

# Flag Football Rules

All rules not mentioned will be governed by the 2007 & 2008 NIRSA FLAG & TOUCH FOOTBALL RULES BOOK Game, Field, Players, and Equipment

- Shirts must be long enough to tuck in so that they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down or short enough so there is a minimum 4" from the bottom of the shirt to the player's waistline. Arm openings must be no bigger than 4".
- Pants or shorts with BELT LOOPS, POCKETS & DRAWSTRINGS are prohibited
- Towels may not hang from a player's waist or otherwise interfere with the possible removal of a flag. Towels however may be used and kept on the ground in between the cones before the snap.
- All jewelry must be removed including watches, earrings, bracelets, etc. Players may wear soft, pliable basketball or wrestling knee pads on legs, knees and/or ankle.
- The game shall be played between two teams of 7 players each on a rectangular field. Each team must have 5 players on the field in order to begin the game.
- The field is divided into 4 zones of 20 yards each and 2 end zones of 10 yards each. There are 2 inbounds lines (hash marks) that run parallel with each sideline located 15 yards "in" from each sideline.
- Each team shall designate a captain to act as team spokesperson and make decisions. Only the captain may talk to officials. Team representatives including players, spectators, team managers, coaches, and group members are subject to the rules.
- The use of dangerous equipment is prohibited. Shoes must be worn; metal cleats, sandals, and hard casts are prohibited.
- Men will use the regular size, NCAA or NFHS football, while women and co-rec may use either a regular or intermediate-size football. Game balls will be provided or teams may use their own footballs. Officials will not handle the football, the offense is responsible for the ball at all times.
- All forfeits will result in a score of 6-0 unless the team that did not forfeit is winning at the time of the forfeiture. If the winning team did not forfeit, the score shall stand as it is at the time of the forfeit.

Periods, Time Factors, Substitutions

- The winner of the pre-game toss shall have the first choice of options:

- a) offense/defense
- b) which goal to defend
- c) to defer the choice of A or B until the second half

#### Playing time and intermissions

- A game shall consist of two halves with a two-minute intermission. Each half shall consist of 20 minutes with the clock stopping once at the two-minute warning of each half. The clock will run continuously for the first 18 minutes, stopping at the two-minute mark and afterwards for the following reasons (only in the second half):
  - Penalties (may start on referee's ready-to-play whistle)
  - Scoring plays
  - Incomplete passes/out of bounds
  - Injured players
  - First downs (until the ball is set in play by referee's ready to play whistle)
  - Official and team time-outs
  - Change of possession
- If a team is ahead by 19 points (Co-Rec is 25 points) at the two-minute warning in the second half, the game is over via the mercy rule
- The ball will be placed on the 14-yard line to begin each half. After every score the ball will be placed on the new offensive team's 14-yard line with a first down, with the zone-line to gain being their own 20-yard line.
- Each team is allowed two (2) timeouts per half (1-minute time-outs); time-outs not used in the first half **are not** carried over into the second half. The clock will stop during time-outs.
- Free substitution is allowed after any whistle provided the substitution does not delay the game. However, no offensive substitute may enter unless he joins the huddle and is part of the huddle at the time when it breaks. *Penalty: Illegal substitution*
- The offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after referee signals "ready for play." *Penalty: 5yds, Delay of Game.*
- A maximum of 15 players are allowed on the roster.
- Ties will be broken by the "*Texas Tie Breaker*"
  - Play will begin on the 10-yard line and teams will have 4 plays each to score
  - A coin toss will precede "Tie Breaker". The team winning the toss has 3 options: Offense, Defense, or Direction. The opposing team then has the remaining choice.
  - The object is to score a touchdown and subsequent extra point (1, 2 or 3 points). After team A scores, team B then has 4 plays during which to score. If no team has scored after their

respective plays the process is repeated; with each team switching roles.

- When a pass is intercepted the defense becomes the offense and begins their series of 4 plays. If the interception is returned for a touchdown, the game is over.

- Penalties are assessed similar to regular time. A team shall be given a new series of 4 plays when an automatic first down penalty is accepted. The zone-line-to-gain will always be the goal line. Dead ball penalties after a touchdown are penalized on the extra point attempt. Live ball penalties committed by either team after team B gains possession during an attempt or overtime shall be enforced at the succeeding spot. Dead ball penalties (i.e. unsportsmanlike) following a successful attempt will be penalized from the succeeding spot, the team B 10-yard line, if accepted.

#### Definition of Playing Terms

- When the flag belt buckle is clearly "broken" from the ball carrier, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. A player who removes the flag belt from the ball carrier should immediately hold the flag belt above his head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred. A player may dive to remove a flag belt as long as no illegal contact is made with the opposing team.
- The position of the **ball** when a player is de-flagged determines the spot of the next line of scrimmage.
- A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock down the ball carrier in an attempt to remove the flag, nor shall an offensive player hold, block, hurdle, or run through a defensive player trying to remove the flag belt.
- When a runner loses his/her flag belt, either accidentally or inadvertently, play continues. The de-flagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner between the knees and shoulders.
- The scrimmage line for team A is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. The scrimmage line for team B is the yard line and its vertical plane, which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. A colored puck will signify each.

#### Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-Of-Bounds

- The ball is declared dead when the ball touches the ground: A) on a fumble B) on a lateral C) on a pass or D) after touching a player on a punt.

- The sideline and end lines are considered out of bounds. (Only one foot needs to touch in bounds in order for a pass to be complete).
- It is illegal participation if, prior to a change of possession, an offensive player goes out-of-bounds and returns during the down, unless blocked out-of-bounds by an opponent. If a player is blocked out-of-bounds by an opponent and returns during the down, he/she shall return at the first opportunity. During the down, no player shall intentionally go out-of-bounds and return. *Penalty: 10 yards.*

#### Series of Downs, Number of Downs

- In a series of 4 downs, the ball must be advanced forward past the next zone-line to gain in order for a new series of downs to be awarded. Yardage lines are considered part of the forward zone.

#### Kicking the Ball

- If a punt is to be made, the team punting must announce it before the down starts. After the announcement, the punt must actually be made, and neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until after the ball has been punted.
- The kicking team must have 4 players on the line of scrimmage until the punt is made. After receiving the snap, the kicker must punt the ball immediately in a continuous motion. *Penalty: 5 yards.*
- Quick kicks and or kicking when you have not declared is illegal. *Penalty: 10 yards.*
- The defensive team may not build a pyramid or support each other in any manner in order to block or attempt to block a kick. *Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot.*

#### Snapping, Handling, and Passing the Ball

- The ball may be snapped between the legs or to the side of the snapper in one fluid continuous motion.
- The ball must be legally snapped on or between the inbounds lines (hash marks new in 2007).
- The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. Direct snaps (QB under center) are illegal.
- It is defensive pass interference if an eligible receiver is de-flagged prior to touching the ball on a forward pass attempt.
- During the interval between downs, when 2 or more consecutive encroachments are committed by the same team, the penalty will be 10 yards for the second encroachment foul.

- The offensive team must have a minimum of four players on the line of scrimmage
- All players are eligible for a forward pass. The passer may pass from anywhere behind the **line of scrimmage (orange cone)**.
- The passer shall not intentionally ground the ball in order to avoid a sack. *Penalty: 5 yards and loss of down.*

#### Scoring Plays and Touchbacks

- A team is given the choice of going for 1, 2 or 3 points after scoring a touchdown. Once the captain makes the choice, it may only be changed if a time out is called. Ways of scoring a successful point-after-attempt: A) By running or passing from 3 yards = 1 point. B) By running or passing from 10 yards = 2 points; By running or passing from 20 yards = 3.
- The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player. If the player is not deflagged with one good pull, and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed. The player is disqualified, and it is a foul. *Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot and a loss of down.*
- After a safety is scored, the team that is awarded 2 points will automatically gain possession at their own 14-yard line. ***(No kick will take place)***

#### Players' Conduct

- It is illegal to steal or attempt to steal (strip) the ball from a player in possession. The object of the game is to deflag a ball carrier, not to steal the ball. *Penalty: 10 yards from the end of the run*
- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear that the ball has thrown and may not make contact with the throwing arm. *Penalty: 10 yards and automatic first down, added on the end of the play (if positive yards have been gained), if not, 10 yards from the previous spot and automatic first down.*
- Ball carriers shall not guard their flags by blocking, with arms, hands or ball, the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. *Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of foul.*
- The defensive player shall not (intentionally or accidentally) hold, grasp, or obstruct forward progress of a ball carrier when in the act of removing the flag belt. *Penalty: 10 yards from spot.*
- Intentionally pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player is illegal. *Penalty: 10 yards from spot.*

- The offensive screen block shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the arms, elbows, legs, or knees to *initiate* contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her feet in order to gain position before, during and after screen blocking. *Penalty:* 10 yards
- A player who screens shall not:
  - when he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than a normal step from him or her;
  - when he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with him/her;
  - take a position so close to a moving opponent that his opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be one to two normal steps or strides from the opponent.
  - after assuming his/her legal screening position, move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path of his/her opponent. *Penalty:* 10 yards from spot
- Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere for him/her by screen blocking, but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner. *Penalty:* 10 yards
- Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used to grab or push the opponent aside (the application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official). A rusher may use his/her arms or hands to break a fall or retain his/her balance. *Penalty:* 10 yards
- There shall be no bumping, checking, or other intentional contact between a defender and an offensive pass receiver. Both offense and defense are limited to screening an opponent.
- If a player attempting a diving flag removal trips the ball carrier there is a penalty of 10 yards from the spot of the foul
- The third unsportsmanlike foul by the same team shall result in their forfeiture of the game

