

Ohio River Valley Youth Football League - Flag Football Playing Rules

General Rules

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams will meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the 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 direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that states the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its own 35 yard line and begins 1st and 20.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its 35 yard line.
5. Offensive team will have a simulated punt option (30 yards). There is no punting inside the 30 yard line.
6. If the defense intercepts the ball, the defensive player can attempt to return the ball until down, out of bounds or possession of the ball is lost.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
8. All players are eligible to receive a pass or handoff, except the center. Center is only allowed to receive a pass. Center cannot receive a handoff..
9. Center will snap the ball from the ground.
10. Games are played on a 100 yard field.
11. Flag teams will consist of players in grades Kindergarten thru 2nd grade.
12. Teams will play with an equal number of players with a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 9. Example- 7 on 7; 8 on 8; 9 on 9.
13. If playing with 8 players, 1 player must be a tight end. If playing with 9 players, 2 players must be tight ends.

Equipment

1. Each player must wear uniform shirts and flag belts that are snap style flags.
2. Flags cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.
3. Teams will have different color flags.
4. The hosting team will provide flags for both the home and visiting team.
5. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads.
6. Mouth pieces must be worn.
7. Players must remove jewelry and hats. Winter beanies are allowed.
8. Jerseys must be tucked in shorts or pants.

Timing and Overtime

1. Games will consist of two (25) minute halves. The play clock will be a running clock. The play clock will stop for injuries and restart once the injured player is off the field. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion for injury, to stop a team from delaying or other unsportsmanlike conduct.

2. Halftime is 10 minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 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. In playoff games only, if the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. The overtime format is as follows:
 - a. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
 - If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
 - The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
 - b. Each team will take turns getting one play from the defense's 35 yard line for one point or the defense's 10 yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts, the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of its own.
 - c. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - d. There are no timeouts in overtime.

Scoring

1. Touchdowns: Worth 6 points
2. Point after touchdown (PAT) one point from the 5-yard line or two points from the 10-yard line.
3. Safety: Worth 2 points.
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his or her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, the step out of bounds, a knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyonds the end zone.
4. At youth level, after one team is leading by 28 points or more, score is no longer kept. Once a 28 or more point advantage is gained, no points after touchdown are attempted. The game continues in scrimmage mode for the remainder of the game.

Coaches

1. Two coaches are allowed on the field to call plays and direct players according to need. Once the quarterback begins his or her cadence, however, coaches can no longer direct players and must be behind the deepest offensive and defensive players and out of the action.
2. Coaches can assist in the alignment of their players to facilitate a fast-paced game, but coaches on the field may not provide extra instruction or make audibles to play calls once the huddle is broken. Coaches on the sidelines can provide this information to players on the field.

Live Ball Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap and remains alive until an official's whistle blows the ball dead.
2. A fumble on a handoff (behind the line of scrimmage) is a dead ball.
3. A fumble on a run is considered a live ball and can be recovered and ran back.
4. Interceptions can be returned.
5. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage by spotting the ball before each play and signaling ready for play with a short whistle.
 - 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, an official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification prior to the snap to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. The defense may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
4. A player who gains possession of the ball is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is rule "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. Any part of the body other than feet or hands touches 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. An inadvertent whistle.
8. In any 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.

Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's front foot is when the flag is pulled, not the position of the ball.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball, except when rushed. The quarterback cannot run the ball until the rushers pass the line of scrimmage.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must take place behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs
 - a. "Center Sneak" play is not allowed as centers are ineligible to receive handoffs.
4. No laterals of any kind are allowed, including pitches and throwbacks.
5. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
9. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he or she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. There is no running with the ball-carrier.
12. Flag obstruction- All jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the players hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
13. 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 football jersey.

Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack, The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage and be in the vicinity of a receiver (per NFH's rules).
 - b. Quarterbacks cannot spike the ball dead unless the ball travels beyond the line of scrimmage and is in the vicinity of a teammate.
2. A ten-second pass clock begins upon the snap and continues until there is a handoff or pass. If the ten-second clock expires while the quarterback still has the ball, the play is blown dead, a down is lost and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage as if an incomplete pass occurred.
3. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
4. Any player who has received a legal handoff can throw the ball forward, if done so behind the line of scrimmage.

Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes.
2. A player must have at least one foot inbounds to make a legal reception.
3. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
4. Interceptions change possession at the point of the catch. Interceptions are returnable and are the only changes of possession that do not result in starting on the 5-yard line.
5. The play is blown dead immediately if an interception is made on an extra-point try. There are no returns on that play.

Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A marker, or the referee will designate a rush line seven yard from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
4. A rusher who leaves the rush line early (breaks the seven yard area) may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
5. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
6. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
7. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, no contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer still results in a roughing the passer penalty.
8. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where he or she lines up prior to the snap. If the "path or line" is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
9. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's front foot was when the flag was pulled.

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.
 - a. If a defender makes a good-faith flag pull while a receiver bobbles or juggles what will be a completed catch, the ball is down where possession is made.

Penalties

1. The official will call all penalties.
2. Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.

3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players, assistant coaches, and fans may not question calls.
5. Games and halves may not end on a penalty unless the opposing team declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

Defense spot fouls

Defense pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

Offensive spot fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards and loss of down

Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down

Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / False start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the 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 (More than one person moving)	-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