

Youth Flag Football Rules

LEAGUE CLASSIFICATION

- A. 3rd and 4th League is for boys and girls in the third and fourth grades in the fall semester of the current school year.
- B. 5th and 6th League is for boys and girls in the fifth and sixth grades as of the fall semester of the current school year.

PLAYER SELECTION

- A. A team roster will consist of no more than 14 players. Players shall not be added by coaches! Players may be added only by approval of the League President. These may only be added because of the depletion of a team for possible forfeiture of games. Players must be officially on the team to play. Use of an ineligible player will result in forfeit of any games they played in.
- B. Players will be drafted in the Rec. office. Anyone added will be done by League President in the order of drafts until teams are full.
- C. Each team is allowed one coach and one assistant coach. Other adults and parents may help with team practices and fill in at games during the absence of a coach or assistant coach.

THE GAME

- A. The game shall be played by an eight-man team. At least five offensive players must be within one yard of the line of scrimmage at the snap. These five players must be within 5 yards of the ball laterally and all offensive players must be set for at least one second prior to the center snap. Instead of the ball carrier being tackled or tagged, a ball carrier is downed when a flag is pulled from his belt.
- B. The field is divided into four equal zones of 20 yards. Each zone is bounded by a zone line. A team will be given four downs to move the ball across the next zone line. When the zone line is crossed, a new series of four downs will again be awarded.
- C. If the offensive team fails to advance the ball to the next zone in four downs they shall lose possession of the ball to their opponents at the spot where the ball is declared dead after four downs. One line may be passed only once during a series of plays to constitute a first down.
- D. Goal lines for each team shall be established at opposite ends of the field and each team shall be allowed opportunities to advance the ball across their opponent's goal line by running or passing it.
- E. Each coach will designate to the referee a team captain(s). The captain will speak for his team in all dealings with the officials. A captain's first choice on any option shall stand.
- F. Players, substitutes, coaches, and other team representatives are subject to the rules and shall be governed by the decisions of the officials.

THE FIELD

- A. The regulation dimensions shall be 80 yards by 40 yards.
- B. The lines bounding the sidelines and end zones are out of bounds in their entirety, and the inbounds area is bound by those lines.

STARTING THE GAME

- A. Each half starts with a kickoff. Before game time the referee shall toss a coin with the two team captains, after first designating which captain will call the toss.
- B. The captain winning the toss shall choose one of the following options:
 - 1. To kickoff
 - 2. To receive
 - 3. To designate which goal his team will defend.
- C. The loser of the toss shall make his choice of the remaining options.
- D. At the start of the second half the choosing of options shall be reversed.
- E. Between the first and second, and third and fourth quarters, the teams shall change goals. Team possession, number of next down, the relative position of the ball and line-to-gain remains unchanged.

PLAYING TIME

- A. Four, ten minute running quarters. The clock is stopped only for time outs and emergencies.
- B. A two minute rest period between quarters and five minutes between halves will be allowed. The referee will notify the coaches when two minutes remain before the half and end of the game.
- C. The playing time shall be kept on a stop watch operated by an official on the field.

TIME OUTS

- A. Two (2) time outs are allowed each team each half. After a team has used its time outs they cannot take another. Time outs cannot be accumulated.
- B. A requested time out by a team shall not exceed 1 ½ minutes. Emergency time outs for injury may extend longer if the referee deems it necessary.

ILLEGAL DELAY OF THE GAME

- A. The ball must be put into play within 25 seconds after it is declared ready for play by the referee. Any action or inaction by either team which tends to prevent this is illegal delay of the game. This includes:
 - 1. Interrupting a 25 second count for any reason except calling a time out.
 - 2. Using more than 25 seconds in putting the ball into play.
 - 3. Failing to remove an injured player for whose benefit an excess time out has been granted.
 - 4. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead or ready for play.
 - 5. 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

- A. Free substitutions shall be used at all times. Every player must play two quarters of every game. Coaches wishing to keep boys out of games for disciplinary reasons may do so. However, the opposing coaches and referee must be notified before the game.
- B. No substitute shall enter during a down. Any number of eligible substitutes may replace players as long as it is done before the ball becomes alive. Existing players must be off the field.
- C. No substitute shall become a player and then withdraw and no player shall withdraw and then reenter as a substitute until one play has expired.
- D. Each substitute shall be in uniform ready for play with flags in position as directed. Penalty: 5 yards for substitution infractions.

EQUIPMENT

- A. Players should wear their jerseys to each game.
- B. Players wearing glasses may wear protection shields.
- C. Use of all-purpose athletic shoes is optional. Said shoes must meet the following specifications:
 - 1. The cleat must be molded to the sole; detachable cleats are illegal.
 - 2. The sole must be constructed of rubber or plastic. No metal cleats. Tennis or gym shoes may also be worn.
 - 3. Bare feet or stocking feet will not be allowed!!!
- D. Each player on the field will wear a belt with two (2) flags attached. These will be furnished by the Payson Recreation Department.
- E. Wrapping, tying, or in any way securing flags to the uniform or belt, other than the prescribed rule, is illegal. Penalty: 10 yards. Repeat offenders will be ejected from the game.
- F. The Payson Recreation Department will furnish mouth guards for each player. **MOUTH GUARDS MUST BE WORN BY EVERY PLAYER ON THE FIELD AT ALL TIMES!!** Teams will be given one warning if a player is not wearing his mouth guard. If a second infraction occurs, even if it is a different player, the player in violation will be ejected! **NO EXCEPTIONS!!!!**

DEFINITIONS AND RULES OF:

Ball Carrier

- A. The ball carrier is a player in possession of a live ball trying to advance the ball.
 - B. 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 this 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: 10 yards, loss of down from point of foul. Flagrant offenders may be ejected.
- C. The ball carrier cannot protect his flags by blocking, guarding, hacking, stiff arming or holding flags with arms or hands so his opponent cannot pull or remove his flag. Penalty: 5 yards from point.
 - D. 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 point.

Spinning

- A. The ball carrier may spin only one time in succession. He must establish balance and direction before he can spin again (5 steps usually). Penalty: 5 yards from spot.

Removing the Flag

- A. When the flag is cleanly taken from a ball carrier the down shall end and the ball is dead. Upon removing the flag the defender shall hold the flag above his head to assist the referee in locating the spot of capture.
- B. In an attempt to remove a flag from the ball carrier, a defensive player may use his hands on the body and shoulders of an opponent but not on his face or head. A defender may not hold, push or knock down the ball carrier to get his flag. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and automatic 1st down.

- C. The flag may be dropped at the spot of capture without a penalty.
- D. 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.

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, (i.e. Loose clothing, lost flags, 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.

Live Ball

- A. A live ball is a term which indicates that the ball is in play.
- B. After being declared ready for play by the referee, the ball becomes a live ball when it is snapped or free kicked, legally or illegally.

Dead Ball

- A. A live ball becomes dead and the referee sounds his whistle under the following incidences:
 1. When it goes out of bounds or when it touches the goal line (vertical plane) or the ball carrier's opponents.
 2. When any part of the ball carrier's person other than his hand or foot touches the ground.
 3. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful try for point is made.
 4. When, during a try for point, the defending team obtains possession of the ball or when it becomes certain the try will not score a point.
 5. When a player of the kicking team catches or touches any kick, or when the kicked ball comes to rest on the ground without any player touching it.
 6. When a forward pass hits the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
 7. When a lateral or backward pass, or a fumble hits the ground.

Note: A ball snapped from scrimmage which hits the ground before or after getting to the intended receiver is dead at the spot it hits the ground. Any fumbled ball that touches the ground is dead and possession of the ball belongs to the team which had it at the time of the snap, unless it is lost on number of downs.

- 8. When a legal forward pass is caught by the offensive team on or behind his opponent's goal line. It is also dead if a defender catches a pass in the end zone and elects not to run it out.
- 9. When a ball carrier has a flag removed legally by a defensive player.
- 10. Any type of kicked ball in the end zone will be a dead ball.

Scrimmage Line

- A. All plays from scrimmage must be started by a legal snap. The ball must be passed from between the legs of the center to a teammate. Penalty: 5 yards, down remains the same.
- B. Before the ball is snapped:
 1. 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. An infraction of this may be called whether or not the ball is snapped. Any contact by a defensive player on such will be nullified.
 2. After the ball is ready for play and before it is snapped, no defensive player can touch the ball or contact an offensive player.

3. No offensive player shall make a false start. An infraction of such will be treated the same as the faking a snap (refer to #1).
4. In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and hold stationary for one full second before the ball is snapped. This means feet, hands, arms, legs, body, and head. Penalty: 5 yards, down remains the same.

C. When the ball is snapped:

1. At least five offensive players must be on their line of scrimmage. The ball may be snapped to any one of the remaining three backfield men as long as it goes between the legs of the center and the signal caller is between two backfield players.
2. All players must be inbounds. Only the center may be crouched on the neutral zone over the ball. The rest of the line must be at least 12 inches behind the ball.
3. One offensive backfield player may be in motion but not toward his opponent's goal line.
4. No offensive player while on his scrimmage line may receive a snap. Penalty: 5 yards, down remains the same.

Handling the Ball Forward and Backward

A. No player may hand the ball forward except as follows:

1. An offensive player who is behind his scrimmage line may hand the ball forward to a backfield teammate who is also behind that line.
2. To a teammate who was on his scrimmage line when the ball was snapped provided that teammate left his line position and was at least one yard behind his scrimmage line when he received the ball. Penalty: 5 yards and loss of down.

B. A ball carrier may hand the ball backward at any time.

Passing

A. Passing the ball is throwing it.

Forward Pass

A. A forward pass is a live ball thrown toward the opponent's line.

B. All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass.

C. Only one forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage is allowed. The passer must be behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is thrown. Penalty: 5 yards from spot and loss of down.

Illegal Forward Pass

A. A forward pass is illegal:

1. If a passer is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is thrown.
2. If more than one forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage is made.
3. If ball is intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds. Penalty: 5 yards from spot and loss of down.

Backward Pass

A. A backward pass is a live ball thrown toward one's own end zone or parallel to the passer's line of scrimmage.

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

Completed Pass

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

Incomplete Pass

- A. A forward and backward pass is incomplete when the ball touches the ground or goes out of bounds.
- B. It is incomplete also when a player jumps from inbounds and catches the pass but lands on or outside a boundary line.
- C. An incomplete forward pass belongs to the passing team at the previous line of scrimmage.
- D. An incomplete backward pass belongs to the passing team at the spot the ball hits the ground unless lost on downs.

Ineligible Receiver

- A. A player, who goes out of bounds during a passing down, loses his eligibility until the ball has been touched by an opponent. Penalty: Loss of down at previous spot.

Pass Interference

- A. 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:
 - 1. When two or more players are making a simultaneous and legitimate attempt to reach, catch, or bat the pass.
 - 2. When a defender contacts an opponent before the pass is thrown.
- B. Forward Pass interference regulations are effective whether or not the pass crosses the scrimmage line.
- C. 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.
- D. 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- point of foul and automatic first down.

Interception

- A. A catch of an opponent's pass before it hits the ground is an interception and may be advanced.

Fumble

- A. 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.
- B. On a punt or kick off that has been touched and then touches the ground, the ball is dead at the point it touches the ground.
- C. A fumble may be caught in flight before hitting the ground and can be advanced.

Kicks

Kick Off

- A. A kick off is a free kick which starts each half and follows each extra point try or safety and must be place kicked. Punting on kick off is not permitted.
- B. Kick offs shall be from the kicking team's "B" line. 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.
- C. The receiving team must have four players within 5 yards of their own "B" line.
- D. If the ball goes out of bounds on a kick off, a re-kick will be used. Penalty: 5 yards
- E. A kick off going into the end zone will be put in play from the receiving team's "D" line.

Punting

- A. A punt is kicking the ball by the player who drops the ball and kicks it before it strikes the ground.
- B. There are no quick kicks. If a team desires to punt, they must announce the kick before the ball is ready for play. Penalty: 5 yards.
- C. Both teams must maintain five players on the line of scrimmage. All players must remain frozen until the ball is kicked. Penalty: 5 yards.
- D. The punter may be at least 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage when receiving the center snap or he may take a direct snap from the center. He must then kick the ball immediately in a continuous motion from behind his center.
- E. 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.
- F. On a replay of a kick due to penalties, the offensive team must re-announce their intention to kick if going to kick.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.

Kick off and Punt Reception

- A. If a kick off or a punt is caught by a player of the receiving team, or picked up cleanly after hitting the ground being untouched, the ball continues in play and can be advanced.
- B. A player of the receiving team who has an opportunity to catch a kick off or punt 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 infraction and receiving team's ball.

Offside

- A. 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. Penalty: 5 yards.
- B. If the kicking or the receiving team is offside, the ball is kicked over if the penalty is accepted.

Blocking

- A. Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent by contacting him with the blocker's body.
- B. In all instances a blocker must be on his feet during a block. If after the block, the blocker's body momentum causes him to fall or leave his feet the referee at his discretion may rule it incidental to the block and not illegal.
- C. Hands and forearms must be clasped next to the blocker's body at time of block. The hands and arms must be kept below the shoulders of the opponent during the entire block. Penalty: 10 yards.

Defensive Use of Hands

- A. Defensive players may use their hands to push or pull an opponent to the side in an attempt to get at the ball carrier, and may use their hands for protection in warding off an opponent.

Offensive Use of Hands

- A. The ball carrier shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled or lifted from the ground by a teammate. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and loss of down.
- B. The offensive team shall be prohibited from obstructing an opponent with extended hands or arms. This includes "stiff-arm". Penalty: 10 yards from spot and loss of down.
- C. There shall be no interlocking interference or blocking. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and loss of down.

Clipping

- A. Clipping is running or diving into the back, or throwing or dropping the body across the back of a leg or legs of an opponent. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and loss of down.

Tripping

- A. Tripping is using the lower leg or foot to obstruct or trip an opponent. This includes the ball carrier. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and 1st down.

Tackling

- A. Tackling is grasping or encircling an opponent with the hand or arm. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and 1st down.

B. It is illegal to tackle, trip, push, hold, hack, stiff-arm, or rough another player.

Note: Referee will enforce pushing the ball carrier out of bounds. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and 1st down.

- C. If a defensive player tackles or trips a ball carrier that, in the judgment of the referee had an open field for a touchdown, a touchdown will be awarded the ball carrier.

Hurdling

- A. Hurdling is an attempt by the runner to jump with both feet or knees foremost over a player who is still on his feet. Penalty: 10 yards from spot and loss of down.

Huddle

- A. A huddle is the offensive and/or defensive players grouped together after the ball is ready for play and before assuming scrimmage formation prior to the snap.

Hideouts

- A. A hideout is a player who is trying to conceal himself or be concealed by teammates on or off the field. No hideouts will be permitted.
- B. All players must break from the huddle and assume their position on the line or backfield.
- C. When no huddle is used, all players being substituted for must exit immediately with the substitute taking the proper position.
- D. All players not in the game being on the sideline must be behind the sideline in their proper zone.

Penalty for hideouts: 10 yards from scrimmage and play called back.

Safety

- A. A safety is when the ball becomes dead in the offensive team's own end zone by cause of the defense.
- B. If during a scrimmage play the ball becomes dead in the offensive team's end zone (pulled flag, fumble, out of bounds, or any manner or part of the play), a safety shall be called.
- C. After a safety is scored, the offensive team will kick off from their "D" line. This can be from the ground, a tee, or a punt.

Touchback

- A. A touchback is a result of the ball crossing the end zone line because of a kick off, punt, or intercepted pass in which the receiver elects to not run out of the end zone.
- B. After a touchback is declared, the ball shall belong to the defending team (team of defense prior to play) at its own "D" line.

Penalty Clarification

- A. A penalty is completed when it is accepted, declined, or canceled according to rule. Any penalty may be declined, however, a disqualified player on such penalty, if enforced, must leave the game.
- B. A penalty which occurs simultaneously with a snap or free kick (punt or kick off) is considered as occurring during that down.
- C. When two or more penalties by the same team occur on one play, the referee will explain the penalties to the captain of the offended team who may elect only one of these penalties.
- D. After a penalty that leaves the ball in possession of the offense beyond its line-to-gain, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with next zone to gain.
- E. If a penalty involves a loss of down, the down shall count as one of the series of four.
- F. Offsetting penalties are penalties committed by both teams on a said play. If such penalties are reported by the referee while the ball is ready for play or during the down, the penalties cancel each other and the down is replayed.
- G. When team possession changes during a down (Interception, punt) and neither team committed a penalty prior to but after exchanged possession, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with zone to gain by the team which established last possession.
- H. If a penalty occurs before a change of team possession, the ball belongs to team A (offense) and the down repeated unless the ball rests beyond the line to gain. Exception: If offense commits the penalty, the defense may refuse and keep the ball or have offense replay the down.

- I. During a try for extra point, if a distance penalty occurs by team B (defense) on a successful try, team A (offense) shall have the option of declining the score and repeat the try following enforcement of penalty, or accepting the score with enforcement of penalty from the spot of the next kick off. If offense commits the penalty the down is repeated.

Line Backs

- A. A line back is handing the ball off within one yard of the center. No running plays within one yard of either side of the center will be permitted unless it has been preceded by a distinct lateral pass, backward pass, shovel pass, or forward pass. A hand-off is not a pass. Penalty: 10 yards.

Conduct of Players

Flagrant Fouls

- A. Whenever, in the referee's judgment, the following acts are deliberate or flagrant, the players involved will be suspended from the game on the first offense:
1. Using fists, kicking, or kneeing.
 2. Using locked hand, elbows, forearm or hands except according to rule.
 3. Tackling or tripping the ball carrier.
 4. Any other deliberate or flagrant act that could cause injury.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- A. The referee may eject a player, manager, or coach for the entire game for unsportsmanlike conduct, abusive language, profanity, or talking back at any time. Penalty: Half the distance to goal from line of scrimmage.
- B. Unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, and coaches or others subject to rules is prohibited. Unsportsmanlike conduct includes:
1. Acts of unfair play.
 2. Managers, coaches, or others on the field of play at any time without permission.
 3. Interference of coaches, players, or others of any nature with the progress of the game.
 4. Using a hide out play.
 5. The punter delaying his kick.
 6. Attempting to substitute a suspended player.
 7. Pulling or removing a flag of an offensive player by a defender as the ball is snapped with the intent of making the offensive player ineligible to become a pass receiver or ball carrier.
- Penalty: 10 yards; offender may be disqualified.

- C. If a team refuses to play within two minutes after ordered to play by the referee, or if play is interfered with by an obviously unfair or unsportsmanlike act, or if a team repeatedly commits fouls which can only be penalized by halving the distance to the goal line, the referee may enforce any penalty he considers equitable, including awarding a score. For refusal to play or repeated fouls, the referee shall forfeit the game to the opponents.

Personal Foul

- A. Any act prohibited hereunder or any act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul.
1. No player shall block in a manner that would cause his feet, knees, or legs to strike an opponent. All blocking shall be done with the feet in contact with the ground.
 2. No high-low blocking.
 3. No tripping or clipping.
 4. No hurdling.
 5. No unnecessary roughness of any nature.
 6. No running over by the ball carrier.

The official, the site supervisor, and the League President reserve the right to expel any coach, manager, or player from further participation in the program for any action that they deem not in keeping with the rules or the philosophy of the Department.

VOLUNTEER COACHES CODE OF ETHICS

A Coach Shall:

Endeavor to set a standard for sportsmanship and conduct which will influence good attitudes and habits of all participants.

A Coach Shall:

Assume full responsibility of maintaining standards of decency as to conduct and as to language from players, coaches, and spectators.

A Coach Shall:

Not at any time lay a hand upon, push, shove, strike, or threaten an official.

A Coach Shall:

In coaching of teams, act in the capacity of leaders, not managers or coaches of professional teams. In so doing players on your team will reflect your attitude and conduct toward their opponents.

A Coach Shall:

Refrain from objectionable demonstrations regarding the decision of an official. This includes the use of profane language and obscene gestures.

A Coach Shall:

Abide by the official's decision.

A Coach Shall:

Refrain from drinking of alcohol on the field of play and shall not appear on the field while under the influence of alcohol.

A Coach Shall:

Enforce and adhere all Department League and regulations governing play.

A Coach Shall:

See that his team win or lose, parts on friendly terms with its opponents.

A Coach Shall:

Strive to further good sportsmanship, develop good character, citizenship training, and healthful physical conditioning among players.

A Coach Shall:

Work toward the understanding of a wholesome and healthful "Sports for fun" philosophy.

A = End Zone

B = Kick Off Line

C = Extra Point Line

D = 1st Zone Line. Ball brought out to when dead in the end zone.

