

3rd–5th Grade Flag Football League Rules

Fall 2026

The goal of the league is to provide a competitive, organized, and safe environment where players can develop their skills, learn the game, and demonstrate good sportsmanship.

GAME FORMAT

- Games are played **5 vs. 5**.
- Games consist of **two 20-minute halves**.
- Each team receives **2 timeouts per half**.
- The game clock will stop during the **final 2 minutes of the second half on dead-ball situations**.
- All offensive possessions begin at the team's **5-yard line**, unless otherwise determined by a penalty or turnover rule.
- There are **no kickoffs or punts**.

Downs & First Downs

- The offense receives **4 downs to reach midfield**.
 - Crossing midfield results in a **first down**.
 - Once the first down is achieved, the offense receives a new set of downs to score.
 - If the offense fails to gain a first down or score within its allotted downs, it is a **turnover on downs**.
 - Following a turnover on downs, the opposing team begins its possession from its own **5-yard line**.
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NO-RUN ZONES

A **5-yard no-run zone** will be enforced:

- 5 yards before the midfield first-down line.
- 5 yards before the end zone.

While inside a no-run zone, the offense must advance the ball through a legal forward pass.

QUARTERBACK & RUSHING RULES

QB Run Rule

- The **quarterback may run the football once per offensive possession.**
- Once the quarterback has used their designated run, the quarterback may not run again during that possession.

Defensive Rush

- A defensive player wishing to rush the quarterback must begin at least **7 yards from the line of scrimmage.**
- Once the ball is snapped, an eligible rusher may immediately cross the line of scrimmage.
- A defender who begins closer than 7 yards may not rush unless the ball has been handed off or otherwise legally transferred according to league rules.

Seven-Second Rule

- If the defense does **not rush the quarterback**, the quarterback has **7 seconds to release the football.**
- Failure to release the ball within 7 seconds will result in the play being ruled dead.

RUNNING & HANDOFFS

- **Direct handoffs are permitted.**
- The ball may be handed off behind the line of scrimmage.
- Players carrying the football may **not dive or jump forward to gain additional yardage.**
- The ball will be spotted based on the location of the **ball carrier's waist/flag belt**, not where the football is extended.
- Ball carriers may not intentionally protect or cover their flags.

Laterals

- Laterals or backward passes are permitted only according to league rules.
 - **No laterals are permitted after the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage.**
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RECEIVING RULES

- A receiver must have **at least one foot inbounds** for a completed catch.
 - Defensive players may not pull a receiver's flag before the receiver has possession of the football.
 - Offensive and defensive players may not illegally interfere with another player's opportunity to catch the football.
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FLAG PULLING

- A legal defensive play is made by removing one of the ball carrier's flags.
- Players must begin each play wearing **two properly positioned flags**.

If a player receives the football without two accessible flags:

- The defender must make a **two-hand touch** to stop the play.
 - The referee will determine the spot of the ball.
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CONTACT & BLOCKING

This is a **non-contact flag football league**.

Players may not intentionally:

- Tackle.
- Push.
- Hold.
- Shove.
- Trip.
- Initiate unnecessary contact.

- Strip or attempt to rip the football from a ball carrier.
- Block defenders downfield.
- Physically interfere with a legal rusher.

Players are expected to make an effort to avoid unnecessary contact whenever possible.

FLAG GUARDING

A ball carrier may not intentionally prevent a defender from reaching their flags.

Examples include:

- Covering the flag with a hand or arm.
- Swatting a defender's hand away.
- Stiff-arming.
- Holding clothing over the flag.
- Intentionally moving the ball or arm to obstruct access to the flag.

Flag guarding may be called as a **spot foul** and may include additional yardage when the referee determines the action was intentional.

SCORING

Touchdown

A touchdown is scored when the offensive player legally crosses the goal line with possession of the football.

Extra Points

After a touchdown, the scoring team may attempt:

- **1-point conversion:** From the **5-yard line**.
 - **2-point conversion:** From the **10-yard line**.
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OVERTIME

If the game is tied at the end of regulation, overtime will be used.

- The overtime attempt will begin from the **10-yard line**.
 - Overtime will use a limited possession format as determined by league rules.
 - Regular offensive and defensive rules remain in effect during overtime unless otherwise stated.
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TEAM UNIFORMS

- Players are required to wear their designated **team jersey** during games.
 - Players must wear a properly secured flag belt with two accessible flags.
 - A team/player not wearing the required team jersey may be subject to a **2-point penalty awarded to the opposing team**, subject to the league's uniform enforcement policy.
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PENALTIES

Referees have final authority to determine whether a foul occurred, the location of the foul, and whether additional disciplinary action is necessary.

Defensive Penalties

Defensive Offside

Penalty: +5 yards to the offense and repeat the down.

A defender crosses the line of scrimmage before the snap.

Illegal Rush

Penalty: +5 yards to the offense and repeat the down.

A defender rushes the quarterback without beginning from the required 7-yard rush position.

Defensive Holding

Penalty: +10 yards to the offense and repeat the down.

A defender illegally grabs, holds, or restricts an offensive player.

Illegal Flag Pull

Penalty: +10 yards to the offense and repeat the down.

A defender intentionally removes a receiver's flag before the receiver has possession of the football.

Stripping the Football

Penalty: Spot foul +10 yards and repeat the down.

Defenders may attempt to pull the flag but may not intentionally rip, strip, or knock the football out of the ball carrier's possession.

Roughing the Passer

Penalty: +10 yards to the offense and repeat the down.

Unnecessary or avoidable contact with the quarterback after or during a passing attempt may result in roughing the passer.

Defensive Pass Interference

Penalty: +15 yards and repeat the down.

A defender illegally prevents an eligible receiver from making a reasonable attempt to catch the football.

Defensive Delay of Game

Penalty: +5 yards to the offense and repeat the down.

The defense intentionally delays the offense from beginning the next play.

Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Penalty: +15 yards and repeat the down.

Examples may include:

- Taunting.
- Excessive arguing.
- Disrespect toward players, coaches, or officials.
- Intentional unnecessary contact.
- Abusive or inappropriate language.
- Other conduct determined unsportsmanlike by the referee.

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

False Start

Penalty: Loss of down.

An offensive player illegally moves before the snap.

Offensive Offside

Penalty: -5 yards and loss of down.

An offensive player lines up or crosses beyond the line of scrimmage before the snap.

Illegal Motion

Penalty: -5 yards and repeat the down.

More than one offensive player is moving illegally at the time of the snap.

Delay of Game

Penalty: -5 yards and repeat the down.

The offense does not begin the play within the league's required play-clock period.

Offensive Pass Interference

Penalty: -15 yards and loss of down.

An offensive player illegally pushes, blocks, or interferes with a defender while the ball is in the air.

Illegal Forward Pass

Penalty: Spot foul.

An illegal forward pass includes a forward pass thrown after the passer has crossed the line of scrimmage or another forward pass that violates league rules.

Impeding the Rusher

Penalty: -5 yards.

An offensive player intentionally moves into the path of a legal defensive rusher or otherwise prevents the rusher from having a clear path toward the quarterback.

Illegal Downfield Blocking

Penalty: Spot foul.

An offensive player may not intentionally block or screen a defender downfield.

Flag Guarding

Penalty: Spot foul / -5 yards when determined intentional by the referee.

A ball carrier may not intentionally prevent a defender from accessing their flags.

Jumping or Diving With the Ball

Penalty: Spot foul.

A ball carrier may not intentionally jump or dive forward to avoid a flag pull or gain additional yardage.

Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Penalty: -15 yards and loss of down.

Unsportsmanlike behavior includes taunting, excessive arguing, inappropriate language, unnecessary contact, disrespect toward officials, or other behavior determined inappropriate by the referee.

SPORTSMANSHIP & OFFICIALS

- Players, coaches, and spectators are expected to demonstrate good sportsmanship.
- Coaches are responsible for helping maintain appropriate behavior from their teams and sidelines.
- Only designated coaches/captains should communicate with officials regarding rule interpretations.
- Judgment calls made by referees are final.
- Repeated or serious unsportsmanlike conduct may result in a player or coach being removed from the game.