NFL FLAG

RULE BOOK

4UAD INDOOR SPORTS

2023/2024

ap09222021

Tournament Rules

I. Game

1. 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 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 started the game on defense.

3. 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 three (3) downs to score a touchdown.

    a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect 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 field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.

    b. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.

    c. Offensive Teams MUST declare 4th down intent or snap the ball prior to the expiration of the 25 second Play Clock.

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

II. Terminology

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 eight 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 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	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	Refers to 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 the 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.

III. Equipment

1. Participants must bring their own official NFL FLAG belts and mouth guards to the tournament. Extra belts and mouth guards will be available for purchase.
2. All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and mouth guards at all times while on the playing fields.
3. NFL FLAG footballs will be provided. Team footballs are not allowed.
4. Players must wear shoes. Cleats may not be allowed at certain locations. This will be specified in the tournament details you receive prior to the tournament. However, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
5. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
6. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.
7. Players may wear soft shell helmets but they must ne secured at ALL times while on the playing field
8. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
9. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.
    a. ***Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.***

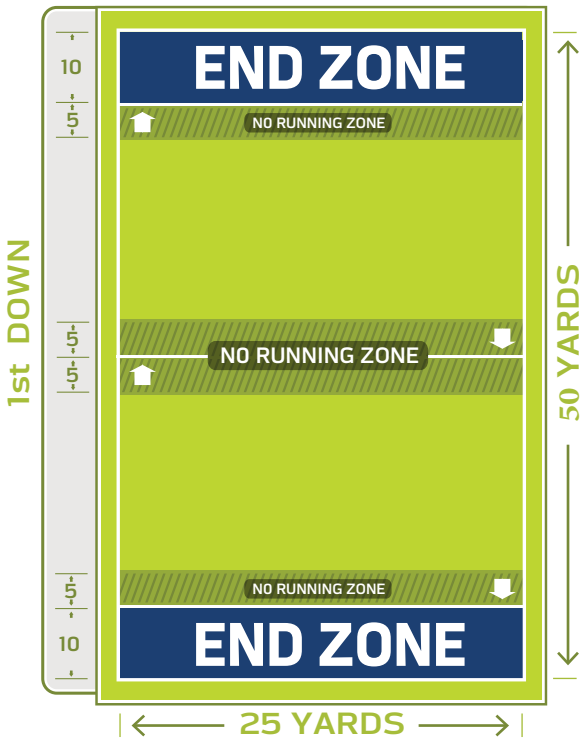
IV. Field

1. The field dimensions are 25 yards by 50 yards with two 7-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each line-to gain by 5 yards. However, some tournaments may use smaller fields because of field space available or to complete tournament scheduling on time. Recommended smaller field dimensions are 50 yards by 25 yards with two 7 yard end zones. Larger field dimensions are used for tournaments with older ages. The 7v7 (14U &16U) field size dimensions are 32 yards by 56 yards.

2. 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.

3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

4. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).



V. Timing

1. Regular Season Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two 20 minute halves, and Tournament Games are played on a 24 minute continuous clock with two 12 minute halves, unless one team gains a 28-point advantage, which will then end the game. Clock stops only for half time, time outs, injuries and the Officials discretion.

2. Halftime is one minute.

3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball.

4. Each team has two 30-second timeouts per game.

5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

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

VI. Scoring

1. ***Touchdown:*** 6 points
2. ***PAT*** (point after touchdown) ***1 point*** (5-yard line) or ***2 points*** (10-yard line)

    a. Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass.

3. ***Safety:*** 2 points

    a. 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.

4. Extra points that are returned equals 2 points.
5. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-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.
6. After one team is winning by 28 points or more, the scoreboard will be turned off. Once a 28 or more point advantage is gained, no PAT will be attempted.
7. ***Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.***
8. The coaches, officials and scorekeeper must sign the score sheet. If a coach does not sign the score sheet before leaving the field, the scorekeeper will note on that score sheet and the score will be FINAL.

VII. Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL FLAG philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct.
2. Only two coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines.

    a. Coaches are permitted to Coach on the sideline.

    b. All team photographers, managers, position coaches, team moms, fans, etc. are required and must remain a minimum of 10 yards off the field in a designated viewing area.

    c. Coaches, this is your responsibility to keep your fans and any other team associated members in the designated areas.

IX. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
    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, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground in the field of play.
4. 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.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled "dead" when:
    a. The ball hits the ground.
        i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit 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. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits 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. The 7 second pass clock expires.
    i. Inadvertent whistle
    j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet other than jump cuts, spinning or to avoid a downed player on the field of play.

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

8. If inadvertent whistle occurs the offense has two options:
    A) take the ball where the whistle blew and the down is consumed
    B) replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

    If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.
9. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

X. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
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 be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
    a. ***"Center sneak" play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.***
4. Absolutely NO pitches or laterals of any kind.
5. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
6. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
9. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
    a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
10. 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.
11. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
12. Offensive players in close proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
13. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XI. Passing

1. All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and ball out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.

    a. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.

    b. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.

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

3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the 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.

    a. 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 (LOS).

XII. Receiving

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

2. 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.

3. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first.

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

5. Interceptions may be returned. This also includes conversions and overtime. Defense is awarded 6 points for score during play, 2 points if returned for score on conversions or overtime

XIII. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of eight 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.

   8U Division: Defenders may not rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield.

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

   a A legal rush is:
      i. Any rush from a point 8-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
      ii. Ar ush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.

   b. A penalty may be called if:
      i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

      ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).

      iii. 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 and first down).

      iv. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.

   c. Special circumstances:
      i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
      ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.

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

5. 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 prior to the snap. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. 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.**

6. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possesion of the ball is once the flag is pulled.

   a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XIV. 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 a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. 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.

XV. Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to five players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.

    a. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
    b. One player at a time may go in motion at least 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage.

2. 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.

3. The center must 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.

XVI. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. 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!*

2. 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.

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

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

5. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED

6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

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

7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:

    a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
    b. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.
    c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.

8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:

    a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
    b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

XVII. Penalties

i. General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees 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 team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense 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 yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

iii. 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

iv. Defensive penalties

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

v. 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
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down