



5 v. 5 Flag Football Rules (Celina Parks and Recreation -- Fall 2023, v1.0)

In this game, the offensive team plays for a first down at midfield and a touchdown in the end zone. The offensive team cannot use a running play when the line of scrimmage is in an effective “no-running zone.” (Please review playing field diagram in back of rulebook for more info.) The defensive team grabs flags to make “tackles.” Starting in 5th grade division, the rules change slightly: see the 5th- specific section at the end.

The Basics

- Coinflip determines who picks first between BALL or SIDE. The team that chooses SIDE in the first half will have possession to start the second half. Teams switch direction at halftime.
- The Offense takes possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. If team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- If Offense crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its own 5-yard line.
- Possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense’s 5-yard line. Interceptions may be run back. The ball is spotted at the end of the run-back.
- There is NO kicking/punting.
- JERSEYS – teams do not need to have 2 different jerseys. In the event that opposing teams have similar color jerseys, the team listed as “home” will wear light color and team listed as “away” will wear dark color. Mesh cover jerseys will be available at concession stand

Game Ball

- Kinder – 4th = Wilson “K2” ball (or any peewee ball that’s close in comparison)
- 5th / 6th = Wilson TDJ (or any ball of similar size)
- Offense may choose to use a ball larger than the size listed, but not smaller

Flag Belts

- League will provide all teams’ flags at beginning of season.
- Teams are responsible for bringing their flags each week.
- Flag belts must be the provided Triple Threat brand.

Players

- Teams must have a minimum of four players on the field at all times
- Max of five players on the field.
- Teams are formed and placed in divisions based on grade level
 - Players may play up

- Players may play on 2 teams only if in separate grade divisions (for the purpose of having a team make, typically in an older division)

Coaching

- Max of 3 coaches/adults on sideline (4 for kindergarten only)
 - Must be on roster turned in to league
 - Must pass background check
 - Head coach, referee, or site admin to monitor/correct
 - Sidelines coaches must always stay on their team's side of midfield line. Team sidelines are for rostered/designated coaches only.
- Offensive coach must be behind deepest offensive player and minimum of 5 yards behind quarterback once the huddle has broken
 - there is to be no talking by the on-field coach once the ball is snapped
 - after one official warning, referee may restrict offensive coach to sideline for remainder of the game
 - exception: kinder divisions – coach can still talk after snap
 - **5th**: no coaches on the field; must stay on sideline
- Defensive coach must be behind the deepest safety and remain ahead of play
 - **Kindergarten**: Up to 2 coaches on the field
 - **1st – 4th**: One coach per team is allowed on the playing field during the game. Must stay out of the play at all time (typically freezing)
 - there is to be no talking by the on-field coach once the ball is snapped
 - after one official warning, referee may restrict defensive coach to sideline for remainder of the game
 - exception: kinder divisions – coach can still talk after snap
 - **5th**: no coaches on the field; must stay on sideline

Attire

- Team uniform must have number on back
- Shorts must allow for the flags to be visible (and not blend in)
- No pockets on shorts. No taping of pockets
- Cleats are allowed, except for metal spikes.
- All players MUST wear a protective mouthpiece; there are no exceptions.
- Jerseys are to be tucked in at all times during play.
- Baseball hats are not allowed.
- No jewelry is allowed (necklaces, bracelets, etc.) unless approved by League Director prior to the game.

- Casts – players may play with casts, if the following conditions are met:
 - Cast must be fully wrapped in soft padding
 - Parents must sign release form before each game in which player plays with cast. Contact Jeff Davis for that sheet to be signed on gameday

Timing/Overtime

Games are played in two 20-minute halves with a running clock. The only actions that stop the game clock are a Coaches' time out, an Official's time out, or a delay of game penalty (*introduced in 2017*). Clock will always restart on the next snap.

- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has two 60-second time outs per half. Unused TOs do not carry over.
- Halftime is 5 minutes long.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion (injuries, ejections, etc)
- *There is no overtime in the regular season – only postseason tournament.*

Bad Weather

In the event of bad weather on game day, officials and site administrators will make the final decision about playability of the fields and safety of the players. For 2019, league may, for example, cancel 9am games and keep all other games "on as scheduled" to reevaluate weather and field conditions.

If games are cancelled for the day once games have started:

- Games must reach halftime for the score to be recorded
 - If the first half has any time remaining, no matter how lopsided the score may be, the game will be treated as though it didn't happen and will be rescheduled
- If the game is called after the 1st half has ended, the score will be recorded as it stands at the time the game is called.
- **PLAYOFF GAMES SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN THEIR ENTIRETY**

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra point (PAT): 1 point (played from 5-yard line*) or 2 points (played from 10-yard line)
- PAT returned by defense 2 points (and possession)
- Safety: 2 points (and possession)
- Forfeits: Any forfeit will be scored as 15 – 0

* Extra point attempt from 5-yard line must be a passing play because of no-run zone. (This is not applicable for kindergarten division, who can always run the ball)

“QUARTERBACK” DEFINED

- The offensive player who first has possession of the ball after the snap.
- Not necessarily the player lined up behind the center.

Running

- The quarterback CANNOT directly run the ball past the line of scrimmage after receiving the snap (no QB sneak); however, beginning 2019, the QB will be able to run if the defense crosses the Line of Scrimmage (LOS). See section below for further explanation
- **“No-running zones” located five yards from each end zone and five yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations to get a 1st down or a touchdown.**
 - No-run zones are only activated when *approaching* the line-to-gain.
 - If the offense gets a first down and is then penalized yards that moves them behind the midfield line, they are not considered in no-run zone.
 - **NOT APPLICABLE TO THE KINDERGARTEN DIVISION –**
kindergarten teams may run the ball every play
- The player who takes a handoff from the QB can still throw a legal forward pass if that player does not cross the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball leaves QB’s hands, all defense players are eligible to rush.
- There is no hurdling or diving, particularly while in possession of the ball – no exceptions. (Defensive players may leave their feet to attempt to pull a flag. Excessive contact penalties can still be called if they dive into the ball carrier.)
- Spotting the ball – where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- *Laterals are allowed*
- If the ball carrier’s flag falls off at any time, the play is dead at that spot.
- **Center Sneak Rule** - When the ball is snapped, to hand the ball back to the center, the QB must reach ball around the center’s body or the center can reach back to get the ball. Handoffs back between the center’s legs are NOT allowed.

Quarterback Running Rule (new for 2019)

- this applies for all divisions 1st grade – 6th grade (no kindergarten)
- if and only if the Defense crosses the LOS, the QB (as defined in our rules) will be allowed to cross the LOS as a runner looking to gain positive yards
 - doesn’t matter if it’s the 7-yard defensive rusher (explained in a later section), or an illegal defensive rush
 - if there is an illegal defensive rush, then it’s a live ball penalty and the offense will get to choose between the result of the play OR 5 yards from the previous LOS and replay the down
 - if the QB runs with the ball and the defense did not cross the LOS, then it’s a 5 yard penalty from previous spot and a loss-of-down
- this rule does apply even on pass-only plays from the no-run zone
 - exception: only the QB (as defined by league rules) is eligible to run the ball across the LOS if the appropriate trigger takes places
 - if the ball is handed off in the no-run zone, then the offense loses the ability to have the QB run if the defense crosses the LOS

- Per league rules, any defensive player can cross the LOS once the ball leaves the QB's hands.
- QB-run rule also applies to the 5th/6th division which is otherwise pass-only

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only 1 offensive player may be in motion when ball is snapped.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- If the player's flag falls off while the player is running a route and then catches the ball, the ball is down at the spot of the catch.

Passing

- **To be considered a pass, the ball must cross the offensive LOS in the air.** Otherwise, it is considered a running play. (Important for plays in no-run zone)
- Shovel passes are allowed. (A shovel pass is a legal pass that goes past the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver)
- The quarterback has a 7-second "pass clock" kept by an official. If a pass is not thrown within the 7 seconds, play is immediately blown dead and loss of down. No yardage is lost. If the QB throws the ball after the 7 seconds has expired, the ball is dead before the pass and an interception does not change possession.
- Once the ball leaves the QB's hands, the seven-second count is over.
- Interceptions change possession and the ball is spotted at the end of the runback

SPECIAL NOTE ON BLOCKING/SCREENING/CONTACT:

- On "rub routes", there is no picking like in basketball. Receivers are to run their route as if expecting to be targeted by QB
- For all other blocking downfield, the officials will be looking for (and throwing flags at) players deliberately seeking contact.
- Offensive players running with a ball carrier down the field is fine given the provisions above
- Officials have final judgment.
- No blocking to mimic an offensive line to protect the QB

Dead Balls

Substitutions may be made on any dead ball *except inadvertent whistle*.

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- Ball carrier's flag is pulled
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds
- Touchdown or safety is scored
- Ball carrier's knee hits the ground
- Fumble (not on the snap)
- Ball carrier's flag falls out

Play is NOT ruled dead when player's flags are pulled randomly (not a play on a ballcarrier). This typically happens in younger divisions. No penalty, and no clock stoppage. The play goes on.

Starting Play

To start the play the center snaps the ball. Ball must be snapped from the ground. Snap can be between legs or from the side. *There are no live fumbles*: however, a botched snap is still live and the 7-second QB count continues to run. (Recall the QB is the first person to have possession of the ball.)

On a botched snap, only an eligible defensive rusher may cross LOS

For any non-snap fumble, the ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground. In the event of a forward-fumble, the ball will be spotted at the player's front foot.

Rushing the Quarterback (in 2020, starts in 1st grade)

All players who rush the QB must be a minimum of 7 yards from the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback as long as they are 7 yards back. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage but may not cross the LOS until ball leaves hands of the QB. Kindergarten teams may not cross LOS until ball leaves Quarterback's hands.

Once the ball is handed-off or thrown, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage. The referee will designate the seven yards.

Mercy Rule

Starting in the 2nd half, a team winning by 28 points or more may not send a defensive rusher. Once the ball leaves the QB's hands, all players may still cross the LOS.

Sportsmanship/Roughing

As per the conduct agreement signed at registration by all players and parents, sportsmanship is the utmost priority. If the referee witnesses any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player/coach/fan may be ejected from the game.

"Trash talking" is illegal and violates the player/parent conduct agreement signed at registration. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game. Fans are subject to this as well and may be asked to move to the parking lot.

Defensive Penalties

- **Offside** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage and repeat the down
- **Incidental contact** -- 5 yards from spot of foul and repeat the down (unless penalty yardage results in a 1st down)
- **Illegal flag pull** (before receiver has ball, dropped pass) -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage and repeat the down
- **Illegal flag pull** (before receiver has ball, catch made) – 5 yards from spot of catch and repeat the down
- **Illegal rushing** (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker) -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage and repeat the down
- **Substitution fouls** (player enters field after ball is blown ready for play, i.e. to deceive opponents, or 6 players on the field) -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage and repeat the down
- **Illegal batting** -- It is illegal to try to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time -- 5 yards from the spot of the foul and repeat the down
- **Pass Interference** -- 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
- **PI in the endzone** -- automatic first down AND ball placed at 1 yard line
- **Roughing (i.e., tackling)** – 10 yards from spot of foul and automatic 1st down (this is for blatant contact)
- **Defensive holding** – 5 yards added to end of run. NOT automatic 1st down

Offensive Penalties

- **Delay of game** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down
- **Substitution fouls** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down
- **Illegal motion** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down (more than one person moving, moving towards LOS on the snap, etc.)
- **False Start** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down
- **Illegal Snap** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down
- **Offensive holding** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage ; replay down
- **Offensive pass interference** -- 5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)
- **Flag guarding** -- 5 yards from the point of foul and loss of down (using hands, arms or the ball to prevent a flag pull / stiff-arming)
- **Running on a “no run zone” play** – 5 yards from LOS & loss of down
- **Illegal QB run** – same as running in a no-run zone play
- **Illegal forward pass** – result of the play OR 5 yards from previous spot and loss of down

Conduct policy (ejections/suspensions)

Below are the penalties if a person is ejected from a game. *In the event that a team incurs two ejections in the same game (any combination of coach/player/fan), that team will immediately forfeit the game as losing team no matter the current score.*

- COACH
 - Must leave the playing field immediately and go to their vehicle
 - Will not be allowed on the team sideline for the following week
 - Involvement in practice is up to that town's Director
 - There is to be no coaching from the stands the following week
 - A meeting will take place with their town Director to discuss event
 - A 2nd ejection in the season will result in removal from the team

- PLAYER
 - Same as "COACH"
 - Means that player will have miss all games scheduled the following week, even if there are more than 1 game scheduled

- FANS
 - Must leave playing field and stay in their vehicle in the parking lot
 - A second ejection will result in not being allowed at games for remainder of the season

"When In Doubt, Sit Them Out" Policy

If a coach or official suspects that an athlete may have sustained a concussion, the player should be removed from play immediately. The player should not be left alone and the parent/guardian should be notified so they can follow up accordingly.



Tiebreakers for Post Season - Tiebreaker protocol will only look at "division" games that count towards playoff seeding. Tiebreakers will be in the following order:

1. Head to Head Competition (record; stats if more than 1 game)
2. Point Differential – maximum spread of 15 ppg (cumulative for season)
3. Total Points Allowed
4. Coin Flip

Overtime (Playoffs Only) - If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, teams move directly into overtime.

- Coin flip will determine possession
- Each team will get one possession starting at mid-field (Teams will get the same amount of attempts)
- Each team will go the same direction
- Teams get 1 Time Out for the entire Overtime (not 1 per each OT)
- Continue until winner is determined
- Starting with the 3rd OT, teams must try for 2-pt conversion after a TD

5th / 6th GRADE DIVISION – *changes from standard rules*

- Use TDJ ball or larger
- Only passing plays (no running the ball)
 - Exception: QB run rule (new for 2019)
- No coaches on the field

Playing Field

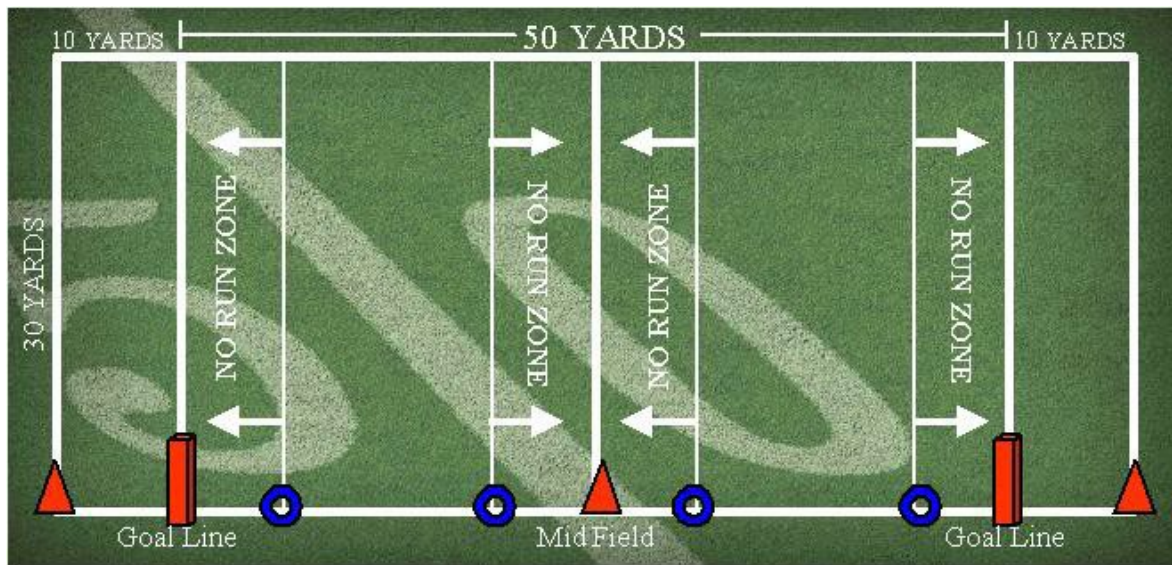
The playing field is 50 yards long and 30 yards wide with 10 yard end zones.

No-Running Zones (pass only zone): Will be marked 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on both sides of mid field. The no-run zone is only in play directly prior to the line to gain

(i.e. attacking towards the midfield line and the end zone).

So, looking at the diagram below... if offense moving from left to right and gets a 1st down one yard past midfield, they are NOT in a no run zone. The effective no run zone is now the 5 yards prior to the goal line (the new line to gain).

Coaches and players on the bench/sidelines must stay on their side of midfield. Team benches will be on opposite side of the fields from the stands/fans section.



Special notes about playing field and game-play

OFFENSE commits penalty on a no-run play =

The next play is still a no-run play, even if LOS is not within the active no-run zone. Example: 3rd down LOS is in the no-run zone. Offense commits false start. After 5 yard penalty, LOS is not within no-run zone. BUT, 3rd down is still a no-run play. The succeeding down will be result of the play on 3rd down. (if no yards gained, then 4th down would NOT be a mandatory run play). On a 1 point PAT, a false start (or similar offensive penalty) that moves the LOS back still results in a 1 point try, no-run, from the 10 yard line.

DEFENSE commits penalty on a 2-point PAT =

This logic applies just to 2-point PATs. If the defense commits a penalty and the try is unsuccessful, the offense will get a second attempt after marking off penalty yards. If there is illegal contact to a ball-carrier (or tackling) to prevent a score, the new LOS will be the spot of the foul AND the no-run zone will not be in effect: the offense has the option to pass or run the ball even if the LOS is inside the no-run zone.