

## Youth Flag Football Rules: 3rd-9th Grade

### The Game

1. The game shall be played by a 7-man team, 7-9th grade will play with an 8-man team. 4 offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap, and a center must snap the ball. If you have only 5 players playing only 3 must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap. You must have no more than 3 "lineman" or players on the line of scrimmage within the safety zone and they can not be closer than arms length apart.
2. The field for 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> shall be 60yrd X 30yrd with two 10yrd end zones (80 yards total length), with a 5yrd safety zone down the middle. The field dimensions for 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> will be 70yrd X 35yrd with two 10yrd end zones (90 yards total length), with a 5yrd safety zone down the middle. Dimensions for a 7th-9th grade field will be 80yrd x 40yrd with two 10yrd end zones (100 yards in total length), with a 10yrd safety zone down the middle. (Diagrams are included at the end of the document.)
3. Scoring- 6 points for Touchdowns, 1 or 2 point options for extra points (5 yards and 10 yards), Safeties can occur and will count as 2 points.
4. You must have at least 5 players to play the game
5. Each team will have 4 downs to get past the next 20 yard mark on the field for a first down. If failed on 4th down the opposing team will be awarded the ball at the spot. (Please review punting rules for further information)

### Starting the Game

1. Before game time, the referee shall toss a coin with the two team captains, after first designating which captain will call the toss. Teams will kick off from mid field.
2. The captain winning the toss shall choose one of the following options:
  - a. To receive or start on defense
  - b. To designate which endzone his team will defend
3. The loser of the toss will take the remaining option. At the start of the second half, the team that did not receive the opening kickoff, will receive the second half kickoff.
4. Between the first and second half, the teams shall change endzones to defend.

### Playing Time

1. All leagues will play two 20 minute halves.
  - a. The clock is stopped only for timeouts and emergencies. The clock will be stopped for all dead ball situations during the last two minutes of the second half.
2. Games will have a 5 minute halftime. The referee will notify the coaches when two minutes remain before the half and end of the game.

3. The playing time shall be kept on a stopwatch operated by an official on the field.

### **Time Outs**

1. Two (2) timeouts are allowed for each team each half. Time outs cannot be accumulated between halves.
2. A requested time out by a team shall not exceed one and one-half minutes. Emergency time outs for injury may extend longer if the referee deems it necessary.

### **Illegal Delay of Game**

1. The ball must be snapped within 25 seconds after it is declared ready for play by the referee, the ball must be snapped 40 seconds after any change of possession. Any action of inaction by either team which tends to prevent this is an illegal delay of the game. The includes:
  - a. Interrupting a 25 second count for any reason except calling a time out.
  - b. Using more than 25 seconds in putting the ball into play. Or 40 sec on change of possession.
  - c. The referee may order the game clock stopped or started if, in his opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair. In all cases, penalty: 5 yards.

### **Substitutions**

1. Free substitutions shall be used at all times. Every player must play at least 1/2 of every game.
2. No substitute shall enter during a down. Any number for eligible substitutes may replace players as long as it is done before the ball becomes live. Exiting players must be off the field by the time the ball is snapped, or a penalty of 5yrd will be called for too many players on the field.
3. No substitute shall become a player and then withdraw and no player shall withdraw and then re enter as a substitute until one play has expired.
4. Each substitute shall be in uniform ready for play with flags in position as directed. Penalty: 5 yards for substitution infractions.

### **Equipment**

1. All players must be in an official Spanish Fork Parks & Recreation issued jersey in order to play. Jerseys must be long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down.

2. Each player must wear a one-piece flag belt, without any knots, at the waistline with three flags permanently attached, one flag on each side and one in the center of the back.
3. Wrapping, tying, or in any way securing flag belts to the uniform other than the prescribed rule is illegal (Flags must be located on sides and back of body). Penalty: 10 yards from original line of scrimmage. Repeat offenders will be ejected from the game.
4. Metal Cleats are not allowed.

### **Rules of Ball Carrier**

1. The ball carrier shall not lower his head and deliberately drive or run into a defensive player. This is running over. The carrier shall try to avoid a flag pull by agility rather than power.

**NOTE:** Officials, in judging “running over,” will keep in mind the charging rule as applied in basketball. A ball carrier shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in his path or attempt to run between two opponents or between an opponent and a boundary unless the space is such as to provide a reasonable chance for him to go through without contact. If a ball carrier passes an opponent to have his head and shoulders in advance of the opponent, the greater responsibility for contact is on the opponent. If a ball carrier in his progress has established a straight line path, the carrier must avoid contact by changing directions or ending his forward motion. Penalty: 15 yards from point of foul. Flagrant offenders may be disqualified.

2. **Flag Guarding:** The ball carrier cannot protect his flags by blocking, guarding, hacking, or holding flags with arms or hands so his opponent cannot pull or remove his flag. Penalty Flag Guarding: 15 yards from point.
3. The ball carrier may not hurdle or jump over a player who is standing on his feet. He may jump over a player who is lying on the ground. Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
4. The ball carrier may not dive at any point while carrying the ball in an attempt to avoid a flag pull or to gain extra yardage. Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
5. After every score, the official will remove the flags of the player who scored. If it is found that the scoring player has tied his flags in any way, the score will not be allowed, and the ball will go over to the other team on their own 20 yard line.

### **Removing the Flag**

1. A defender may not hold, push, or knock down the ball carrier to get his flag. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down. If in the judgment of the official, the ball carrier would have scored a touchdown, a touchdown shall be awarded.

2. **All players' shirts or jerseys must be tucked inside their pants** so the belt holding the flags can be worn at the waist and can be clearly seen by the opponents and referee. Failure to comply after one warning will result in a 5 yard penalty.
3. **NOTE:** This rule should be interpreted as follows: If an infraction is noticed before a snap, the referee shall warn or penalize the offending team as stated above. When a down is in progress, if for any reason (loose clothing, lost flag, etc.) it becomes difficult or impossible to pull the flags, a tag on the ball carrier anywhere with one hand shall take the place of a pulled flag.

### Scrimmage Line

1. All plays from scrimmage must be started by a snap between the legs or snapped from the side. The ball must be passed from the center to a teammate in the backfield. Penalty: 5 yards, down remains the same.
2. Before the ball is snapped:
  - a. After taking his hiking position, the center cannot move or change position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play until he snaps the ball.
  - b. No offensive player shall make a false start. An infraction of such will be treated the same as faking a snap (Refer to a).
  - c. Please do not huddle if possible. Call the play and line up. This will allow for more playing time and improve the speed of the game.
  - d. There will be a 3-5 yard rope that the offense must start on one side of and the defense must start on the opposite side to mark a line of scrimmage.

### Passing

1. Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage, it may not return behind the line and be thrown as a forward pass. A forward pass is a pass that is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, by an offensive player, in any forward motion including underhand, sideways, or shuffle pass.
2. No forward passes after the line of scrimmage will be allowed. Any forward passes attempted beyond the line of scrimmage will result in a 5-yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage and a loss of down.
3. All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass.

### Rushing

1. The offense may run the football!
2. No rushing up the middle. All runners must stay to the outside of the safety zone until they cross the defensive line of scrimmage, after they have crossed the defensive line of scrimmage they may enter the safety zone. If a runner runs up the middle it will be a 5 yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage and replay down.

3. The QB can run the ball.
4. Please refer to “Rules of the Ball Carrier” for further instruction.

### **Backwards Pass**

1. The ball may be passed backward at any time beyond the line of scrimmage by the ball carrier except if intentionally thrown out of bounds. Penalty: 5 yards from spot and loss of down.

### **Completed Pass**

1. A forward and backward pass is completed when caught by any player of the passing team who is inbounds with one foot. The ball is live and play continues by advancing the ball.
2. If the pass is caught simultaneously by opponents, the ball is dead and belongs to the offensive team at the spot of the catch.

### **Ineligible Receiver**

1. A player who goes out of bounds during a passing down, loses his eligibility for that play Penalty: Loss of down at previous spot. This does not count if the offensive player is pushed or bumped out of bounds by a defensive player. In that case the offensive player must make an immediate attempt to come back in bounds.

### **Pass Interference**

1. Contact by a player which interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage during a legal forward pass is pass interference unless it occurs:
  - a. When a defender contacts an opponent before the pass is thrown
2. Pass interference regulations are effective whether or not the attempted pass crosses the scrimmage line.
3. Interference beyond the line of scrimmage is prohibited by the offensive team from the time the ball is snapped until the pass is touched by any player.
4. Interference by the defensive team is prohibited from the time the pass is thrown until it is touched by any player. Penalty: Interference by offense - 10 yards from scrimmage and loss of down. Interference by defense - spot of the foul and automatic 1st down.
5. **No Pick Plays.** Receiver may not go down field and block or intentionally run into or bump a defensive back prior to the ball being thrown.
6. No jamming the receiver off the line! (Defensive backs must play straight up defense).

## **Fumble**

1. A fumble which touches the ground between goal lines is dead and belongs to the offensive team unless lost on downs. A centered ball is dead as soon as it touches the ground. No ripping the ball out of the ball carrier's hands. Defense must go for the flag.
2. A fumble that occurs and lands in either end zone and the ball has not crossed the plane while in the ball carrier's possession it will be placed on the 5 yard.
3. A fumble occurred in the offense's defending endzone will be considered a safety.
4. A fumble may be caught in flight before hitting the ground and can be advanced.

## **Tie Game**

1. Regular Season games may end in a tie. Post season games will play overtime to determine the winner.
  - a. College overtime rules will be used in tournament play.

## **Kickoffs**

1. A kick off is a free kick which starts each half, and follows a touchdown and extra point attempt.
2. Kick offs shall be from mid field. No onside kicks are allowed. If the ball is touched by the kicking team before the receiving team, the ball is dead and will be played from that point by the receiving team.
3. The receiving team must be at least 10 yards of the mid field line.
4. If the ball goes out of bounds on a kick off, a re-kick will be used. Penalty: 5 yards.
  - a. The receiving team may choose a re-kick or take the ball at their own 20-yard line
5. A kick off that goes into the end zone will be a touchback and the team will start at their own 20 yard line.

## **Punting**

1. Punting is allowed on fourth down only. No rushing the punter. There are no fake punts. The offense must declare their intent to punt. No snap required and the offense must wait until the ball is kicked before they can cross the line of scrimmage. The receiving team may choose to have all their players downfield to catch the punt. Punts can be caught or picked up.
2. If penalties during a kick cause the ball to go over a first down line, the ball remains to the offensive team with a first down.
3. The punter must be at least 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage. He must then kick the ball immediately (5 seconds) in a continuous motion from behind his center. If the ball hits the ground while being snapped to the punter, it will not be ruled a dead ball. The offensive team must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the

ball is kicked.

4. A player of the receiving team who has an opportunity to catch a punt or kick off in flight **must be given an unencumbered opportunity to catch said kick.** At the point of touching the ball, then the defense may grab flags. Penalty: 10 yards from the point of infraction and receiving the team's ball.
5. A punt that goes out of bounds is dead and will be put into play in the center of the field parallel to where it went out.
6. A punt that comes to rest untouched in fair territory is dead and will be put into play at that point by the receiving team.

## **Offside**

1. Offside denotes the position of a player, offense or defense, who has any part of his person beyond the scrimmage line at the time the ball is put into play. Offensively the ball is blown dead. Defensive (should never be offside) offside will be played out. At the end of the play, the offense will make a decision as to accept the play or replay the down with the penalty added.
2. If the punting or the receiving team is offside, the ball is kicked over if the penalty is accepted, and it does not occur in a first down for the offense. If the penalty does not result in a first down for the offense. The offense may rechoose and needs to reestablish whether they are punting or not.

## **Blocking**

1. Blocking is permitted
2. A player must block with a closed fist and may not fully extend their arms. Blocking will essentially be like a Basketball screen but may have arms partially extended to help lineman block incoming rushers.
3. A player may not hold a defender's jersey or body part as they are blocking. This will result in a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul, and redo down.
4. The offense and defensive players must attempt to stay standing while blocking or being blocked. There are no chop blocks or cutting. These acts will result in a Personal Foul: 15-yard penalty and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down with a potential ejection from the game.
5. No shoving while blocking will be permitted. This act will result in a Personal Foul: 15 yard penalty and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down with an ejection from the game on repeat offenders.

## **ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS-CLIPPING, TRIPPING, TACKLING & HURRIDLING**

1. Teams shall be prohibited from obstructing an opponent with extended hands, arms or legs. This includes "stiff arm." Penalty: 10 yards from spot and loss of down.

## **Touchback**

1. A touchback is a result of the ball crossing the end zone line because of a punt or kick. This also includes intercepted passes in which the receiver elects to not run out of the end zone.
2. After a touchback is declared, the ball shall belong to the defending team (team on defense prior to play) at its own 20-yard line.

## **Defensive Rushing the QB**

1. No more than 2 defensive players may rush the QB at the time of the snap. 7-9th grade leagues may have 3 defensive players rush the QB at the time of the snap.
2. No defensive rushers may line up over the center and rush. All defensive rushers must rush outside the safety zone until they cross the offensive line of scrimmage, after a defensive rusher crosses the line of scrimmage they may go inside the safety zone.
3. After the ball is handed off, or the QB crosses the offensive line of scrimmage any defensive player may cross the defensive line of scrimmage to pull the runners flag

## **Teaching the Game**

1. One coach and only one coach is allowed on the playing field at one time. We encourage the youth to call the plays in all grades. In 5th and 6th the coaches must be off the field by the 5th game. In 7<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> grade the coaches are never permitted on the field.
2. Coaches on the field are not allowed to call out instruction during plays. Let your defense and/or offense learn to read and react to the offense and/or defense. This game is for the kids, please let them play it and have fun!

## **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

1. The referee may ban a player, manager, coach or fan for the entire game for unsportsmanlike conduct, abusive language, profanity, or talking back at any time. Penalty: 15 yards or half the distance to the goal, and an automatic first down.
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, and coaches or other subject to rules is prohibited. Unsportsmanlike conduct includes:
  - a. Acts of unfair play.
  - b. Coaches, fans or others on the field of play at any time without permission.
  - c. Interference of coaches, players, or others of any nature associated with the game.
  - d. Using a hide out play.
  - e. Profanity or abusive language
  - f. Attempting to substitute a suspended player.



- g. Pulling or removing a flag of an offensive player by a defender as the ball is snapped with the intent of making it easier to down the player by just a one hand touch.

### **Personal Foul**

1. Any act prohibited hereunder or any act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul.
  - a. No player shall block in a manner that would cause his feet, knees, or legs to strike an opponent.
  - b. No tripping or clipping.
  - c. No hurdling.
  - d. No unnecessary roughness of any nature.
  - e. No running over by the ball carrier.
  - f. No tackling, intentionally shoving or running over the ball carrier by the defender.
  - g. No Chop blocks or cutting.

**The official, the Site Supervisor and the Program Director reserve the right to expel any coach, manager, player, or fan from further participation in a game for any action that they deem not in harmony with the rules or the philosophy of the Parks and Recreation department. If a player or coach is ejected from a game, they will be suspended from the following game.**

### **Tournament Play Overtime College Rules (League games can end in a tie)**

- A. At the end of regulation, the officials will have team captains do a coin flip to determine which team will possess the ball first in overtime. The winner gets to choose to either play offense or defense first or chooses which side of the field to play on. The decision cannot be deferred.
- B. The team that loses the coin flip must exercise the remaining option. They will then have the chance to choose first from the four categories in the second overtime and subsequent even-numbered OT periods. The team that wins the toss will have the same options in odd - numbered OT periods.
- C. In each of the first two overtime periods, teams are granted one possession beginning at the opponent's 20-yard line, unless a penalty occurs to move them back.
- D. Each team is granted one timeout per overtime period. Timeouts do not carry over from regulation nor do they carry over between overtime periods.
- E. Each team retains the ball until it fails to score, fails to make a first down or turns the ball over.
- F. Beginning with the second overtime period, teams must attempt a two-point conversion after scoring a touchdown.



- G. Beginning with the third overtime period, teams will begin to run alternating one(1)-point conversion plays instead of offensive possessions.