

Summary of 2025 Rules

Overview

- The game is 5 on 5, minimal-contact, non-blocking, non-screening, youth flag football.
- First possession is determined with a coin toss (away team will call).
- All players are eligible receivers.
- There is no kicking in this style of play.
- Game officials will use preventative officiating when possible.
- No foul or penalty flag stops a live play. However, pre-snap fouls will stop the action.
- Players cannot make contact that is considered unnecessary or provokes roughness.
- 3- and 4-point stances are not permitted.
- Officials will mark the ball where the hips of the player were at the time it became dead; not where the ball was.
- The ball will be spotted in the middle of the field after each play.
- Fields have a “no run zone” five yards from the end zones (exception- 6U do not have no-run zones).
- When the ball is spotted in a “no run zone” the offense must execute a pass play that breaks the line-of-scrimmage.
- An “onside play” is available in the final two minutes of the game.
- There is a mercy rule if the score differential is 27 points or more.

CLOCK OPERATIONS

Scheduled Block	Length of Game	Periods	Halftime	Time Outs	“Stop Clock” or “Pro Clock”
60 Minutes	40 Minutes	Two 20-minute halves	5 minutes	One per half	Used in the last two minutes of game

OFFENSE

- Possessions will begin on the 5-yard line, unless moved by penalty.
- The play clock is 25 seconds.
- Snaps must be made between the center’s legs.
- The player taking the snap cannot run the ball past scrimmage unless pursued by a defender.
- An audible 7-second “sack clock” is administered by an official. When the “sack clock” expires it is treated as an incomplete pass and the ball is returned to scrimmage.
- Teams will have four downs to gain a first down at mid-field.
- Once across mid-field and awarded a new set of downs, teams will have four downs to score unless awarded an automatic first down by penalty.
- On fourth down coaches must decide if they want to “go for it” or “punt”.
- If they “go for it” and fail to achieve the line-to-gain, the opposing team takes the ball from where it became dead.
- If they choose to “punt” a game official will move the ball to the opponent’s 5-yard line, change of possession.
- Ball carriers may legally use backward passes and legal pitches behind the line-of-scrimmage.

- Fumbles and muffs (including snaps) are dead when they hit the ground.
- Receivers must have one foot inbounds with possession to be a legal catch.
- Ball carriers are allowed to slightly leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player's safety at risk.
- Jump cuts or advancing between two defenders is allowed if they do not initiate noteworthy contact with the defender or put another player's safety at risk.
- Ball carriers may not dive, lunge, hurdle etc., to advance the ball. Ball is spotted at the hips/belt of the player.
- Ball carriers may not physically deny defenders the opportunity to capture their flag.
- After a play the offense is responsible to retrieve and return the ball to the nearest game official.

DEFENSE

- Before a legal snap a rush line will be set 10 yards from the line-of-scrimmage.
- Legal rushers must be a minimum of 10 yards from the line-of-scrimmage at the snap.
- Defenders may enter the backfield once the ball is handed-off, passed forward or backward or the ball touches any other offensive player other than the player who took the original snap.
- Interceptions during all live ball plays may be returned for points, including during Point-After Touchdown (PAT).
 - Exception: During overtime intercepted balls are ruled as dead balls.
- Defenders may safely dive to capture an opponent's flag but must avoid excessive contact.
- Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player in possession is illegal.
- Whether or not a ball was tipped in the air has no bearing as it pertains to fouls (illegal contact, personal foul, roughing, etc.).

SCORING

Touchdown	6 pts with the chance to go for 1 or 2
Points After Touchdown (PAT)	1 pt from the 5-yard line, pass play only 2 pts from the 10-yard line, run or pass
Safety	2 pts awarded to the defense & possession of the ball at the 5- yard line (going out)
Forfeits	Recorded as 27-0

OVERTIME

- When regulation time ends in a tie teams will conduct a one-play overtime series until a winner is determined. Teams will alternate on offense. The away team will choose to be on offense or defense first. In the first overtime the offense will have a choice of going for a 1 or 2 pt attempt. 2nd and all future overtimes the offense must go for a 2 pt attempt.

RULE 1: GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Our Governing Philosophy

- Our mission is to provide a superior football experience to our players, coaches and spectators.
- Flag football is a finesse game, not the brute strength game of tackle football. Play accordingly.
- Remind yourself and others that no college scholarships are handed out today, so just relax and enjoy.
- We retain the right to amend, update or edit these rules as situations require.
- This document uses the pronouns he, his, and him for readability and is not an act of gender bias, the program seeks and encourages inclusive participation.

2. Our Game Officials

- Many of our officials are young people learning the craft. Please treat them with respect.
- Our officials administer the rules of this league not any other organization past or present.
- Our officials are encouraged to use the “preventative style” of officiating which allows them to talk to, remind and help players avoid violations whenever feasible. Cautions and teaching points are appropriate most times.
- It is not the mission of game officials to flag every small, nuanced infraction of traditional football rules or other insignificant issues that do not produce a significant unfair advantage.

3. Your Required Personal Conduct

- Players, coaches, spectators, and officials must avoid profanity.
- Disrespectful language; racist, sexist, homophobic remarks; obscene or threatening gestures/behavior; and bullying are prohibited by anyone attending our events to include coaches, players and spectators.

- Foul play will not be tolerated.
- Any staff member who hears or sees anything that, in his judgment, is an infraction of the required personal conduct standards, may require the person responsible to leave the event.
- If a player or non-player fails to comply with our requests, we have the authority to forfeit the game and have that individual(s) removed from the rented complex.
- Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection, possible suspension, or even a lifetime exclusion. Alcohol, intoxicants, tobacco products, vaping, weapons and drones are prohibited at our events.
- Our staff, game officials, players and non-players must comply with rented facility rules.

4. Your Required Team Conduct

- For the safety of our officials and their ability to administer the game all team personnel and spectators must remain at least two yards off the sidelines.
- Our staff will determine where spectators can and cannot observe from and will err on the side of safety for our players and game officials.
- Officials may require boom boxes or other noise-producing devices be turned off or eliminated as they may interfere with the official's ability to communicate and administer the game.
- After the game teams are required to clean up and remove any garbage they brought with them.

5. Rosters

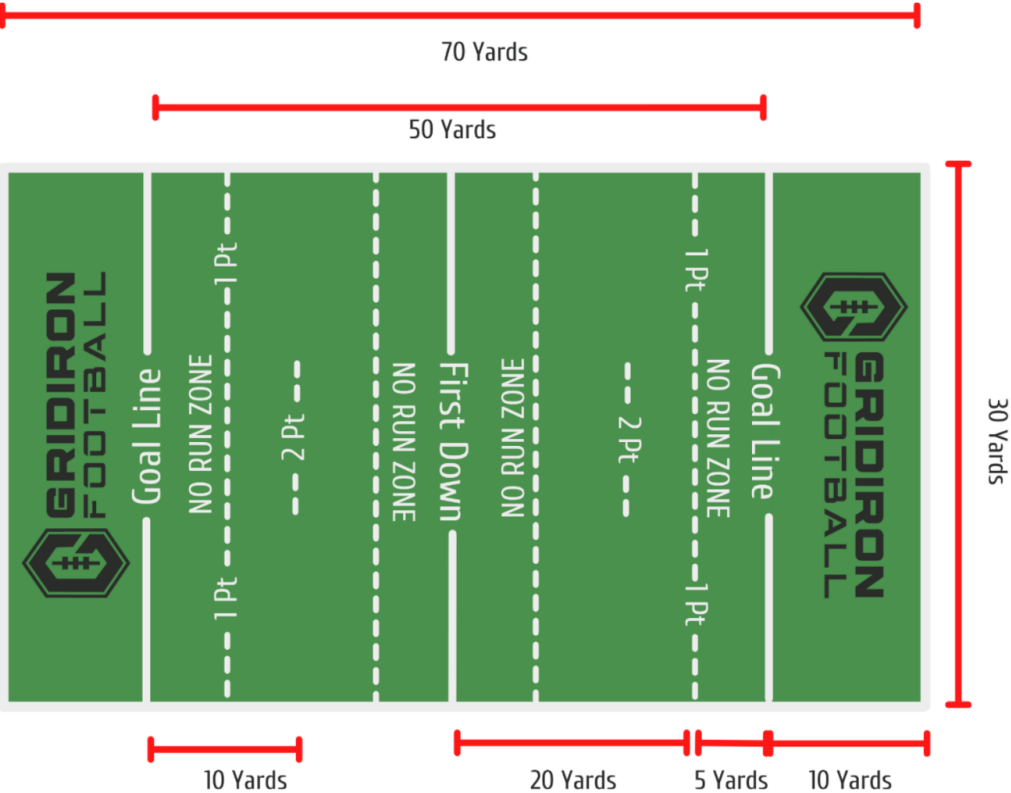
- Only players on an officially approved Gridiron roster may participate.
- Teams may play one player down (4 players) to avoid a forfeit.
- The opposing team is not required to "adjust down" when a team cannot field the required number of players but may do so to show sportsmanship.
- If a team "borrows" a player(s) from another team to give them the required number of players, the game will be recorded as a forfeit and the game may be played.

6. Coaches Conduct / Bench Fouls

- We ask that coaches maintain the spirit and the intent of our rules
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their sidelines to include players, spectators, guests and their team staff.
- For the following divisions you may have one coach on the field and they must be ten yards deeper than their deepest player.
 - 6U
 - 8U
- For the following division you may have one coach on the field during offensive plays, and they must be ten yards deeper than their deepest player.
 - 10U
- No coaches above 10U can be on the field.
- Coaches who elect to be on the field cannot interfere with a play or imminent play in any physical or verbal way (examples may include inadvertent screening or blocking, blocking the lines-of-sight, impeding a player or official, becoming entangled in the play or distracting from their opponents' cadence). If they do, the team may incur a bench foul.
- Coaches are prohibited from "chasing the play down field" in the way a game official does.
- For convenience and to speed the game along teams may huddle on the field-of-play near the sidelines. However, only five players and one coach are allowed in the huddle.
- Coaches are responsible to know down and distance. Officials should endeavor to remind them.
- Coaches, or any other person, are not allowed in the restricted area along the sidelines (see diagram on page 7) during a live ball. Violations will be charged to the head coach.
 - Teaching Lesson: Have the assistant coach help you keep this area clear; if the assistant coach is not in attendance appoint a spectator.

7. Our Basic Field Layout / Diagram

- Each team will pass through one “No-Run-Zone” as indicated by the directional arrows.
- Possessions will begin at the 5-yard line and will be marked with a colored disc cone.
- The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line for a touchback or a safety, unless moved by penalty.
- The only first down line-to-gain on the field is at mid-field and marked with a colored disc cone.
- A colored disc cone will mark where “No-Run-Zones” begin.
- Team boxes are established well off the sidelines and between the 10-yard lines.
- No player or non-player may be in the restricted area during a live ball. This area is a 2-yards wide perimeter around the sidelines.



RULE 2: UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

1. SAFETY

- Players may not wear unyielding or stiff material items that in the judgment of the officials may present a hazard to other players. Casts and braces must be padded with a closed-cell, slow recovery foam padding no less than 1/2-inch thick. This type is the material doctors will use.
- Players must properly wear a protective mouthpiece in their mouths while on the field-of-play.
- Failure to comply is a safety violation, not a foul/penalty. Coaches, officials, and players share responsibility for safety.
- Players must wear pants or shorts that do not have pockets, belt loops, zippers, or exposed draw strings. Shorts with no pockets can be purchased at www.gridironfb.com. If a player attends a game with pockets on the shorts and no other option is available, tape must be used over the pockets.
- Players must wear closed-toed shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed.
- Players may wear eye protection to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses.
- Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against facial injury.
- Jewelry that might endanger players must be removed before play or taped to the body.
- We recommend all players wear soft gloves that may be purchased at www.gridironfb.com.
- At the recreational levels players may wear stocking-style caps, baseball caps or soft shelled helmets. Baseball caps must be turned backwards.

2. FLAG BELTS

- Players must wear flag belts provided by Gridiron.
- All teams in the same league must use the same version of Gridiron flags during play.
- Flag belts must be worn as designed, and be free of obstructions or alterations.

- Altered or tampered flags could result in an ejection or forfeiture.
- If a player chooses to wear a hand towel, or any other object, on his waist, it will be treated as part of the flag belt.
- Flags cannot be the same color as a player's pants/shorts. Similar color Official's discretion.

3. TEAM JERSEYS

- Players must wear a Gridiron-approved jersey. If a player does not have a team jersey with him, it is permissible, at staff's discretion, to wear a street shirt.
 - It is the team coach's responsibility to clear a non-team jersey/street shirt with the game officials before the game.
- Players must strive to ensure their jerseys are long enough to remain tucked in during the entire play. If a jersey is not long enough to remain tucked in, the player must wear the flag belt over the jersey.
- When a shirt is untucked at the snap a "holding" call on a defender is unlikely when a defender is making a fair and legal attempt at the ball carrier's flag and ends up with their opponents' jersey in lieu of the flag belt. Keep shirts tucked.

RULE 3: CLOCK MECHANICS

1. GENERAL TIMING PROCEDURES (be aware there are exceptions for 6U)

- Games are 40 minutes long (two 20-minute halves).
- It is our intent to complete a game within 1 hour.
- Officials may stop the clock as needed.
- Halftime is 5 minutes.
- Each team will have one timeout per half. Timeouts will not roll over from the 1st half to the 2nd half.
- Team timeout is 30 seconds. After 30 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 25-second play clock.
- The clock will run continuously during the 1st half unless a team timeout is used or play is stopped by an official (ex: deal with injury, challenge, officials' conference, etc.).
- A stop clock or pro clock will be in effect in the final 2 minutes of the 2nd half.
- Officials will give verbal 2-minute warning as close as possible to the actual 2-minute mark, but will not interrupt live play.
- The 2-minute warning will stop the clock.
- The clock will not run during point-after-touchdown attempts (PATs) in the final 2 minutes of the game.
- Our staff may enter the field during any dead ball situation to address matters they believe should not wait until half-time or the end of the game by calling a "Staff Time-Out".

2. CLOCK OPERATIONS

- The Offense has a 25-second play clock to snap the ball before a delay of game penalty is assessed.
- No period or half can end if there is an obvious timing error or any other irregularity has occurred.
- When officials go to "stop clock" or "pro clock" mechanic, the clock will stop/start as listed below:

- Defense gains possession of the ball/on the snap
- Inadvertent whistle/at the ready
- Incomplete passes/on the snap
- Intentional grounding/at the ready
- Offense achieves a 1st down/clocks stops until official whistles ready-to-play
- Out-of-bounds plays with a player in possession of the ball/on the snap
- Fumbled or thrown out out-of-bounds by ball carrier beyond scrimmage/on-the-ready
- Penalty administration (other than Delay of Game)/depends on previous play
- Delay of game/on the snap
- Referee timeout/at the referee's discretion
- Team timeout/on the snap
- Injury/when player removed from field (depending on status of clock on previous play)
- Touchdown or Safety on the next snap after the PAT attempt. PATs and Onside Plays are untimed downs during stop/pro clock mechanics.

RULE 4: COIN TOSS

- Coaches or team captains are required to bring their game balls to the coin toss for inspection.
- Officials will conduct a pre-game safety check to ensure players and equipment are safe and ready for competition.
- First possession is decided using a coin toss. The away team will make the call.
- The head official will ask the “calling captain” his choice of “heads” or “tails”. The official will ask the opposing team to repeat and confirm the choice before flipping the coin. The head official will then confirm the call.
- The team winning the toss shall choose one of the following options (Game officials: Always ask a coach, do not let players make the decision):
 - Begin on offense
 - Begin on defense
 - Designate which goal their team will defend
- The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
- The team that started the game on offense, will start the second half on defense.
- Teams will play the opposite direction in the first half and the second half.

RULE 5: SCORING

1. SCORING CHART

Touchdown	6 pts with the chance to go for 1 or 2
Points After Touchdown (PAT)	1 pt from the 5-yard line, pass play only 2 pts from the 10-yard line, run or pass
Safety	2 pts awarded to the defense & possession of the ball at the 5- yard line (going out)
Forfeits	Recorded as 27-0

2. POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN (PAT)

- Following a touchdown, once the scoring team's coach has informed an official of which point conversion choice they want to attempt and the ball is either spotted or the ready-to-play whistle is blown, the decision cannot be changed unless the scoring team uses a team timeout.
- If a penalty occurs during an extra point attempt, the penalty will be assessed but the extra point value remains the same.
- Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
- Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by the defense on a successful PAT are enforced on the next possession, or next spot in overtime periods.
- Fouls committed by the offense on a successful PAT will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.
- Fouls committed by the offense on an unsuccessful PAT will be declined by rule (exception: personal and unsportsmanlike fouls).
- Fouls by the offense during a PAT attempt that carry a loss-of-down penalty (flag guarding, illegal advancement, illegal pass, etc.) will result in the PAT being "no good" and the attempt will not be repeated.
- Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful PAT attempt will result in a retry after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry.
- Interceptions on PATs may be returned by the defense for 2-points.

Fouls During PAT attempts

	Successful Attempt	Unsuccessful Attempt	Penalties That Carry Loss-of-Down	Unsportsmanlike and Personal Fouls
Foul by the Offense	Yardage assessed Retry attempt	Attempt no good, no retry	Attempt no good, no retry	Carries over to next possession
Foul by the Defense	Declined Attempt is good	Yardage assessed Retry attempt	Not applicable	Carries over to next possession

3. SAFETIES (Team A is the team that initiated the snap. Team B is the team that began the play on defense)

- A safety occurs when the ball becomes dead in Team A’s end zone or Team A commits a foul in their end zone.

4. ONSIDE PLAY OPTION

- This option is only available to the team behind in score during the final two minutes of the game and only immediately after the trailing team has scored and completed their PAT attempt.
- This is an untimed down.
- This option is not available after the trailing team has scored a safety.
- This option is never available to the team ahead in points.
- After the trailing team has scored and completed the PAT attempt, the team coach of the trailing team must inform the game officials they intend to attempt an onside play.
- The ball is placed at the offensive team’s 5-yard line, going out.
- The one play is treated exactly like a fourth down play including the assessment of penalties.
- The offense must advance the ball to or past midfield after all live ball penalties have been assessed in order to retain the ball.
- Dead ball penalties will not be considered in determining if the line-to-gain was achieved.

- If a Roughing penalty occurs the offense will receive a 10-yard penalty and repeat the down, they will not automatically retain the ball.
- If the offense retains the ball, the next zone-line-to-gain will be established (i.e., goal line) and clock operations will go back to normal stop clock procedures.
- If the offense is unsuccessful with its onside play attempt, the defense will take possession of the ball at mid-field unless the attempt ends up as an interception returned to the end zone for six points and a PAT attempt.

5. MERCY RULE

- The mercy rule will be invoked if the score differential is 27 or more points in the second half.
- When this occurs, the final score will be recorded as the score at the time the mercy rule was invoked. No more score recording will be done.
- If both coaches agree, the game may continue as a “scrimmage” and a running clock will be used.
- Once the Mercy Rule is invoked and coaches agree to continue the game as a scrimmage, the trailing team will begin their possessions at mid-field for the remainder of the game.
- Officials reserve the right to end the game if teams or coaches are not acting in a sportsmanship like manner (for example, running up the score as punishment, trash-talking, rough play, etc.) Please play and coach in the spirit of the league.

RULE 6: CHALLENGE PROCEDURE

- Only the head coach may ask game officials about rule clarification and interpretations.
- Generally, officials are happy to answer quick questions during the game if they do not impede the game. The priority is to spot the ball then address questions without impeding the play clock.
- If a head coach believes an official has made a procedural error, he may call for a timeout. If the head official agrees that there has been a procedural error (example: wrong down, incorrect penalty yardage, improper rule interpretation, score recorded incorrectly, etc.), the procedural error will be addressed and the timeout will not be charged.
- The challenge must be made to an official before the next snap.
- In the event a head coach loses a procedural challenge and the team did not possess a legal team timeout, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed to the head coach. If a coach receives two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, he will be disqualified and must leave the event.
- Only procedural issues may be addressed; not an official's judgment call or no call.

RULE 7: OFFENSE

1. GENERAL OFFENSE

- After all players have “set” one player may go “in motion”.
- There are no “free plays” for the offense. After the game official blows the ready-for-play whistle and the snapper puts his hand on the ball, no player may enter the neutral zone until the ball is moved to start the snap.
- Snaps must be made between the center’s legs.
- Teams will have four downs to gain a first down at mid-field.
- Once across mid-field and awarded a new set of downs, teams will have four downs to score unless awarded an automatic first down by penalty.
- On fourth down coaches must decide if they want to “go for it” or “punt”.
- If they “go for it” and fail to achieve the line-to-gain the opposing team takes the ball from where it became dead.
- If they choose to “punt” a game official will move the ball to the opponent’s 5-yard line, change of possession.
- Any quick or abrupt movement by a single player or multiple offensive players in unison, which simulates the snap, is a false start. This includes, but is not limited to, a quarterback thrusting his hands forward when there is not a simultaneous snap. This is a judgment call.
- All players must substitute from their sideline only. This allows the defense to be aware of their presence and avoids deceptive plays by the offense.
- It is a dead ball foul if any player on offense enters the neutral zone before the snap.
- “Center Sneaks” are not allowed. The ball must completely leave the center’s hands. The center must take at least two steps backward to receive a handoff.
- Direct snaps are legal to any player not on the line-of-scrimmage. The player receiving the snap is considered the passer and cannot run the ball past the line-of-scrimmage unless rushed or pursued by the defense.
- Ball carriers may use backward passes and legal pitches behind the line-of-scrimmage.
- The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier’s body other than his hands or feet (knee, elbow, buttocks, or ball-in-hand, etc.) touches the ground.

- The offense is always responsible for quickly retrieving the ball and returning it to an official or to the line-of-scrimmage at the end of each play.
- To prevent deceptive plays, offensive substitutes must come onto the field no less than 5 yards from their sideline sometime after the ball has been declared ready for play and before the snap.

2. BLOCKING / ILLEGAL SCREENING

- Blocking is obstructing or physically contacting an opponent with any part of the body.
- Illegal Screening is when an offensive player materially impedes the defender from getting to the player with the ball by abruptly stepping in the defender's path or taking a position (two or less normal strides away) in a defender's line of travel that forces the defender to abruptly veer around his opponent. This is a judgment call.
- Physical-contact blocking (as seen in traditional football) and non-contact blocking "screen blocking" (as seen in basketball) are not allowed even if unintentional. This is a difficult transition for traditional football players.
- Ball carriers cannot use their teammates as a screen by "juking around" or "hiding behind" them.
- A penalty may be called even when an offensive player accidentally obstructs a defender.
- Offensive players must be aware that they may be penalized for screening by simply chasing the play and providing an inadvertent block or screen.
- Passers caught between a ball carrier and a rushing defender will not be considered to be screening if there is no clear and obvious attempt to be doing so.
- "Pick plays" (often seen in basketball) or "rub routes" are not allowed as these plays are designed to initiate contact or to screen-out defenders. Receivers going down field after the snap may not initiate contact with an opponent.

3. FUMBLES / MUFFS

- The ball becomes dead when it hits the ground.
- If a passed, pitched, muffed (uncontrolled touch) or fumbled ball is intercepted before becoming dead it remains a "live ball".
- Forward fumbles that hit the ground will be marked where the ball carrier's feet were when he lost control and not the spot where the ball hit the ground.

- Backward fumbles are marked where they hit the ground. Backward passes that hit the ground are considered fumbles.
- Muffed snaps will be marked where the ball hits the ground.

4. RUNNING/JUMPING/DIVING/NO RUN ZONES

- The player initially taking the snap may not run the ball past the line-of-scrimmage unless he is rushed or pursued by a defender.
- Ball carriers are allowed to slightly leave their feet, jump, and spin as evasive maneuvers in order to advance the ball as long as they do not put another player's safety at risk. This is a judgment call by the game officials.
- Not every insignificant jump or small hop constitutes a safety issue. This is a judgment call.
- No player may not hurdle over another player.
- Ball carriers may not dive, lunge, or fall forward in a perceived intentional manner in order to advance the ball or achieve a line-to-gain (spot of the ball is at the ball carriers hips/flags). This is a judgment call.
- Ball carriers may extend the ball out in front of them to gain additional yardage.
- Diving by the defense to capture a ball carrier's flag is legal. However, game officials may still make judgment calls about contact.
 - Teaching Point: Play the flag, not the player's body.
- If a defender trips a ball carrier while pursuing the offensive player from the rear and the ball carrier goes to the ground (typically seen in break-away plays), even if the defender is making a fair and reasonable attempt to capture the ball carrier's flag, the defender will be called for illegal contact and may be disqualified or ejected. The defender is obliged to make a fair, SAFE and reasonable attempt. Safety is paramount.
 - Teaching Lesson: Coach our players to play safe.
- Ball carriers must make every effort to avoid a defender who has established a stationary position.
- Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision or falling on another player.
- Passers may jump vertically to throw the ball over a taller defender.

- “No Run Zones” 8U divisions and up. No Run Zones are enforced as a safety measure to discourage power-runs, diving, etc., near the goal line. When the ball is spotted inside a “No Run Zone” the offense must execute a forward pass that breaks the line-of-scrimmage.

- 6U DOES NOT HAVE A NO RUN ZONE.

5. FLAG GUARDING/STIFF-ARMING

- The ball carrier’s flags must be accessible to the defense throughout the play.
- Flag guarding is the act of a ball carrier denying a defender the opportunity to capture his flag in any physical way.
- Flags may not be tucked in pants, tucked under jerseys, worn improperly, looped around the waist belt, or knotted.
- The ball carrier shall not flag guard by flailing of arms, using their hands, arms, elbows, or extremely dipped shoulders to deny the opportunity of an opponent to remove a flag.
- The ball carrier may not swat a defender’s hands away nor pin the flag against his body using the ball or hands.
- An official may call flag guarding if he feels that a ball carrier’s natural running motion gave the ball carrier a decisive advantage over the defender and the running motion caused part of the ball carrier’s body to block a de-flagging attempt.
- What constitutes flag guarding is up to the official’s judgment. We recommend you carry the ball with your hands held high on the body to avoid flag guarding. This is one of the most difficult transitions for traditional football players.
- Flag guarding shall not be called if there is no defensive player within reasonable distance to capture the flag.
- The ball carrier may bend at the knees to dip low, side cut, skip, or take short hops.
- Extreme low dips (sometimes called a “duck-walk”) are legal and do not constitute flag guarding in themselves as long as the flag carrier’s flags are still exposed and the defensive player isn’t physically impeded (i.e., the ball carrier isn’t using his arms, hands, shoulder, ball, etc., to impede the defender). Normally flag guarding can be avoided while “duck-walking” when the ball carrier keeps his hands and elbows high on the body (example: at shoulder-level).
- No penalty will be called if a ball carrier simultaneously flag guards as the defender pulls the flag. Remind the player not to flag guard.

- Tampering with the flag in any way to gain advantage is illegal and will be dealt with by the Commissioner (or League owner).

6. PASS PLAYS

- An audible 7-second “sack clock” is administered by an official. The required cadence is a consistent 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, Sack!
- When a sack occurs, it is treated as an incomplete pass and the ball is returned to scrimmage.
- Only one forward pass per play.
- Once the ball has passed the line-of-scrimmage, it cannot be returned to behind the line-of scrimmage and thrown forward legally.
- To be a legal pass, both feet of the passer must be in or behind the neutral zone when the ball is released.
- A passer may jump vertically to throw the ball over a defender.
- All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass, unless they have stepped out-of-bounds of their own accord.
- Offensive players may not re-establish themselves in the field of play, or participate in any way, once they have stepped out-of-bounds on their own accord.
- When an offensive player touches the ball after stepping out-of-bounds, it will result in a foul for illegal participation.
- Any offensive player who receives either a forward or backward handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line-of-scrimmage.
- If the passer’s flag has been pulled while the passer still has the ball in his hand, it is a sack. There is no allowance given for the passer’s arm being in motion at the time of the sack. Ball-in hand at all equals a sack.
- An underhand forward pass (shovel pass) is legal and if it is dropped, it is ruled an incomplete pass, not a fumble. The pass must go beyond the LOS to be a legal forward pass.
- A backward pass that is dropped or incomplete is ruled a fumble. The ball will be spotted where it hit the ground.
- Any player, including the passer, may catch and advance a loose ball that has not been grounded.

7. BATTING

- Any ball in flight may be batted in any direction by an eligible receiver.

8. INTENTIONAL GROUNDING

- A passer may not throw the ball into an area behind the line-of-scrimmage where there is no offensive player to avoid a loss of yardage.
- A passer may legally “throw the ball away” as long as the ball goes beyond the line of scrimmage.
- It is legal for the passer to conserve time by intentionally throwing the ball to the ground immediately (spiking) after receiving either a direct hand-to-hand snap or from the “shot-gun” formation.
- The spike must be fluid and immediate after the snap or it is intentional grounding.
- Passers may intentionally throw the ball out-of-bounds to stop the clock, if it goes past the line of scrimmage.

9. CATCHES

- A pass is completed when the receiver simultaneously places at least one foot inbounds and maintains possession. If the first foot to land on the ground is out of bounds, it is an incomplete pass.
- If the ball comes out of the receiver’s grasp due to contact with the ground or while going to the ground the pass is incomplete.
- Simultaneous catches between a defensive and offensive player become dead automatically and go to the offense.
- In the event of a bobbled catch, i.e., the ball is batted about by the receiver in an attempt to catch it, and the intended receiver is de-flagged before taking full possession, there is no penalty for early flag pull.
- Whether or not a ball is tipped or touched in the air has no bearing on the play as it applies to fouls anywhere on the field (roughing, personal fouls, illegal contact, etc.).

RULE 8: DEFENSE

1. GENERAL DEFENSE

- Stripping or attempting to strip the ball from a player's hand, including the quarterback, is illegal.
- Defensive teams may not attempt to confuse the offensive team by simulating their pre-snap signals or cadence.

2. RUSHING THE PASSER

- Before each play is allowed to begin an official will mark off a 10-yard rush line.
- Defensive players that "rush the passer" must begin the play at this 10-yard mark or further away from the line-of-scrimmage.
- Players not rushing the passer may defend the line-of-scrimmage but not enter the backfield unless the ball is handed-off, passed, pitched or touches another player.
- If the ball makes contact (touches) with any player other than the player who took the snap and the defense does not cross the line-of-scrimmage and pursue the ball carrier, the player that took the snap is not permitted to run the ball past scrimmage. Simply touching the ball to another player does not permit the passer to run.
- A defensive player that insignificantly crosses the rush line before the snap and immediately self corrects and returns to his side of the rush line before he rushes is not penalized. Think "reset".

3. ROUGHING THE PASSER

- Defensive players must make a concerted effort to avoid charging into the passer.
- During the passer's drop and throughout his entire throwing motion, the passer cannot be touched above the upper waist in any material way.
- Defenders cannot materially touch any part of the passer's arm, hand, shoulder, or ball while the ball is still in the passer's hand. The ball is considered an extension of the passer's arm and hand.
- Defensive players may not "crash" the passer's throwing arm, shoulder, or body even if the ball is touched first.

- An insignificant “brush-by” may be allowed by the game official but is not guaranteed. This is a judgment call.
- A roughing penalty will not be enforced if a passer initiates contact with an opponent while in the throwing motion; for example, during the passer’s follow through the passer’s arm makes contact with an opponent’s hand, arm, or shoulder. In this instance the impetus of the contact is the action of the passer and not the defender. This is a judgment call.
- It is a personal foul if the passer’s follow-through hand or arm makes significant contact with an opponent’s head, neck or face (Personal Foul, Contact above the Shoulders). This is a judgment call.
- If roughness is habitual for a single player, disqualification or ejection procedures may apply.
- If roughness is habitual for a team, forfeiture procedures may apply.

4. FLAG PULLING MECHANICS

- Flag pulling is the legal removal of a flag from an opponent who has possession of the ball.
- Legal flag pulls must begin with the hands leading toward the opponent’s hips and flags.
- No player has the right to over aggressively “body up”, “wrap up”, “play through”, “bull rush”, charge, spear or lead with a shoulder, tackle, or attempt to tackle an opponent even to capture a flag.
- Pushing out on the sidelines is not permitted unless the defense was making a fair, legal, and reasonable attempt to pull the ball carrier’s flags, i.e., the defender’s hands were aimed low at the ball carrier’s hips and flags and not high up on the body.
- Pushing, striking, holding, slapping, or tripping while attempting to pull a flag is not permitted.
- Defenders may dive to attempt to pull the ball carrier’s flag but this must be done in a safe manner in the judgment of the covering official.
- A defensive player may not pull the flag of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Players may be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct for throwing, spiking, obscuring, or delaying the ball carrier in recovering his pulled flag.

- If a ball carrier's flag inadvertently comes apart or falls off during the play, the ball carrier will be ruled down where the flag belt is detached.
- If a receiver has an incomplete or missing flag belt when he catches the ball the play will be called dead where the receiver caught the ball.
- When a ball carrier flag guards and a defensive player pulls the ball carrier's flag simultaneously, no penalty will be called for flag guarding.
- A missing flag belt is a violation not a penalty and will not delay the game or stop a live play.

5. PASS COVERAGE / INTERFERENCE

- This is a "free release" league.
- Defenders cannot "chuck", "jam", "bump", "press", etc., a receiver.
- Receivers may not intentionally make contact with defenders as they progress down field.
- A player may "find" their opponent by reaching out and placing a hand on him as long as touching does not delay or impede him. This is not considered pass interference.
- Pass interference normally occurs above the waist; entangled feet are not considered pass interference.
- Incidental contact is not considered pass interference.
- Contact away from the direction of the pass is not considered pass interference but may be a separate foul.
- Pass interference indicators are:
 - Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
 - Making noteworthy contact before the ball arrives.
 - Playing through the back of an opponent.
 - Hook and turn: grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives.
 - Early material contact by a defender who is not playing or looking for the ball.
 - Arm bars, restricting, or grabbing.

- Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched, commonly seen through “pick plays”.
- Cutting off the path of a receiver by being in front of him and slowing down or being beside him and “riding” them off his path to the ball.
- Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on pass interference.
- All passes are considered catchable.
- A player may use his arms or hands to obstruct the receiver’s view of the ball (face guarding) without turning his own head to play the ball as long as contact is not made with the receiver.

6. INTERCEPTIONS

- Intercepted passes remain live and may be returned for points.
- Intercepted passes during Point After Touchdown (PAT) attempts may be returned for 2 points.
- In the event of an interception, the intercepting team must secure the ball with “clean hands” to be legal i.e., they must not have committed a foul before or simultaneous to the interception.
- If the intercepting team gains the interception with “clean hands,” they will be awarded a first down where the ball becomes dead (flag pull, stepping out-of-bounds, fumbled, etc.)
- Fouls by the intercepting team after an interception will be assessed either from the spot of the foul or the end of the run (whichever affects the intercepting team worse).

RULE 9: OVERTIME FORMAT

1. GENERAL OVERTIME RULES

- 1st overtime-If regulation time ends in a tie, teams will play a one-play series until a winner is determined. Teams may elect to go for one point from the 5-yard line (pass play), two points from the 10-yard line (run or pass) or three points from mid-field (run or pass) unless moved by penalty. 2nd and subsequent overtimes- teams must go for a 2 point try.
- The away team will begin each overtime period on offense.
- Interceptions during overtime scoring attempts are dead balls and no points will be awarded.

2. PENALTY ENFORCEMENT DURING OVERTIME

	Successful Attempt	Unsuccessful Attempt	Penalties That Carry Loss-of-Down	Unsportsmanlike and Personal Fouls
Foul by the Offense	Yardage assessed Retry attempt	Attempt no good, no retry	Attempt no good, no retry	Carries over to next possession
Foul by the Defense	Declined, attempt is good	Yardage assessed, Retry attempt	Not applicable	Carries over to next possession

- Penalties and play are administered as it is during regulation time.
- Point conversion choices cannot be changed after a penalty.
- Penalties that occur during overtime periods will carry over and be enforced from the next spot or possession unless declined. All 10-yard penalties will carry over.
- Personal and unsportsmanlike fouls by the defense on a successful attempt are enforced on the next possession or next spot in overtime periods.
- Fouls committed by the offense on a successful attempt will result in penalty yardage assessed and the down replayed.
- Fouls committed by the offense on an unsuccessful attempt will be declined by rule (exception: personal and unsportsmanlike fouls).

- Fouls by the offense during an attempt that carries a loss-of-down penalty (flag guarding, illegal advancement, illegal pass, etc.) will result in the attempt being “no good” and the attempt will not be repeated.
- Fouls by the defense during an unsuccessful attempt will result in a retry after the options are administered. The offense may opt to accept or decline penalty yardage before the retry.