

Woodridge Park District

Indoor Youth Flag Football League Rules

Revised: 10/21/2024

All rules are subject to change anytime based on the League Coordinators' discretion.

Any rules not stated will go by the NFL Flag Football rule book.

GAME RULES

- Games will be played with a 7 v 7 player format.
 - Before the game, coaches can agree upon a decreased player format depending on the players present for the game.
- At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield with the coaches and referee for a coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The Away team calls the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. There is no option to defer.
 - Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense and teams will change direction.
- Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves and a 5-minute halftime. The clock stops only for timeouts, injuries and final minute of the game from dropped pass or out of bounce.
 - Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.
 - In the event of an injury, the clock will stop until the injured player is removed from the field of play.
 - Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- Play clock is 35 seconds. (Time from when the ball is spotted until when the ball must be snapped.) Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
 - The 1/2nd grade division will use a 40 second play clock.
- There is no overtime period. If the score is tied at the end of the game, the game will be considered complete.
- If a thrown ball hits the wall or netting, it will be considered an incomplete pass.

EQUIPMENT

- The Park District will provide each player with an official flag belt and NFL Flag team jersey. Teams will use footballs provided by the Park District for games.
 - Football Sizes:
 - 1st – 4th Grade: Pee Wee (Blue NFL Flag Football)
 - 5th – 8th Grade: Junior (Brown NFL Flag Football)
- Home teams wear the dark color jerseys. Away teams wear the light-colored jerseys.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
- We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
- Players can either wear gym shoes or cleats. However, cleats with exposed metal are NOT allowed and must be removed.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
- Players must remove all jewelry and hard billed hats. Winter beanies are allowed.
- Mouth guards are not required; however, it is strongly encouraged for all players to wear.

SCORING

- Touchdown: 6 points
- PAT (Point After Touchdown): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - 1-point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass
 - 1st/2nd Grade can run or pass for a 1-point PAT due to the "No Run Zone" being eliminated.**

- b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare either a 1- or 2-point PAT. Any change, once a decision is made and the ball is set by the referee, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
 - c. Interceptions returned for a score will result in 2 points
3. Safety: 2 points
- a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in their own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.
4. Mercy Rule: After a team is leading by 18 points (3 TDs) or more, the opposing team will automatically get the ball at midfield. Once the score is back under 18 points, normal play will continue. Coaches are strongly encouraged to replace or substitute out their best athletes from both the running back and quarterback positions and alter play calling in the spirit of sportsmanship and until the game becomes competitive.

Coaches

- 1. A Max of 2 coaches are allowed on the field to direct players during the game, but should stay back far enough to avoid the play.

OFFENSE

- 1. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has 4 plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has 4 plays to score a touchdown.
- 2. After 3 plays, if the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score (after already passing midfield), they may elect to “punt” or “play”.
 - a. **Punt**: There is no actual “punt”, instead the possession of the ball changes and the opposition will start their drive from its own 5-yard line.
 - b. **Play**: If offensive team fails to cross midfield or score (after already passing midfield), the possession of the ball changes and the opposition will start their drive from the spot where the play ended.
- 2. The center must snap the ball, starting from the ground, with a rapid and continuous motion either between his/her legs or to the side of his/her body to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.
 - a. Within the 1/2nd grade division, if the ball hits the ground during the snap, the offense will be allowed to redo the play without a loss of down.
- 3. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - a. **Motion Exception**: a player from the backfield may motion up to the line of scrimmage but must be set for 1-second prior to the snap of the ball.
- 4. Each offensive team will approach two, “no-run zones” in each drive. No run zones precede each end-zone and midfield by 5-yards. This is in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zone, teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays. This is eliminated for the 1/2nd grade division.

RUNNING

- 1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- 2. The quarterback (the player who receives the snap) cannot directly run with the ball.
- 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 offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. The “center sneak” play is **NOT** allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
 - b. Absolutely **NO laterals or pitches** of any kind.
- 4. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- 5. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- 6. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
 - a. If the referee determines that the ball-carrier deliberately runs through a defender, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be called.

7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
 - a. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
9. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
10. Offensive players in close proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
11. 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.

PASSING

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - a. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage are illegal forward passes.
 - b. 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 7-second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the 7-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.
 - 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.

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. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
3. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

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. Play rules "dead" when:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball hits the ground <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet are at the time of the fumble. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball-carrier's flag is pulled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball-carrier's flag falls out
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball-carrier steps out of bounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits the ground
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A touchdown, PAT or Safety is scored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 7-second pass clock expires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadvertent whistle - the team with possession has two options: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. For this to occur, a player must have possession of the ball at the time of the whistle. 2. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage. 	

DEFENSE

1. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions.
2. 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.
3. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
 - a. If the referee determines that the defender deliberately runs through the ball-carrier or another offensive player, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be called.
 - b. **ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**

RUSHING THE PASSER

1. "Blitzing" - All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 10 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Blitzing is **not** allowed within the 1/2nd grade division.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the 10-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. The referee will designate a rush line 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the referee on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point ten yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere after the ball has been handed off
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 10-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 handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the ball carrier.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped - off sides
 - ii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line or leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off- illegal rush
 - iii. All penalties are 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down for offensive team.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Making contact with the quarterback will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
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. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. 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.

FLAG PULLING

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot 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 flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

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 their jersey.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

1. If the field attendant 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. Referees have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player(s) or coach will be ejected from the game.
 - a. The referee does NOT have to issue a warning and they may eject the player/coach if they deem necessary.
3. Players and coaches may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or referee.
4. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship - no harassing players or referees, no profanity, and always compliment players on both teams.

PENALTIES

General

1. Coaches must respect the call made by the referee. No protests/challenges are allowed!
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 may not end on a defensive penalty.
 - a. If a penalty is called on the last play of the game, the offensive team will receive one untimed down to finish the game, unless the offense declines the penalty.
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.

Defensive Spot Fouls:

Automatic 1st down	+5 yards and automatic 1st down
Defensive pass interference	Holding & Stripping

Defensive Penalties:

+10 yards from LOS and automatic 1st down		+5 yards from LOS & automatic 1st down	
Defensive unnecessary roughness	Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	Offside	Illegal flag pull
		Illegal rush	Roughing the passer
		Taunting	

Offensive Spot Fouls:

-5 yards and loss of down		
Screening, blocking or running with the ball-carrier	Charging	Flag Guarding

Offensive Penalties:

-10 yards from LOS and loss of down	-5 yards from LOS and loss of down	
Offensive unnecessary roughness	Offside/false start	Delay of game
	Illegal forward pass	Impeding the rusher
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	Offensive pass interference	Illegal Procedure
	Illegal motion	

TERMINOLOGY

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.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field ten yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
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.
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.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
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 includes 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 their flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, arm or ball.
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.