



2021 NFL Flag Football Rules 5th/6th Grade Division



General Information

All coaches, parents, and players are expected to know and respect the rules and philosophies of the Boys and Girls Club NFL Flag program. In instances where there is an issue with any aspect of the program, we encourage coaches/parents to first review our playing rules/policies. If there is a situation/issue not outlined in the rulebook, please contact the Athletic Director for a final ruling/decision.

I. Game

1. At the start of each game, one captain from each team will meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine first possession. The visiting team calls the coin toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of which endzone they will defend. The team that starts the game on defense will have first possession to start the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross the line-to-gain. Once a team crosses the line-to-gain, it has three (3) plays to score a touchdown. **Fourth-down option – teams can elect to “go for it” on fourth down. If they do not convert either a first down or touchdown, the opposing team will take over on downs at the spot of the last play (or their own 5-yard line IF the spot of the last play is closer to the goal line than the 5-yard line).**
4. If the offense elects to “punt” on fourth down, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. All possession changes (except interceptions **& failed 4th-down plays**) start on the offense’s 5-yard line.
6. Teams change endzones/directions to start the second half.
7. All games are scheduled by the Athletic Director and start time is game time. If a team is not ready to play at their scheduled start time, then they may be forced to forfeit their game.

II. Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) - an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
Downs (1-2-3-4)	The offensive team has three attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. After three plays, the offense can elect to either “punt” or “go for it.”
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	Sound made by an official to signal the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	Official's whistle that is blown in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier or any offensive player directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by using a stiff arm, lowering the elbow or head, or blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.
Shovel Pass	A forward pass that looks like a pitch.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	Any rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

III. Eligibility

1. All players must have a current Boys & Girls Club membership and must be in the 5th/6th grade level during the 2021-22 school year. All legal guardians must sign the COVID-19 waiver before their child/ward can participate (this includes practicing) in the league.

IV. Equipment

1. The league provides each player with an official flag belt and NFL FLAG team jersey. It is the coach's responsibility to keep track of each players' official flag belt.
2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, but any cleat with exposed metal must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed. **Face coverings/masks are optional on the field.**
4. Players must remove all jewelry, hats/headwear. Winter beanies are allowed.
5. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants. All player flags must be visible & uncovered.
6. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.
 - a. **Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.**

V. Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards wide by 70 yards long with two 10-yard end zones, and a line-to-gain at midfield. No-run zones precede the line-to gain and end zone by 5 yards.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before each line-to-gain and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays (and can include a hand-off).
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from the line-to-gain, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a touchdown).
5. **NOTE – If local/state health restrictions are in place, coaches/players MUST practice social distancing on their sidelines and encourage bench personnel to wear face coverings.**

VI. Rosters

1. Home teams wear dark jerseys. Visiting teams wear light jerseys.
2. Teams rosters have a minimum of eight players and a maximum of ten players.
3. Teams must start games with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field (but no fewer than four).

VII. Player Placement

1. All players will be placed on a roster comprised of kids from their elementary/middle school. (Exception, see #6). Home-school players will be placed on a school team closest to their residence.
2. If enough players in a particular grade and school turn out to form more than one team, then the coaches will participate in a private draft held at the Club with the Athletic Director present. The first ten legally registered and paid players are guaranteed a roster spot. They cannot be cut and they may be moved only if schools combine. They will be included in a draft. Maximum roster size is 10 and minimum is 8.
3. A player may play up one grade level only. A player may not play down. A player may not “bump” an appropriately graded player, with the exception of the head coach’s child. **Example:** A 4th-grader may play in the 5th/6th division, but a 3rd-grader may not. Note: The Athletic Director reserves the right to require an inappropriately-aged player to play at their corresponding grade level at any time.
4. A coach may not reserve a player, except for the coach’s own child. A player/parent may not reserve a coach; but must go through the sign up process. The child of the head coach will be the 4th pick of the draft. Each team is limited to one head coach and one assistant coach. The assistant coach is not selected until after the draft.
5. The determining number for having a draft is 16 or more players. The Athletic Director will make every effort to build two or more teams, if applicable, and may require extra time to do so.
6. A player may play for a different school if:
 - a. There is no team planned at the school the player attends, including players from private schools and public schools outside the local school districts.
 - b. The player is sent to another school due to a full roster.
 - c. Personal or disciplinary reasons of exceptional or extraordinary circumstances (custody issues, no-contact orders, etc.). The Athletic Director will make the final ruling in these cases.
7. Students who attend a private school may elect to play on a public school team if their school does not have a team; however, they must play for the public school closest to their residence.
8. **All children MUST be members of the Club and have all fees paid prior to the first game. A player may NOT practice until the Club has their registration and COVID-19 waiver.** Once the roster is full at 10, no additions or deletions can be made; and no guarantees can be made as to where a child will be placed. Placement will be based upon need.
9. Late registrations WILL be taken ONLY if there are open roster spots on another existing team. **Note:** The Athletic Director will try to create full rosters on all teams. Only players approved and/or placed by the Athletic Director are eligible to play.
10. The Club cannot and will not guarantee any team or coach for any reason, including transportation. All players MUST go through the appropriate registration process. We will do our best to accommodate requests; but cannot make any guarantees. The Placement Policy is our guide.

VIII. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. If a team gains a 28-point advantage, the game will continue, but the officials will no longer keep score (exception – the trailing team scores to reduce the margin to under 28 points). The game clock stops only for timeouts, injuries and the end of halves.
2. Halftime is **three** minutes.
3. 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.
4. Each team has one 30-second timeout per half.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop; and then restart once the injured player is safely removed from the playing field.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. Overtime format is as follows:
 - a. A coin flip (visiting team calls toss) will determine the team that chooses who gets ball first on offense.
 - i. If a second round of overtime is needed, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues

- with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
- ii. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
- b. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts their try; the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.
 - i. Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the 5-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win.
 - ii. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
- c. All points will be counted in the final score.
 - i. Example: End of regulation time, score is 14-14. Team A scores one point and Team B score two points. Team B wins with a final score of 16-15.
- d. Maximum number of rounds is 5. If there is no winner after 5th round, the game ends in a tie.
- e. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
- f. There are no additional timeouts in the overtime periods.

IX. Scoring

1. Touchdown: worth 6 points
2. PAT (point after touchdown): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1-point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass.
 - b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
3. Safety: 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
4. If a team is winning by 28 points or more, play continues in scrimmage mode for the rest of the game.
5. Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team (or the actual score when the 28-point margin is reached).

X. Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to both the Boys & Girls Club and NFL FLAG philosophies, coaching guidelines and the Club's code of conduct.
2. Both the offensive team and defensive team can have one coach in the huddle for the **first week** of the season (or their first game IF they have a bye in week #1)
 - a. Coaches must be on the sidelines at the start of each play.
 - b. After the first week of the season (or their first game), no coaches can be on the field.

XI. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play and no part of their body touched out-of-bounds prior to the catch.

4. The defense may not try to confuse the offense by mimicking the verbal signals or creating a distraction prior to the snap. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground. **NOTE - If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the play can continue IF the quarterback (QB only) immediately retrieves the ball.**
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. Inadvertent whistle.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier lost possession.

8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
9. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be administered. Officials should confer and agree on any controversial call in order to get the call right.

XII. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner’s feet are when the flag is pulled; not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player’s front foot.
2. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. The toss or pitch is a legal handoff.
 - b. “Center sneak” play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
3. Absolutely NO laterals beyond the line-of scrimmage.
4. No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of the lines-to-gain are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from the line-to-gain and one 5 yards from the goal line).
5. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback (or pitched), all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. **The quarterback can only run with the ball in the following situations:**
 - a. **In the act of scrambling on a designed passing play, or**
 - b. **As part of a reverse (or throw back) play**
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
9. **Spinning – ball carriers are allowed to pivot/rotate from side to side; but NOT spin completely around (360 degrees). If a player spins completely around to avoid a flag pull, the referee will whistle/stop the play and mark the ball at the spot of the spin.**
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that they are avoiding a collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.

11. No blocking is allowed at any time. Offensive players can run with the ball carrier but CANNOT initiate any contact with a defensive player. ANY intentional blocking motion or initiated contact by an offensive player will be a “blocking penalty”. Blocking motions include:
 - a. Dropping of the shoulder
 - b. Extending the arms **and/or forming a “wall” around the ball-carrier**
 - c. Elbowing
 - d. Charging
12. “Screening” is a legal offensive motion. An offensive player may set a screen by standing still with their arms crossed and pressed against their stomach/chest. If the offensive player setting a screen is moving, they will be called for a “blocking penalty”. All illegal blocking motions are also true for any player setting a screen (see #11).
13. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XIII. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (no safety awarded).

XIV. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes.
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception AND no part of the receiver’s body can touch out-of-bounds prior to the catch.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable; **except** on PAT conversions.

XV. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of **ten (10) yards** from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the ten-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. The referee on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage will line up ten yards off the line of scrimmage to mark the 10-yard rush line. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point of 10 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from any player from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off, pitched, or thrown by the quarterback.

- iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 10-yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap. – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player (not lined up at the rush line) crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- 4. **NO RUSHING THE PASSER ALLOWED IN THE NO-RUN ZONES. Note – the 7-second clock is still in effect for the no-rushing zones (including PATs).**
- 5. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- 6. The offense cannot initiate contact with the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
- 7. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

XVI. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier’s possession at any time.
4. If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender’s access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with their jersey.

XVII. Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to the quarterback, and the ball must completely leave their hands.

XVIII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor, referee or athletic director witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, then the game will be stopped and the offending player will be ejected from the game. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine if language is offensive. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one verbal to both the player & coach AND penalize the offender. If it continues, the player or players (or coach) will be ejected from the game.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders who have established a defensive position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
 - d. **Any parent/fan who enters the field of play will be required to leave the facilities (out of sight & sound) for the remainder of the game. (Exception – a parent beckoned onto field for an injured player.)**
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid-friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
 - b. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

NOTE: The field monitor, referees and athletic directors reserve the right to eject any player, fan, coach or parent who commits either verbal or physical abuse. Anyone ejected from the game **MUST** leave the facility (out of sight/sound) for the remainder of the game. Two ejections in a single season will result in immediate termination from the program.

XIX. Participation

1. Coaches are expected to give each player equal playing time. If issues come up in which a coach is unfairly/intentionally limiting playing time of some players, then the athletic director will meet with the coach to resolve the issue.

XX. Penalties

- A. General
 - a. The referees will administer all penalties.
 - b. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
 - c. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
 - d. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players and/or fans may not question calls.
 - e. Games may not end on a defensive penalty; unless the offense declines it.
 - f. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
 - g. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than the distance to the goal.

B. Defensive Spot Fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	Automatic first down

C. Offensive Spot Fouls

Blocking	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards and loss of down

D. Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down
Illegal rush (not starting from 10-yard line)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down
Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down

E. Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside/false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (any pass not received past line-of-scrimmage of throwing pass after crossing line-of-scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

For additional information regarding the Club's NFL Flag Football program (sponsored by HappyDayEats.com), visit our website at www.poweroftheclub.org or contact:

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