

# NFL Youth Experience Sports Flag Football Rules

Away team (red) will start with the ball.

There are no kickoffs.

The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to get past the 1<sup>st</sup> down mark at the center field line (30yrd marker). If the offense fails to score or move past the 1<sup>st</sup> down line, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over where the other team left off unless elected to punt on 4<sup>th</sup> down.

If the offensive team fails to cross the 1<sup>st</sup> down mark in 3 downs, on the 4<sup>th</sup> down they can elect to punt. Possession of the ball then changes, and the opposition starts from their 5-yard line. If 4<sup>th</sup> down is attempted and failed, the opposing team receives possession at previous line of scrimmage.

Teams change sides and possession of the football after the first 2 quarters.



## **PLAYERS**

*Teams must field 6-7 players at all times for 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade.*

## **ATTIRE**

Cleats are allowed, except for metal spikes. Inspections must be made. All players must wear a protective mouthpiece; THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS.

## **TIMING / OVERTIME**

Games consist of 12-minute quarters running time including a 1-2 minute break between quarters.

After a touchdown, the extra point after will start on the 5-yard line.

Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before delay-of-game penalty is enforced.

Each team has one 60-second and one 30-second time out per half. Each game will have a 5-minute half time.

Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

## **RUNNING**

The quarterback cannot run with the ball. If he is being rushed, he can run around but cannot cross the line of scrimmage.

Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs.

NO laterals or pitches of any kind.

No-running zones are located 5 yards from the opposing end zone and 5 yards before each 1<sup>st</sup> down mark. These are designed to avoid short-yardage power running situations.

The player who takes the handoffs can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (NO diving or jumping).

The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.

## **RECEIVING**

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

As in the NFL, only one player is allowed in motion at a time.

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

## PASSING

### 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> grade:

- All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

### 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> grade:

- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage
- Pitches or Laterals will be allowed. Laterals passed the line of scrimmage will not be allowed
- Screens will be allowed. Backwards passes/passes behind the line of scrimmage

The quarterback has a seven-second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead and loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.

## DEADBALLS

ALL GRADES – \*SHOTGUN – Quarterback is allowed to start with the ball in Shotgun formation and hike the ball from this position. This allows for games to move faster and get more plays in. You may also snap the ball off the center's back for all grades if you do not want to do shotgun

Play is "dead" when:

- Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- Touchdown or safety is scored.
- Ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- Ball carrier's flag falls out.
  - (If the flag detaches on it's own, the person must be touched in order for the ball to be declared dead)
- Interception on an extra point attempt.
- Ball is dropped from a pass, shovel pass, pitch, lateral or screen.

Fumbles: The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.

## BLOCKING

Screening is allowed. Screener MUST put both hands behind their back, locked together is some matter for the duration of the screen. A penalty will be called if a screener's arms are separated from behind their back while screening **within 2 yards of the rusher**.

Moving screens are only allowed behind the line of scrimmage when protecting the passer or potential passer. Moving screens are when a player is in motion in an attempt to prevent the rusher from de-flagging a player.

Stationary screens are allowed anywhere. Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, all downfield screens must be stationary. Offensive players may NOT run with the ball carrier.

Screener may NOT step into the rusher. However, screener is in a vulnerable position with hands behind their back so the main responsibility of avoiding contact rests with the rusher.

## **RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK**

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 may 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 cone or the official, will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Remember, NO tackling is allowed.

## **SPORTSMANSHIP/ROUGHING**

If the official witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

Trash Talking is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If trash talking occurs, the official will give one warning. If it continues, person responsible will be ejected from the game.

## **PENALTIES**

### **Defensive:**

Offside	5 yards
Roughing the player (automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> down)	5 yards
Illegal Contact (holding, excessive contact, etc)	5 yards
Illegal Flag Pull (before the receiver has ball)	5 yards
Rushing (starting to rush from inside 7-yard marker)	5 yards
Defensive Pass Interference	5 yards & automatic 1st down

### **Offensive:**

Illegal Motion (2+ people moving, false start, etc)	5 yards
Illegal Forward Pass (pass received behind the LOS)	5 yards
Illegal Screen (moving screen downfield, contact, etc.)	5 yards from point of infraction
Offensive Pass Interference (pushing off defender)	5 yards & loss of down
Flag Guarding	5 yards from spot of foul
Delay of Game	5 yards (clock stops)
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	15 yards & possible ejection

Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.

Only the team coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.

Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.