

Official League Rules

I. PLAYERS AND ROSTERS

A. Divisions

Play is open to players 3rd-7th Grade, by division.

B. Team Rosters

A roster of eligible players will be maintained by the League and may only be modified at its discretion.

Only players on the official roster may be used in games. Teams rosters typically consist of between 8 and 12 players.

II. PLAYING FIELD

The field is 35 yards wide, 55 yards long.

III. EQUIPMENT

A. Uniforms

The uniform consists of:

- An official Elite Football Flag Football Shirt
- Shorts or pants *with no pockets*
- Shoes
- A protective mouth guard
- A flag belt

This uniform, including mouth guard and flag belt, must be worn at all times on the field of play. For all games, the home team shall be the one listed second on the schedule. In the case of a jersey color conflict, the home team shall wear league provided pennies.

Uniforms are subject to the following restrictions:

- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times.
- Pennies, undershirts, sweatshirts and any other article of clothing that could impede the defender's access to the flags must also be tucked in.
- Footwear must be sneakers or cleated shoes with no exposed metal parts.
- Flag belts must be of the type provided by the League
- Flag belts must remain snug and unimpeded by clothing at all times.
- Flag belts must be of a color that contrasts (in the official's judgment) with underlying clothing.
- Flag belts must be in good condition and have two unaltered streamers attached.

B. Game Ball

The game ball shall be a conventional football constructed of leather, rubber, or similar material.

The allowable sizes vary by age group:

3rd – 4th Grade: Junior

5th –: Junior

6th Grade / 7th Grade: Youth

The offensive team has the option of substituting another ball in place of the standard one, subject to approval by the League. In general, a conventional football which is no smaller than the standard one will be approved. Unconventional balls will not be approved; this includes Nerf balls and others constructed of unusual materials.

C. Prohibited Equipment

- Shorts or pants with pockets, belt loops, belts, or exposed draw strings
- Shoes with exposed metal
- Padding of any kind, including hard surface padding such as shoulder pads, hip pads, or helmets
- Any hard substance on a player's clothing or person
- Sticky substances such as grease or glue on a player's clothing or person
- Jewelry of any kind, except for medical alert bracelets
- Barrettes or other hard objects worn on the head
- Eye glasses, unless of athletically approved construction and containing shatter-proof lenses
- Anything that the official feels could endanger or confuse players

IV. RULES OF PLAY

A. Game Timing and Flow

- A game consists of two halves, each of **18 minutes** in duration, separated by a **two minute halftime** period.
- The game clock runs continually, except:
 - When an injury occurs
 - During a timeout
 - When an official deems it appropriate to stop the clock

Each team is entitled to one timeout per half, each of which lasts for 30 seconds.

The offense must put the ball in play within 30 seconds of the "ready for play" whistle.

A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense or defense. The team that begins on offense in the first half will begin on defense in the second half.

The team that begins on defense is allowed to choose which goal to defend.

Teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half.

B. Playing Time

It is the goal of the League to provide every child the opportunity to develop as an athlete. With this in mind, it is required that all players receive at least one half playing time during each game and that each player be actively utilized. Coaches are required to abide by the spirit of this rule.

C. Number of Players

3rd-7th Grade Play shall be 7on7

In the event that only six players are present for a given team, they shall be allowed to play with six, although the opposing team shall still be allowed the option to play with seven.

D. Player Substitutions

Players may be freely substituted after any dead ball.

E. Location of Coaches

3rd-4th: One coach is allowed on the field to instruct players. This coach must move at least 15 yards away before the ball is snapped. Coaches on the field must remain on his/her team's side of the line of scrimmage.

5th – 7th: Coaches are not allowed on the field during play. Coaches can participate in the huddle, but must move to the sideline before play starts. Players may also choose to huddle at the sideline before each play.

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the coach to avoid interfering with play.

Officials may take appropriate action, including issuing a warning, re-playing a down, imposing penalties, or removing a coach from the field, if he/she believes the coaches' presence has interfered with play.

Also, coaches are not allowed to make contact with their own players during the course of a play (ie, giving them a nudge in the right direction). This will be considered coach's interference, and will be penalized.

F. Coaches Conduct

All coaches are required to abide by the Coach: Code of Conduct.

G. Offense

Snapping the Ball

The center must snap the ball between the legs and must release the ball to the quarterback for a legal play to begin. Shotgun snaps are allowed but not required. Prior to the snap, the ball must be resting on the ground.

If the ball hits the ground on a snap, the play is called dead, and the ball is spotted at the point where it hit the ground.

Number of Downs

Each team will have four downs to advance the ball across the first down marker or into the opposing end zone. After a team crosses the first down marker, it receives four more downs in which to score.

Ball Position

The location of the runner's hips (not the ball) at the end of the play determines where the ball is to be spotted.

Running

3rd-5th Grade- The player who receives the snap (the quarterback) may run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage if it has been given to another player or is rushed by defense. After the ball has been handed off to another player, then this restriction no longer applies; the quarterback becomes eligible to run, pass, or receive the ball. The offensive team may run the ball after performing a valid hand-off. Spin moves are allowed.

6th-7th- The player who receives the snap (the quarterback) may not run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage until it has been given to another player or is rushed by defense. After the ball has been handed off to another player, then this restriction no longer applies; the quarterback becomes eligible to run, pass, or receive the ball. The offensive team may run the ball after performing a valid hand-off. Spin moves are allowed.

It is the ball carrier's responsibility to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact shall not be penalized, provided the ball carrier makes an effort to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) may be penalized, even if it does not result in a collision. **Intentional contact will not be tolerated**, and may also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and/or player ejection.

Once the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, his teammates must not block with their hands or body.

Restrictions

- Ball carriers are prohibited from using hands, arms, or the ball to impede access to the flag belt.
- If the ball carrier impedes access to the flag belt, if it is in his/her "natural running motion", a flag guarding penalty shall not be assessed.
- The ball carrier shall not lower his/her head to charge or run into a defensive player.
- No intentional contact of any kind is allowed. This includes charging or running directly into a defensive player or stiff-arming.
- The ball carrier is not allowed to dive. If he/she dives into the end zone, it is not a score; a diving penalty shall be imposed from the goal line.

No-Running Zones

3rd - 5th Grade there is a five yard no-running zones on the near side (from the offensive point of view) of the first down marker and end zone. When the line of scrimmage lies within one of these zones, no running plays are allowed. This means that the offense must attempt a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage. Handoffs are allowed, but must lead to a pass attempt. The one-point extra point line is within the no-running zone.

Laterals and Pitches

Neither laterals nor pitches are allowed beyond line of scrimmage.

Handoffs

Handoffs may occur only behind the line of scrimmage. There is no limit on the number of handoffs that may occur during a given play. Handoffs may be forward or backward and do not limit the offense's option to throw a subsequent forward pass.

Handoffs may not occur after a completed forward pass.

Special Cases: Running Eligibility After Multiple Handoffs

In order for a handoff to be considered legal, the player with original possession of the ball (Player A) must completely relinquish control of the ball to another player (Player B). By *completely relinquishing control of the ball*, it is meant that Player A would not have any contact with the ball whatsoever after handing the ball to Player B. Therefore, in order for Player A to gain the ability to run the football, he or she would have to hand the ball to Player B, clearly ceasing all contact with the ball, and then Player B could hand the ball back to Player A, giving Player A the ability to run. The act of placing the ball on the center's back and retrieving it is not considered a legal handoff.

Five "Second Rule"

After the ball is snapped, the quarterback has **five seconds** (age 3rd-7th) to pass or hand-off the ball. If this time expires without a pass or hand-off, the ball shall be returned to the line of scrimmage and the down shall be lost. As soon as the quarterback no longer has possession, the five/seven second rule ceases to apply, even if the quarterback gains possession of the ball again.

Passing

No more than one forward pass is allowed on the same play. All players excluding the center are eligible receivers. In all division, forward passes must be completed at or beyond the line of scrimmage.

Blocking

Blocking is not allowed. Once a ball carrier has possession of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, the other offensive players must not touch any players. If an offensive player moves and impedes the progress of a defender who is making an attempt to pull the ball carrier's flag, an illegal blocking penalty shall be assessed.

Receiving

A completion results when the receiver has control of the ball with at least one foot in bounds. If a receiver catches a pass while not wearing a flag belt, the ball shall be down at the point of the catch. Offensive players are not allowed to intentionally bat a passed ball forward to a teammate. A pass that is intentionally batted forward (in the referee's judgment) that is caught by an offensive player shall be ruled as an incomplete pass.

Motion

No more than one player at a time is allowed to be in motion, and a player in motion may not move toward the line of scrimmage while the ball is being snapped.

G. Defense

Flag Pulling

- To stop the ball carrier, the defensive player must remove the flag or force (without contact) him/her out of bounds.
- No intentional contact is allowed. This includes tackling, pushing, grasping, and bumping. This also includes touching the face or head in any way or contacting a passer's arm or the ball while he/she is holding the ball.
- Incidental contact to the ball carrier's body while reaching for the flag belt is not a violation.
- If a ball carrier's flag falls off without being touched, he/she is down at the spot it touched the ground.

Rushing the Quarterback

Any defensive player is eligible to rush the quarterback if he/she is behind the rushing line when the ball is snapped. The rushing line is marked by the official and is seven yards from the line of scrimmage. This seven-yard distance applies even if the first down line or goal line is less than seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Any number of players may rush the quarterback, provided they comply with the listed restrictions.

ONE RUSH PER 4 DOWNS

When the ball leaves the quarterbacks hands (for a handoff or pass), then all defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of whether they lined up behind the rush line. **Linebackers must start at 5 yards from the LOS. CB's may start as close as 1 yard from the LOS**

H. Change of Possession

A team failing to advance beyond the first down marker or into the end zone after four downs loses possession of the ball. The opposing team takes possession on its own ten yard line. An intercepted pass results in a change of possession and may be returned until the ball is dead. The line of scrimmage then moves to the point at which the ball was ruled down.

I. Dead Ball

The ball shall be declared dead when:

- The ball touches the ground
- Any part of the ball carrier other than hands or feet touches the ground
- A run is attempted from a no-running zone
- The ball carrier's flag belt falls off or is removed
- The ball carrier scores
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds
- The five/seven second clock expires

J. Score Values

- Touchdown: 6 points

Point after touchdown

- From 5 yards: 1 point
- From 12 yards: 2 points
- Safety: 2 points
- Extra point attempt (whether from 5 or 12 yards) returned to opposing end zone: 2 points

K. Tie Games

Games ending in a tie will be settled by a *longest-yard tie-breaker*. A coin toss will take place to determine which team will go on offense first. The winner of the coin-toss will have the right to choose offense or defense. Each team will have one play from their own five yard line to gain as many yards as possible. The team gaining the most yards will be declared the winner.

L. Ejections

At the official's discretion, a player may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules. To eject a player, the official shall notify the coach, who is responsible for removing the player within two minutes to avoid a forfeit.

Any player ejected may be put on probation with possible suspension, depending upon the severity of incident. The League shall have full discretion when imposing penalties. Our league is intended to provide a family-oriented environment for the enjoyment of children. All coaches, players, and spectators are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times. The League, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to eject, suspend, or dismiss anyone for any inappropriate behavior.

M. Forfeits

If a team cannot field at least six players, the game will be forfeit. If a team is more than 5 minutes late for their game start time, the game will be forfeit. The score of a forfeited game shall be 7-0.

N. Penalties

All defensive penalties are five yards, and result in an automatic first-down for the offense. All offensive penalties are five yards, and result in a loss-of-down for the offense. Penalties are either imposed from the line of scrimmage or from the point at which the foul occurred.

For fouls that occur before or during (prior to the catch) a legal forward pass, the foul shall be marked from the original line of scrimmage.

Otherwise, the foul is spotted from the point of the infraction.

The offended team always has the option to decline any penalty. When the penalty is greater than the distance to the goal line, it shall be assessed half the distance to the goal line.

A period of play cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense chooses to decline it. In the event of a defensive penalty that is not declined at the end of a half, the offense receives another un-timed play (along with an extra point attempt, if they score).

Offensive Penalties - 5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of Down

- Delay of Game
- Off-Sides
- False Start
- Illegal Motion
- Illegal Blocking
- Attempting to Run From a No-running Zone
- Offensive Pass Interference (Loss of Down)
- Charging (depending on degree)
- Interference by a Coach on the Field
- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
- Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
- Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
- Stripping or Attempting to Strip the Ball
- Intentionally Contacting an Official
- Fighting

Offensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Infraction, consumption of down

- Jumping
- Diving
- Flag Guarding
- Charging (depending on degree)

Flag guarding by the Quarterback occurring in his or her own end-zone will result in a safety.

Defensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the LOS, Automatic 1st Down

- Defensive Pass Interference (Automatic First Down)
- Roughing the Passer
- Removing Receiver's Flag Belt Before he/she Contacts the Ball
- Tackling, Hitting, or Shoving the Ball Carrier
- Obstructing or Holding the Ball Carrier
- Illegally Rushing the Quarterback
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Spiking, Kicking, or Inappropriately Throwing the Ball
- Spiking or Throwing Flag
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
- Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
- Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
- Stripping or Attempting to Strip the Ball
- Intentionally Contacting an Official
- Fighting

- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation

On extra-points only, pass interference occurring in the end-zone will result in a successful extra point conversion. Pass interference occurring in the end-zone during the regular course of play will result in a five yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage, and an automatic first-down.

Defensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Infraction, Automatic First Down

- Holding

Last Man Rule

In the event that the defensive player commits a flagrant holding penalty and there are no other defensive players between the offensive player and the end-zone, the referee has the discretion to credit the offensive player with a touchdown (or extra point conversion). In the event that the defensive team intercepts an extra-point conversion attempt, and the defensive player is flagrantly held by the (original) offensive player, two points shall be credited to the (original) defensive team.

Possible Warnings (at Official's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty

The referee has the ability to warn a player for unsportsmanlike conduct, and require the player to sit out a specified number of plays, or for the remainder of the half.

Possible Ejection (at Official's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Flagrant Personal Fouls (especially Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment

V. RULE REVIEW REQUEST

There is no mechanism to challenge a judgment call by an official. **The official's judgment is final.**

However, a head coach may request a conference with the referees to review a call if he feels it is inconsistent with the current rule book. This request must be made immediately after the play in question and prior to the time the ball once again becomes live. As soon as the ball becomes live again or the half officially ends, the call may not be changed. To request a review, the head coach must call time out and inform the head official that he is requesting a review of the rule. If the final decision is in the coach's favor, the time out will be returned; otherwise the time out is forfeited. In response to a request, the referee shall meet with the coach on the field. Only referees, the head coach may participate in this conference. After conferring, the referee shall issue a ruling, to be communicated to the coaching staff of both teams. The official may, at his discretion, confer with the Site Supervisor, League Director, or member of the league. The final ruling is to be made by the official and may not be appealed at a later time