



2025 TACKLE FOOTBALL RULES

Article I – Introduction

I. General Purpose

Since 1958, the Rochester Youth Football Association (RYFA) has been driven toward teaching the fundamentals of football at a safe, fun and competitive level. This allows for an opportunity for area youth to participate in and learn about the game of football.

II. Specific Purpose

Acquaint the participants with the fundamentals of the game of football (i.e. passing, blocking, tackling, running and rules of the game) and promote good sportsmanship. Emphasize the value of discipline, sportsmanship and team play; teach that passion, respect and accountability are more important than winning, while providing a fun and safe environment for the youth in the Rochester area.

III. Liability

This organization shall not be held responsible for injuries or illnesses incurred in relation to the game of football being offered.

Article II – Player Requirements

I. Grades and Weights

A. Grade League- To participate in a league, a player must be entering the respective league’s grade in the upcoming school year.

B. Player weight

3 rd /4 th & 5 th Grades	<p>All player weights must be recorded and witnessed by at least two RYFA board members, Sports HQ employees, or ETS Performance Employees</p> <p>The maximum weight limit is mathematically calculated each season. The calculated maximum is based upon average weight and statistical criteria of all players within the grade. The calculated maximum weight will be posted on the RYFA website. Players weighing more than the calculated maximum weight shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Only play from Tackle-to-Tackle on the offensive and/or defensive lines2. When on a kick-off return team they shall be within 5 yards of their free kick line at the time of the kick3. Be taped with orange tape on the back of his/her helmet <p>*These players can punt the ball, but cannot advance the ball by running or passing **These players can advance a turnover and on-side kick from the front row only</p> <p>5th Grade – players over the posted weight limit are allowed to play TE, WR, QB. They are not allowed to take handoffs or tosses</p>
6 th Grade	No positional weight restriction, although weigh in is still encouraged to help RYFA maintain as fair of a competitive balance as possible

II. Team Districts and Player Placement

- A. Team districts (area) will be assigned by League Directors.
 - a. We do not accept team requests
 - b. We cannot guarantee a player will have the same teammates as previous seasons

- B. Team districts shall be established after all registered players have been plotted on the league player maps.
- C. No player shall be permitted to practice until assigned to a team.
- D. Registration forms will not be accepted after the first official game. Players that submit late registrations (registration forms received between the official registration days and the first game) shall be placed on a waitlist, and assigned to a team based on teams' player needs.
- E. Players whose parent is a Head Coach may play within their assigned resident district, or the district in which their parent is a Head Coach. This exception will be granted to head coaches only.
- F. For grades 5 and 6, we will attempt to roster teams based on their projected high school
- G. A change of address during the season does not impact a player's team assignment.

III. Parental Consent

The player registration form shall contain the parental consent statement. By signing the player registration form, the parent or legal guardian acknowledges that the child identified on the form is physically fit and able to participate in the RYFA football program and that RYFA and its Board of Directors are not liable for any injuries or illness the child may incur from participating in the RYFA football program.

No youth shall be registered as a qualified player if they do not have the registration form signed by their parent or legal guardian.

The RYFA recommends that all players have a physical prior to their participation in this program.

Article III - Team Requirements

I. Team Composition

- A. Each team shall consist of only players properly registered with the Rochester Youth Football Association. RYFA teams shall only practice and play those players who have been properly registered with the RYFA.
- B. Each registered player shall be assigned a number. That number shall be placed on the proper league map according to the registered player's current home address.
- C. There shall be a minimum of four teams in each of the RYFA leagues
- D. The RYFA Board will make every effort to provide a minimum of 18-20 players assigned to each team by the first practice in all RYFA leagues, unless the requirement of "C" above cannot be met. All efforts to provide an equal number of players to each team will be made.
- E. Once a player has been placed on a team, by RYFA rules he/she may not be removed from that team and placed on another. The only exception to this rule is if the player had been misplotted on the league player map. If misplotting occurs that player may be placed in the proper team district if a member of the RYFA Board of Directors is informed of the mistake by the end of the first week of practice.
- F. A registered player may be removed from a team and placed on another team, or declared ineligible if he/she has used an address other than his/her home address on their player registration form.

Article IV - The Football Season

I. Preseason

A. Practice will begin each season on a date determined annually by the Board of Directors.

B. Number of practices per week:

3rd/4th Grade	Minimum of 2 practices, maximum of 4
5 th Grade	Minimum of 2 practices, maximum of 4
6 th Grade	Minimum of 2 practices, maximum of 5

C. Only one practice per day is permitted. Practice time cannot exceed 2 hours.

D. Practice contact rules for the 1st week of practice should follow rules MSHSL rules including the following:

- o Day 1 of the 1st week: Helmets only
- o Day 2 of the 1st week: Helmets and shoulder pads only
- o Day 3 of the 1st week: Full pads are allowed

E. Practice shall be immediately suspended and shelter sought whenever lightning is observed. Practice may only resume after the thunderstorm has passed and there has been no sighting of lightning for a minimum of 15 minutes.

F. All players participating in scrimmages and/or games shall wear a complete uniform and pads as outlined in the Article VI-B.

G. Scrimmages and joint practices may be scheduled with other teams within the same league after the first full week of practice.

H. The RYFA Board will schedule one scrimmage prior to the beginning of our scheduled games

I. A team may scrimmage or practice against a same grade level team, which is not in their assigned league with approval from the RYFA League Director.

II. Regular Season

A. The season length, game times and game locations shall be determined by the RYFA Board of Directors.

B. League standings shall be kept for each league. The standings shall be based on each team's record of wins, losses and ties.

C. Number of practices per week:

3 rd /4 th Grade	Minimum of 2 practices, maximum of 3
5 th Grade	Minimum of 2 practices, maximum of 3
6 th Grade	Minimum of 2 practices, maximum of 4 (4 th practice is 1 hr walkthrough)

D. Practice shall be immediately suspended and shelter sought whenever lightning is observed. Practice may only resume after the thunderstorm has passed and there has been no sighting of lightning for a minimum of 15 minutes.

E. Only one practice per day is permitted. Practice time cannot exceed 2 hours.

III. Playoffs

3 rd /4 th	No Playoffs
5 th Grade	Playoffs
6 th Grade	Playoffs

The schedule, location and times of the play-off games shall be determined by the league standings and the Board of Directors.

Playoff teams will be determined by one of the following:

1. A league with 4 teams: First place plays second place in the City Championship game.
2. A league with 6 teams: First place plays fourth place and second place plays third place, the winners of these games will play in the City Championship game
3. A league with two separate divisions; First place of each division will play second place of the same division. The winners of these games will play in the City Championship game.

If, at the end of the regular season, a tie exists between play-off teams, the following format will be used in sequence until the tie is broken:

1. Result(s) of game(s) played between teams tied. If tied teams played twice in the regular season and split those games, the most recent winning team is given the tiebreaker.
2. Result(s) of game(s) played within division.
3. Result(s) of game(s) played involving common opponents.
4. The records of the team's respective opponents.
5. If a tie still exists, the League Director shall use a one-time flip of a coin to break the tie. The coin flip will be done in the presence of both coaches involved in the tie.
6. Score, margin of victory, total points scored or total points allowed shall not be used to break a tie.

Article V - Coaches and Game Officials

I. Team Coaches

- A. Each team shall have one head coach. The head coach shall recruit a maximum of four additional assistant coaches.
- B. A maximum of five coaches are allowed on the sidelines during a game.
 1. A coach assigned as the "charter" for a game shall count as one of the five coaches allowed on the sideline.
- C. Coaching staff personnel must be of unquestionable character with a profound interest in and knowledge of the game of football.
- D. Every coach must pass the required concussion testing and background check. Once those tasks have been accomplished, a lanyard will be given to the coach, which notifies the commissioners that the coach has passed all their testing.
- E. Coach's Code of Ethics

Coaches are an extremely important part of any athletic program. A coach, merely because of his/her position, is an influence on the youth in his/her charge. The behavior of the coaching staff may be a factor in the formation of a young person's character. Please set a good example. All head coaches and assistant coaches shall agree to abide by the word and intent of the "Coach's Code of Ethics" following these rules.

Article VI - Equipment and Playing Fields

I. Equipment

A. All equipment shall meet the minimum requirement as set forth by the Minnesota State High School League

B. The following is a list of equipment that is required to be worn during all full contact activities:

1. Approved football helmet and face guard with 4-point chinstrap, which meet the NOCSAE test standard at the time of manufacture.
2. No visors or eye shields, without a doctor's prescription
3. Approved football shoulder pads
4. Approved solid white or black football pants with thigh, knee, hip and tailbone pads.
5. Approved, formed, mouth guard.
6. Athletic shoes or approved football cleats.

C. Only a player's legal last name shall be used on a game jersey.

D. All teams are required to wear jerseys that are provided by RYFA.

II. Playing Fields

3rd/4th Grade	If possible, shall play on a field 60-yards long by 40-yards wide with 8-yard end zones. Extra points shall be attempted from the two-yard line.
5 th Grade	When possible, shall play on a field 80-yards long and high school regulation width as described in the MSHSL (Minnesota State High School League) rules.
6 th Grade	When possible, shall play on a regulation sized field as described in the MSHSL (Minnesota State High School League) rules.

III. Bench Area

A. The bench area shall be lined one yard off the sidelines, two yards wide, twenty yards long and centered at midfield.

B. All players and coaches shall remain within the bench area

Article VII - Game Rules

I. Basic Game Rules

All games shall be played under the rules and regulations of the National Federation of the State High School Athletic Association as adopted by the Minnesota State High School League with the modifications specified below and elsewhere in these rules.

II. Specific Rule Modification for the RYFA:

A. Each quarter shall be ten minutes in length for all leagues.

1. Clock stoppage will be governed by MSHSL & RYFA rules.

2. At the change of possession, the clock will start at the snap of the ball.

B. A two-minute break shall be taken between the first and second quarter and third and fourth quarter.

C. A minimum of 10 minutes and a maximum of 15 minutes shall be taken as a half-time break.

D. Unless injured, ill or ineligible, all players shall dress and participate in each game.

E. Kickoffs:

3 rd /4 th Grade	No Kickoffs
5 th Grade	Each game shall start with a kickoff. The kick shall be from the 30-yard line. - If the ball is kicked into the end zone, the ball shall be spotted on the 15 yard-line - The free kick line shall be the 20-yard line after a safety has been scored
6 th Grade	Each game shall start with a kickoff. The kick shall be from the 30-yard line. - If the ball is kicked into the end zone, the ball shall be spotted on the 15-yard line - The free kick line shall be the 20-yard line after a safety has been scored

F. Extra Points:

3 rd /4 th Grade	One point shall be awarded for a successful run attempt Two points shall be awarded for a successful pass attempt
5 th Grade	One point shall be awarded for a successful run attempt Two points shall be awarded for a successful pass attempt
6 th Grade	One point shall be awarded for a successful run or pass attempt Two points shall be awarded for successful PAT kick

G. Punt Formation:

<p>3rd/4th Grade</p>	<p>In a punt situation, the team on offense shall declare their intention to punt. When the intention to punt is declared the clock will stop. The clock will start when the ball has been snapped.</p> <p>The center must long snap the ball between his/her legs. The punter must be 7-yards off the line of scrimmage.</p> <p>The defense shall not rush the punter.</p> <p>The receiving team may drop a maximum of 3-players to receive a punt. The remaining 8 players shall remain within 6 yards of the line-of-scrimmage.</p> <p>The kicking team shall not run down the field to cover the punted ball.</p> <p>The ball shall be punted from no closer than 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.</p> <p>After the ball has been punted, the receiving team shall start their possession from the spot at which their receiver catches the ball in flight or causes the ball to be declared dead. The receiving team may not advance a punted ball.</p> <p>If the receiving team does not cause the ball to be declared dead, the ball shall be spotted for the receiving team at the point it was furthest from the previous line of scrimmage.</p>
<p>5th& 6th Grade</p>	<p>Per offensive team play/participation requirements for each respective league</p> <p>Plays as the Punter only do not count toward a player's participation records</p> <p>If the receiving team is winning by 25 or more points, the ball is placed at their own 20-yard line after the punt, regardless of field position after</p>

I. Offensive Team Play:

<p>3rd/4th Grade</p>	<p>Each offensive play from scrimmage shall be limited to one exchange between eligible offensive players after the snap. (no HB pass, double reverse, flea flicker, etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Violation of this rule: Unsportsmanlike conduct against the coach, 15 yards from the previous spot. <p>All 3rd/4th grade teams shall use a balanced formation with seven players on the line-of-scrimmage. All offensive linemen and tight ends will have splits of 1 yard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Violations of this rule; illegal formation, 5-yard penalty, live ball foul. <p>There must be a minimum of two backs in the backfield, excluding the quarterback, Tackle to Tackle at the snap of the ball.</p> <p>No motion</p>
<p>5th & 6th Grade</p>	<p>Any offensive formation and/or play that is allowed by MSHSL rules.</p>

J. Defensive Team Play:

<p>3rd/4th Grade</p>	<p>Teams shall use a standard 6-2-3 defensive formation.</p> <p>The defensive line shall be balanced with three defensive linemen on each side of the football lined up within 1 yard of the line-of-scrimmage at the snap of the ball.</p> <p>A defensive tackle must be lined head-up over the offensive guard. They are not to enter the A-gap until they are engaged by the offensive guard.</p> <p>Defensive ends may be lined up no further than 1 yard outside of the TE, nor further in than head up on the TE</p> <p>Linebackers must be lined up at least 3-yards from the line-of-scrimmage at the time the ball is snapped</p> <p>Defensive backs must be lined up at least 6-yards from the line-of-scrimmage at the time the ball is snapped</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Violation: Illegal formation, 5 yards, live ball foul - No defensive formation exceptions are allowed for goal line situations
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5 th & 6 th Grade	Any defensive alignment allowed by MSHSL rules, with the exception that Defensive Tackles must not line up in the A gap
6 th Grade	Any defensive alignment allowed by MSHSL rules

K. Overtime:

3 rd /4 th Grade	Games tied at the end of regulation time shall remain a tie
5 th & 6 th Grade	If a tie exists at the end of regulation the overtime procedure outlined by MSHSL rules shall be used to determine a winner.

L. Penalties:

3 rd /4 th Grade	<p>All penalties will be marked as 5-yards</p> <p>Unsportsmanlike conduct against a coach will remain 15-yards</p> <p>Unsportsmanlike conduct against a player will remain 10-yards</p> <p>All spot of foul penalties occurring behind the LoS will be marked from the LoS</p> <p>All spot of foul penalties occurring beyond the Los will be marked from the spot o</p>
5 th Grade	<p>All penalties will be marked as 5 or 10 yards. 15-yard penalties will be marked as 10 yards</p> <p>Unsportsmanlike against coach will remain 15-yards</p> <p>Unsportsmanlike against player will remain 10-yards</p>
6 th Grade	All penalties will be enforced per MSHSL rules

M. Participation Rule:

A “Period” is defined as an aggregate of the time a team spends on the field in either defense or offense within a single quarter.

There are 8 “periods” in a game

3 rd /4 th Grade	<p>All players must play a minimum of 4 periods, a minimum of 1 period on offense, and a minimum of 1 period on defense and a minimum of 1 period per half</p> <p>No player may play more than a maximum of 6 periods, unless all eligible players have played 6 periods</p> <p>A long snapper, holder, kicker, or punter will not accrue a period if that’s the only position played in that quarter by that player</p>
5 th Grade	<p>All players must play in a minimum of 4 periods, a minimum of one period on offense, a minimum of one period on defense and a minimum of one period in each half of the game.</p> <p>There is no restriction on the maximum number of periods played, provided all players play their minimum</p> <p>A long snapper, holder, kicker, or punter will not accrue a period if that’s the only position played in that quarter by that player</p>
6 th Grade	<p>All players must play a minimum of 3 periods, 1 minimum of 1 period on offense, a minimum of 1 period on defense, and a minimum of 1 period in each half</p> <p>There is no restriction on the maximum number of periods played, provided all players play their minimum</p> <p>A long snapper, holder, kicker, or punter will not accrue a period if that’s the only position played in that quarter by that player</p>

N. Roster Grid:

- a. All head coaches shall present a completed RYFA Official Team Roster with all player period assignments to the assigned RYFA field coordinator. Games will not start until completed roster sheets have been turned in.
- b. A 15-yard spot foul penalty will be assessed after the kickoff to a team that does not hand in the roster sheet in the format that is listed on the RYFA website.
- c. If the Roster Grid is not followed the following penalties will apply per game: 1st infraction: warning. 2nd infraction is a 15-yard penalty, 3rd infraction is a 30 -yard penalty, and 4th infraction is a 30-yard penalty in addition to the head coach being removed from the game and the next. Consistent violation of participation rules will be reviewed and addressed by grade commissioners.

O. Free Substitution Rule:

<p>3rd/4th Grade</p>	<p>Free substitution is only allowed in the event of an injury</p> <p>No 6-period players may substitute for another player</p> <p>Participation in a single offensive or defensive play counts as a period of play</p>
<p>5th Grade</p>	<p>The free substitution rule is in effect if the RYFA participation rule is not affected.</p> <p>All players must play at least 4 full periods. Only players playing 4 or more periods may be substituted out of a period (unless injured).</p> <p>For substitutions, participation in a single offensive or defensive play counts as a period of play</p>
<p>6th Grade</p>	<p>The free substitution rule is in effect if the RYFA participation rule is not affected.</p> <p>All players must play at least 3 full periods. Only players playing 4 or more periods may be substituted out of a period (unless injured).</p> <p>For substitutions, participation in a single offensive or defensive play counts as a period of play</p>

P. Quarterback Play:

3 rd /4 th Grade	A player can play a maximum of 2 periods at quarterback per game
5 th Grade	A player can play a maximum of 2 periods at quarterback per game
6 th Grade	A player can play a maximum of 3 periods at Quarterback per game

Q. Head coaches will require certification according to USA Football coaching training requirements. RYFA will pay for membership for USA Football membership for head coaches.

R. Coaches on the field:

3 rd /4 th Grade	<p>An offensive and defensive coach will be allowed on the field during the game.</p> <p>Coach on the field is not allowed to talk to the referees.</p> <p>The 25 second rule between plays will be strictly enforced.</p> <p>Coaches are encouraged to not talk to players after the offensive team breaks the huddle.</p> <p>Play runners must report to the sidelines during the play.</p> <p>The offensive coach is required to stand 10 yards behind the deepest offensive player after the offensive team breaks the huddle. The defensive coach 10 yards behind the free safety</p> <p>Coaches on the field are not allowed to carry white boards, clip boards or other solid material. Paper documents only.</p>
5 th and 6 th Grade	<p>An offensive and defensive coach will not be allowed on the field</p> <p>Coaching will occur from the sideline</p>

III. Game Officials

A. On field game officials shall be recommended to the Director of Officials and approved by the RYFA Board of Directors.

1. All on field game officials shall be trained in the Minnesota State High School League Rules of Football.

B. An approved league representative will be assigned for each game.

C. The Director of Officials has the authority to penalize a team for any unsportsmanlike conduct during the game.

Coach's Code of Ethics

Adapted from the American Football Coaches Association's Code of Ethics

ARTICLE ONE

Responsibilities to Players

1. In his/hers relationship with players under his/hers care, the coach should always be aware of the tremendous influence he/she wields, for good or bad. Parents entrust their dearest possession to the coach's charge, and the coach, through his/her own example, must always be sure that the youth who have played under him/her are finer and more decent people for having done so. The coach should never place the value of a win above that of instilling the highest desirable ideals and character traits in his/her players. The safety and welfare of his/her players should always be uppermost in his/her mind, and they must never be sacrificed for any personal prestige or selfish glory.

2. In teaching the game of football, the coach must realize that there are certain rules designed to protect the player and provide common standards for determining a winner and loser. Any attempts to beat these rules, to take unfair advantage of an opponent, or to teach deliberate unsportsmanlike conduct, have no place in the game of football, nor has any coach guilty of such teaching any right to call himself a coach. The coach should set the example for winning without boasting and losing without bitterness. A coach who conducts himself/herself according to these principles need have no fear of failure, for in the final analysis, the success of a coach can be measure in terms of the respect he/she has earned from his/her own players and from his/her opponents.

ARTICLE TWO

Responsibility to the Rochester Youth Football League

1. The function of the coach is to educate his/her team members through participation in the game of football. This primary basic function must never be disregarded.
2. A coach shall conduct himself/herself so as to maintain the principles, integrity, and dignity of the RYFA.

ARTICLE THREE

Rules of the Game

1. Each coach should be acquainted thoroughly with the rules of the game. He/she is responsible for having the rules taught and interpreted for his players.
2. Both the letter and the spirit of the rules must be adhered to by the coaches.
3. To gain an advantage by circumvention or disregard for the rules brands a coach or player as unfit to be associated with football.
4. A coach is responsible for flagrant roughing tactics. He/she is responsible for illegal substitutions. He/she shall not permit faking of injuries in order to stop the clock. He/she shall not permit an illegal shirt with the intent of drawing an opponent offside
5. A coach must remember always that IT IS NOT the purpose of football to hurt or injure an opponent by legal or illegal methods.
6. GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP habit formation is developed on the practice field. Where coaches permit, encourage or condone performance, which is dangerous to an opponent, they are derelict in their responsibility to teach fair play and good sportsmanship. This aspect of coaching must be attacked just as vigorously as the teaching of offense and defense, and to the players it is far more important than all the technical aspects of the game combined. Any coach who fails to stress this point or who permits, encourages or defends the use of unsportsmanlike tactics shall be considered guilty of the most serious breach of football coaching ethics.

ARTICLE FOUR

Officials

1. No competitive contest can be played satisfactorily without impartial, competent officials. Officials must have the respect and support of coaches and players. On and off-the-record criticism of officials to players or to the public shall be considered unethical.
2. The appointing of head coaches and the terminating of any coach is the sole responsibility of the RYFA Board of Directors.

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