

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Revised on August 14, 2023



The National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) Flag Football Rules, as modified by the State CIF are the official rules for all CIF regular season games and post-season games.

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

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CIF FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

I. GENERAL RULES:

a. Game Length:

1. 2 – 20 – minute running halves.
2. Halftime will consist of five (5) minutes.
3. Running clock until last 2 minutes of each half. The game clock will start on the snap following the stoppage for notification of 2-minute warning.
4. Each team will have 2-time outs per half with no carry over from the first half to the second half or the second half to overtime.
5. A coin toss determines first choice of options to receive or defer.

b. Field:

1. Width: 30 yards minimum to 40 yards maximum
2. Length: 50 yards minimum to 80 yards maximum + 2 end zones (10 yards each)
3. No-Run Zones are located 5 yards from each End Zone and 5 yards from each line-to-gain.
4. Team Area: 2 yards from each sideline and between the 20-yard markers.

c. Players:

1. Team consists of at least 7 players.
2. Must have at least 7 players to start a game.
3. Minimum of 5 players to play a game.

d. Equipment:

1. Shoes:

- Must be soft pliable upper material (i.e., canvas/synthetic) that completely covers the foot and is attached to a one-piece molded composite bottom (i.e., tennis shoes).
- Turf Shoe or molded rubber cleats only. NO metal cleats, screw in cleats, or baseball cleats allowed.

2. Shirts/Jerseys:

- All jerseys must have numbers on front and back. (6 inches in height on the front and 8 inches in height on the back)
- No identical numbers on the field at the same time.
- Must cover the players' torso.
- Must be long enough to be tucked into pants.
- Must have both a light colored (away) and a dark colored (home) shirt.
- Shirt must be always tucked in.
- Sweats (including hoods) must be worn under the uniform, if worn.

3. Shorts/Pants:

- Must be part of a uniform.
- Uniform may be a flag football, soccer, or lacrosse uniform.
- No Open Pockets
- Spandex and compression shorts may be worn under the uniform.
- No torn shorts or sweatpants.
- The pants or shorts must be a contrasting color than the flags.

4. Flags:

- A one-piece flag belt without any knots.
- One flag on each side and one in the center of the back. (3 total)
- Flag size is at least 2" wide by 14" length. Flags may be removable from the belt.
- Flags may not be altered in width or length and may have no tape on them.
- All players must be wearing a flag before the ball becomes live. Failure to properly wear required player equipment when the ball is about to become live results in a dead ball penalty for Delay of Game.

NOTE: Games will not be played unless both teams have the appropriate flags.

5. Football:

- Pebble grained or rubber covered football.
- Must be a size 7, youth or intermediate size football.
- The referee shall be the judge of any ball offered for play.

6. Field Equipment:

- Score board
- Goal post pads
- Sideline markers and pylons
- Down marker (If possible)

7. Additional Equipment:

- Mouth and Tooth Protector: It is **MANDATORY** that all players wear a mouthpiece.
- Sunglasses: Players are not permitted to wear sunglasses
- Hand Warmers: Players may not wear hand Warmers that buckle around the waist
- Wristbands and headwear shall meet the following guidelines: Soft-sided, Rubber, cloth or elastic bands may be used to control hair. Hard items, including, but not limited to, beads, barrettes, and bobby pins, are prohibited. **Soft shell helmet may be worn to protect the head. All head gear must be secured to the head and worn as intended by the manufacture and must contain no hard objects.**
- Knee & ankle braces are permitted but all exposed hinges must be covered. Most oversleeves recommended by the manufacturer are acceptable. These braces may be padded or unpadded.
- The officials shall not permit any team member to participate while wearing apparel or equipment if in his/her judgment any item is dangerous or confusing to other players, is not appropriate, or constitutes a safety concern.
- A player may not wear jewelry. Religious and medical alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert medal must be taped and may be visible. Additionally, no hanging play cards and no eye shade other than all black.

II. GAME PLAY RULES:

➤ Offense:

- Blocking: **No Blocking or Moving Screens allowed at any time**
- NO EXCESSIVE CONTACT will be allowed.

➤ Passing:

- The offensive team may NOT throw more than one forward pass per play.
- The offensive team may throw an unlimited number of backward passes during any

- play.
 - No player may throw the ball forward if that player is beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - The QB MAY intentionally ground the ball by throwing the ball into the ground or out of bounds to avoid a sack. If the ball is thrown laterally or backwards it is considered a fumble and the ball will be placed at the spot where the ball crossed the out of bounds demarcation or hits the ground. If the pass is thrown forward it is considered an incomplete pass and will be placed at the previous spot.
 - No forward passes are allowed after an interception.
- **Snapping:**
- The ball must be snapped from the ground but does not have to be snapped between the legs.
 - The ball may be snapped to any person whose feet are at least 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
 - The person who receives the snap is considered the quarterback for that play.
- **Rushing:**
- ALL players are eligible receivers.
 - Quarterback can run the ball ONCE per SERIES OF DOWNS.
 - There is no limit on the number of times players other than the quarterback can run.
 - The PAT shall be treated as a new series (**QB is open**).
 - No stiff arming.
 - If a defense “blitzes” or rushes multiple defensive players at the quarterback, the quarterback may run without it counting as their one run per series of downs.
- **No Run Zone:**
- No-Run Zones are located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards from each line-to-gain. No run zones are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations to help avoid blocks/screens & excessive contact. If a penalty or loss of yardage takes a team out of the no run zone (more than 5 yards from end zone or line to gain), that team is then allowed direct hand-offs again.
 - QB runs are not allowed in these No Run Zones unless the defense blitzes.
 - Direct hand-offs, including a direct hand-off following a forward or backward pass, are not allowed in these No Run Zones.

- **Receiving:**
 - A reception is deemed made if:
 - The receiver possesses the ball before the ball contacts the ground and
 - The receiver has a body part down in the field of play after possessing the ball.
 - The receiver may NOT use their hands or arms to move a defender to make a reception.
 - No stiff arming.

- **Jumping:**
 - A player may not leave her feet to avoid a flag from being pulled.
 - Official will blow the whistle and the player will be down at the spot where she left their feet.

- **Fumbles:**
 - Fumbles are dead as soon as they hit the ground.
 - Forward or backward fumbles will be placed at the spot where the ball crossed the out of bounds demarcation or hit the ground.
 - A fumble caught in the air by either team is a live ball and may be advanced.

- **Defense:**
 - **Blocking: No Blocking or Moving Screens allowed at any time**
 - NO EXCESSIVE CONTACT will be allowed.
 - **Rushing/Blitzing:**
 - Any defensive players can rush from any position on the field if they are 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
 - Teams may only rush up to two (2) players at a time.
 - Rushers must attempt to avoid any offensive players. NO EXCESSIVE contact is allowed.
 - Rusher must avoid hitting the QB's arm, even on the follow through motion.
 - NO limit on the number of rushing attempts (BLITZS) by a team.
 - **Pass Defense:**
 - Receivers are allowed a free release from the line of scrimmage. NO Bump and Run coverage. This is an illegal contact foul - 10-yard penalty. This would be enforced from the end of the related run (running play) or previous spot (pass play).
 - Defenders are not allowed to play through the receiver to make a play on the ball.
 - Interceptions occur if:
 - The interceptor possesses the ball before the ball contacts the ground, &
 - The interceptor has a body part down in the field of play after possessing the ball.
 - If the defense intercepts a pass, they can return the ball for a touchdown. Wherever the flag is pulled is where the new offense will start their first series of downs.

- De-Flagging/Tackling:
 - The defender must make a play at the flags. A player may not try to strip, grab or knock free a ball in player possession, including a quarterback prior to passing the ball. If this occurs, it is penalized as an illegal contact foul or unsportsmanlike conduct foul.
 - When de-flagging the ball carrier:
 - The ball carrier is down at the point when the flag is removed NOT when it falls off or is dropped.
 - The ball will be spotted using forward progress where the ball is at when the flag comes unclipped, not where the flag may fall.
 - Forward progress is the forward-most point of the ball when de-flagged, if a player is holding the ball out in front of her body, then that's the dead-ball spot where the ball will next be put into play.

- Kicking:
 - **Kick-offs:**
 - There will be NO kick-offs.
 - Teams will take possession of the football on their 20-yard line. (10-yard line for 50 yard fields)

- Punting:
 - There will be NO punts.
 - On 4th down the offensive team must declare whether they are “punting” or going for the first down prior to expiration of the play clock.
 - If the offensive team declares a “punt” after committing a delay of game foul, the penalty will be enforced at the subsequent dead ball spot.
 - If the offense declares a “punt” the defense will take possession of the football on their 20-yard line. (10-yard line for 50 yard fields)
 - If the offense goes for the first down and does not obtain it, the defense will take possession of the football at that point on the field.

- Penalties:
 - Offense:
 - Illegal Contact:
 - When an offensive player makes excessive contact with a defensive player.
 - No Blocking or Moving Screens
 - 10-yard penalty
 - False Start:
 - When an offensive player moves in a way that simulates the start of a play.
 - 5-yard penalty

- **Offensive Pass Interference:**
 - When an offensive player hinders a defensive player's ability to catch a pass by making physical contact with the defensive player.
 - It is forward-pass interference if any player of A, who is beyond the neutral zone, interferes with an opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch, or bat a pass.
 - It is not forward-pass interference if:
 - a. Unavoidable contact occurs when two or more players are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
 - b. Contact by A is immediately made on a B lineman and the contact does not continue beyond the neutral zone.
 - 10-yard penalty

- **Illegal Forward Pass:**
 - When a player is or has been past the line of scrimmage throws the ball forward or when more than one forward pass is thrown during a play.
 - When a forward pass is thrown after a change of team possession.
 - 5-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction (loss of down, if by offense).

- **Illegal Quarterback Run:**
 - When the quarterback runs the ball more than once per series of downs.
 - 5-yard penalty, loss of down

- **Illegal Shift/Illegal Motion:**
 - When an offensive player in motion moves towards the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
 - A maximum of one (1) player off the line of scrimmage is allowed to be moving laterally/backward at the snap of the ball.
 - 5-yard penalty

- **Flag Guarding:**
 - When a player, either intentionally or accidentally, inhibits a player from deflagging them using their hands, arms, etc. (including stiff arming).
 - 10-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction, loss of down.

- **Illegal Formation:**
 - When the offensive team has more than 3 players lined up behind or off the line of scrimmage at the snap.
 - 5-yard penalty

- **Hurdling/Spinning/Diving:**
 - A player may not attempt to jump over an opponent.
 - A player may not spin to avoid a flag from being pulled. ("spinning is a complete 360 degree turn and not allowed, however a turn and change of direction is permitted")
 - A player may not leave their feet and dive in any direction to advance the football.
 - 10-yard penalty

➤ **Defense:**

- **Illegal Rush:**
 - When a defensive player rushes the QB after being less than 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage at the snap.
 - When more than two (2) players rush at a time.
 - 5-yard penalty
- **Illegal Contact:**
 - When a defensive player makes excessive contact with an offensive player.
 - A player may not run through the ball carrier when pulling a flag.
 - 10-yard penalty
- **Illegal Flag Pulling:**
 - A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who has not touched the ball.
 - 5-yard penalty, automatic first down.
 - Run Play - enforced from end of run
 - Pass Play - Complete - enforced from end of related run
 - Pass Play - Incomplete - enforced from previous spot
- **Roughing the Passer:**
 - When a defensive player contacts the QB while the QB is in the throwing motion or has just completed the throwing motion. This includes hitting the QB's arm after they have released the ball.
 - 10-yard penalty, automatic first down.
- **Defensive Pass Interference:**
 - When a defensive player hinders an offensive player's ability to catch a pass by making physical contact with the offensive player.
 - It is forward-pass interference if any player of B, who is beyond the neutral zone, interferes with an opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch, or bat a pass.
 - It is not forward-pass interference if:
 - a. Unavoidable contact occurs when two or more players are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
 - b. Contact by B is obviously away from the direction of the pass.
 - 10-yard penalty
- **Defensive Holding:**
 - When a defensive player holds up the offensive player while attempting to de-flag that player.
 - 10-yard penalty
- **Encroachment:**
 - When a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
 - 5-yard penalty
- **Tackling:**
 - A player cannot tackle the ball carrier.
 - 10-yard penalty

- Sliding:
 - A player may not slide to get the flag.
 - 10-yard penalty

III. Coach and Player Conduct:

- Coaches and/or players who disrespectfully object to a game official's call may be assessed an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
- No coach, player or substitute shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner once the game officials assume authority of the contest.
- Examples are, but not limited to:
 - Using Profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
 - Attempting to influence a decision by a game official.
 - Disrespectfully addressing a game official.
 - Failure of a head coach, following verification, to have his/her player(s) wear legal and/or required equipment.
 - Being on the field except as a substitute or replaced player.
- Being outside the team box, but not on the field.
- These actions result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty enforcement, with a second unsportsmanlike conduct foul resulting in disqualification.
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty enforcement will be treated the same as a dead ball foul with the penalty being enforced from the spot of the ball at the end of the play. A second Unsportsmanlike Conduct foul will result in the coach or player being disqualified for the remainder of the game.
 - Team captains should be the players that address the officials.
 - Fighting is any attempt by a player or nonplayer to strike or engage a player or nonplayer in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to, attempts to strike an opponent with the arm, hand, leg, or foot, whether there is contact or not.

IV. Scoring:

- **Touchdown:**
 - 6 points
- **Flag Check:**
 - After all scores the player must go to the nearest official for flag check.
 - **Removing a Flag:**
 - Player removing their own flag prior to a flag check will result in no score, loss of down and a warning.
 - Next infraction results in Unsportsmanlike Conduct foul.
- **Tampering with a Flag:**
 - If a player is determined to have tampered with their flag it will result in a loss of down and a warning.
 - Next infraction results in disqualification.

➤ **Point After Touchdown:**

- No kick attempts
- 5 yards = 1 point
- 10 yards = 2 points
- During a PAT attempt, the ball remains live, allowing the intercepting team to return the try for 2 points to the other end of the field.
- Once a team declares their choice for a 1- or 2-point conversion and the ball is declared ready for play by the officials, the team may change their decision only after calling a time-out.
- Point After Touchdown plays will be an untimed down at 2:00 or less in each half. Additionally, when a touchdown is scored and the PAT down has not been played when any half reaches 0:00, the period shall be extended for the PAT down on the same end of the field that the touchdown was scored.

➤ **Safety:**

- 2 points

Miscellaneous Rules:

➤ **Series of Downs:**

- A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance the ball to the first down line.
- Officials will be responsible for determining the spot of the ball and the down markings.
- A new series of downs will be awarded when a team moves the ball to the next line to gain.
- On fourth down the offensive team must declare whether they are punting or going for the first down prior to the expiration of the play clock.
- If the offense declares a punt the defense will take possession of the football on their 20-yard line. (10 yard line for 50 yard fields)
- If the offense goes for the first down and does not obtain it, the defense will take possession of the football at that point on the field.

➤ **Play-Clock:**

- The 25 second play clock begins once the ball is placed on the ground and the whistle is blown by the referee.
- Delay of game: If a team exceeds the 25 seconds.

➤ **Ball Placement:**

- Any request to place the ball on the left or right hash-mark is ignored. The ball should always be placed in the center of the field. This includes Point After Touchdown.

➤ **Restricted Area:**

- The restricted area is the area extending two yards outside the perimeter of the entire field (i.e., outside both sidelines and end lines). This restricted area is designated by the restraining line. The team box is the area immediately outside the restricted area between the 20-yard lines on each side of the field. With limited exceptions, nonplayers are not permitted in the restricted area at any time during the game. Nonplayers include coaches, team personnel, spectators, game administrators and members of the media.
- During a dead-ball interval, no more than three coaches are permitted in the restricted area directly in front of the team box. No one may be in the restricted area when the ball is live.
- The restricted area is designated to make the sidelines safer for everyone and to allow game

officials ample room to work. If the restricted area is not clearly delineated or not enforced by game administration, coaches or game officials, individuals in the restricted area are at risk for injury during or after a play.

- Coaches are encouraged to instruct team personnel of the parameters and boundaries of the team box, and to effectively communicate the requirements to always stay in the team box. Coaches are also required to remain outside the restricted area when the ball is live, and no more than three coaches are in the coaches' area when the ball is dead.
- Coaches are not allowed on the field to call plays.

➤ **Overtime:**

- In the event the 2nd half ends in a tie, **overtime** will commence.
 - A coin toss shall decide who receives the ball first.
 - Winner of the coin toss can choose to be on offense first, defense first or choose the end of the field that overtime will be played on. The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first extra period and shall have the first choice of options for subsequent even-numbered extra periods.
 - Each team will receive one (1) time out per overtime period.
 - Teams will alternate possessions, starting at the 20-yard line. The line to gain is always the goal line regardless of whether a penalty enforcement places the ball more than 20 yards from the goal line to start a new series of downs.
 - Teams may go for 1 or 2 points after a touchdown is scored.
- Each team will have at least one possession during each over time unless B scores first. If team A scores first, team B will be given a series of down from their 20-yard

➤ **Unfair Acts:**

- The Referee has much latitude in handling obviously unfair acts during a game. This would include situations that arise when a team commits a blatant and obvious intentional foul or fouls to gain a clock advantage late in a game. We should treat these intentional fouls as Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls. Each player committing these unsportsmanlike acts will have a counted unsportsmanlike conduct foul, with 2 unsportsmanlike conduct fouls by a single player or coach resulting in disqualification. The following is a list some other potential intentional fouls that could be committed during the game:
- A player or nonplayer or person(s) not subject to the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair act which has no specific rule coverage.
- No team shall repeatedly commit fouls which halve the distance to the goal line.
- No player shall hide the ball under the jersey.
- Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the Referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.

➤ **Mercy Rule:**

- If the point deficit is 21 points or more in the second half, a running clock will be utilized.

➤ **Protest:**

- There are no protests.
- All referee decisions are final.
- Interceptions during overtime remain live and can be returned for a touchdown by the intercepting team.
- A winner must be determined (No ties).
- Fouls During a Point After Touchdown or in Overtime After a Change of Team Possession:

- A score by a team committing a foul during the down is canceled. Exception: Live- ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls.
- If both teams foul during the down and the defensive team had not fouled before the change of possession, the fouls cancel, and the down is not repeated.
- Penalties against either team are declined by rule.

Exception: Penalties for flagrant personal fouls, unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, dead- ball personal fouls and live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls are enforced from the succeeding spot (20-yard line).

Girl's Flag Football

Table of Game Clock Times

PERIOD of TIMING	CLOCK TIME
Game Clock (Varsity)	2- 20-minute running halves
Halftime Intermission	5 minutes
Charged Time-outs	1 minute
Game Clock (JV or Tournament)	2- 15 min running halves
Halftime Intermission	5 minutes
Charged Time-outs	1 minute

STARTING & STOPPING the CLOCK

The clock shall start with the first legal snap of the game and will remain running until the last 2:00 minutes of each half. If there is an official's timeout (i.e., for injury, penalty administration discussion, etc.) that occurs prior to the last 2:00 minutes of each half, the clock shall be stopped during and will then start with the ready for-play signal. If there is a charged team timeout, the clock shall stop and then start with the next legal snap.

2:00 MINUTE TIMING RULES

The clock shall start with the snap (except Point After Touchdown), if the clock was stopped because:

- a. Issue the 2:00 minute warning.
- b. The ball goes out of bounds.
- c. B is awarded a new series.
- d. Touchdown or Safety is scored.
- e. Legal or Illegal forward pass is incomplete.
- f. A request for time-out is granted.
- g. The penalty for delay of game foul is accepted.

NOTE: The clock shall start with the ready-for-play whistle after issuing the 2:00 minute warning if the point deficit is 21 points or more in the second half.

The clock shall be stopped and will start for the ready-for-play signal on a down if the clock was stopped for any reason other than specified above or untimed down:

- a. For official's time-out, other than when B is awarded a new series.
- b. Penalty administration.
- c. There has been no charged time-out.
- d. First down administration.
- e. Because of an inadvertent whistle.

Girl's Flag Football
PENALTY SUMMARY

LOSS of 5 YARDS

Delay of game Illegal substitution Encroachment Snap Infraction False Start

Illegal Formation (more than 3 backs)

Illegal Shift or Illegal Motion

Illegally handing ball forward (loss of down)

Illegal forward pass (by A; loss of down)

Helping runner Sideline Interference

Nonplayer outside of team box Attendant illegally on field

Illegal QB run (also loss of down) Illegal Run in No Run Zone (also loss of down)

Illegal Defensive Rush Illegal Flag Pull (also first down)

LOSS of 10 YARDS

Illegal Blocking/Screening/Holding

Illegal Block in Back Excessive Contact

Offensive/Defensive Pass Interference Flag Guarding (by A; also loss of down)

Hurdling/Spinning/Diving – Spot of the foul, loss of down (down counts)

Roughing the Passer (also first down) Tackling

Sliding

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Unfair Acts

Illegal Unintentional Contact with an official in the restricted area while ball is live

DISQUALIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN PENALTIES

Flagrant Excessive Contact Fighting by Player or nonplayer

Intentionally Contacting a Game Official Striking, kicking, kneeling

A second unsportsmanlike foul by player or nonplayer

A substitute leaving team box during a fight Second violation of tampering with a flag

Second violation of not wearing Mouth and Tooth Protector

Other Rules as contained in CIF publication “Official CIF Flag Football Rules (Officials Manual)” that have application to coaches, players, and fans

General Rules

1. The game should be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. Five players are required to avoid a forfeit.
2. The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 to 4 officials.
3. A speaking captain must be selected to make all decisions and shall be the only one who addresses the officials.
4. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game, and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

The Field

1. The field should be a minimum of 30 yards and a maximum of 40 yards in width, a minimum of 50 yards and a maximum of 80 yards in length and contain four (4) twenty (20) yard zones with a ten (10) yard end zone on each end and a 5 yard No Run Zone located 5 yards from each goal-line and each line-to-gain.
 - 80 yard field – line to gain at the 20 – 40 – 20, no run zone at the 5, 15, 35, 25 going each direction
 - 60 yard field – line to gain at the 15 – 30 – 15, no run zone at the 5, 10, 25, 20 going each direction
 - 50 yard field – line to gain at the 10 – 25 – 10, no run Zone at the 5, 20, 15 going each direction
2. The field will be marked with lines and/or cones of different colors/sizes to indicate the lines to gain and the no run zones. A diagram at the end of this document will show how you can use cones and or lines to indicate your lines to gain and no run zones.

Game and Player Equipment (Legal)

1. Football - The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and shall meet the recommendations of size and shape for a youth or intermediate size football. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion.
2. Jerseys - Players of opposing teams must wear contrasting-colored jerseys, and/or pinnies.
3. Pants / Shorts - Each player must wear pants or shorts without any belt(s), belt loop(s), open pockets, or exposed drawstrings. The pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags.
4. Flag belt - Each player must wear a flag belt. The belt must be one piece, the flags may be part of the belt or removable from the belt and meet the size requirements stated in the CIF Rules Book. One flag on each side and one in the center of the back. The player will be removed from the game for at least one play if not legally equipped, the play clock will not be adjusted to accommodate removing players for not being properly equipped. If the problem continues then a foul may be called.

Penalty: Dead Ball Foul - Failure to have flag belt legally attached prior to the snap, 5 yards from the succeeding spot.

5. Gloves - Players may wear gloves which must consist of a soft, pliable, and nonabrasive material
6. Headwear – Players are not permitted to wear bandanas. Players may wear soft-sided caps, or elastic headbands. Hats may not have a bill.
7. Shoes – Shoes with cleats must be made of soft pliable plastic or rubber. No exposed metal cleats are permitted. (See illegal player equipment)

Game and Player Equipment (Illegal)

1. A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. This applies to any equipment, which, in the opinion of the Referee, is dangerous or confusing. Types of equipment or substances which shall always be declared illegal include:
 - A. Headgear containing any hard, unyielding, or stiff material, including billed hats.
 - B. Jewelry
 - C. Pads or braces worn above the waist.
 - D. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. Any team found wearing illegal equipment will be penalized 15 yards, and the second warning results in a forfeit.
 - E. Shirts or jerseys, which do not remain, tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt, which does not remain tucked in.
 - F. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s) or exposed drawstring(s).
 - G. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped, and any other hard substance is covered with at least 1/2 inch of closed cell slow recovery rubber or other material of similar thickness and physical properties.
 - H. Towels attached at the player's waist (flag only).
2. An official time out shall be declared to permit prompt repair of equipment, which becomes illegal or defective through use (except for illegal shoes).

DEFINITIONS OF PLAYING TERMS

Catch - A catch is an act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight.

Clipping – Clipping is running or diving into the back or throwing or dropping the body across the back of the leg or legs of an opponent, or pushing an opponent in the back.

Encroachment - Encroachment is a term to indicate a defensive player is illegally in the neutral zone. An entering substitute is not considered to be a player for encroachment restrictions until he/she is on his/her team's side of the neutral zone.

Foul – A foul is a rule infraction for which a penalty is assessed.

Fumble - A fumble is a loss of player possession other than by handing, passing, or kicking the ball.

Goal Line – Each goal line is a vertical plane separating the end zone from the field of play. The plane of goal extends beyond the sideline.

Hurdling - Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over a player who is on his/her feet.

Interception - A catch of an opponent's pass or fumble in flight is an interception.

Live Ball - A pass or fumble, which has not yet touched the ground, is a live ball in flight and therefore can be caught and advanced by either team.

Neutral Zone - The neutral zone is the area between the offensive and defensive line of scrimmage that has been established by the spot cone markers and extends to each sideline. It is established when the ball is ready for play.

Pass (Forward and Backward) - A forward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent's end line. A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the passer's end line. A pass continues to be a pass until it is caught or strikes the ground. A backward pass that hits the ground is ruled the same as a fumble. It will be dead at the spot where it strikes the ground.

Penalty – A penalty is a loss imposed by rule upon a team that has committed a foul.

Tagging - Tagging is placing one hand anywhere between the shoulders and knees of an opponent with the ball. The tagger may leave his/her feet to make the tag. Pushing, striking, slapping, and holding are not permitted. If a player trips the runner in his/her attempt to make a diving tag, it is a penalty.

Tripping – Tripping is the use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent, including the runner, below the knee.

Other definitions contained in the NFHS Football rule book that use the same terminology used in flag football will be used. Examples of these are – False start, Encroachment and Pass Interference and are not limited to these examples. Timing rules for under 2 minutes in each half will also mirror timing rules from the NFHS rule book unless otherwise expressly directed in these rules.

PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS

1. Game time is forfeit time.

2. Captains Coin toss – The coin toss winner will have the choice of offense or defense to start the game. Whom ever starts on offense will start the second half on defense. Whichever team chooses to start on offense or defense, the other team chooses the direction.
3. Length of game - Playing Time shall be 40 minutes, divided into two halves of 20 minutes each. The intermission between halves shall be 5 minutes. When overtime is used, there will be a 3-minute intermission
4. Shortened Periods - Before the start of the game, playing time may be shortened by mutual agreement of the field captains and the Referee. Anytime during the game, the playing time of any remaining period(s) may be shortened by mutual agreement of the opposing captains and the Referee.
5. Extended Periods - A half may be extended by an untimed down when, during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:
 - A. If there was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted.
 - B. If there was a double foul.
 - C. If there was an inadvertent whistle and the down is to be replayed.
 - D. If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the second half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.
6. Continuous Clock - The Clock will start when the ball is legally snapped. It will run continuously for the **first 18 minutes** unless it is stopped for:
 - A. Team time-out (clock resumes on snap of next play)
 - B. Referee's time-out (clock resumes on official's ready to play whistle)
7. 2-Minute Warning - Approximately 2 minutes before the end of each half the Referee shall stop the clock and inform both captains of the playing time remaining in that half. **This is not a timeout, and no coach-player conference will be allowed. The referee will start the play clock directly after the warning.**

8. Stopped Clock - **During the final 2 minutes of each half** the clock will stop for the following and resume on the snap of the next play unless otherwise noted:
- A. Incomplete Pass
 - B. Out-of-Bounds
 - C. Score (touchdown or safety)
 - D. Team time-out
 - E. Penalty and administration
 - F. Referee's Time-out - starts at his/her discretion
 - G. Change of Possession
 - H. Team attempting to conserve time illegally
9. Timing Errors - The Referee shall have the authority to correct obvious timing errors if discovery is prior to the second live ball following the error unless the period had officially ended.
10. Tie Game - In case of a game ending in a tie score, the officials must bring the captains and coaches of both teams to the center of the field. They will discuss the tiebreaker procedures and answer all questions prior to the coin toss.
- A. A coin will be flipped as in the start of the game. The winner of the toss shall be given the options of offense, defense, or direction. The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options. **Each overtime period begins with a coin toss.**

B. ALL OVERTIME PERIODS ARE PLAYED TOWARD THE SAME GOAL LINE.

- C. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1st and goal from the 20 yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. An overtime period consists of one possession by each team. If the score is still tied after one period, they go to a second period or as many as needed to determine a winner. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the opponent still has a chance to win the game. If the defense intercepts the pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown, they win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the ball will belong to the defense, as the offense did not convert their chance. Each team is entitled to one time-out per overtime period.
- D. Penalties - The offense should be awarded a new series of 4 downs when the penalty for roughing the passer is accepted. Dead ball fouls following a successful try will be penalized from the succeeding spot.

11. Time-Outs – Each team is entitled to 2 charged timeouts per half.

- A. The Referee shall declare time-out when he/she suspends the play for any reason. Each time-out shall be charged either to the Referee or one of the teams.
- B. The Referee shall declare an official's time-out when a team is illegally conserving time and administer a five-yard penalty.
- C. The Referee may declare an official's time-out for any contingency not covered elsewhere by the Rules.
- D. An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has blood on the uniform shall be considered injured.

12. Delays

Delay of Game - The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is a delay of game. This includes:

- A. Failure to snap within 25 seconds after the ball is ready for play.
- B. Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play.
- C. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.

Unfair Tactics - The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair.

Penalty: Delay of Game, 5 yards from previous spot.

13. Substitutions - No substitute shall enter during a down. All substitutions must enter the game during a dead ball.

SERIES OF DOWNS, NUMBER OF DOWN, & THE TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY

1. Each team receives four (4) downs to pass the zone-line-to-gain or endzone.
2. The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.
3. A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the opponents moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the opponents involves an automatic first down; or either team has obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, pass interception, or failure to gain the zone in advance of the ball.
4. If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated.

Exception: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not prior to the final change of possession and it declines all penalties for its opponent's fouls, other than unsportsmanlike, and any penalty that indicates either "down counts" or "Loss of Down".

SNAPPING, HANDLING, PASSING, RECEIVING, RUNNING THE BALL

Prior to the Snap

1. Following the ready for play and until the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents or in any other way interfere with them. This includes standing in the neutral zone to give defensive signals or shifting through the zone. After the snapper has placed his/her hands on the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the scrimmage line plane, except for the snapper's right to be over the ball. **Penalty:** Dead Ball Foul, Encroachment, 5 yards from the previous spot.
2. The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play until it is snapped. An infraction of this provision may be penalized, whether or not the ball is snapped, and the penalty for any resultant encroachment or contact foul by an opponent shall be cancelled.

Position and Action during the Snap

1. The offensive team must have at least 4 players on their scrimmage line at the snap.
Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from previous spot
2. All offensive players must be within 15 yards of the ball.
Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from previous spot
3. One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line.
Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards from previous spot
4. The player who receives the snap must be at least two yards behind the offensive scrimmage.
Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from previous spot
5. In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position without movement of feet, body, head, arms for at least one full second before the snap.
Penalty – Illegal Motion, 5 yards from previous spot

Passing and Receiving

1. There is no **diving** while running with the ball. A receiver may dive to catch a ball. **A defensive player may not dive to try to remove a flag.**
2. A runner may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble at anytime except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to conserve time or to avoid being de-flagged/tagged.
3. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the last team in possession unless lost on downs.
4. **A backward pass or fumble that goes out-of-bounds, and first touches the ground between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the spot the ball went out of bounds. If a ball goes out-of-bounds and first touches the ground behind a goal line, it is a touchback or safety.**
5. If an offensive player fumbles the ball prior to reaching the end zone and the ball lands in the end zone, the offensive team shall retain possession at the spot of the fumble.
6. All players are eligible to catch a pass.
7. A forward pass is illegal:
 - A. If the passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - B. If there is more than one forward pass per down.

8. If a player attempts a catch or intercept while in the air, the player must contact the ground inbounds with the ball in his/her possession prior to touching out-of-bounds, unless an opponent's contact causes him/her to first touch out-of-bounds.
 - A. If one foot first lands in-bounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception although a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.
 - B. A loss of ball simultaneously with returning to the ground is not a catch or interception.
9. A player may, while jumping in the air to attempt a catch, may pass (tip) the ball forward provided he/she has not touched the ground yet.
10. Pass Interference - Contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference unless it occurs when 2 or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged/tagged prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - A. Offensive Pass Interference - after the ball is snapped, and until a receiver has touched it, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage.
Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from previous spot, loss of down
 - B. Defensive Pass Interference - after the pass is thrown, and until it is touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage while the ball is in flight.
Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from previous spot, automatic first down
11. Roughing the passer – Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown, also there should be no attempts to hit the player’s arm during a throwing motion.
Penalty: Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, automatic first down

Running and Flag Belt Removal

1. Flag Belt Removal - When the flag belt is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. A player who removes the flag belt from the runner should immediately hold the flag belt above his/her head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred.
 - A. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be de-flagged.
 - B. When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play continues. The de-flagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees.
 - C. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.
 - D. A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. The official shall administer an illegal flag pull penalty and warn the team, any further penalty will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct foul.
 - E. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.
 - F. A player may NOT leave his/her feet when trying to remove the flag.
2. Contact - In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, defensive players may contact the body and shoulders, but not the face, neck or any part of the head of an opponent with their hands. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt.
Penalty: Defensive Holding, 10 yards from spot
3. Flag Guarding - A runner shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. A player may use a change of direction move (“spinning is a complete 360 degree turn and not allowed, however a turn and change of direction is permitted”) however; must keep their arms away from their flag to avoid flag guarding.
Penalty: Flag guarding, 10 yards from the spot of the penalty.

4. Face Guarding – A defensive player may not use their arms and hands to intentionally obstruct the receiver’s view of the ball.
Penalty: Face guarding, 10 yards, automatic first down.
5. Stiff Arm – A runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with an extended hand or arm which includes the use of a “stiff arm” to flag guard
Penalty: Stiff Arm, 10 yards from the spot of the penalty
6. Helping the runner – A player shall not grasp, pull, push or aid any teammate runner.

BLOCKING

1. Offense Blocking – No blocking/Moving screens permitted. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive play is illegal.
Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards from the spot of the penalty
2. Screen Blocking - Teammates of a runner or passer may not interfere for him/her by screen blocking.
Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards from the spot of the penalty
3. Defensive Rush and Use of Hands – Defensive players must attempt to go around the offensive player. Defensive players must not use any part of his/her arms, hands, elbows, or any part of the body to contact the offensive player.
Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards from previous spot

SCORING PLAYS AND TOUCHBACKS

Mercy Rule

1. If a team is 21 or more points ahead with 2 minutes to go in the second half, the game clock will run.

Touchdown

1. All touchdowns are 6 points
2. A touchdown shall be scored when a legal forward pass is completed or a fumble or backward pass is caught behind the opponent's goal line or when a player is legally in possession of the ball and penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line

Extra Point Try = 1, or 2 Points

1. An opportunity to score 1 point from the 5-yard line or 2 points from the 10 yard line, shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown. While time is out there shall be one scrimmage play, unless changed by penalty.
2. The Referee must speak to the field captain, asking him/her whether the try shall be from the 5 or 10-yard line. Once the scoring team makes the choice, he/she may change the decision only by taking a charged team time out.
3. If a double foul occurs during the down, the down shall be replayed. When a distance penalty is incurred by the offense during a successful try, the down will be repeated, if accepted. However, if the offense penalty carries a loss of down, the try has ended and will not be repeated.

Safety = 2 points

1. It is a safety when a runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his/her team's possession.

Exception: Momentum Rule

2. A safety is also when an offensive player commits a foul for which the penalty is accepted and the measurement is from the spot of the foul that is in the end zone.
3. When a safety is scored, the ball belongs to the defending team, and they shall put the ball in play from the 20 yard line.

Field marking – Red = endzone pylon, Pink = Cone for lines to gain, Yellow = Cone for no run zone

