



Youth Flag Football League Rulebook
2026 Season

LEAGUE RULES

Players:

- A player may not participate until he/she is officially registered in the program.
- The Parks & Recreation Department will establish teams to ensure balance.
- Each team within a division will have approximately the same number of players.
- The Parks & Recreation Department maintains the authority to add players or move players to different teams to balance the league up to two weeks into the season.

Uniforms:

- Each player will be issued a jersey that is kept by the player at the conclusion of the season.
- Jerseys must be tucked in during games.
- Flag belts must have the strap tucked in.
- Volunteer coaches will be responsible for handing out jerseys to their players.
- To keep the spirit of the league, teams must wear the issued jersey during games.

Equipment:

- Protective Mouthpiece – For the safety of each participant, protective mouthpieces are **strongly recommended** to be worn during all games/practices. The participant is responsible for his/her own protective mouthpiece.
- Proper footwear – includes rubber cleats or closed toe athletic shoes such as tennis shoes.
- Softshell helmets are not mandatory but recommended.

Ball sizes:

- 1st-2nd Grade: Peewee
- 3rd-4th Grade: Junior
- 5th-6th Grade: Junior
- 7th- 8th Grade: Youth/Intermediate

Playing Time and Substitutions:

- Parents, coaches, and league administrators must provide equal sports play opportunity for all youth regardless of race, creed, sex, economic status, or ability.
- Participants may not play an entire game unless there are no substitutes.
- No player shall sit out for more than 50% of any half that he/she is present. If a player is late to a game or must leave early, this may affect his/her ability to play at least half of the game.
- Substitutions shall be made during timeouts and dead ball situations.
- Coaches are required to have the players play both offense and defense throughout the season.

Exceptions:

- A player who is injured during a game may be substituted for safety reasons. If the game must be stopped due to injury, the injured player must come out of the game. The injured player is eligible to re-enter the game on the next dead ball.

THE BASICS

Game:

- Practice will take place for the first 30 minutes – 1 hour prior to the start of the game.
- Each team will be required to appear at the time that it is scheduled to play or suffer a forfeit of that game (In the case of a forfeit, referees will still make arrangements to play a game).

Players/Teams:

- Each team will consist of no less than six players and no more than ten players. For 7th and 8th grade, teams will have 12 to 14 players.
- A team must have four players to start a game. During a game, no team is to play with less than four players.
- If a team has only four players, the opposing team has the option of playing 4-on-4 or letting the other team borrow a player. This will not be counted as a forfeit.
- If a team has less than four players, please still show up for the game. The league referees will combine teams to allow the game to be played as scheduled.
- All teams must play with the same number of players (i.e. 4-on-4, 5-on-5, or 7-on-7 for 7th/8th grade).

Game Length:

- Games consist of two 20-minute halves.
- Each game will hold a five-minute halftime break following the conclusion of the first half.

Clock:

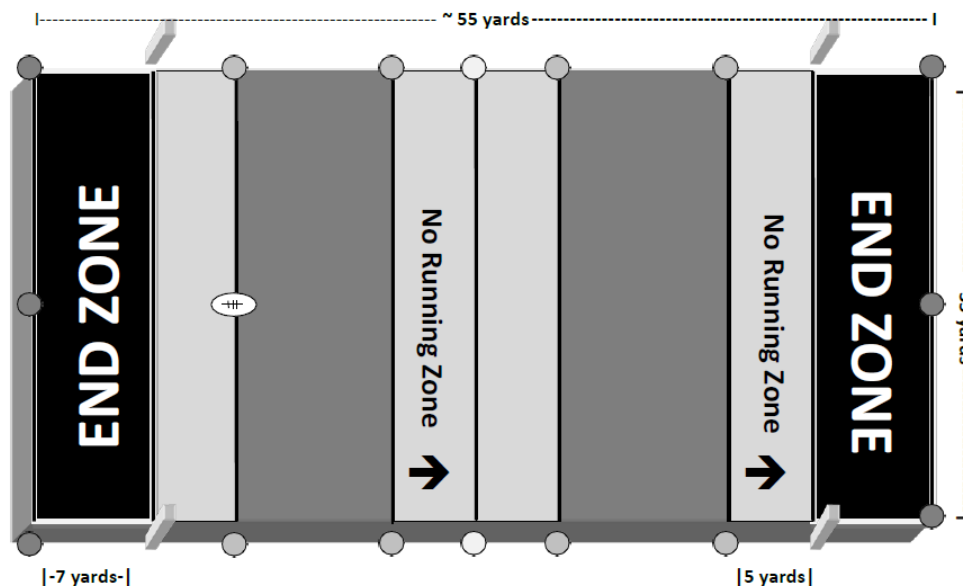
- The clock will be a “RUNNING” clock stopping only for the following situations
 - Injury timeout
 - Team timeout
 - Referee timeout
- Referees will be the official timekeeper of the game. Referees can stop the clock for other reasons at their discretion.

Timeouts:

- Each team has two times outs per half. Timeouts cannot be accumulated.
- Each timeout is 30 seconds in length.

Field Specifications (Grades 1-6):

- The approximate total yardage for the field will be 55 yards, including 7 yards for each end zone.
- **There are two “no running zones” in effect, in the direction the offense is being run.** “No- running zones” are located five yards from each end zone and five yards on either side of midfield.



Field Specifications (Grades 7-8):

The approximate total yardage for the field will be 70 yards, including 10 yards for each end zone.

There are two “no running zones” in effect, in the direction the offense is being run. “No- running zones” are located five yards from each end zone and five yards on either side of midfield.

GAME RULES

Getting Started:

- This is a 5-on-5 (7-on-7 for 7th/8th grade), non-contact, passing flag football league!
- It is ultimately the responsibility of the offensive player to avoid contact. The offensive team will incur a penalty if the offensive player does not attempt to avoid running into the defensive player. Furthermore, once the ball has been carried/received past the line of scrimmage all other offensive players must stop motion. No running with the ball carrier. A coin toss determines the first possession.
- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play. Shotguns are allowed.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and has three plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three 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.
- 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.
- Each time the ball is spotted, the team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense’s 5-yard line. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to loser of coin toss.

Running:

- The offensive team can use running plays in designated running zones.
- The quarterback is not eligible to run with the ball until after it has been handed to another player.
- Spinning is allowed. At least one foot must remain on the ground at all times.

- Jumping to avoid defenders is not allowed.
- Diving is not allowed under any circumstances.
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.

Handoffs:

- Offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback must take full possession of the ball before handing it off to another player.
- "Center Sneak" play – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

No-Running Zones:

- "No-running zones" are located five yards from each end zone and five yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short yardage, power-running situations.
- Running plays cannot be initiated inside the "no-running zone". No handoffs allowed in no-run zones.
- The "no-running zone" is only in effect in the direction you are moving. (See diagram.)

Receiving:

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off/thrown behind the line of scrimmage).
- As in the NFL, only one player is allowed in motion at a time. Players in motion may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds and no foot out of bounds when making a catch.

Passing:

- All passes must be forward passes initiated from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Forward Pass: A pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage to a receiver at least one foot forward from the passer. Lateral (passes thrown in line with the passer) or backward passes are allowed.
- Shovel passes are allowed. Shovel Pass: To throw a shovel pass, the quarterback palms the football, and "shovels" the pass directly forward to the receiver, usually with a backhand, underhand or pushing motion.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has an eight-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the eight seconds, play is dead and loss of a down. Once the ball is handed off, the eight-second rule is no longer in effect.

Interceptions:

- Grades 1st/2nd & 3rd/4th: Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Returns are not allowed and the ball will be spotted where it was intercepted.

- Grade 5th/6th & 7th/8th: Interceptions change the possession of the ball and returns are allowed ONLY to the midfield line. In the case of an interception made on the offense's side of the field, no returns are allowed. The ball will be placed at the point of interception.

Scoring:

- Touchdown = 6 points
- Extra Point
- 1 point if played from 5-yard line (no running play allowed) or
- 2 points if played from 12-yard line (running and passing allowed)
- Safety = 2 points
- If the score is tied at the end of the game, no overtime will be played (unless it's a playoff or championship game).
- As soon as a 21-point lead has been reached by a team, the trailing team will start each possession at midfield until it is within 19 points or less.
- Scores will not be recorded for 1st/2nd and 3rd/4th grade leagues. Scores will be posted the following week on TeamSideline for 5th/6th and 7th/8th grade leagues.

Dead Balls:

- There are NO fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - o Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- Touchdown or safety is scored.
- At the point of an interception (interception returns are not permitted, except ages 11-12 & 13-14).
- Ball carrier's knee or elbow hits the ground.
- Catch is made without a flag. The ball will be marked where ball carrier received the ball.
- Flag falls out after receiving the ball. Ball will be marked where the flag fell out.
- Ball carrier intentionally leaves their feet to avoid a defender other than for safety.
- Ball is hand offed in the no run zone.

Rushing the Quarterback:

- Once the ball is hiked the quarterback will have 8 seconds to pass the ball.
- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
- A special marker or the referee will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off and/or thrown, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- Players rushing the quarterback are not allowed to block the pass by jumping or hitting the ball out of the quarterback's hand. Defensive players are only permitted to go for the quarterback's flag.
- Blocking is not allowed. A block, as defined by the league, is a conscious act to create a barrier denying the right of way for a defender to make a play on an intended receiver or ball carrier which will advance the offense. These calls are at the discretion of the field referee.

Defense:

- When on defense, players must go for the flag and not the ball. They may not grab a player's jersey or hold the player in any way, to slow down the player or make grabbing a flag easier.
- Defensive players must avoid contact and collisions with receivers when defending a pass. A penalty will be called for illegal contact if a defensive player hits or otherwise interferes with an offensive player's hand, arm, body or leg when they are attempting to catch a ball.

Sportsmanship/Roughing:

- If the Field Monitor or referee witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike behavior, the game will be stopped, and the player may be ejected from the game. The City of San Carlos has a No Tolerance policy for actions such as these.
- Trash talking will not be tolerated by players, coaches or spectators. Referees have the right to determine offensive language. Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to referees, opposing players, teams or spectators. If trash talking occurs, the player(s), coach, or parents will be ejected from the game and field.
- Parents are urged to bring any concerns to their coach who in turn may speak to the referee during timeouts, during halftime, or after the game.

Penalties:

- All penalties will be called by the referee.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage
 - Defense: All defensive penalties result in an automatic first down (except offsides).
 - Off-sides: 5 yards
 - Interference: 10 yards
 - Illegal Contact (holding, blocking, etc.): 10 yards
 - Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has ball): 10 yards
 - Illegal Rushing (starting rush from inside the 7-yard marker): 10 yards
 - Offense: All offensive penalties result in a loss of down (except false start & delay of game).
 - Illegal Motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.): 5 yards
 - Illegal Forward Pass (pass thrown from beyond line of scrimmage): 5 yards
 - Offensive Pass Interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender): 10 yards
 - FLAG guarding: 10 yards
 - Delay of Game: 10 yards

- Illegal contact/not avoiding contact with a defensive player: 10 yards

General Information:

- League rules may be amended at the discretion of the league supervisor.
- No team or individual statistics will be kept.
- Official League Standings will be kept only for grades 5/6 and 7/8.
- Bowl games will be held for the 7/8 grade league at the end of season.
- There are NO protests of games in the San Carlos Youth Flag Football League.

Safety Regulations:

- All players wearing glasses must have unbreakable lenses. It is recommended, but not required to wear a sports strap with glasses.
- Referees and coaches must always check for safety measures.
- No wrist watches or jewelry (i.e. earrings, bracelets, necklaces) of any kind may be worn during practices or games. Referees reserve the right to ask the participants to remove the jewelry. This includes newly pierced ears – Earrings must be removed during play.
- Exception: Medical or religious bracelets are allowed to be worn, if they are covered by a wristband in order to prevent another player's fingers from becoming tangled.

Conduct:

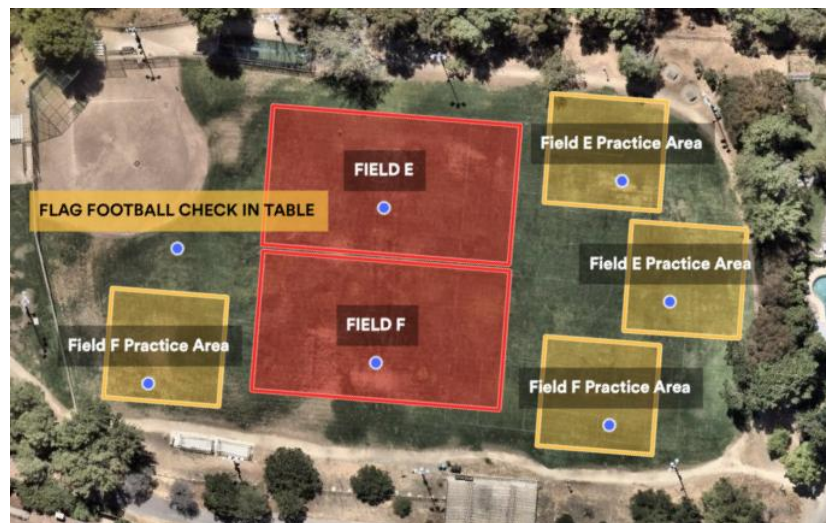
- San Carlos Youth Flag Football tradition calls for teams to shake hands (participants, coaches and referees) at the game's conclusion
- Adverse spectator reaction to referees will not be tolerated.
- All participants (players, coaches and spectators) will conduct themselves in a manner conducive to good sportsmanship and will observe the flag football rules in effect.
- Any participant exhibiting unsportsmanlike conduct will be subject to removal from the game at the discretion of the referee or City staff.
- PARTICIPANTS EJECTED FROM A GAME OR PRACTICE MUST MEET IN PERSON WITH THE LEAGUE SUPERVISOR BEFORE PLAYING THEIR NEXT GAME

For any questions, please contact Recreation Coordinator Holly Gonzales at hgonzales@cityofsancarlos.org or call 650-802-4124.

HIGHLANDS 7TH/8TH GRADE FLAG FOOTBALL LAYOUT



STADIUM FIELD FLAG FOOTBALL LAYOUT



HIGHLANDS FIELD FLAG FOOTBALL LAYOUT



HIGHLANDS FIELD FLAG FOOTBALL LAYOUT

