



# 2023 NFL Flag Football Rules

## 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Division



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS**  
OF THE LEWIS CLARK VALLEY

### 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 Football program. In instances where there is an issue with any aspect of the program, we encourage coaches/parents to first review our playing rules. If there is a situation/issue not outlined within 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 (coach can be a captain) will meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. 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 started the game on defense will have first possession at the beginning of the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has **four (4) plays to cross the line-to-gain. Once a team crosses the line-to-gain, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown. Fourth-down option – teams can elect to “go for it” on fourth down. If they do not make a first down (or TD) on the fourth-down play, the opposing team will take over on downs at the spot of the last play (or their own 5-yard line IF the 4<sup>th</sup>-down play is closer to the goal line than the 5-yard line).**
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line (or at the spot IF opposing team elects to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup>-down and fails to convert).
5. If the offensive team fails to gain a first down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line (or at the spot IF opposing team elects to go for it on 4<sup>th</sup>-down and fails to convert).
6. If the offensive team opts to “punt” after three plays, the receiving team will start on their 5-yard line.
7. Teams change endzones/directions at the start of the second half.
8. All games are scheduled by the Athletic Director and game time is start time. If a team is not ready to play at their scheduled start time, they may be forced to forfeit the game.

### II. Terminology

<b>Boundary Lines</b>	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
<b>Line of Scrimmage</b>	(LOS) - an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
<b>Line-to-Gain</b>	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
<b>Rush Line</b>	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
<b>Offense</b>	The team with possession of the ball.
<b>Defense</b>	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
<b>Passer</b>	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
<b>Rusher</b>	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.
<b>Downs (1-2-3-4)</b>	The offensive team has three attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. <b>After 3 plays, the offensive team can either “punt” or go for it on fourth down.</b>

<b>Live Ball</b>	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.
<b>Dead Ball</b>	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
<b>Whistle</b>	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.
<b>Inadvertent Whistle</b>	Official's whistle that is blown in error.
<b>Charging</b>	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier 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.
<b>Flag Guarding</b>	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.
<b>Shovel Pass</b>	A legal forward pass to a receiver behind the line of scrimmage.
<b>Lateral</b>	A backward or sideway toss/pitch of the ball by the ball-carrier.
<b>Unsportsmanlike Conduct</b>	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

### III. Eligibility

- All players must have a current Boys & Girls Club membership and must be in the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade level during the 2023-24 school year. All legal guardians must sign the COVID-19 waiver before their child/ward can participate (including practices) in the league.

### IV. Equipment

- 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.
- Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, but any cleat with exposed metal must be removed.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed. **Face coverings/masks are optional.**
- Players must remove all jewelry, hats/headwear. Winter beanies are allowed.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants. Both player flags MUST be showing/uncovered.
- 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.
  - Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.**

### V. Field

- The field dimensions are 20 yards wide by 50 yards long with two 5-yard end zones, and a line-to-gain at midfield. No-run zones are located 5 yards out from each end zone and on each side of the midfield line to gain.**
- 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 end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays. Pass plays after a hand-off ARE allowed (pass must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage).
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- Each offensive team approaches only one no-run zone in each drive (5 yards from the goal line).
- NOTE – If local/stage health restrictions are in place, coaches/players MUST practice social distancing on their sidelines and encourage bench personnel to wear face coverings.**

### VI. Rosters

- Home teams wear dark color jerseys. Visiting teams wear light color jerseys.
- Teams rosters have a minimum of eight players and a maximum of 10 players.
- 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 (no fewer than four).

## VII. Player Placement

1. All players will be placed on a roster comprised of kids from their school. (Exception, see #6 below). Home-school players will be placed on a 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 level. A player may not “bump” an appropriately graded player, with the exception of the head coach’s child. **Example:** A 2<sup>nd</sup> grader may play 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade, but a 1<sup>st</sup> 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 registration process. The child of the head coach will be the 4<sup>th</sup> pick of the draft. Each team is limited to one head and one assistant coach. Assistant coach is not selected until after the draft.
5. The determining number for conducting 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 (i.e., custody issues, no-contact orders, etc.). The Athletic Director will make the final decisions in these cases.
7. Students who attend a private school may elect to play on a school team if their school does not have a team planned; however, they must play for the public school which they would normally attend.
8. All children **MUST** be members of the Club and have all fees paid prior to their first game. A player may **NOT** practice until the Club has their registration. Once the roster is full at 10, no additions or deletions can be made. There will be no exceptions!
9. Once rosters fill, team placement will be based on roster vacancies (open spots).
10. **Note:** The minimum roster number is 8 and the maximum is 10. The Athletic Director will strive to build every roster to 10. The cooperation and patience of coaches and parents is key in this process. Only players approved and/or placed by the Athletic Director are eligible to play.
11. The Club cannot guarantee placement on any team or coach for any reason, including transportation. We will do our best to accommodate requests but cannot make guarantees. The Placement Policy guides our decisions.

## VIII. Timing

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20 minute halves. Game clock stops only for timeouts, injuries or the end of a half/period.
2. Halftime will be **three** minutes in length.
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 stops and restarts once the injured player is removed from the field.
7. Score will not be kept for 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade leagues and no overtime will be conducted.

## IX. Scoring

1. While we do not keep score at the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>-grade level, we will have PAT attempts after touchdowns.
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).

## **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 on the field at all times. The offensive coach will be the quarterback for their team.

## **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 officials 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 gaining possession in the air is considered "in" as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not try to confuse the offense by mimicking the verbal cadence while the quarterback (coach) is calling out signals to start the play. 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.
  - 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. The 7 second pass clock expires.
  - i. Inadvertent whistle.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of 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 ruling. If the ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the ruling is incorrect, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should confer/agree on any controversial call 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. The quarterback cannot run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. 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 initial handoff.
4. Absolutely NO laterals beyond the line-of scrimmage.
5. "No-run zones" are located 5 yards before each end zone and are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones.
6. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback (coach), all defensive players are eligible to rush.

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 spin only ONCE (one rotation) per carry. Spinning multiple times will result in a flag-guarding penalty.**
10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid 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 screening contact by an offensive player will be a “blocking penalty”. Blocking motions include:
  - a. Dropping of the shoulder
  - b. Extending the arms **and/or creating 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 (and penalized).

### **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 is enforced).

### **XIV. Receiving**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (except the quarterback/coach).
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.
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 change of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable **except** on PAT conversions.

### **XV. Rushing the Passer**

1. **There are NO restrictions on rushing the passer in the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade leagues.**
2. Once the ball is handed off any defensive player is allowed to rush.

### **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 the jersey.

## **XVII. Formations**

1. The quarterback (Coach) will be the 6<sup>th</sup> player on the offense and the defense will field five players on defense. This rule promotes more player participation and allows for more substitutions on both sides of the ball.
2. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to five players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback (coach) 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.
3. 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.
4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs OR to their side to the quarterback/coach; and the ball must completely leave the center's hands.

## **XVIII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

1. If the field monitor, referee, and/or athletic director witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be removed (ejected) from the game. The decision is made at the discretion of the referee, field monitor, and/or Athletic Director. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials, field monitors and/or the Athletic Director have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players 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 attempt to avoid defenders who are in an established defensive position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier (or hold the runner) 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 free of profanity.
  - 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 facility for the rest of the game. (Only exception is when a player is injured and the officials/coach beckon them onto the field.)
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 director 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 a **suspension from the program/league**.

## **XIX. Participation**

1. Coaches are expected to give each player equal playing time. If issues come up in which a coach is 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 referee/officials 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 rulings/calls.
- e. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines the penalty.
- f. Penalties are assessed as either live ball or dead ball penalties (or both if they happen during and after the same play). 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 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 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

#### 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 (received past line-of-scrimmage or thrown beyond 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 NFL Flag Football (sponsored by HappyDayEats.com) program, visit our website at [BGCLCV/NFL Flag Football](http://BGCLCV/NFL Flag Football) or contact:

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