



Metro South Youth Football League (MSYFL)

5th Grade Rules & Regulations

(Update 6/17/2025)

1. Organization

1.1. Refer to the MSYFL By-Laws and Governing Committee for all governance rules.

2. Registration and Player Eligibility

2.1. The player must meet the participation guidelines of their home association.

2.2. Based on home association rules, players must play at the grade level they are currently enrolled in (for the fall) or above.

2.3. **Weight of a player:** Players weighing **105+ lbs** at the beginning of the season are not allowed to advance the ball from behind the line of scrimmage or lead-block from behind the line of scrimmage. These players will be identified by a stripe on their helmets, running from the front to the back.

2.3.1. "Striped" players on the LOS are allowed to "pull."

3. Team Size, Game Time & Game Play

3.1. Number of Players: 9 vs 9

3.2. **Field Size:** The playing field is 80 yards x 35 1/3 yards.

3.3. First downs, down markers, and the "chain gang" are administered according to the MSHSL rules. The home team supplies equipment and volunteers for the "chain gang."

3.4. **Penalties:** Developmental youth football aims to educate and foster a fun playing environment. All penalties should be educational for players, coaches, referees, and spectators.

4. Game Play

4.1. Each possession begins with the ball on the 25-yard line to start the game, at halftime, or after any score.

4.2. The offense has four (4) downs to reach the line-to-gain (first down marker) or score.

4.3. After third down, the offense can declare a "punt" for the fourth down play, and the ball is advanced 25 yards, and possession is changed.

4.4. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. Hash marks are not used.

4.5. One coach is allowed on the field. The coach will call the play/defense and ensure the kids are aligned correctly. After this, the coach must step back 10 yards and let the athletes play. The coach can continue coaching while on the field; however, they will not be able to stop the game to reset the play or defense.

4.6. Equipment -

4.6.1. Only clear (non-tinted or shaded) helmet visors are permitted.

5. Scoring

5.1. A **Touchdown** is worth six (6) points.

5.2. All **Point-After-Attempts** are attempted through a run or pass try. Coaches can choose one (1) point from the 3-yard line or two (2) points from the 5-yard line.²

5.3. **Celebrations** - players are allowed to celebrate a score; however, at no time should the celebration be directed at the opposing team or be taunting.

6. Game Time

6.1. Four (4) quarters of twelve (12) minutes running time. During running time, the clock does not stop except for time-outs, injuries, penalties, touchdowns, and possession changes.

6.2. Stop time applies during the last two (2) minutes of each half. During stop time, the clock stops for timeouts, injuries, penalties, touchdowns, incomplete passes, first downs, change of possession, and out-of-bounds. However, if a team leads by 28 points with 4:00 minutes left in the fourth quarter, there is no stoppage of time (except for injuries and penalties).

6.3. **Time Outs**: Each team will get two (2) timeouts per half.

6.4. **Half Time**: Teams are allowed two (2) minutes between quarters and a five (5) minute halftime.

6.5. **Overtime**: No Overtime - if a game is tied at the end of regulation, the game is recorded as a tie.

6.6. **Play Clock**: Referees will maintain a 35-second clock from the referee's set of the ball to the snap (The delay of the game is a 5-yard penalty).

6.7. There is no "Hurry-up" offense. The offense and defense should have a reasonable time to get set (10 seconds). In the last two minutes of the game, an offense can run a "hurry-up" offense within the rules of stop time (see rule; 6.2)

7. Formations

7.1. Balanced Offensive Line- Each play must include five (5) offensive players on the LOS. They must be: a center, two guards, two tight ends on either side of the center.
(TE-G-C-G-TE)

7.1.1. The center and guards are ineligible for the first touch as the receiver of a pass, regardless of the numbers on their jerseys.

7.1.2. **Stance** - The Offensive Line must be set in a three-point stance.

7.1.3. **Splits** - Offensive Line (TE to TE) splits must be 6"-18" between players.

7.1.4. **Tight Ends** must follow the same rules for splits; however, they can choose to take a two-point stance.

7.2. Offensive Backs and Receivers

7.2.1. The remaining players may line up anywhere in the formation, as long as they are one (1) yard off the line of scrimmage (LOS) and there are no more than two (2) players on either side of the centerline.

7.2.2. **"Motion"** is not allowed. All players must be set (not moving in a football stance) before the snap of the ball. Since the defense can NOT blitz, this movement would create an unfair advantage for the offense.

7.3. Balanced Defensive Line- Each play must include four (4) defensive players on the LOS. They must be Defensive Tackles and Defensive Ends on either side of the center line.
(DE-DT-*ball*-DT-DE)

7.3.1. **Cover Center—No defensive player covers the offensive center on the LOS (see rule 7.4.1 for rules about linebackers, who MUST be 4 yards off the line of scrimmage).**

7.3.2. **Helmet to Helmet (DT)**—Defensive Tackles on the line of scrimmage must line up helmet to helmet with an Offensive Guard in a three- or four-point stance. This means no lining up in the gaps.

7.3.3. **Shoulder to Shoulder (DE)** - Defensive Ends on the line of scrimmage must line up helmet to helmet with an offensive Tight End, or an outside shade (shoulder to shoulder).

7.4. Defensive Backs (ILB, OLB, C, S)

- 7.4.1. **Linebackers** must be 4 yards off the LOS. An inside linebacker may be in the center but must be 4 yards off the LOS.
- 7.4.2. **Corners** must be 4 yards off the LOS.
- 7.4.3. **Safeties** (S) must be 7 yards off the LOS. Except inside a team's 10-yard line, safeties line up 1 yard behind the deepest linebacker.

8. Offense Play Rules

- 8.1. **Cadence** - the quarterback shall not attempt to draw the defense offside via the use of a hard, irregular count or by bobbing. The same cadence shall be used throughout the game and not changed. (5-Yard Penalty).
- 8.2. **Snap** - Teams may use an "under center" snap or "shotgun" style. [*See: Snap Rule 11.1.8*].
- 8.3. **Direct Snaps Prohibited**- Quarterback sneaks (QB running the ball between the guards after receiving the snap) are prohibited because the defense cannot have players aligned over the center or in the center-guard gaps. This rule also applies to a wildcat play (where the ball is snapped directly to an offensive back or receiver).
- 8.4. **Offensive Fumble** - All backfield fumbles or dropped/missed snaps are considered live balls.
- 8.5. All **false starts** and **offside** are dead-ball fouls.
- 8.6. No **blocking below the waist**. (10-Yard Penalty)[*See: Rules - 11.1.3, 11.1.4, & 11.1.5*].
- 8.7. **Charging** – a ball carrier may NEVER lower their head to run through or charge a defensive player. (10-Yard Penalty) [*See: Intentional use of Helmet Rule -11.1.7*].

9. Defense Play Rules

- 9.1. **No Blitzing** - No blitzes are allowed.
 - 9.1.1. The defensive line (DTs and DEs) on the LOS can penetrate (**rush**) upon the snap.
 - 9.1.2. **Run Plays**: Linebackers, safeties, and cornerbacks can flow to the ball naturally after a handoff (or fake) is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
 - 9.1.3. **Pass Plays**: Linebackers, safeties, and cornerbacks cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage. Once the quarterback leaves the box (TE to TE), executes a play-action, or throws a pass, any defensive player can rush.

- 9.1.4. *Rule application:* The restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
- 9.1.5. *Rule enforcement:* Illegal blitzes by a linebacker or defensive back shall be enforced as an illegal procedure foul and a five-yard live ball penalty. If continued blitzing is determined to be a product of coach encouragement, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty can occur.

9.2. Engagement -

- 9.2.1. **Defensive Linemen** (DT, DE) must engage their opposing player prior to moving toward the ball carrier. "Engage" means contact with two hands pushed into the opposing player's chest and/or shoulder area.
- 9.2.2. *Rule application:* The requirement to engage is to encourage skill development. After engagement has occurred, the defensive line player can flow toward the ball, to include the a-gap (note: this league does not restrict running through the a-gap so defensive plays can defend all gaps after engagement has been made).

9.3. Tackling - [See: *Illegal Personal Contact Rule - 11.1.6*].

- 9.3.1. Players may never leave their feet to launch or dive into another player. No throwing players to the ground. (10-Yard Penalty)[See: *Illegal Contact Rule - 11.1.6*].
- 9.3.2. No helmet-initiated contact. (10-Yard Penalty)[See: *Intentional use Rule - 11.1.7*].

9.4. All **false starts** and **offsides** are dead-ball fouls. Play stops immediately when these fouls occur.

10. Special Teams

10.1. There are no Kickoffs or Punts.

11. Emphasized MSHSL Rules - Minnesota State High School League ("MSHSL") rules will be followed except as noted above and below. The MSHSL rules apply to all players, coaches, parents, and referees.

11.1. **Illegal Block-Clipping** (Rule 9-Sec.3-Art.5): A player shall not clip, and there is no free blocking zone. All lines must match up head-to-head or double team block and be above the waist. Clipping Rule 2-Sec.3-Art 1&2) Clipping is: charging or falling into the back or across the back of the leg(s) of an opponent who is not a runner or pretending to be a runner, or- Pushing by use of hands or arms in an opponent's back. Such cases shall not be ruled clipping unless the official sees the initial contact. When in doubt, the opponent turns their back, or the block is from the side, it is not clipping if the opponent could see the blocker. (10-yd penalty)

- 11.2. **Illegal Blocking-Below the Waist** (Rule 9-Sec.3-Art.2): A player shall not block an opponent below the waist (10-yd penalty)
- 11.3. **Illegal Blocking-Chop Block** (Rule 9-Sec.3-Art.6): Blocking by offense or defense is illegal when it is a chop block. Rule 2- Sec.3-Art.9 Chop block is a block at the knees or below the waist to an opponent who is in contact with a teammate of the blocker. (10-yd penalty)
- 11.4. **Illegal Personal Contact** (Rule 9-Sec.4-Art.2): No player shall: b. Charge into or throw an opponent to the ground after the player is obviously out of play or after the ball is dead, either in or out of bounds. In other words, players shall not HEADHUNT 30 yards away from the play, and coaches should teach their kids that such activity is illegal and dangerous. c. Pile on any player who is lying on the ground. i. Butt block, face tackle, or spear. (Butt Block is a blow driven directly into an opponent with the face mask, frontal area, or top of the helmet as the primary point of contact). (10-yd penalty)
- 11.5. **Intentionally use the helmet** to butt or ram an opponent (Rule 9-Sec.4-Art.7): A defensive (and offensive) player shall not use their hands to strike (the opponent's) head. (10-yd penalty)
- 11.6. **Snap Rule** (7-Sec.1a): The snapper may be over the ball...and no part of their person, other than a hand(s) on the ball, may be beyond the foremost point of the ball. b. The snapper may lift the ball for lateral rotation but may not rotate end-for-end or change the ball's location. c. The snapper may not remove both hands from the ball, make a false snap, or fail to pause before the snap. d. An act intended to cause the defense to encroach. (5-yd penalty)
- 11.7. **Assist the Runner** (Rule 9-Sec. 1): An offensive player shall not push, pull, or lift the runner to assist their forward progress. (5-yd penalty)
- 11.8. **Fighting** - Illegal Personal Contact (Rule 9-Sec.4-Art.1): No player or non-player shall fight (striking, kicking, kneeing, and intentionally contacting an official) (10-yd penalty & disqualification)
- 11.9. **Neutral Zone** (Rule 2-Sec.27): The Neutral Zone is as wide as the length of the ball and is expanded following the snap up to 2 yards on the defensive side of the line of scrimmage.
- 11.10. **Inadvertent Whistle** (Rule 4.-Sec.2-Art.3): During a down, or during a down in which the penalty for a foul is declined, if an inadvertent whistle occurs during the following, the down shall be replayed; a. A legal forward pass or snap is in flight, b. The ball is loose following a backward pass, fumble, or illegal forward pass.

11.11. Pass Interference

- 11.11.1.1. Pass Interference restrictions apply only beyond the neutral zone if the forward pass crosses the neutral zone.
- 11.11.1.2. Pass interference restrictions begin for the offense at the snap and for the defense at the release of the pass. It is forward-pass interference if any player, offense, or defense that is beyond the neutral zone interferes with an eligible opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch or bat the pass. (15 yards from the previous spot and automatic first down if by the defense or 15 yards from previous spot and loss of down if by offense)
- 11.11.1.3. It is not pass interference if unavoidable contact occurs when two or more eligible players make a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
- 11.11.1.4. It is not pass interference if the offense immediately makes contact with the defense and the contact does not continue beyond the neutral zone.

11.12. **Noncontact Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Rule 9-Sec.5):** Baiting, taunting, insignias worn that engenders ill will; embarrass, ridicule, or demean based on race, gender, religion, or national origin; profanity, insulting, language or gestures; spiking or kicking the ball, throw it in the air; any delayed excessive or prolonged act by which a player attempts to focus attention upon themselves. (10 yards & disqualification if flagrant, and if the 2nd unsportsmanlike foul results in disqualification)

11.13. **Noncontact Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Nonplayers (Rule 9-Sec.8-Art.1):** No coach, substitute, trainer, or another team attendant shall act unsportsmanlike. Examples are, but are not limited to: Using Profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures, attempting to influence a decision by an official, and disrespectfully addressing an official. (10-yard penalty and, if flagrant, disqualification and ejection. The second unsportsmanlike foul with a 10-yard penalty results in disqualification. Failure to comply, the referee may forfeit the game.

11.14. **Electronic equipment on the field** - At no time shall any coach, player, or spectator have any electronic communication or recording equipment. This includes a video camera, radios, computers, and any other equipment that can be used for communication between players, coaches, and or spectators. Personal cell phones are allowed on the sidelines but are not to be used to facilitate communication for coaching in the game. Anyone violating this rule will be removed from the game and reviewed by the MSYFL Executive Committee for further action. **Parents, or teams videotaping the game, must do so from at least 7 yards back from the sideline or endzone and cannot review the tape with any players or coaches during the game.**

- 11.15. **Parent/Spectator Conduct** (Rule 9-Sec.9-Art.1): A player, nonplayer, or person not following the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair act, which has no specific rule. (The referee enforces any penalty he considers equitable, including the award of a score. Warnings are recommended but optional.)
- 11.16. **Sportsmanship recommendation**: When leading by 21 points, it is recommended that players be replaced with skill-positioned players when they are able.

12. Sources

- 12.1. USA Football: <https://fdm.usafootball.com/game-types/limited-contact>.
- 12.2. USA Football: <https://assets.usafootball.com/documents/rookietackle/resources/ADM-Junior-and-Senior-Rule-book.pdf>.
- 12.3. MN State High School League: <https://www.mshsl.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/football-2021-22-rpb0.pdf>.