



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES AND REGS



## YMCA OF METROPOLITAN DALLAS

The mission of the YMCA is to put Christian values into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

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**IMPORTANT: The following rules were written by NFL Flag. When you see the following marks \*\* This means YMCA has altered rules from the national NFL Flag. If your team is to play in any official NFL Flag sponsored event or tournament you will need to abide by NFL Flag rules.**

**Updated: 7/27/22**

## I. Game

1. Format: K-2<sup>nd</sup> = 5v5, 3<sup>rd</sup> and up = 7v7
  - ***Coach will play QB for Kindergarten. 1st - 8th grades will have a player play QB.***
2. At the start of each game, Teams will recite the YMCA Pledge. Afterwards, captains from both teams will conduct the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
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. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown. ***\*\*The table below does not apply to "downs"\*\****
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. ***\*\*YMCA Rule: teams will always start at the 5-yard line regardless of first down conversion rate\*\****
6. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

## II. Terminology

<b>Boundary Lines</b>	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
<b>Line of Scrimmage</b>	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
<b>Line-to-Gain</b>	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
<b>Rush Line</b>	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
<b>Offense</b>	The team with possession of the ball.
<b>Defense</b>	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
<b>Passer</b>	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
<b>Rusher</b>	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.
<b>Downs (1-2-3)</b>	The offensive team has three attempts or "downs" to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
<b>Live Ball</b>	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.
<b>Dead Ball</b>	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
<b>Whistle</b>	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.
<b>Inadvertent Whistle</b>	Official's whistle that is performed in error.
<b>Charging</b>	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.
<b>Flag Guarding</b>	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 or arm.
<b>Shovel Pass</b>	A legal pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage.
<b>Lateral</b>	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
<b>Unsportsmanlike Conduct</b>	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

### III. Eligibility

Must be a YMCA registered participant on a current season roster and wear the provided NFL flag uniform.

### IV. Equipment

1. The league provides each player with an official flag belt and NFL FLAG team jersey.
2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats may not be allowed at certain locations. This will be specified in the tournament details you receive prior to the tournament. However, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
3. **All players must wear a protective mouthpiece; there are no exceptions.**
4. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
5. Players must remove all jewelry, hats, and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
7. We recommend 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.
8. K-4th will play with the blue Pee Wee NFL Flag football. 5th and up will play with the brown Junior NFL Flag football.
  - a. Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.

## V. Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 60 yards or 30 yards by 70 yards. This will depend on the field availability for each YMCA. Most fields will be 30 yards by 70 yards. Each will have two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each line-to gain by 5 yards. However, some tournaments may use smaller fields because of field space available or to complete tournament scheduling on time.

2. 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.

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 must consist of at least four (k-2<sup>nd</sup>) and five (3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>) players to start the game.
3. Games are played 5v5 (k-2<sup>nd</sup>) and 7v7(3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>). In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with five players on the field but no less than four.

## **VII. Timing**

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. Clock stops only for timeouts or injuries.
2. Halftime is five minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds (45 seconds for K-2<sup>nd</sup>) to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has Two (2) 30-second timeouts per half. Time outs do not carry 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 then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. **No overtime for the regular season. See tournament rules.**

## **VIII. Scoring**

- Touchdown = 6 points
- Extra Points:
  - 5 yards out = 1 point (Pass ONLY Plays from the 5 yard attempt.)
  - 12 yards out = 2 points (Pass or Run Plays allowed from 12 yards out.)
- Safety = 2 points
  - Safety happens ONLY when one of these occur:
    - When ball carriers flag is pulled or flag falls out in their own end zone
    - Player goes down in their own end zone or steps out of bounds
    - Knee or arm touches the ground
    - A fumble occurs in the end zone
    - The ball is thrown out of the back or side of the end zone
    - Snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone

## **IX. Coaches**

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to YMCA/ NFL Flag philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct.

2. Number of coaches allowed on the field:

K-2<sup>nd</sup> = 1 coach offense and 1 coach defense

3<sup>rd</sup> and up = 1 coach offense and no coach defense

3. **Coach Conduct Policy:**

All coaches MUST adhere to the YMCA sportsmanship pledge. Any coach who does not adhere to the sportsmanship pledge or is verbally abusive to other coaches, players, spectators or officials will receive the following:

1st offense = Meeting with YMCA sports department/warning

2nd offense = 1 or 2 game suspension

3rd offense = Removal of coach from league for remainder of season or indefinitely.

Physical abuse of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in automatic removal from the league.

Note: The sports director reserves the right to skip to suspension or removal if conduct warrants.

## **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.

**Snaps Between the legs 3rd Grade and up, side snaps allowed in k-2nd Grade (Kinder can snap with or without QB exchange)**

2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. a. 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 inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.

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.



- The Quarterback may pick up an errant or dropped snap in the area where they are standing (one step max). If the quarterback takes more than one step to get the ball, the referee will mark it down. Snaps over the QB's head are returned to the spot and loss of down. This is up to the referee's discretion.
- 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 7 second pass clock expires. The Pass clock continues on a dropped snap.
- i. Inadvertent whistle.

**NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.**

8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:

- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

9. 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. Coaches must stay on the sideline/team huddle during this time. **No interference from coaches or spectators will be allowed. Official decision after this time is final.**

## **XI. Running**

1. The ball is spotted where ball is when the flag is pulled

2. **The QB may rush for positive yards only once the defensive rusher fully passes the line of scrimmage. Premature advancement will result in offensive penalty.** \*\*Official NFL Flag tournament will permit no rushing by the QB\*\*

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. "Center sneak" play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.

4. Absolutely NO pitches or laterals of any kind behind or in front of the line of scrimmage. Handoffs only.

5. No-run Zones 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. Teams are not allowed to run in these

zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. **QB can run while in this area if rushed by the defense.**

**\*\*Official NFL Flag tournament will permit no rushing by the QB\*\***

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.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
9. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
  - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
10. 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.
11. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
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. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage
2. Passes for Kinder will be defined as a forward pass 1 yard in front of the QB. Cannot be a direct handoff.
3. Passes for 1st-8th grade will be defined as a pass received beyond the line of scrimmage
4. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock" in grades 1<sup>st</sup> – 8th. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.
  - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the LOS.
  - b. If the QB throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated as an incomplete pass.
5. 15 second pass clock in grades Kinder. If the ball is not released the play will be blown dead with loss of down from the previous spot.
6. Interceptions change the possession of the ball. All interceptions may be returned. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.

7. If the interception occurs during an extra point and is returned to the opposite end zone, the play will be counted as a defensive 2 point conversion.

### **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 inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

### **XIV. Rushing the Passer**

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. **MAX OF TWO RUSHERS AT ONE TIME starting at 1st grade. No rushing the passer in Kider**
2. Once the ball is handed off all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line 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 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
- II. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
- 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 quarterback.

#### **b. A penalty may be called if:**

- I. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
- II. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5 yards from line of scrimmage and 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 line of scrimmage and first down).

#### **c. Special circumstances:**

- I. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
- II. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.

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 contacting the passer 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. 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.

## **XV. Flag Pulling**

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.

2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot 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 from a player who is not in possession of the ball.

6. Flag guarding is not allowed.

- I. 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.

## **XVI. Formations**

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center counts as one). A maximum of four players are allowed on the line. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.

- a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- b. 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.

**Snaps Between the legs 3rd Grade and up, side snaps allowed in k-2nd Grade (Kinder can snap with or without QB exchange)**

## **XVII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

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 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. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.

4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.

5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

6. 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.

7. Fans are required to keep fields safe, and kid friendly:

a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.

- 1) Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.
- 2) Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.

8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:

- a. Defense - +10 yards from 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 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. Penalty yardage
  - A. **All Offensive penalties will result in -5 yards and loss of down.**
  - B. **All defensive penalties will result in +5 yards and automatic first down.**
  - C. Spot Fouls will be assessed where the penalty took place.
    - a. Offense: screening/blocking, charging, flag guarding
    - b. Defense: Defensive pass interference, holding, stripping
  - D. **Unsportsmanlike penalties**
    - a. **Offensive will result in -10 yards and loss of down.**
    - b. **Defensive will result in +10 yards and automatic first down.**

## **XIX. Coach QB League - Kinder**

1. QB has 15 seconds throw or hand off
2. Coach may snap the ball without the center/QB exchange
3. No Rushing the Coach QB - Ball must be visible at all times
4. No fake handoffs or fake passes
5. No defensive player may pass the line of scrimmage until a handoff has been taken
6. QB cannot pass the Line of scrimmage at any time.