



ARLINGTON-MANSFIELD AREA

FLAG FOOTBALL RULEBOOK

Arlington–Mansfield Area YMCA Sports Rulebook

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1. Purpose of YMCA Sports

The YMCA sports program is designed to aid in the development and growth of kids. The YMCA is more than just buildings, athletic fields, or sports—it is an association of people united by loyalty to Jesus Christ, working together to build character and foster a positive society.

- Athletic skills and winning are important, but secondary.
- The ultimate goal is to mold future men and women by promoting physical, mental, and spiritual growth.

2. Arlington–Mansfield Area YMCA Mission Statement

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

3. Purpose of YMCA Volleyball

1. Build self-esteem
2. Teach physical skills, fitness, and health
3. Develop social skills and relationships
4. Strengthen and support family life
5. Encourage responsibility, decision-making, and leadership
6. Create a fun, enjoyable family activity

4. YMCA Pledge and Procedures

Before each game, teams line up mid-court, shoulder-to-shoulder. The referee leads the pledge:

YMCA Pledge

*"Win or lose, I pledge before God,
To play the game as well as I know how,
To obey the rules,
To be a good sport at all times,
And to improve myself
In spirit, mind, and body."*

After the pledge, referees give instructions before teams return to their benches.

5. Now You're a Coach

As a coach, you are your players' most important adult leader. **Your role is to help them have fun, learn skills, develop sportsmanship, and engage with YMCA values meaningfully.**

Coaching Responsibilities

1. Parent/Player Communication

- Contact parents and players directly.
- Conduct parent/player meetings.
- Recruit players if needed.

2. Practice Setup

- Set practice days, times, and locations.
- Explain discipline procedures for missed practices or behavior issues.
- Severe actions require **approval from the Sports Director**.
- Ensure players bring proper volleyball equipment (knee pads, water, ball, shoes).

3. **Player Engagement**

- Encourage good school grades.
- Ensure players wear clean uniforms for every game.
- Involve parents as volunteers (line judges, team parents, etc.).
- Verify roster accuracy and report corrections to the YMCA Sports Department.

4. **Practice Conduct**

- Get to know your players personally.
- Help them set personal and team goals.
- Teach volleyball skills, physical fitness, and teamwork.
- Enjoy yourself and ensure the players know it too.

5. **Game Day Responsibilities**

- Ensure players are present and prepared.
- Conduct pre-game warmups.
- Introduce yourself to the game official and opposing coach.
- Control your behavior, as well as that of your players and parents.
- Coach and encourage your team without officiating the game from the bench.

YMCA Coaching Philosophy

Youth coaching is about more than winning. Coaches are:

- **Leaders**
- **Role models**
- **Teachers**
- **Friends**

Key Coaching Principles

- Keep it simple: avoid overcomplicating strategies.
- Focus on fundamentals, especially with younger teams.
- Work with all players—skilled and less skilled alike.
- Teach **Fair Play**: respect for teammates, opponents, rules, and officials.
- Encourage individual growth and goal-setting.
- Keep winning in perspective: fun, fitness, leadership, and development come first.

Coaching Objectives

- Every player should be given opportunities to **learn and enjoy the game**.
- All players should be exposed to **appropriate challenges** and experience success before more advanced situations.
- Naturally gifted players may need additional challenges, but **every player must feel supported and valued**.
- Players learn best by **playing the game**—practice should include game-like situations.

6. Parents Need to Be Good Sports! (Spectator Code)

Arlington–Mansfield Area YMCA Spectator Code:

- 1. Children play for their enjoyment, not yours.**
- 2. Be respectful—avoid profanity or harassment of players, coaches, or officials.**

3. Applaud good plays from both teams.
4. Show respect for opponents—without them there would be no game.
5. Never ridicule a child for mistakes.
6. Respect officials' decisions.
7. Condemn violence in all forms.
8. Encourage fair play and adherence to the rules.

7. AMA YMCA Coaches Manual

Coaches Information

Every player should be given the opportunity to learn and enjoy the game, face challenges, and experience success before advancing.

Player Organization

- Teams formed by age and, when possible, honoring requests.
- Returning players placed first-come, first-served during regular registration.

Practices

- Selected at the coaches' meeting for the entire season.
- One YMCA facility practice per week allowed.
- Second weekly practice permitted, but must be scheduled by coach at non-YMCA site.
- Locations may include YMCA gyms, schools, or churches.

Games

- Typically held on Saturdays and weeknights (Monday-Thursday).
- Game schedule provides details for dates, times, and locations.

Inclement Weather Policy

- Games assumed to be played unless otherwise notified.
- Once started, cancellation decisions rest with the official or site coordinator.
- Half-completed games = full games.
- YMCA will reschedule one game per season if necessary (may occur mid-week).
- Coaches must inform parents of this policy.

Participant Responsibilities

- Players must register/pay through AMA YMCA (in person or online).
- No player may participate on two teams in the same age division.
- Absences allowed for legitimate reasons if communicated to coach.
- YMCA is not liable for injuries during practices or games.

Role Models and Good Sportsmanship

- YMCA promotes good sportsmanship and healthy lifestyles.
- Children must be guided by positive role models—both coaches and parents.

8. Youth Flag Football Rulebook

Position Descriptions

1. Quarterback

- **Role:** Captain of the offense
- **Responsibilities:**

- Calls the offensive plays and leads the team
- Stands behind the center to receive the football after the snap
- Has the option to hand off the football or pass it to a teammate

2. Center

- **Role:** Snaps the football to the QB
- **Snap Types:**
 - **Shotgun:** Tosses the ball between legs to the QB
 - **Direct:** Hand-off either between legs or side to side
- **Eligibility:** Can become an eligible receiver after the snap

3. Wide Receiver

- **Role:** Catches passes and runs with the ball

4. Defensive Backs

- **Responsibilities:**
 - Stop offensive players and attempt to intercept or gain possession of the football
 - Pull the flag of the player with the football

Minimum Number of Players

- Each team must provide the required number of players for their age group.
- If a team cannot field at least six players at the start of a game, they will forfeit.
- Forfeited games may be followed by a scrimmage, but the official score will record as a forfeit.
- No player should compete without proper registration with the Arlington-Mansfield Area YMCA.

Age Group Rules

5/6 Year Olds

- **Ball Size:** Pee-wee size (any brand)
- **Game Length:** Four (4) quarters of ten (10) minutes each (running clock)
- **Players per Team:** 7 on 7
- **Field Size:** 40 yards wide by 60 yards long (excluding end zones); minor adjustments may occur based on available field space
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:**
 - Spiking the football or aggressively throwing the flag constitutes a foul
 - Gestures to taunt opponents will result in a foul
- **Play Clock:** 35 seconds between plays
- **Substitutions:** Only on dead balls and timeouts

7/8 Year Olds

- **Ball Size:** Pee-wee size (any brand)
- **Game Length:** Four (4) quarters of twelve (12) minutes each (running clock)
- **Players per Team:** 7 on 7
- **Field Size:** 40 yards wide by 60 yards long (excluding end zones); minor adjustments may occur
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Same as above
- **Play Clock:** 30 seconds between plays
- **Substitutions:** Only on dead balls and timeouts

9/10 Year Olds

- **Ball Size:** Junior size (any brand)
- **Game Length:** Four (4) quarters of twelve (12) minutes each (running clock)

- **Players per Team:** 7 on 7
- **Field Size:** 40 yards wide by 80 yards long (excluding end zones); minor adjustments may occur
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Same as above
- **Play Clock:** 25 seconds between plays
- **Substitutions:** Only on dead balls and timeouts

9–12 Year Old Girls League

- **Ball Size:** Junior size (any brand)
- **Game Length:** Four (4) quarters of twelve (12) minutes each (running clock)
- **Players per Team:** 5 on 5
- **Field Size:** 40 yards wide by 60 yards long (excluding end zones); minor adjustments may occur
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Same as above
- **Play Clock:** 30 seconds between plays
- **Substitutions:** Only on dead balls and timeouts
- **Offensive Players:** Five total: one center, one quarterback, and three eligible receivers.

11/12 Year Olds & Older

- **Ball Size:** Junior size (any brand)
- **Game Length:** Four (4) quarters of twelve (12) minutes each (running clock)
- **Players per Team:** 7 on 7
- **Field Size:** 40 yards wide by 80 yards long (excluding end zones); minor adjustments may occur
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Same as above
- **Play Clock:** 25 seconds between plays
- **Substitutions:** Only on dead balls and timeouts

General Flag Football Rules

A. The Game and Players

- Flag football is a non-contact sport; incidental contact is allowed, but intentional contact is not permitted.
- Each game is played between two teams of seven (7) players for boys leagues and five (5) players for girls leagues.
- The visiting team calls the coin toss, with the winner choosing either offense or defense.
- Participants must play at least one (1) half of each game.

B. Field, Uniforms, and Equipment

- **Starting Position:** The ball is spotted at the 15-yard line at the start of the game, each new half, and following touchdowns or safeties. There are no kickoffs for the 5/6 & 7/8 age divisions and the girls' division.
- **Kickoffs:**
 - Required for the 9/10+ age divisions.
- **Ball Spotters:** Two spotters will be used: orange to indicate the ball's forward position and yellow for the defensive line.
- **Flag Belts:** Flag belts must be worn and visible at all times.
- **Uniform Colors:** Players' pants should be a different color from their flag belts to avoid confusion.
- **Coaches on Field:** One coach per team may be on the field; however, coaches are not allowed to touch players during play (two coaches are allowed for the 5/6 age division but must stay behind the numbers).
- **Game Ball:**
 - Ages 8 & under: Pee-wee size
 - Ages 9 & up: Junior size

- **Cleats:** Metal cleats are prohibited.
- **Hats:** Baseball caps with hard brims are not allowed for safety reasons.

C. Timing Rules

- Each team has two (2) timeouts per game, each lasting sixty (60) seconds.
- The clock runs continuously once the ball is snapped, stopping only for timeouts or injuries.

D. Series of Downs

- The offense must advance the ball to the next zone for a first down.
- First downs awarded due to penalties are an exception to this rule.

E. Scoring

- **Touchdowns:** 6 points
- **Extra Point Options:**
 - 1 point from the 3-yard line
 - 2 points from the 10-yard line
- **Safeties:** 2 points

F. Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes; however, they cannot catch their pass unless another player first touches it.
- A reception is valid with one foot in bounds.

G. Rushing

- The same player is not allowed to advance the ball past the line of scrimmage on two consecutive plays. While back-to-back running plays are allowed, a different player must carry the ball on each consecutive attempt.
- Spinning is allowed, but diving is not.
- Diving into the end zone without contact is a penalty during the extra-point attempt.
- **Deflagger may NOT leave his or her feet to deflag runner.**
- Defensive players should go for the flag belt ONLY.

H. Rushing Restrictions

- Runners are not allowed to use a stiff arm or guard their flags.
- Defensive players cannot deflag a player without possession, nor hold, push, or knock down the runner.

I. Snap Rules

- The snap must be continuous; either a shotgun or direct snap is acceptable.
- A minimum of four (4) (boys leagues) and three (3) (girls leagues) offensive players must be set on the line of scrimmage during the snap.

J. Forward Pass

- Only one forward pass per down is permitted, while backward passes can be thrown at any time.
- All players are eligible to receive passes.

K. Screen Blocking

- Legal, non-contact screen blocking is allowed.
- Blocking cannot involve extended arms or legs, as any illegal contact will be penalized.

L. Flag Belt & Deflagging

- Runners must not guard their flags while running.

- The ball is spotted at the location where the flag was pulled.
- The play is dead if a runner's flag belt falls off before gaining possession.

M. Rushing the Quarterback

- A maximum of three (3) players may rush the quarterback.
- Rushing players must start beyond the designated "No Rush Zone."

N. Roughing the Passer

- Contacting the passer's arm to block is considered roughing the passer.

O. Punts

- For ages 5/6 & 7/8 age divisions, the ball is moved twenty (20) yards on a punt (no kicking is allowed).
- The punt must be kicked and announced for ages 9/10+ divisions.

P. Ball Touches Ground

- Except for untouched punts or kickoffs, the ball is considered dead when it touches the ground.
- If the ball hits the ground during a kickoff, it remains a live ball, and the receiving team may scoop it and continue running. However, if a player from the kicking team touches the ball, it is declared dead at the contact spot.

Q. Basic Penalty Enforcement

- Most penalties incur a five-yard penalty, while unsportsmanlike conduct results in a ten-yard penalty.
- Offensive penalties result in a loss of down; defensive penalties result in an automatic first down.

R. Protests

- Judgment calls are not open for protest. Protests based on rule interpretation must be made before the next snap.

S. Inadvertent Whistle

- If the ball is loose, the down is replayed.

T. Sportsmanship

- Unsportsmanlike conduct is penalized with a ten-yard penalty; two such infractions result in an ejection.
- Coaches and parents are expected to adhere to a high standard of conduct.

9. Conduct & Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary Actions

The YMCA recognizes that coaches may need to discipline players for disruptive behavior during practices or games, as well as for missed practices. If a coach chooses to discipline a player, the following steps must be followed:

1. Obtain approval from the Sports Director.
2. Discuss the situation with the player's parents.
3. Notify the opposing coach before the start of the game.
4. Disciplinary actions apply to **one game only**; each offense requires separate approval.

Note: Discipline should address ongoing disruptive behavior, not isolated or unavoidable incidents. At the coach's discretion, players arriving late may lose the opportunity to play at least half the game.

Ejections

In the event of an ejection (player, coach, or fan), the head coach must notify the Sports Director within **48 hours**. Failure to do so may result in further action against the head coach.

Penalties for Ejection:

- The ejected individual will be placed on probation for the remainder of the season and receive a **one-game suspension**.
- Depending on the severity of the offense, a **second ejection may result in suspension for the rest of the season**.
- The YMCA will **not issue refunds** for any player, coach, or fan ejected from a game or for those involved in a suspended game or season.

Conduct

- Unsportsmanlike conduct from team members, coaches, or spectators will not be tolerated. This includes actions such as **arguing with the official**.
- Coaches are **responsible for the behavior of their spectators**.
- No unsportsmanlike behavior will be allowed at any time, as determined by the game official or a YMCA representative.

Examples of Unsportsmanlike Conduct:

- Intentionally distracting the server or any player attempting to play the ball.
- Repeated violations of the same rule.

Consequences:

- Unsportsmanlike acts will result in a **loss of serve**.
- Repeated offenses may lead to **ejection from the game**.
- If a player is ejected and refuses to leave the court, this may result in the **forfeiture of the game**.

End of Game Procedure:

- At the end of each set, teams must line up on the end lines until the referee signals for them to come to the net to switch sides or shake hands.

Rule Default:

- Rules not explicitly covered in this document will default to **NFHS Rules**.

10. First Aid

- Coaches and parents are responsible for providing first aid to their team and children. However, a staff member trained in First Aid will be available to assist.
- **Open sores or lesions** must be covered before participating in the game.
- A player with an **open wound** will not be allowed to participate until proper treatment is administered.
- If treatment can be completed **reasonably**, the player may re-enter the game. The official will determine what is considered reasonable.