 20 minute running clock halves.*
 - a. *The clock will only stop on dead balls in the final two minuets of the second half.*
 - b. *Each team is allowed two 30 second timeouts per half. Unused timeouts do not roll over.*
4. **Captains:** Only one captain on the field may be designated to talk to the officials and to make decisions. Captains' first choice of any option shall be final. Each captain (three maximum per game) must participate in the pre-game conference with the officials.
5. **Equipment:** Team managers are responsible for checking in and out flag belts and scrimmage vests for their team at each game.
 - a. Hats with a brim of any kind are illegal.
 - b. Knee braces with no metal in front of the knee, are considered legal.
 - c. All clothing must be tucked in so that flags and belts are visible.
 - d. Close-toed athletic shoes are required. Tennis shoes and soft rubber or molded cleats are permitted as footgear.
 - i. Metal-cleats (football, golf, or track shoes, including metal tipped cleats), work or cowboy boots, or bare feet are illegal.
 - e. Pant trim, or shorts must contrast with the flags (flags are red, yellow, and blue). Multicolored or flowered apparel will not be permitted. Final judgment will be left to the game officials. If a player wears a "half-shirt", the shirt may not touch his flag belt.
 - f. Gloves are allowed providing they contain no metal, no padding, and no abrasive materials. All gloves and all pads shall be inspected by an official for legality and safety and approved/disapproved accordingly. (Items must be checked before each game.)
 - i. **Note:** No pads or padding below the elbow.
 - g. "Stickum" will be allowed in small amounts. It may not be applied directly to a ball and may not be used in excess. (A ball may be removed from the game for excessive "stickum".)
 - h. **Note:** Wedding rings and religious or medical medals will be allowed if properly covered with tape and declared safe by an official.
6. **Scoring:**
 - a. **Touchdown:** is worth 6 points.
 - b. **Point after Attempt:** Teams have the choice to go for 1 or 2 Points. An opportunity to score 1 point from the 3-yard line or 2 points from the 10-yard line shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown. While time is out, there shall be one scrimmage play, unless changed by penalty.
 - i. No kicks for field goals are allowed.

- ii. PAT's may be returned by the defense for 1 point.
 - c. **Safeties:** Are worth 2 points, plus the defense gets the ball on their 18-yard line.
 - i. If a snapped ball lands in the end zone, it is an automatic safety.
 - ii. A penalty committed by the offense in their own end zone will result in a safety.
7. **Overtime:** In the event the score is tied at the end of regulation the following tie breaker will be used:
- a. A coin flip will be used to determine the team with the choice of:
 - i. Start on offense or defense at the opponent's 18-yard line to start the first possession series.
 - ii. Which end of the field the overtime period will be played on (both teams will play towards the same end zone)
 - b. The loser of the toss will select from the remaining options.
 - c. Overtime will be played from the 18-yard line closest to the end zone selected to play towards.
 - d. Each team will have 4 downs to score unless a first down is gained by penalty enforcement or there is a change of possession.
 - i. *For the first two over time periods teams will have an option of attempting a 1 or 2 point try following a successful touchdown.*
 - e. Teams will alternate possessions until a winner is decided.
 - f. *If after the conclusion of the first overtime period (when both teams have had an opportunity on offense) the score is still tied, the loser of the coin toss will be given the same options the winning team had prior to the first period and another overtime period will be played.*
 - g. *If the score is still tied after the second overtime period teams will alternate 2 point tries until a winner is determined.*
 - h. *Change of possessions are live unless they do not have a bearing on the outcome of the game.*
 - i. *For example:*
 - 1. *If Team A failed to score during their offensive series and intercept a pass during their turn on defense, the play is live, and may be returned the length of the field for a score.*
 - 2. *If Team A scored during their offensive series and intercept a pass during their defensive series the play is dead, and the game is over.*
 - i. *Each team is allowed one 30 second timeout during overtime.*
 - i. *Timeouts from the second half do not roll over into overtime.*
 - ii. *Once a timeout is used a team may not request another no matter how many overtime periods are played.*
8. **Player Area:** All players on the sidelines must remain between the 18-yard lines and behind the line running parallel to the playing field.
9. **Ball becoming dead:**
- a. The ball is dead when it touches the ground.
 - i. Exception: A punt before it's touched and a center snap to the punter.
 - b. The ball is dead when a player in possession of the ball is deflagged.
 - i. All players are required to wear a flag belt with 3 flags hanging from it.
 - ii. Flag must be worn with one on each hip, and one down the back.
 - 1. In the case of an inadvertent detached flag:

- a. When a runner or receiver loses their flag either accidentally or inadvertently, play continues. The de-flagging occurs by a one-handed tag between the shoulders and knees.
 - b. On a pass play, if a potential receiver inadvertently loses their flag, then catches the ball, they may be de-flagged by a one-handed tag between the shoulders and knees.
 - c. If a defensive player is caught pulling the flag off an offensive player before receiving the ball, an unsportsmanlike penalty will be assessed.
 - d. Player legally de-flagged without the ball who then again becomes a legal ball carrier must be tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees.
10. **Diving:** *is legal to gain yards or attempt a flag pull, provided it does not violate any other rules.*
11. **Neutral Zone:** The neutral zone is from the forward point of the football, one yard to the defensive scrimmage line and extended to each sideline. It is established when the ball is ready for play. The official will mark the forward point of the football with an orange disc and step forward 1 yard and mark with a gold disc.
12. **Inadvertent Whistle:** The team in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle has the choice to accept the play at that spot (when whistle is blown) or to replay the down.
- a. If a whistle sounds when the ball is loose, the down must be replayed.
13. **Stance:** Players may use a 2, 3, or 4 point stance

Playing Rules – Offense

1. **Formation:** *Only 1 player must be on the line of scrimmage (at the snap).*
 - a. All offensive players must be within 15 yards of the ball at the time of the snap.
 - i. A player may not use the sideline to deceive the opposing team.
 1. **Penalty:** 5 yards from line of scrimmage, repeat the down.
2. **Snap:** each offensive down will begin with a snap.
 - a. *The ball must be stationary, on the ground, and thrown in one motion to a player at least 2 yards behind the offensive line of scrimmage.*
 - b. *Direct snaps are illegal.*
 - c. *The snap does not have to be between the legs.*
 - i. **Penalty:** Dead ball, 5 yards.
3. **Legal forward pass:**
 - a. All players are eligible to receive a pass.
 - b. Forward passes must be thrown from behind the offensive line of scrimmage.
 - c. The offensive team may only complete one forward pass per down.
 - i. Forward passes may not be thrown after a change of team possession.
4. **Catch:** A catch is completed when a player has firm control and at least 1 body part in bounds
 - a. No offensive player may screen block on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage on a pass play until after the pass is caught.
 - i. **Penalty:** *Offensive pass interference (10 yards from the previous spot).*
5. **Spinning:** is allowed however the ball carrier must maintain control of their body at all times.
6. **Lateral:** Any pass thrown overhand or underhand behind or parallel to the passer's sideline.

7. **Blocking:** The offensive screen block shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have their hands and arms at their side or behind the back. Any use of the arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive players screen block is illegal.
 - i. **Screen blocking fundamentals:** A player who screens shall not:
 1. When they are behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than a normal step from them.
 2. When a player assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with them.
 3. Take a position so close to a moving opponent that their opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing directions. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take a stationary position. This position will vary and may be one to two normal steps or strides from the opponent.
 4. After assuming a legal screening position move to maintain it, unless they move in the same direction and path as their opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, they have committed a personal foul.

Playing Rules – Defense

1. *Defensive players may line up anywhere on the field behind their line of scrimmage, outside of the neutral zone.*
2. The defense may rush the quarterback at any time after the snap, but must avoid contact with offensive blockers.

Kicking the ball

b. Punts:

- i. The offensive team is only required to announce it is punting on fourth down.
- ii. Neither the offensive and defensive teams may cross their line of scrimmage until the ball has been kicked.
- iii. The punter must kick the ball within 5 seconds of receiving the snap from center.
 1. Note: The ball is not dead when it touches the ground on a snap from center; kicker may pick it up off the ground.
- iv. An grounded, untouched punt may be advanced.
- v. **Fair catch:** Receivers of a punt must signal by extending arm overhead and waving.
 1. Kicking team must allow punt returner room to catch the ball.
- vi. **Ball kicked into end zone:** *any kicked ball that breaks the plane of the goal line is a touchback.*

Fouls and Penalties

1. All fouls will be have 5 or 10 yard penalties associated with them, unless otherwise noted in the rule.
2. **Illegal Blocking:** Not maintaining a block in accordance with the Screen Blocking rules listed in “Playing Rules – Offense, Rule 6 Blocking”
 - a. **Penalty:** Illegal Contact, 10 yards.
3. **Blocking and interlocked interference:** Teammates shall not grasp or encircle one another in any manner.
 - a. **Penalty:** Personal foul, 10 yards.

4. **Illegal use of hands or arms by the defense:** Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used to contact the opponent to gain an advantage.
 - a. **Penalty:** Personal foul, 10 yards.
5. **Illegal Contact:**
 - a. **Tackling:** An attempt to encircle the body of an opponent with hands or arms, thus impeding their progress.
 - i. **Penalty:** 10 yards.
 - b. No player shall contact a ball carrier for the purpose of knocking them out of bounds.
 - i. **Penalty:** 10 yards
 1. If the contact is judged to be excessive the referee may eject a player for illegal contact
 - c. Tackling or knocking runner out of bounds or any other means to prevent a score within the 18-yard line:
 - i. ball will be placed on the 1-yard line and a first down awarded.
 - ii. **Note:** Repeated violations inside 18-yard line may result in a touchdown being awarded and possible ejection.
 - d. **Flagrant impeding the runner:** will be enforced when a defensive player makes an attempt to stop a runner's forward momentum without attempting to de-flag the runner –
 - i. **Penalty:** 10 yards and possible ejection.
 - e. An offensive player may not run over a defensive player.
 - i. **Penalty:** 10 yard from the spot of the foul.
 - f. No player shall make an attempt to strike, strip, or hit a football in player possession.
 - i. **Penalty:** 10 yards.
6. **Clipping:** Running or driving into the back, or throwing or dropping the body across the back of the leg or legs of an opponent, or pushing an opponent in the back.
 - a. **Penalty:** 10 yards and possible ejection.
7. **Flag Guarding:** The ball carrier may not protect their flags by blocking with arms, hands or shoulder to stop an opponent from pulling or removing flags.
 - a. **Penalty:** 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
8. **Intentional grounding:** intentionally throwing the ball to an area of the field without a teammate who has a bonafide chance at catching the ball to conserve time or yardage
 - a. **Penalty:** 5 yards and loss of down from line of scrimmage.
 - i. Note: Grounding the ball immediately after receiving a snap, to stop time is not a penalty.
9. **Motion:** Any one player in the offensive backfield may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line at the time of the snap.
 - a. **Penalty:** 5 yards.
10. **Roughing the passer:** The defense may not make contact with a player in a passing posture or a player who has passed the ball but has not moved to participate in the play. Defensive players may not have any unnecessary physical contact with the passer.
 - a. **Penalty:** 10 yards from the succeeding spot and automatic 1st down.
11. **Hurdling:** An attempt by the ball carrier to jump over a defensive player who is standing or is on their hands and knees.
 - a. **Penalty:** 10 yards from the line of scrimmage.

12. **Delay of game:**

- a. The offense not snapping the ball within 25 seconds of the ready for play signal from the referee.
- b. Snapping the ball before a signal from the official.
 - i. **Penalty:** 5 yards from the previous spot.

13. **Referee Judgment:** The Head Referee will have the ability to use their judgement for any infraction not listed above.

Penalty Enforcement

1. The basic spot for a loose ball foul is the previous spot.
2. The basic spot for a foul that occurs during a run play is the end of the run.
3. All defensive fouls will be assessed from the basic spot, unless otherwise noted in the rule.
4. All offensive fouls will be assessed from the basic spot, unless the foul occurred behind the basic spot (all but one principle).
5. Any penalty that moves the ball more than half the distance to the goal, unless otherwise stated in the rules, will be placed only half the distance to the goal.