



**MO FAMILY  
SPORTS  
FLAG FOOTBALL  
2024 RULES**

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# Terms

## Boundary Lines:

The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.

## Line of Scrimmage (LOS):

an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.

## Line-to-Gain:

The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.

## Rush Line:

An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.

## Offense:

The team with possession of the ball.

## Defense:

The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.

## Passer:

The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.

## Rusher:

The defensive player(s) that is assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.

## Live Ball:

The period of time that the play is in action. Generally used regarding penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

**Dead Ball:**

The period of time immediately before or after a play.

**Whistle:**

Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime, or the end of the game.

**Inadvertent Whistle:**

Official's whistle that is performed in error.

**Charging:**

An illegal movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm, or chest.

**Flag Guarding:**

An illegal act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, arm, or ball.

**Shovel Pass:**

A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand, or by pushing the ball forward.

**Lateral:**

A backward or sideway toss of the ball by the ball carrier.

**Unsportsmanlike Conduct:**

A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

**Safety:**

A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.

### **No-Run Zone:**

A 5-yard zone before each end zone. Offensive teams cannot run the ball while in the zone before the opposing team's endzone- plays must be pass plays, even with handoffs. Defensive teams are not allowed to rush the passer while the offensive team is in this zone. A team is considered in the 'No-Run Zone' when the LOS is on or within the 5-yard line before the opposing team's end zone.

### **Play-Action:**

An offensive play that starts as if it is a run play, but ends as a pass play. The quarterback will typically do a fake handoff to the running back before passing to a receiver. Only teams in the 8U, 10U, & 12U divisions are allowed to run a Play-Action. **\*\*Special Note-** teams cannot run a Play-Action in the 'No-Run Zone.'

### **Flag obstruction:**

Deliberately obstructed flags that make flag-pulling difficult for the defense. This will be considered flag guarding. All jerseys **MUST** be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction.

# **Game Rules**

At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball.

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 started the game on defense.

The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.

If the offense fails to score after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession. A team may elect to punt on 4th down, and the new offensive team starts its drive on its 5-yard line. If the offensive team elects to go for it on 4th down and fails, the opposing team will have the option to take over at its own 5 or the spot of the loss of downs, whichever is a better field position.

If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.

Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

Special note: Teams in the 4U & 6U divisions cannot run a Play-Action. Teams in the 8U, 10U, & 12U divisions can run Play-Actions.

1 parent volunteer will be needed from each team - one to run the scoreboard and another to run the 'Down Marker.' It is the responsibility of each team's coach to find a volunteer to run one of these.

# Equipment

Flags, belts and, game footballs will be provided for each game. Your team must return all flags after each game - a \$15 fee will be charged to any team who doesn't return our flags.

Metal Cleats are not allowed.

Players must remove all jewelry or hats.

Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.

4U, 6U, and 8U divisions will use a PeeWee (PW) size football.

10U and 12U divisions will use a Junior (Jr) size football.

# FIELD

The field dimensions are 70 x 200 ft, with two 5-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain.

No-run zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.

No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff. This applies to all divisions except 4u- the 4u division will not have any 'No-Run Zones.'

Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

Each offensive team approaches one 'No-Run Zone' in each drive ( 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

# **Rosters**

Rosters can have a max of 12 players, with a minimum of 7, unless permission is granted by league officials.

Teams must start games with a minimum of 7 players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with 6 players on the field but no fewer than 6. Teams can use players not on their roster to fill in, in emergencies. However, that must be communicated to both the league admin via email/message as well as the opposing coach. We do this so we can track and make sure no one is abusing this rule. Should a player be found to have played on a team that is not on a roster and was not communicated, the game will be scored as a forfeit. If this continues to happen, the league can remove the team from the league and/or playoffs.

## **TIMING AND OVERTIME**

Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves unless one team gains a 28-point advantage, which will then end as the game's final score. The game will continue, but no further scoring will be kept. The clock stops only for timeouts or injuries.

Halftime is three minutes.

Each team is allowed 2, 30-second timeouts per half. Timeouts do not carry over to the next half.

Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. Officials will count down out loud once 5 seconds are remaining.

Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.



In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will end in a tie during the regular season. An overtime period will be used to determine a winner during the league tournament.

Overtime format is as follows:

- A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
- The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
  - 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 during every round of overtime.
- Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's start line for one point. A run will qualify as one one-point attempt, and a pass is a two-point attempt. 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 their own. The defense may not rush the passer but may cross the line of scrimmage if/once the ball is handed off. A pass that does not cross the line of scrimmage will be ruled a dead ball and scored as a failed attempt (please note, the passer may lateral the ball and the team may attempt a pass off the lateral). The passer will have a 7-second pass clock.

# SCORING

Touchdown: 6 points

PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point (Run) or 2 points (Pass): 5-yard line

Safety: 2 points

Extra points that are returned equals 2 points.

A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (run) or a 2-point conversion (pass) from the 5-yard line. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. **Teams are not allowed to blitz on 2-point conversions.**

Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.

# COACHES

Only two coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines.

Coaches are expected to provide a positive example for players and must abide by the rules and display respect towards officials, spectators, and the opposing team.

Coaches must present their provided 'Coach's Pass' to enter each game for free. Coaches must pay the entry fee if they cannot present their pass.

- **Note:** Coach's Passes cannot be shared

# **LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL**

The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.

The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.

- It is an automatic deadball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.

A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.

The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

Any official can whistle the play dead.

Play is ruled “dead” when:

- The ball hits the ground.
- If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap.
- The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
- The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
- A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
- The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
- The ball carrier’s flag falls out.
- The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- The 7-second pass clock expires.

- Inadvertent whistle.

**NOTE:** There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forward then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.)

If an inadvertent whistle occurs with no time left on the clock at halftime or the end of the game, the offense will have one untimed down. The offense can replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

## **RUNNING**

The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.

The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.

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 be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs. A “Center sneak” play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play- the Center cannot be the first person to touch the ball on a handoff from the QB.

**Absolutely NO forward laterals of any kind.**

Offensive teams are not allowed to run the ball in the No-Run Zones, located 5-yards before each end zone. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only ONE ‘No-Run Zone’ in each drive – one, 5 yards from the opposing team’s goal line).

Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.

Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.

Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.

No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.

Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.

## **PASSING**

All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward, and received beyond the line of scrimmage.

- All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes.
- The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.

Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.

- If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage, a down is consumed, and is NOT a safety (when in their own end zone).
- If a QB is being rushed and the pass rusher passes the line of scrimmage, the QB can then become the runner, including in areas designated as no running zones.

# RECEIVING

All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).

Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.

A player must have at least one foot in bounds when making a reception.

In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

Interceptions are returnable on conversions after touchdowns (2 points).

# RUSHING THE PASSER

All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from 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.

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.

A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

- A legal rush is:
  - Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
  - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.

**A penalty may be called if:**

- **The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage).**
- **Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from the line of scrimmage).**
- **Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage).**

**Special circumstances:**

- **Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven-second clock in effect.**
- **Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.**
- **Defensive players that jump the LOS due to the Offense running a Play-Action, must attempt to return to the other side of the LOS or immediately stop and not make a flag pull attempt.**

**Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact with the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.**

**The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up before 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 avoid contact.**

**A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.**

# **FLAG PULLING**

A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.

Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.

It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.

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.

A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who does not have the ball.

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.

# **FORMATIONS**

Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and the quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.

- One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.

Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.



The center may snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands. Side snaps are allowed.

## **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT**

If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**

Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.

Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official.

Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.

Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.

Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

- Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
- Keep comments clean and profanity-free.
- Compliment **ALL** players, not just one child or team.

Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:

- Dispose of **ALL** trash in designated trash cans.

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:

- Defense + 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
- Offense - 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

# **PENALTIES**

The Following Defensive Penalties are +5 YDS and REPLAY OF DOWN

- Holding, Pass Interference, Stripping, Offside, Illegal Rush, Illegal Flag Pull, Roughing the Passer, Taunting, More than 7 players on the field

The Following Defensive Penalties are 10 yards added to the end of the play, and automatic first down:

- Unnecessary Roughness, Unsportsmanlike Conduct

The Following Offensive Penalties are a 5-yard loss and a replay of down:

- Screening/Blocking the Ball Carrier, Charging, Flag Guarding, Offside/False Start, Illegal Forward Pass, Offensive Pass Interference, Illegal Motion (more than one person moving), Delay of Game, Illegal procedure, Impeding the Rusher, More than 7 players on field

The Following Offensive Penalties are a 10-yard loss and a loss of down:

- Unnecessary Roughness, Unsportsmanlike Conduct

The Following Penalties will result in the LOS moving half the distance to the Goal Line:

- Any Offensive penalty while on their own 5-yard line (adhere to Replay/Loss of Down to the specific penalty)
- Any Defensive penalty while Offense is in the 'No-Run Zone (adhere to Replay/Loss of Down to the specific penalty)