

# FLAG FOOTBALL

## Official Rules



## **A note from our founder...**

*Welcome to Gova Sports Flag football. We strive to provide the absolute best skills training and game day experience while maintaining affordable pricing. Our flag football games and rules are unique. They provide an experience that will prepare young athletes for the next level of competition. The rules in this program have been intentionally developed to closely match High School football rules with due consideration for player safety and player development. These rules are intended to promote proper instruction in the game of football and to form good player habits for the next level of competition. We encourage you to not only read these rules, but promote sportsmanship in the league by volunteering to coach or assist with game days, working with your child one-to-one, and providing positive motivation to other parents and players.*

# Flag Football – Gova Sports Official Rules of the Game

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[www.GovaSports.com](http://www.GovaSports.com)

### 1.1 PLAYER ELIGIBILITY (LEAGUE)

1. Players shall be eligible to play for the entire season if they are age eligible on the day of the first scheduled game in a season. (For example, a 6U player is eligible if they are 6 years old on the opening game day of the season even if they celebrate a seventh birthday the following day).
2. Only players rostered by Gova Sports Flag Football may participate in organized team activities (such as practices and games) and only for the team rosters on which they are assigned. Substitute players that are not rostered by Gova Sports are strictly prohibited.
3. An ineligible player is one who is legally a member of the team but who is ineligible to play in a particular game or games because of an infraction of the rules, or because of a previous violation or disciplinary action. It is the duty of the head coach to keep a record of his ineligible players. Certain injuries or medical situations may warrant an ineligibility.
4. An Illegal player is one that is not a legal member of the team (registered and rostered). Playing illegal players will result in forfeiture of the game.
5. A player may be rostered to only one team per season in each eligible age division. (For example, an age eligible 7-8 player may play on one team in each of the following age divisions: 7-8, 9-10, 11-13 and 14-16).
6. Players may “Play Up” in higher age divisions, but are never allowed to “Play Down” – there are no exceptions to this rule. Age divisions are in place to ensure equitable and competitive games.
7. The League may adjust the division demarcations or the date used for age determination at any time.

#### GOVA SPORTS Flag Football Divisions

Divisions	Ages
6U	4, 5, 6
8U	7, 8
10U	9, 10
13U	11, 12, 13
16U	14, 15, 16

NOTE: Division structure may change at any time to support seasonal needs such as player ratios.

### 1.2 LEAGUE POLICY

1. The team’s head coach, whether or not they are on the coaching lines, may moderately dispute any rules interpretation but may not protest discretionary calls of the official. If a coach at any time makes any derogatory remarks about, or to the opposing players, opposing coaches or officials, he may be issued a penalty or immediately be ejected from

the game in the official's discretion. Coaches should remain positive and encouraging at all times. Coaches should be respectful of any decisions made by an official. Concerns and questions about official calls may be submitted to the Gova Sports league commissioner via the website: [www.govasports.com](http://www.govasports.com)

2. No adult, other than coaches or game officials, will be allowed on the field during the game without the consent of the officials, or be subject to penalty. If an injury occurs on the field, parents/adults may enter the field to assist when appropriate.
3. If any player, head coach or assistant coach conducts himself/herself in an unsportsmanlike manner he/she shall be removed from the game and the field in the sole discretion of the official or league representatives. This includes the baiting or heckling of officials or opponents. Gova Sports operates with professionalism and integrity at the forefront. Please understand that we must enforce sportsmanship rules in order to ensure that the young athletes have the very best sports environment.
4. Tobacco, vapor, and smoking products are strictly prohibited at the game venues. A warning will be issued for infractions. Please respect this rule and understand that continual use of these products after a warning will result in your removal from the venue.
5. Profanity, slurs, rude jokes, and any inappropriate language is not allowed under penalty of forfeit. Use of profanity during games is grounds for immediate ejection, in the discretion of the officials and league representatives. Gova Sports provides safe and professional sports programs for young athletes. Any behavior or language outside of professional will not be tolerated by officials and league officials. Remember, young children are present at the games and they look up to coaches and adults. Be a good role model.
6. If, in the opinion of the officials, a player, head coach, assistant coach or scorekeeper, commits any act which may maim or injure an opposing player, if deemed deliberate, he shall be ejected from the game. Players or coaches who are ejected may not return to the game. An ejected player

or coach must immediately leave the venue and shall not participate further in the game. Gova Sports Flag Football reserves the right to institute penalties based on the severity of the infraction for any player, coach or spectator that is ejected from a game up to and including banishment from the league.

6. Concussions: Any player receiving contact to the head must be removed from the game for at least one play allowing the coach/parent to assess for symptoms of concussion. If the official, coach, or parents suspect that a concussion has been sustained, the player must be removed from play until he/she is evaluated by a medical professional and provides the league written clearance to resume activities. Officials may not see contact to the head during play, therefore coaches also have a responsibility to identify any player that has sustained a bump to the head and inform the official(s).
7. Any concerns regarding penalties, interpretation or application of rules, or official calls during the game must be brought to the attention of the head coach and officials prior to the next snap. Photography and video will not be used to debate official calls.

### **1.3 Playing Time and Active Players**

1. Gova Sports Flag Football for most divisions is 7 vs 7.
  - a. The 16U division may elect to play 5 Vs 5.
2. It is the goal of the League to provide every child the opportunity to develop as an athlete. With this in mind, it is required that all players receive ample playing time during each game and that each player be actively utilized. Coaches are required to abide by the spirit of this rule. The league provides tools to help coaches with the rotation of players. Please visit the Gova Sports web site at [www.govasports.com](http://www.govasports.com) to obtain these tools.

## **2. PRE-GAME**

1. Teams with 5 or fewer players at the scheduled time of kick-off shall automatically forfeit the game. Although the coaches may choose to scrimmage during their allotted game time.
2. Teams must field a team of at least 5 rostered players to play a scheduled game. The opposing team will match the number of rostered players. Both teams will always have the same number of players on the field. This rule is in place to ensure that every game is equitable, fun, and competitive.
3. A traditional coin toss will be held to determine the opening kick-off. Game officials and team captains will meet at mid-field for pre-game instructions. Three players from each team and all coaches will meet in the center of the field. One member of the visiting team will call the

toss, and the winner of the coin toss may elect to kick-off, or receive (no deferrals allowed). The opponent will elect which goal to defend during the first half and will receive the kick-off to start the second half.

4. **Game officials are to conduct an equipment check of both teams prior to the coin toss. Officials will check to ensure that the following requirements are met:**

- a. Jerseys are tucked in.
  - b. Shorts have no pockets (or pockets have been sewn/taped shut).
  - c. No jewelry is being worn by the players (watches, bracelets, necklaces, etc).
  - d. Players have mouth guards and must wear them during play.
  - e. Flags are properly worn outboard on the hips.
  - f. Cleats do not have metal spikes.
  - g. Players are not allowed to wear anything that may be dangerous to other players. Any casts or braces made of fiberglass, plaster, metal, or any other non-pliable substances are not allowed. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
  - h. No baseball hats or caps may be worn during play (beanies are allowed).
  - i. No sunglasses may be worn (prescription glasses are allowed, sport/recreational specs are recommended)
  - j. Soft/padded helmets designed to protect players heads are allowed.
  - k. No Go-Pros or other recording equipment may be worn by the players.
5. Teams will switch end zones at half time.
6. The offensive team has four 4 downs to cross midfield. If a team crosses midfield, it has an additional four 4 downs to score a touchdown.
7. Teams may elect to kick or throw the ball (punt) on the 4th down. (See the section on punting for more details)
8. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score at the end of the 4th down (after assessment of penalties), the opposing team takes possession at the spot of the turnover.

### 3. EQUIPMENT

1. The League will provide an official game ball that must be used by both teams during scheduled games. No other ball will be authorized for use during games. Official game balls will be provided to the head coach at the beginning of the season. The game day official will inspect the designated game ball prior to kickoff. Each team must use the same ball during the game. In the event that the ball is deemed defective during the game, the official will select a new ball that both teams will play with.
  - A. 4-6 age division will use a Pee-Wee size ball
  - B. 7-8 age division will use a Pee-Wee size ball
  - C. 9-10, 11-13, and 14-16 age divisions will use a Junior size ball
2. The League provides each player with an Official Gova "Triple Threat" Flag belt, which must be worn during games. No other flag belt besides the Official Gova Flag belt may be used. Our flag belts have three flags. The entire belt comes off when pulled rather than just one flag. Belts that do not come off when a flag is pulled can cause injury if fingers get stuck in them. Please do not use any belts other than the official Gova Flag Belt during game play.
3. Flags must be worn "OUTBOARD", on each side of the players' hips in line with the hip joint. The third flag is to be worn in the back. One flag on each hip and one flag in the back.
4. Any portion of the belt that dangles or appears like a flag must be removed.
5. The League provides each player with an Official NFL Flag Football Jersey, which must be worn during games. Home teams wear dark jerseys; visiting teams wear light jerseys. The league may sanction alternate team jerseys in the discretion of the commissioner providing that the entire team wears identical looking jerseys. Unless it is physically impossible, jerseys must be tucked in at all times during games. The Commissioner may allow an alternate jersey in the event that league provided equipment is not available.
6. Pants or shorts with pockets must be taped. Belt loops are not allowed. This rule is in place to prevent injuries to fingers (defensive players may get fingers caught in pockets when they try to pull a flag.)



6. Every player must wear a protective mouth piece during games. No player will be allowed to play without a mouth guard.
7. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed/recommended, however metal cleats are not allowed.
8. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
9. Players may paint their faces to prevent sun glare.
10. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.

#### 4. TEAMS & ELIGIBILITY

1. Teams will vary in size in the discretion of the league organizer.
2. All players must be registered with the league and rostered to the team. Playing with unregistered or un-rostered players will result in immediate forfeiture and potential league suspension.
3. Teams are required to report to their assigned field of play by the scheduled start time or face possible forfeiture.
4. All players' legal guardians must agree to the Gova Sports waiver and the online waiver form at <https://www.nfflag.com/form/player> Players will not be permitted to participate without a completed waiver.

#### **Player Substitutions**

2. Players may be freely substituted after any dead ball.

#### 5. REGULATION PLAY and GAME CLOCK

1. Games consist of two 20-minute halves. Halftime is 2-minutes. Teams change ends to begin the second half.
2. The clock runs continuously during the first half and the first 18 minutes of the second half unless a time-out is called or officials pause the game for official's reasons.
3. During the last 2 minutes of the second half, the clock stops when there is an incomplete pass, a penalty, change of possession, or when a ball-carrier runs out of bounds. (Not on first downs). Scoring will also stop the clock during the last two minutes until the ball is put into play via a resulting kick-off.

4. Please note: Gova Sports does not have a “mercy rule” or clock stoppage due to point differential. We believe that young athletes deserve a chance to play every second of the game to the best of their ability. Scores will not stop the clock or end a game.
4. The offensive team has 30 seconds (by the referee's count) to snap the ball after the ball spot. The offense may snap the ball at any time after the referee has completed the ball spot whether the defense is ready or not, except on the first down following a change of possession. There will be no hurry up offense allowed for the first play following a change of

possession. The referee will warn the offensive team when there are 10 seconds left on the snap count clock.

5. A ball spot is completed when the ball has been spotted and the rush marker has been established (as required per age division). This establishes the line of scrimmage for the offense and the rush marker for the defense.
6. Each team has one 60-second time out per half that can be used at any time prior to a ball snap. Unused time-outs are lost and cannot be carried forward.
7. Officials can stop the clock for an injury, pet on the field, or at their discretion to support the safety of the players or spectators. Officials may also stop the clock to allow players to hydrate (drink fluids).
8. Neither the first or second half shall end on a defensive penalty. The offense will have the opportunity to repeat the last down with all penalties assessed. In the case of offsetting penalties at the end of either half, the down will be replayed. Offsetting penalties will be assessed from the point of first infraction. (Coaches may accept or decline penalties).

#### DEAD BALL

1. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
2. Play is ruled "dead" when:
  - A) The ball touches the ground (except for throw-off, kick-off and punt returns).
  - B) Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
  - C) Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - D) Ball carrier's knee, elbow, hip or backside touches the ground.
  - E) When a touchdown or extra point is made.

## 6. COACHES

1. Coaches are volunteers whose role it is to help young people learn to play and enjoy football. Parents are encouraged to support their youth and their coach at all times.
2. Coaches are required to wear the Gova Sports coach's shirt provided for the current season of play.
3. In the 10U, 8U, and 6U divisions, only one coach shall be allowed on the field. The designated coach will assist players with their positions and play calling. At the snap, on-field coaches must be 3 yards behind their nearest player and avoid physical interference during the play. Verbal direction may be given.
4. Coaches of all other age divisions may not come on to the field of play during a game unless a player is injured. Coaches or parents who come on the field of play anytime during a game

will be assessed a team penalty. A sideline warning may be issued in the discretion of the game official after which the following penalties will result:

- A) Coach or parent on the field during live action = unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- B) Coach on the field during a dead ball = delay of game penalty.
- 4. Coaches are expected to adhere to Gova Sports Flag Football philosophy, coaching guidelines and codes of conduct and ethics at all times.
- 5. Only three coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines. The head coach can address the officials. The Head coach may designate an assistant coach to address game officials if he/she desires. This may be used during an illness, absence, or other discretionary reason. All coaching substitutions must take place prior to the start of the game. Only one designated coach shall address the officials.
- 6. Coaches can call plays and give verbal direction to the players from the sideline. Gova Sports recommends that one coach should be designated for offense and another for defense. More than one coach giving direction at one time may be distracting for players.
  - 7. Coaching staff is responsible for the conduct of their sidelines, including spectators.
  - 8. Coaching staff must remain on their sidelines. Or, in the event that both teams share a sideline, coaches must remain between their end zone and the midfield line. Coaches are not allowed to extend beyond the midfield line into the opponent's team sidelines.
  - 9. Coaches are encouraged to pick up any trash on the field left by their team.

## 7. CONDUCT

- 1. Contact is limited to incidental contact that is a normal part of flag football.
- 2. Players are expected to behave in a civil manner. Flag slamming, flag throwing, or other uncivil acts will result in a verbal warning for the first offense and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for each subsequent offense. Players are encouraged to politely return a pulled flag to the offensive player after a tackle.
- 3. Taunting, trash talking, cursing or other offensive language or behavior by players, coaches or their fans will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for the first offense and possible forfeiture for the second offense (in the game official's sole discretion).
- 4. Reckless play deemed by the game official to be potentially dangerous or harmful (e.g. elbowing, cheap shots, kicking, punching, roughing, pushing out of bounds, etc.) will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Two such acts committed by one player during a game will result in automatic ejection.
- 5. Play that is deemed by the game official to be intentionally malicious (e.g. fighting, attempted punching, clothes lining, blatant tackling with no effort to pull flags, etc.) will result

in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and player ejection. Two such acts by one team during a game will result in immediate forfeiture and potential league sanctions for future games.

6. Players, Teams or Coaches who are found to have intentionally cheated will forfeit their game and be suspended until addressed by the league commissioner.
7. Players, Coaches, or Spectators who are ejected from a game, must vacate the premises. Failure to do so will result in game suspension, game forfeiture or league banishment.

8. Sportsmanship is paramount to the Gova Sports program. The Head Coaches and all Players must participate in the post-game handshake immediately following the conclusion of the contest or be subject to a one game suspension in the sole discretion of the commissioner.
9. Field Supervisors and Game Officials have the authority to suspend play and declare a forfeit if players, fans and/or coaches behave in a manner that is threatening, dangerous or violates the published code of conduct.
  10. Field Supervisors, Game Officials, Security or other Gova Sports Flag Football representatives will make reports to the League Commissioner of conduct violations by anyone at any Gova Sports Flag Football event. In addition to the penalties assessed during a game, conduct violations may carry the additional penalties in the discretion of the commissioner:
    - A) Intentional Unsportsmanlike Conduct - 8-day suspension from practice and play.
    - B) Ejection from a Game - 8-day suspension from practice and play.
    - C) Physically threatening an official - season suspension.
    - D) Hitting an official - season suspension, possible league banishment.
    - E) Public intoxication - season suspension.
    - F) Fighting / Physical Threats (on or off the field) - season suspension or league banishment.
    - G) Second offense of A or B - season suspension.
    - H) Playing an ineligible player - forfeiture of game (minimum).
11. **For safety reasons, spectators must be seated a minimum of 2 yards behind the sidelines.**

## 8. KICK-OFFs

1. The game shall commence upon the referee's whistle to begin the kick-off. The kick-off shall take place as indicated by age group below:
  - Age 4-6: Kick Off occurs at midfield
  - Age 7-8: Kick Off occurs at midfield
  - Ages 9-10: Kick Off occurs at the 12-yard PAT line
  - Ages 11-13: Kick Off occurs at the 12-yard PAT line
  - Ages 14-16: Kick Off occurs at the 12-yard PAT line

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2. The ball will be considered live until it is touched by a defender, rolls to a stop, travels out of bounds, or the ball carrier for the returning team has been flag-pulled.



3. Any kick-off or punt that breaks the plane of the goal line shall be ruled an automatic touchback. Grounding (kneeling) the ball in the end zone results in a touchback.
4. No turnovers may occur on kick-off or punt returns, unless a lateral pass is intercepted or safety occurs.
5. The kicking team must remain on sides during the kick/punt or be subject to penalty.
6. If the ball is kicked out of bounds (sidelines) without being touched, the receiving team will be awarded 1st down at a spot 7 yards behind the midfield line except in the case of punts. (See Section 15 "Punting"). The intent of this rule is to discourage teams from intentionally kicking the ball out of play. Intentionally kicking the ball out of play goes against the spirit of the game and is discouraged.
7. If a kick-off fails to go 7 yards, the receiving team will be awarded 1st down at a spot 7 yards behind the midfield line.
8. In the 4-6, 7-8 age group, no safety will be awarded during punt and kick returns. The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line.
9. Touchbacks will be spotted at the 5-yard PAT line.

## 9. SPOTTING THE BALL

1. The ball is spotted at the location of the ball carrier's forward-most grounded foot at the time the flag is pulled or the play is called dead. Note: The ball-carrier's forward-most grounded foot is the one that is both closest to his goal line and in contact with the ground. For example, should a defender pull the flag of a ball-carrier who has his front foot elevated over the goal line and his back foot on the ground six inches in front of the goal line, the ball will be spotted where his forward-most grounded foot was when the flag was pulled - six inches in front of the goal line. In the case of a player falling to the ground over the goal line, the play will be ruled dead at the location of the ball carrier's forward most grounded foot.
2. If a ball carrier's flag falls out while running, the ball is marked at the spot where the ball carrier's forward-most foot was when the flag came out.
3. Players that start a play without a flag or lose their flag during play can receive a pass but cannot advance it. The ball is spotted where the catch occurred. (Intentionally pulling a players flag before a catch is made will be assessed a penalty for Illegal Flag Pull.)
4. The play is ruled dead when the ball makes contact with the ground. In the case of a fumble, the ball is spotted at the forward-most grounded foot of the player who last controlled the ball. In the case of the center muffing a snap, the ball will be re-spotted at the Line of Scrimmage
  - A) Example 1: a player fumbles the ball forward. The ball is spotted where the players

forward-most grounded foot was at the time of the fumble, not where the ball lands.

B) Example 2: a player muffs a snap while standing in the end zone. The ball is re-spotted at the Line of Scrimmage

C) Example 3: a center hikes it over the head of the QB who could not touch the ball. The ball is re-spotted at the Line of Scrimmage providing the QB never had control of the ball.

## 10. HIKING

1. Prior to the snap, the ball must be resting on the ground.
2. The ball must be snapped between the legs to start play (re-snap, no loss of down).
3. Shotgun snaps are allowed but not required.
4. Center sneak plays are not allowed. Note: A center sneak is any play in which the ball is transferred immediately to the center from the player receiving the snap. A center must take at least one step forward to be eligible to receive a legal forward pass or one step backward to be eligible to accept a legal handoff or pitch.
5. The ball can be hiked from the center to any offensive player.
6. The ball must be snapped from the spot where the referee places it.
7. Any number of offensive players may shift prior to the snap but only one player on offense is allowed in motion when the ball is being snapped. The player in motion may move forward (see note below), backward or parallel to the Line of Scrimmage, but many not pass the LOS until the ball is snapped. All other players on offense must be set during the snap.

**Note:** *Forward motion is not allowed in traditional football and any play that intentionally utilizes forward motion shall be ruled a false start. However, Gova Sports rules are developed to reduce false start calls, teach the participants to get set and watch the snap.*

6. Only one QB may be positioned under center to receive the snap. The use of two offensive players under center in a manner that disguises the location of the ball during the snap will result in a false start penalty.
7. There is no limit to the number of handoffs that can be performed by the offense in a single play, so long as the ball never crosses the line of scrimmage.

### **Motion**

No more than one player at a time is allowed to be in motion, and a player in motion may not move toward the line of scrimmage while the ball is being snapped.

## 11. RUNNING

1. Any player receiving a hand-off or a pitch behind the line of scrimmage is eligible to run the ball.

**Note:** *A pitch may be tossed or thrown underhand or overhand to a player positioned behind the player pitching it.*

**Note:** *A hand-off is a direct exchange of the football from one player to another.*

**Note:** When two or more hand-offs are performed in quick succession, in every case, the player handing the ball off must completely release the ball. Having a player simply touch the ball while it is in possession of another player does not constitute a hand-off.

2. The player receiving the snap (usually a QB) is eligible to run the ball at any time.
3. Jumping or diving to advance the ball is illegal. However, an offensive player may jump over a defensive player on the ground to avoid a collision. Jumping or diving to catch a pass is permitted.
4. Once the ball has been handed off or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush the ball carrier regardless of their position prior to the snap.
5. Pitches are allowed once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. However, a pitch that occurs beyond the line of scrimmage in a forward motion will be assessed an offensive penalty for illegal pass from the point of infraction.
6. Players running the ball may use evasive maneuvers to avoid a defender.
  - A. The following maneuvers are allowed: Juking, stopping, side-stepping, twitching, jetting, spinning, and similar movements.
  - B. The following maneuvers are prohibited: jumping, hurdling, stiff arming, pushing, flag guarding, and “running through” defensive players. A warning/education will be given for infractions and a penalty of 10 yards will be issued for further infractions.
7. If a player missing a flag takes a handoff, the play is ruled dead at the spot of the forward-most foot of the player receiving the handoff.
8. The ball may not be stripped from the runner or receiver. In the event that an offensive and defensive player catch and control the ball simultaneously, the ball shall be ruled dead and awarded to the offense.
9. Any offensive player advancing the ball while running must make a visible attempt to avoid a defender in an established position or receive an unsportsmanlike penalty. An established defensive position means that both feet of the player are established on the ground and the player is not moving (similar to a charge in basketball). “Running Through” other players is prohibited and will be penalized with 10 yards.

## 12. PASSING

1. All forward passes must be received parallel or in front of the Quarterback’s front foot. Note: A forward pass is any ball tossed or thrown overhand or underhand to a player standing in front of the player throwing it.

2. A forward pass must move in the direction of play and cannot be “dropped” vertically from the QB’s hand to that of a receiver.
3. Shovel passes are allowed and subject to all the rules pertaining to forward passes. A "shovel" pass is simply a pass in which the ball is thrown with an underhand motion -- the arm and hand acting like . . . a shovel. There are no rules as to which kind of motion - - overhand, underhand, sidearm -- that a pass -- or lateral -- can be thrown.
4. Only one forward pass is allowed per play, and the passer must be entirely behind the line of scrimmage.
5. The quarterback does not have a time limit to release the ball.
6. Interceptions may be advanced including those made during extra point conversions and during overtime. **If the interception occurs during an extra point attempt and results in a score, the intercepting team will be awarded two (2) points, and receive the following kick-off.**

### 13. RECEIVING

1. All players are eligible to receive forward passes or pitches.
2. If a player missing a flag catches the ball, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the receivers forward most foot.
3. A player must have one foot inbounds when making a reception. If a player receives the ball while in the air, the first foot to touch the ground determines in-bounds or out-of-bounds in the officials’ sole discretion. If both feet land simultaneously while straddling the out of bounds line, the receiver shall be awarded a reception.
4. An offensive player who voluntarily runs out of bounds during live action may not return to the field of play until the ball is dead.
5. An offensive player who is forced out of bounds during live action by contact with a defender may return to the field of play during live action without penalty.
6. If a defensive player pulls a receiver’s flag prior to a legal reception of a pitch or forward pass, the defense will be penalized for Illegal Flag Pull and it will be assessed from the point of reception, not where the flag was pulled.
7. When a pass is thrown, any player from either team has a right to

catch the ball. It is considered fair play (**not** a pass interference) when unavoidable contact occurs when two or more eligible receivers are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass. Referees will determine incidental contact.

8. If a ball is simultaneously caught and controlled by 2 opposing players, possession will be awarded to the offense with the ball being dead at the spot.

## DEFENSE

3. NO INTENTIONAL CONTACT of any kind is permitted.
4. Defenders must only attempt to grab an offensive player's flag when trying to get them down.
5. Diving, lunging, or jumping in an effort to pull a flag is allowed.
6. If a defender attempts to pull an offensive player's flags and inadvertently grabs their jersey, the defender must immediately and completely release the jersey before they can reattempt to pull the flag. Failure to do so will result in a holding penalty.

## FLAG PULLING/GUARDING

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. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
5. Flag Guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by covering the flags with arms, hands, or the football jersey.

## 14 RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

1. Rushing of the QB in the 4-6 year old age group is **not** permitted.
2. All players in the 7-8, 9-10, and 11-13 age groups who rush the QB must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. A special marker will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage. The rush marker for the 14-16 age group shall be set 10 yards beyond the Line of Scrimmage.
3. A defender rushing from a point within 2 yards to the left or right of the rushing marker (i.e. up the middle) may not interfere with the Center or Hiker. Contact with or attempts to impede the center or hiker will be ruled defensive holding.
4. **Any number of players can rush the quarterback.**
5. Rushers may jump to block a pass but may not make contact with the QB during the throwing motion.

6. If a rusher leaves the rush line prior to the snap, he/she may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
7. If a rusher leaves the rush line early but the ball is handed off before the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage, the rusher may continue to legally rush.
8. Once the ball is handed off, passed laterally or pitched, the seven-yard rushing rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders are eligible to rush.
9. The rusher may attempt to block the pass but a penalty will be called if the rusher intentionally makes contact with the quarterback's arm.

## 15. PUNTING

1. The offensive team may elect to punt on 4th down. Punting is required for ages 9 and above. For age groups 7-8, a throw/pass may be substituted for a punt. For age group 4-6, the ball will be placed on the receiving team's 5yd touchback if a punt is elected.

2. Once a punt has been declared by the offense: a.) All defensive players must take position behind the rush cone (7 yards from the line of scrimmage) and may not rush the punter, b.) the Punter shall have 7 seconds after the snap to punt the ball, c.) false start by the offense will result in a 5-yard penalty and re-punt.
3. The Punting team must remain set behind the LOS until the ball has been kicked. An offside penalty will be assessed at the end of the punt return.
4. **Fake punts are not allowed.** Teams must declare a punt.
5. Punts traveling out of the field of play are spotted where the ball left the playing field.
6. Safeties apply to punt and kick returns in accordance with Section 23. EXCEPT in the 4-6, and 7-8 divisions per Section 8.7.

## 16. SCORING

1. Touchdowns are worth 6 points.
2. Extra Points are worth 1 point from 5-yard line or 2 points from 10-yard line.
3. A Safety is worth 2 points. In the event of a Safety, the Defense is awarded 2 points and the ball will be spotted at their own 5-yard line (there is no free kick following a safety). A safety is awarded when:
  - The ball carrier's flag is pulled in his own end zone (impetus must be on the ball carrier - see Section 23 SAFETIES), or
  - The offense commits a spot penalty in its own end zone (such as flag guarding)
- A. In the 4-6, 7-8 age group, no safety will be awarded during punt and kick returns. The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line as a Touchback. All other age groups will be awarded safeties in accordance with Section 23.
- B. The defense may return an interception including extra point attempts during regulation and overtime. An interception returned for a score on an extra point attempt is always worth 2 points.

## 17. RULES VIOLATIONS

1. All live penalties will be assessed at the end of the play. Dead Ball penalties will be assessed prior to the snap.



2. Spinning, “juking”, twisting, etc is allowed but players cannot jump to intentionally avoid a defensive player. **Jumping is in the officials’ sole discretion and is defined as an obvious and intentional attempt to avoid a defensive player by springing with both feet.**
3. Diving or leaping to advance the ball is not allowed. If a player dives or leaps, the ball will be marked where the player left his feet.
4. Blocking is not allowed. No player may run interference, screen or make contact with a player from the opposing team with the intent of impeding motion. It is a natural instinct to run with the play and players are allowed to do so providing that they are not impeding a defender from attacking or pulling the ball carrier’s flag. Blocking is in the official’s discretion and is largely interpreted by intent or proximity to other players.
5. Any player that comes onto the field from out of bounds after the play has begun will be penalized for illegal participation.
6. Referees will determine incidental contact that results from normal play.
7. The head coach (or the on-field coaches in the 4-6, and 7-8 year old divisions) may ask the referee for a rules clarification or interpretation but the request must come immediately after the play in question. Any stoppage of play by a coach to question a call or rule pertaining to a play other than the one just played will result in a delay of game penalty.
8. Game Officials’ calls are final. Players may not question calls. Coaches may ask for rules clarification but shall not question judgment calls.
9. In the case of offensive and defensive offsetting penalties, the down will be replayed with yardage penalties enforced, unless one of the infractions was a personal foul. In that case, the personal foul will take precedence over the non-personal foul. Example: A defender interferes with a pass and, following the whistle; the offensive player turns and pushes the defensive player in anger. While both the defense and offense are flagged respectively for pass interference and unsportsmanlike conduct, the offense alone would then be penalized for the personal foul of unsportsmanlike conduct.
10. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
11. If a team calls a time-out when it has none left, a penalty of 5 yards and 15 seconds run off the clock. If the game clock has less than 15 seconds when such a time-out is called, the game clock will expire for a violation coming from the offense. This will result in either half-time or end of game. This penalty will not negatively impact an offensive team if the violator is defense.

## **WARNINGS**

1. At the officials' discretion, a warning may be given in place of a penalty to a player or coach for any of the stated rules. Coaches and players should not expect to receive more than one warning if any.

## 18. OVERTIME PLAY

1. If the score is tied at the end of regulation, play moves into overtime.

- Repeat the coin toss to begin the competition. The visiting team calls the toss and the winner elects offense or defense. The opponent chooses the end of the field on which play will occur during the entire overtime period. Teams will alternate first possession during subsequent overtime periods if applicable. (For Example, If Team A starts with the ball during the first OT period, Team B shall start with the ball during the second OT period.)
- Each overtime period will last for 5 minutes. The team with the most points at the end of any given overtime period will secure the win.
- The possession begins at the 10-yard line. (No punting in overtime)
- If the offensive fails to score, the ball is turned-over. The next team will attempt to score from the same 10-yard line.
- The game clock does not run during overtime, but the play clock is enforced.
- A team's possession ends when it scores (touchdown), or turns over the ball (either on downs or by the defense otherwise gaining possession).
- As usual, a touchdown by the offense is followed by a try for one or two points.
- The defense may score a touchdown on a play on which it gains possession by turnover; such a play will satisfy the condition of each team having a possession and will therefore end the game (if the scores are now different/not tied)
- If the score remains tied at the end of the first overtime period, the procedure is repeated. The team with the second possession in one overtime will have the first possession in the next overtime.
- The overtime periods are continued until a winner is determined.
- All points scored in overtime count as if they were scored in regulation play.
- During overtime, an interception may be returned for 2 points.
- All applicable regulation period rules and penalties are in effect including the 30 second play clock.
- There are no time-outs in overtime.
- A winner is declared if a point differential exists at the end of the overtime period.

## 19. INADVERTENT WHISTLE

1. In the case of an inadvertent whistle by the game official, the offense has two options:
  - A) Take the ball at the spot of forward progress when the whistle blew.
  - B) Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
2. If a personal foul is committed during or immediately after a play whistled dead by an inadvertent whistle, the penalty for the personal foul will be assessed after the inadvertent whistle ruling.

## 20. PENALTIES

1. Roughing/Unsportsmanlike conduct = 10 yards from end of play.
2. Delay of game = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
3. Too many players on the field = 5 yards from line of scrimmage.

**Note:** When the listed penalty yardage is in excess of half the distance between the goal line and the spot from where the penalty yardage is to begin, the penalty will be "Half the distance to the goal"

line." Example: The original line of scrimmage is 7 yards from the goal line. The defense is flagged for being off-sides. The ball will be moved toward the goal and spotted at the 3 1/2 yard mark.

## **OFFENSIVE PENALTIES**

### **EXCEPT AS NOTED OTHERWISE - ALL OFFENSIVE PENALTIES RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC LOSS OF DOWN**

**Note:** Loss of Down means no repeating of down. An offensive penalty on 1st down costs the offensive team yardage plus the 1st down play during which the penalty occurred. The next play run by the offense would be 2nd down. Penalties on 2nd down are followed by a 3rd down play. Penalties on 3rd down are followed by a 4th down play. Penalties on 4th down result in a change of possession. (Example: The offensive team incurs a penalty while crossing midfield for a 1st down. The team is penalized yardage and awarded 1st & Goal from the ball spot)

1. Illegal Hike = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage. (No Loss of Down)
2. Illegal Motion = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage. (No Loss of Down)
3. False Start = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage. (No Loss of Down)
4. Illegal Forward Pass = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
5. Offensive Pass Interference = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
6. Flag Guarding/Blocking = 5 yards from spot of foul.
7. Center Sneak = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
8. Illegal participation (player enters the field of play after the ball has been snapped) = 5 yard from the original line of scrimmage and loss of down.

## **DEFENSIVE PENALTIES**

### **ALL DEFENSIVE PENALTIES RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC REPLAY OF DOWN**

1. Offside/Illegal Rush = 5 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
2. Pass Interference = Ball placed at spot of the foul - automatic first down. In the case of pass interference in the end zone, the ball will be spotted 1 yard from the goal line.
3. Face guarding = Ball placed at spot of the foul. In the case of face guarding in the end zone, the ball will be spotted 1 yard from the goal line.
4. Holding/Illegal Contact = 5 yards from the spot of the foul.
5. Illegal Flag Pull = 5 yards from the spot of the reception.
6. Roughing the passer = 10 yards from end of play. (Unsportsmanlike)

7. Illegal participation (player enters the field of play after the ball has been snapped) = 5 yard from the original line of scrimmage and automatic first down.

*A note on Defensive Holding: It is inevitable that a defensive player may inadvertently grab shorts when attempting a flag pull. If the flag is in hand, the defensive player may continue the tackle/flag-pull. If the flag is missed, the defensive player must release the shorts. With the exception of the above, defensive holding is defined as impeding an offensive player's progress by holding of clothing/body.*

#### **SPORTSMANSHIP**

2. Trash talking is not allowed. Trash talking is offensive language used against opposing coaches, players, officials, league personnel or fans. Disciplinary action may be taken.
3. If any league personnel or official witnesses any act of rough housing, including but not limited to, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and that player may be ejected. Further disciplinary action may follow including league expulsion.
4. After the game, teams are expected to form a line at midfield and congratulate the opposing team regardless the outcome of the game.

## **21. STANDINGS CALCULATIONS**

### **FORFEITS AND NO-SHOWS**

Please contact the League Commissioner if your team is unable to field a team and must forfeit. This will allow us to notify the other team. Players, Parents and Coaches are accountable for their commitment to the team and the league to participate with their best effort in every practice, every scheduled game, during the whole season.

### **LEAGUE STANDINGS**

1. League standings are based solely on wins or losses. The league discourages "running up the score". The league is organized for competitive fun and encourages coaches with a strong lead to mix up their player positions and plays to ensure that development and fun is the focus. In the event that teams are tied in the standings, the commissioner shall use a random method to determine tournament seeding's.
2. In an effort to keep the focus on player development during the "regular season", the league does not recognize division leaders with awards.

## **22. FIELD DIMENSIONS**

6U: 40 yards long x 25 yards wide and 5-yard end zones.

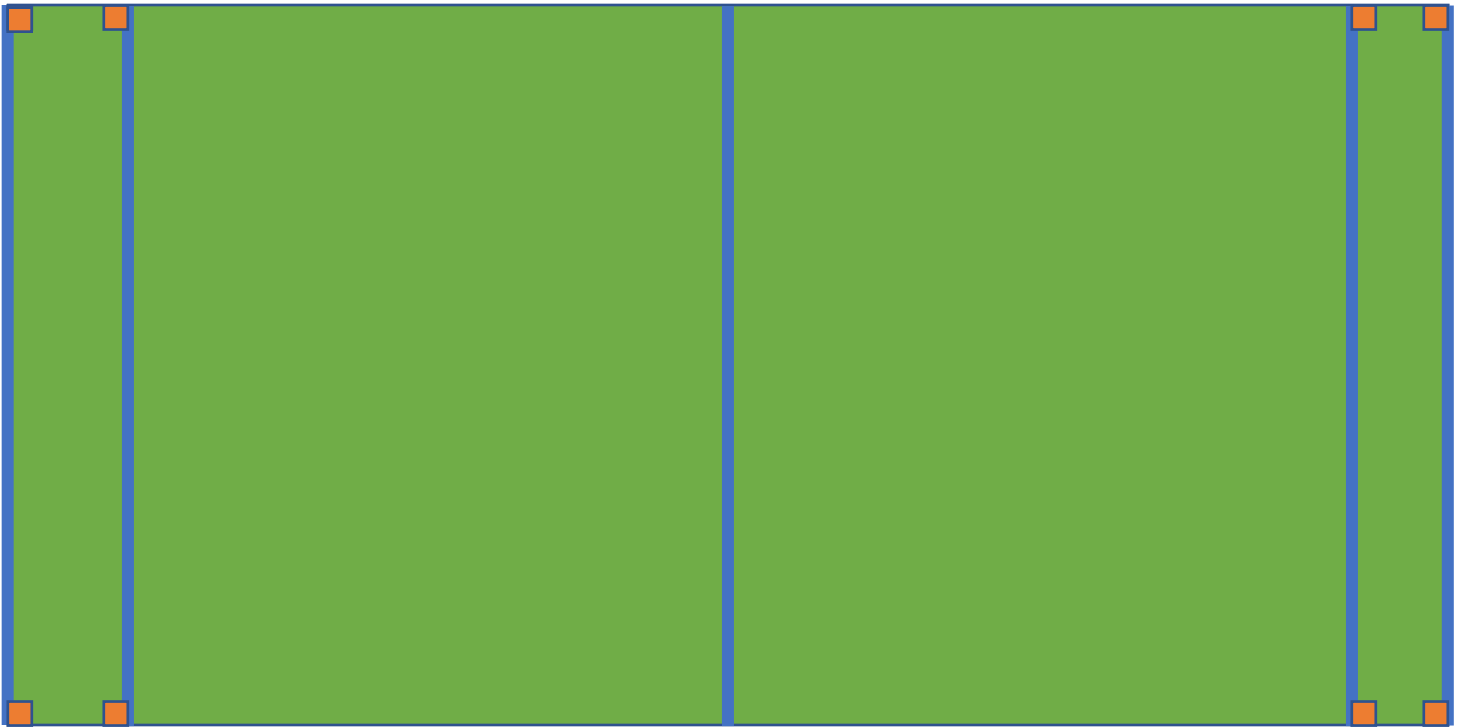
8U: 50 yards long x 35 yards wide and 10-yard end zones.

10U: 50 yards long x 35 yards wide and 10-yard end zones.

13U: 60 yards long x 35 yards wide and 10-yard end zones.

16U: 60 yards long x 35 yards wide and 10-yard end zones.

Note: Field dimensions may change based on available space.



End Zones are delineated with 4 orange pylons. The pylons on the goal line are considered to be in-bounds, the rear pylons are considered out of bounds. (Example, if a player's forward most foot comes in contact with the pylon and sidelines at the same time, the play would be ruled in bounds if it occurred at the goal line, and ruled out of bounds if it occurred at the back of the end zone).

## 23. SAFETIES - DEFINING IMPETUS

In order for a safety to occur, the impetus for the safety must come from the offensive team, and not a result of the defensive team. It is the action of a player that gives momentum to the ball, and if the ball is in the end zone due to the impetus of the defense, a safety cannot be awarded.

Examples:

1. A player receives the ball but retreats to his own end zone where he becomes tackled. Since the ball carrier was the impetus for taking the ball into the end zone, a Safety can be awarded to the defense team.
2. A defensive player intercepts a pass in his own end zone and is immediately tackled. Since the ball was put into the end zone by the offensive play, the defender is not the impetus for the ball being in the end zone, a Safety is not awarded. Rather, the play is ruled a Touchback.



**END OF RULES**