

# FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

## 3rd Grade

(Updated for 2024)

Spirit of the Rules – Coaches, Players and Parents must remember that the Rules are intended to create the most beneficial experience for ALL players. Questions not explicitly addressed by the Rules will invariably arise, and oftentimes require immediate resolution by Coaches from opposing teams (and/or game officials); when the EAA Flag Football Director is not available to answer concerns, the Coaches must default to the Spirit of the Rules and do what is best for ALL players.

Team encouragement and support in a positive manner is urged. However, all rude or invasive forms of communication to the opponent, coaches, fans or parents will not be tolerated. This could result in a game ejection and will be reviewed by the Flag Football Leadership Team for a possible league suspension or dismissal.

### THE PLAYERS

- Offense will have 6 players on the field, players will play QB in 3rd grade and have five players in addition to the QB on the field
- Defense will have 5 players on the field at least two yards off the line of scrimmage by playing man to man or zone
- A team must field a roster of 5 players for a game. A team that has 5 players will play 5 on defense vs 6 on offense and 5 on offense (including QB) vs 4 on defense (the team that has 6+ players)
  - a team may borrow another player that is part of the 3rd grade flag football program
- All players should be played equally as much as possible
  - Goal is to get the ball into each players hands each game
  - Goal is to get each player a touchdown or extra point each season
  - Note: These goals can be challenging to accomplish, parents please have patience

### THE GAME

- An official score will not be kept
- Flip a coin to decide which team will have the ball first, the team winning the coin flip can choose to either have the first possession or the last possession of the game
- A game consists of two 25-minute halves with a five-minute halftime, if both teams have a lot of subs you can choose to skip halftime, begin halftime on a change of possession
- Start games promptly so that both teams will have the same number of possessions, avoid starting a new series of possessions within five minutes prior to the end of the hour.
  - Think more like baseball rather than basketball
- Clock is running time, okay to go slightly longer to have an even number of possessions
- Teams may pass the ball or run the ball on any play
  - within the 5 yard line - Passing play only. Running plays are not allowed

- Offensive team has four downs to get a first down or score a touchdown
- Midfield is a 1st down
- Offensive team will start the ball on their own 5 yard line or at the spot of the turnover on downs/interception, unless it is not past midfield, in which case the ball will start at midfield
  - If the offensive team crosses mid field, change of possession occurs at the spot of the ball
  - If the offensive team does not cross mid field, change of possession occurs back at mid field
- After a touchdown, teams will try for a 2-point conversion only from the 5 yard line.
  - Passing play only. Running plays are not allowed
- Touchdowns = 6 points
- Successful point after touchdown = 2 points

### **DURING PLAY**

- Players will line up in a formation with two players on the line of scrimmage and three players off the line of scrimmage, lateral motion of one player is allowed
- The quarterback will start with the ball at the line of scrimmage. No center or hike of the ball is needed.
- There is no rushing the QB by the defense, QB cannot be downed by pulling a flag or if their flag falls off inadvertently.
- The QB must exchange the ball to a teammate by a handoff, lateral pitch or forward pass within 7 seconds of the play starting or the play will be dead
- Teams may run or pass the ball, lateral pitches, reverses, double reverses, and reverse passes are allowed
- Once the QB hands off, pitches or passes the ball to a teammate the QB cannot get the ball back and should not run downfield unless there is an interception
  - The 5 other offensive players can receive the ball from the QB and advance the ball across the line of scrimmage
- If the QB throws an interception, the QB is allowed to pull a flag
- QB can move, roll out or scramble in any direction but cannot cross the line of scrimmage
- Passes must be forward passes thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, a forward pass can be either a overhand throw or a shovel pass. Underhand or behind the back passes are not allowed
- Only one forward pass is allowed per play
- A forward pass is complete when a receiver has one-foot land in bounds with possession of the ball before any other part of their body touches out of bounds
- A player receiving a handoff can throw a forward pass as long as they do not cross beyond the line of scrimmage
- The coach/quarterback cannot touch the ball after an initial throw or handoff
- What is and is not allowed during a play:
  - No blocking or tackling
  - lateral pitches behind the line of scrimmage is allowed (this is not a throw and that player can throw to any player except the QB)
  - No underhand throws or pitches past the line of scrimmage

- lateral motion is allowed
- No interference with a receiver before they catch the ball
- No rushing the quarterback
- No running beyond the line of scrimmage by the quarterback
- No flag guarding
  - 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
- No stiff arms
- No jumping, diving, or leaping to avoid having your flag pulled, unless the intent is to avoid an inevitable collision
- Spinning is allowed to avoid a defender
- After an offensive player with the ball has passed the line of scrimmage all other offensive players should stop, no running alongside the person with the ball
- No covering flags with jerseys, jerseys should be tucked inside flag belts
- Flag Pulling
  - A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball
  - Defenders should NOT dive to pull flags, this is a safety / technique issue
  - Defenders cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags
  - The ball carrier cannot run through or over a defender
  - It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession
  - If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately and the play is over
  - A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball
- The play ends when any of these occur
  - The player with the ball has their flag pulled
  - The player with the ball has at least one knee hit the ground
  - The player with the ball falls on the ground
  - The player with the ball steps out of bounds
  - The player with the ball crosses into the end zone
  - The player with the ball fumbles so that the ball lands on the ground (safety issue)
  - Interceptions are live and can be run back, and run back for a touchdown. This includes the 2 pt conversion (interceptions run back will count as 2 points). All players, including the QB can pull the intercepting players flag
  - Fumbles end a play and result in a dead ball, not a turnover
    - we want to avoid kids diving on the ball and each other

- The ball is spotted where the ball is at the time when a player is ruled down
- All penalties should be first considered teachable moments on how to play the game correctly and loosely applied, whenever possible, correct them before they occur or consider them “do-overs”, however acts that are clearly committed to gain an advantage need to be dealt with immediately by coaches
- If penalties are needed to be called, they must be done by either coach only
- Penalties that can be called:
  - Offensive penalties are 5 yards with replay of the down
  - Defensive penalties are 5 yards from the spot of the foul
  - Clear interference with a receiver before they can catch the ball, replay the down

**The Field**

- 70 yards (210 feet) long/length by 30 yards (90 feet) across/width
- A first down line splits the field in half at 25 yards from each goal line
- Cones should be placed at the front corners of each end zone and on both sidelines at the midfield first down marker

10 yards	5 yards	20 yards	20 yards	5 yards	10 yards
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