

**NH SPORTSPLEX OFFICIAL
NFL YOUTH AND ADULT FLAG FOOTBALL
RULE BOOK & CODE OF CONDUCT**



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I. Gameplay

1. Game is 5 on 5 unless otherwise authorized.
 - a. Teams may play with no less than 4 players on the field. If a team has less than 4 players, the start of the game will be held for no more than 10 minutes for a minimum of 4 players. Once a team has 4 players the game will start. If a game is delayed because a team has less than 4 players, the offending team will lose their time outs for both halves.
 - b. If a team only has 4 players and an injury occurs to one or more of the players, the team will forfeit the game.
2. At the start of each game, captains from both teams will meet at midfield with the referee. A coin toss will determine who has the option to choose offense or defense to start the game. The visiting team calls the coin toss loud enough so both captains and the referee can hear the call.
3. The winner of the coin toss will choose offense or defense to start the game. Possession changes at the start of the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
4. The offense takes possession at the 5-yard line to start the game and on any turnover on downs. The offense must make the line-to-gain (midfield) with three (3) plays or it is a turnover on downs. Once the line-to-gain is crossed the offense is awarded a new set of downs and has three (3) plays to score a touchdown.

II. Equipment

1. The league provides each player with official flag belts and flags.
 - a. Players may also purchase and use their own flags.
 - b. No youth flags, either as a whole set, or just the flags used with adult belts, velcro or tournament flags.
 - c. The length of the flags must be AT LEAST the standard length of 17.25 inches.
2. Players must be properly equipped including shoes or cleats that have no metal exposed. Legal equipment includes tape on arms, hands or fingers. Players may use gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Shorts or pants that do not have pockets are recommended. If shorts or pants with pockets are worn, and a pocket is grabbed during an attempt to pull a flag, it will not be considered

holding - unless deemed unnecessary by the officials. Also, hoodies with pockets should not be worn, grabbing the pockets would be treated the same as grabbing the pocket of shorts/pants. If possible, have the player either remove or put a shirt over it.

3. Players must tuck their jersey in under the flag belt to ensure the entire flags and holsters are not covered. Also, if a player has anything hanging from their belt, it is considered a flag and can be pulled (gloves or towel are the most common).

4. The flag color must contrast the color of the player's shorts or pants. At no time can the flags be the same color as the player's shorts or pants, to include solid strips on the pant legs.

5. Flags must be worn tightly, to not freely spin on the player's hips and down the side of the player's legs - along the seam of their pants or shorts. Flags worn on the "back" part of the hips are considered illegal. Flags must also be worn straight down so they flare out.

6. If a player is legally equipped at the snap, then he is legally equipped through the play, unless he willfully changes something. If a player is illegally equipped at the snap, they become down by contact throughout the play - this includes, but is not limited to: flags not in the proper place, belt too loose, or shirt covering flags.

III. Field Regulations

1. The field of play is 35 yards in width and 60 yards in length; with 5 yard end-zones at each end of the field. Midfield is 25 yards from each goal-line.

2. The perimeter of the field will be marked with cones and each goal-line and end-line will be marked with pylons.

3. No-run zones are located 5 yards before midfield and 5 yards before each goal-line.

4. While in a no-run zone, teams may still handoff the ball, however all plays must be passing plays.

5. Each offensive team approaches only two no-run zones on each drive (5 yards before midfield and 5 yards from the goal-line).

IV. Timing and Overtime Procedures

1. The time for a game is 50 minutes with two 25 minute halves. The clock will only stop for timeouts, to include injury, team, and official timeouts.

2. Halftime is one minute.
3. Each team has one 30-second timeout per half.
4. The offense has 30 seconds to put the ball in play after the ready-for-play signal. A warning of 10 and 5 seconds will be announced prior to a delay of game penalty.
5. In the event of an official time out (injury or interpretation), the clock will start again on the ready-for-play signal.
6. If the score is tied at the end of the second half, overtime procedures will be in effect.

V. Overtime procedures:

1. A coin toss will determine possession - options are offense or defense.
2. Each team gets three plays to advance the ball down field.
3. The team that advances the ball the furthest downfield is deemed the winner.
4. Each team will have 3 downs, and if a touchdown is scored on either of the first 2 downs, the team will continue to the next down (in theory, a team can score 3 touchdowns on their possession).
5. An interception ends the drive, and the offensive team will be credited for yards they have gained up to the interception. Interceptions are blown dead immediately.
6. A safety ends the drive. The offensive team is given zero yards. The next team must then gain at least 1 yard to win the game.
7. All penalties remain the same where offensive penalties are a loss of down, and defensive penalties could give the offense a new set of downs.

VI. Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points
 - a. A touchdown occurs when a player possesses the ball in the opponent's end zone.
Note: the ball must break the plane of the goal-line. The player cannot dive, fall or jump into the end zone. If this happens the player would be considered down where he was when this action occurred.
2. PAT (Point after Touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line).
 - a. 1 point try is pass only and is a no-run zone; 2 point try can be pass or run.

b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether they wish to attempt a 1- point try or a 2-point try. Once the ball has been marked ready for play the decision is final and can only be changed with a charged team timeout.

c. If an interception occurs during a PAT (1 or 2 point try) and is returned for a score, the intercepting team scores 2 points.

3. Safety: 2 points

a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in their own end zone.

b. A safety can occur when a legal flag is pulled or a player is down by contact, the player steps out of bounds in the end zone, a fumble occurs in or behind the end zone, or if a spot penalty occurs in the end zone.

4. Mercy - (YOUTH ONLY) Once the score differential is 28-points, “mercy” is in effect. The team who is mercied has the option to accept/decline the mercy rule. By accepting the mercy rule then the score is frozen, they are given four (4) downs and the defense is not able to blitz. Additionally, no extra point attempts by the winning team will occur there-on-out.

VII. Captains/Coaches

1. Captains/coaches are expected to adhere to NH Sportsplex Flag Football rules and code of conduct; as well as ensuring their team, their fans, will adhere to the code of conduct and rules. If the captain/coach cannot control their fans, then an unsportsmanlike penalty can be assessed against the captain.

2. Captains/coaches are responsible to ensure their players are properly equipped.

3. ONLY Captains/Coaches are allowed to ask for an explanation or challenge a ruling by the officials.

VIII. Live Ball and Dead Ball

1. The ball is live when a legal snap occurs and remains live until it is ruled dead.

2. The official will indicate the line of scrimmage and the rush line (Adult, Youth 11/12, 13/14, High School - 7 yards; Youth 5/6, 7/8, 9/10 - 10 yards) prior to the ball being marked ready-for-play.

3. A player must have one foot inbounds for a completed catch. A player may not jump from out of bounds to catch a ball landing in bounds. Two feet must be established in bounds before a player may contact the ball.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players when the snap is imminent. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made during any dead ball period until the snap is imminent.
6. The ball is ruled DEAD if:
 - a. The ball makes contact with the ground. If the ball makes contact with the ground in any manner other than a forward pass the ball is placed at that spot. The only exception to this is if the ball is fumbled forward the ball is dead where the fumble occurred and cannot be recovered by either team.
 - b. The ball carrier's flag is legally pulled.
 - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. Any part of the ball carrier's body other than hands or feet makes contact with the ground.
 - e. Jumping occurs.
 - f. A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
 - g. The seven second pass clock expires.
 - h. An inadvertent whistle occurs. In the event of an inadvertent whistle the team with possession of the ball at the time of the whistle will have two options. *Option 1:* Take the ball at the spot the ball was possessed when the whistle occurred and the down counts. *Option 2:* Replay the down from the preceding line-of-scrimmage.
7. A team may use a charged timeout to challenge a ruling or enforcement of a rule. If the ruling is found to be correct, the charged timeout will stand. If the ruling is found to be incorrect the timeout will not be charged and the ruling will be enforced properly. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call. If a team is out of time outs, the captain has one more chance to challenge a ruling on the field. If they lose the challenge, they will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty.

IX. Running

1. The location of the ball is spotted when the flag(s) is pulled.
2. The quarterback may not run unless a handoff occurs. The quarterback is defined as the player who receives the snap. If this occurs the play will be allowed to finish and the penalty will then be assessed.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are considered "legal handoffs". Once the line of scrimmage has been broken by the runner, the ball may no longer be handed off. Legal handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the player. There may be multiple handoffs during a down. A "legal handoff" is a total loss of possession from one offensive player to another.
4. A player must give up protection at the line (move off the line of scrimmage) to receive a legal handoff. The "snapper sneak" play is not permitted.
5. No laterals are permitted.
6. Any player who receives a handoff may make a legal forward pass.
7. Once a legal handoff occurs, all defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage.
8. A runner may not leave their feet in an attempt to gain an advantage or avoid a flag pull. Jumping to advance the ball is not permitted. When a jump occurs, the play is dead at that spot, there is no penalty for jumping. Spinning and side steps are permitted as long as the runner does not leave the ground with both feet. The passer may jump to pass but may not jump to avoid a flag pull.
9. Blocking is not permitted at any time.
10. Once a runner possesses the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, all other players on the team must stop in place. They may speak to the runner but may not move into or out of the way. There is not running along with the ball carrier permitted.
11. Deliberately obstructing the flags will be considered a flag guard. Players with flags that are not worn properly at the start of the snap will be considered down by contact.

X. Passing

1. A legal pass is defined by a pass that is thrown before any part of the passer's body crosses the line of scrimmage.

2. A legal pass must also be completed/possessed beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. There is no penalty for intentionally throwing the ball away.
4. The quarterback must throw the ball or do a direct hand off prior to the seven second clock expiring. If the seven second clock expires, the ball is dead and the succeeding spot is the previous line of scrimmage. A hand off stops the seven second clock and the play continues.
5. The ball must be out of the quarterback's hand at the time of the flag pull to avoid it being deemed a sack. This is by the official's judgment, with a "tie" going to the quarterback.
6. Ball is live if it makes contact with the ceiling net.

XI. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive a pass, including the quarterback if a legal handoff has occurred.
2. A player must have at least one foot inbounds to be deemed a completed catch.
3. Simultaneous possession is awarded to the offense and the ball is dead.
4. Interceptions change the possession of the ball. The succeeding spot will be the spot of the ball when marked dead. This is the only time that the ball will not start on the 5-yard line unless that is where the ball is marked dead.

XII. Defensive Rushing

1. A legal rush occurs when a player is behind the rush line and one or more yards to the right or left of the center line. The rush line is seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Any or all players may rush if they are behind the rush line at the time of the snap. All other players in front of the rush line must be one yard from the line of scrimmage and may not cross the line of scrimmage unless a legal handoff has occurred. Once a handoff occurs, the impeding dissipates, but blocking penalty may still occur by the offense.
2. If the rusher begins the rush early, they may return to the line and perform a legal rush.
3. Teams are not required to identify the rusher. Teams are not required to rush on any play. Rushers may attempt to block the pass; however no contact may be made with the quarterback. Illegal contact with the quarterback will result in a roughing the passer penalty - other than that deemed incidental by the official.

4. The offense may not impede the rusher's route to the quarterback. The rusher's line is established from point A (Blitzer) to Point B (Quarterback) at the time of the snap. The blitzer has the right to a straight-line path to the quarterback. The line is not dynamic, and the offensive players are responsible for avoiding the rusher's path. Any disruption of the rusher's straight line path or contact with the rusher by the offense will be an impeding the rusher penalty.

a. Once the quarterback rolls out of the pocket, the impeding is off.

5. The offensive players on the line of scrimmage are awarded protection until they move from their position at the snap. The rusher is responsible for avoiding any offensive player that is awarded protection. If the rusher contacts a player with awarded protection it will result in an illegal contact penalty.

6. A rusher must be one yard to either side of the rush line to have impeding protection. If they are not, it is an illegal rush and they do not have impeding protection.

7. When the ball is within five yards of the goal line, the maximum blitz line is the green line beyond the endzone.

XIII. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull occurs when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.

2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but may not tackle or hold the runner. Excessive contact even when attempting a legal flag pull may result in an illegal contact penalty.

3. Players may not attempt to strip or pull the ball from the player with possession.

4. If a player with possession of the ball loses a flag before or during a play (not by a legal flag pull), the player is down when contacted by an opponent.

5. A player may not intentionally pull a flag off of an opponent who is not in possession of the ball. This may result in an unsportsmanlike penalty if deemed the act was intentional and an attempt to gain an advantage.

6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defenders' access to the flags by stiff arm, dropping of the shoulder or arms, dropping their head and using it to try to create space, or intentionally covering the flag with clothing. Dropping or using an extended arm when dipping to avoid a flag pull can also be deemed flag guarding depending on how and where the arm is and where the defender is.

7. In the last one minute of either half, the clock will stop on any penalty where options need to be expanded to the offending team. Once the yardage is marked off, the clock will resume when the official is back at the line of scrimmage to officiate.

XIV. Formations

1. The offense must have a minimum of one snapper and up to four players on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.
2. Only one player may be in motion at the time of the snap. A legal motion is performed one or more yards behind, backwards, or parallel to the line of scrimmage. No player may be in motion towards the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.
3. The snapper must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between their legs to a player that is off the line of scrimmage and the ball must completely leave the snapper's hands.
4. Defensive Formation - All defenders must be AT LEAST 1 yard off the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.

XV. Conduct of Players and Fans

1. If a field monitor or official witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, fighting, or other harmful acts that are deemed unnecessary, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. No appeals will be considered at time of ejection. Foul play will not be tolerated.
2. Offensive or confrontational language or behavior is not allowed. Officials will determine offensive language. A warning may be given by the referee but is not required prior to penalty or ejection from the game.
3. No player or spectator may physically or verbally abuse another player, coach, official, or spectator. Violators will be ejected and removed from the area or building.
4. All players and spectators must adhere to code of conduct rules and guidelines.

CODE OF CONDUCT: Any verbal abuse or physical altercations to referees, NH Sportsplex employees or opposing team that results in an in-game ejection will also be

suspended for the next game (Strike 1). Strike 2 will occur if an additional in-game ejection happens, which will result in a penalty of two suspended games. In the event of Strike 3, this will result in an indefinite suspension. The NH Sportsplex reserves the right to suspend a player for post-game issues either in the building or outside on the grounds of the NH Sportsplex. All suspension decisions are at the sole discretion of League Coordinators & The NH Sportsplex.

5. Only team captains can represent their team at the coin toss.
6. Spectators are encouraged to positively cheer for their team and players. No spectator will harass any players or officials.
7. Fans must stand and keep all supplies (bags, chairs, tripods, etc.) a minimum of 2 yards outside the boundary line and not in the area surrounding the end zone, unless behind a boundary net. Field 3 players will keep bags up against the wall behind the netting. Field 2 players will keep bags behind the end zone's netting (alternating between games if possible). Field 1 players will keep bags up against the wall behind the netting. Incoming teams will stay behind the netting until the end of the previous game concludes. This includes a strict no practicing, passing the ball around, or other horseplay on/around the field during gameplay policy.

XVI. Penalty Procedures

1. The referee will call all penalties and give the signal facing the field to ensure the teams understand what is being called.
2. Referees will determine if incidental contact occurs that results in normal play of the game.
3. Penalties may be assessed from the line of scrimmage, end of the run, or spot of the foul (see penalty enforcements).
4. Only the team captain may ask the referee questions regarding rule clarification or interpretation. All other players may not question calls to any official.
5. A half may not end on an accepted defensive penalty.
6. Live ball penalties will be marked with a yellow flag and the play will continue until the ball is ruled dead.

7. Dead ball penalties will be marked with a yellow flag and the play will not be allowed to begin.
8. Penalty yards may not exceed half the distance to the goal. Penalty yardage that would exceed this distance to the goal will be assessed half the distance to the goal.
9. All penalties may be accepted with or without the yardage that is associated with the penalty.
 - a. If the penalty yards would put a team in or take a team out of a no-run zone, the penalty may be accepted and the yardage may be declined.

XVII. Penalty Enforcement

1. *Defensive Penalties* (Enforced from the line-of-scrimmage (LOS) or succeeding spot)
 - a. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Dead ball - +10 yards and first down is awarded from the succeeding spot // Touchdown - the offense would have to declare 1 or 2 points prior to accessing the penalty
 - i. Two unsportsmanlike penalties on a singular player results in an ejection.
 - b. Unnecessary Roughness: Live ball - +10 yards from the succeeding spot and first down is awarded
 - c. Dead Ball Personal Foul - +10 yards and first down is awarded
 - d. Offsides: Dead ball - +5 yards and replay down
 - e. Illegal rush: Live ball - +5 yards and replay down
 - f. Disconcerting Acts - i.e. trying to draw the offense offsides - +5 yards and first down is awarded
 - g. Illegal Substitution: Live ball - +5 yards from previous spot and replay down
 - h. Illegal Participation: Live ball - +10 yards from previous spot and first down is awarded
 - i. Holding of the ball carrier: Live ball - +5 yards from succeeding spot and first down is awarded
 - j. Holding of an eligible receiver prior to the pass - +5 from the previous spot and first down is awarded
 - k. Holding (last man): Live ball - Touchdown is awarded

- l. Stripping the Ball: Live ball - +5 yards from the succeeding spot and first down is awarded
- m. Tackling / Pushing: Live ball - +10 yards from succeeding spot and first down is awarded
 - i. Forceful intent may result in an ejection.
 - ii. Live ball if the last man downfield received the penalty: touchdown is awarded.
- n. Roughing the passer: Live ball - +10 yards from the LOS and first down is awarded
- o. Taunting: Dead ball - +10 yards and first down is awarded
 - i. Unsportsmanlike Penalty takes into effect from the succeeding spot, as well.
- p. Pass interference: Live ball - Spot foul and automatic first down s awarded
 - i. Pass interference that occurs in the end zone: ball will be placed at the 1-yard line and automatic first down is awarded.

2. *Offensive Penalties* (Enforced from the line-of-scrimmage unless otherwise specified) i. (2x per player= ejection)

- a. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Dead ball - -10 yards and loss of down from the succeeding spot. Defense has the option to choose to access on extra point, or on their next snap. Offense would have to declare if they are going to 1 or 2 prior to the option given to the defense.
- b. Unnecessary Roughness: Live ball - -10 yards and loss of down
- c. Dead Ball Personal Foul: Dead ball - -10 yards and loss of down
- d. Offsides: Dead ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- e. False Start: Dead ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- f. Snap Infraction: Dead ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- g. Illegal Motion: Live ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- h. Illegal Shift: Live ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- i. Delay of Game: Dead ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- j. Illegal Substitution: Live ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- k. Illegal Participation: Live ball - -10 yards and loss of down
- l. Impeding the rusher: Live ball - -5 yards and loss of down
- m. Illegal Run: Live ball - -5 yards and loss of down

- n. Illegal Forward Pass: Live ball- -5 yards and loss of down
 - o. Pass Interference: Live ball - -10 yards and loss of down
 - p. Blocking: Live ball - -10 yards from the spot and loss of down
 - q. Charging: Live ball - -10 yards from the spot and loss of down
 - r. Flag Guarding: Live ball - -10 yards from the spot and loss of down
-