

# YMCA of the Inland Northwest

## Flag Football Rules (Grades 3– 6) 2023

**EXCEPT AS CHANGED OR MODIFIED BELOW, WASHINGTON STATE HIGH SCHOOL RULES WILL APPLY.**

### **I. Game**

- A. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves. Clock stops only for timeouts or injuries. B. Halftime is 2 minutes. For the last 2 minutes of each half, the clock will stop on a dead ball.
- C. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. D. Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.
- E. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- F. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- G. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
- H. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- I. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 10-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- J. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 10-yard line. During the possession change, the clock will stop until the ball is placed on the 10-yard line whereupon the clock will start again.
- K. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 10-yard line.
- L. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 10-yard line.
- M. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
- N. At the 10-minute mark, officials will notify each coach of the time.
- O. Football Size
  - a. 3/4 – Size 5
  - b. 5/6 – Size 6

## II. Field

- A. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each goal line by 5 yards.
- B. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
- C. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- D. Each offensive team approaches only one no-run zones on each drive (one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

## III. Scoring

- A. Touchdown: 6 points
- B. PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
  - a. Note: 1 point PAT is pass only; 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
  - b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
- C. Safety: 2 points
  - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.

## IV. Rosters/Players/Coaches

- A. A maximum of 12 players shall be placed on team rosters – Additional kids may be added at the coach's discretion.
- B. Every player must wear a NFL Flag belt – furnished by the YMCA.
- C. Tennis shoes or rubber cleats are permitted. Cleats are recommended.
- D. EVERY PLAYER MUST PLAY AT LEAST HALF OF THE GAME!!
- E. A player may play the **maximum equivalent** of half the game at the quarterback or running back position.
- E. Each player shall play equally on offense as on defense in each game.
- F. Substitutes are required to be at least 5 yards from the field of play for safety precautions.
- G. Every player must wear a mouth piece at all times – NO EXCEPTIONS!
- H. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- I. Players' jersey's must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line.
- J. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball.
- K. Home teams wear dark color jerseys. Visiting teams wear light color jerseys.

**V. Guidelines:**

- A. Once a team roster has been set, a new player may not be added without the approval of the Sports Director.

**VI. Live Ball/Dead Ball**

- A. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead. First Ball snapped over or around quarterback into the endzone on the first snap will return to the LOS.
- B. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
- C. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- D. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- E. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- F. Any official can whistle the play dead.
- G. Play is ruled "dead" when:
  - a. The ball hits the ground.
  - b. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
  - c. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
  - d. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
  - E. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
  - F. The ball-carrier's knee or arm hits the ground.
  - G. The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
  - H. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
  - I. Inadvertent whistle.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.

- H. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
  - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

## **VII. Running**

- A. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ballcarrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
- B. "Center sneak" play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
- C. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
- D. No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and are designed to avoid shortyardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only one no-run zone on each drive –one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD.)
- E. QB runs are allowed, but no delayed draws up the A Gap.
- F. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- G. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
  - a. Runners may leave their feet, however, if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- H. Flag Obstruction – All jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

## **VIII. Passing**

- A. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
- B. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- C. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received behind the line of scrimmage. These are allowed within the no-run zone.

## **IX. Receiving**

- A. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage) except the center.
- B. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the LOS.
- C. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- D. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

- E. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 10-yard line.
- F. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.

## **X. Flag Pulling**

- A. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- B. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- C. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
- D. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
- E. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- F. 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.

## **XI. Formations**

- A. 8-man on the field for both offense and defense.
- B. The offense will consist of a 5-man line plus a quarterback and one running back. The interior linemen may not be split more than one yard from each other.
- C. The interior line must consist of three down linemen.
- D. The quarterback must take a direct snap from center to commence the play. Shotgun is OK, but quarterback must be identified. No direct snap to halfback is allowed. Running backs may be used as wide receivers but must be 1 yard off the line of scrimmage.
- E. **There must be a minimum of 4 defensive down linemen on every play if the offense chooses to have 5 men inside the box. Those defensive down linemen need to be heads up with the offensive line. If the offense has only three interior linemen, two of the defensive linemen must be heads up with the two offensive guards. The remaining two defensive linemen will have the choice to rush the quarterback or move off the ball with the receiver but must be 5 yards off the line of scrimmage. That player is not considered the designated blitzer.**

The defense may employ defensive backs, linebackers or safety in any manner. The defensive backs/linebackers must be a minimum of 5 yards behind the down linemen.

- F. **One, and only one, designated defensive player may notify the referee of his intention to blitz, where upon the referee will alert the offensive of this intention. There will be no blitzing in the no-run zones.**
- G. Defensive linemen must be one yard behind the line of scrimmage when heads up on the interior line. If tackles are lined up out of the interior line, defense must be 5 yards off the LOS.

- H. All players are eligible to receive a pass except the center.
- I. All interior offensive linemen will be in 2pt stances on offense (elbows on thighs, but down, head up).  
  
All interior defensive linemen will be in 2pt stances on offense (elbows on thighs, but down, head up).
- J. **No defensive lineman can line up opposite the center and shoot the A gap.**

## **XII. Special Rules and Definitions**

- A. **Blocking must be performed in accordance with Washington State High School rules.**  
The head or face may not be used as the primary point of contact. B.  
Use of hands – No stiff-arm by the ball carrier – 5-yard penalty.
- C. Tie games are tie games! No overtime period will be played until playoffs up which each offense will have three plays to score from the no-run zone.
- D. Down field blocking on plays past the line of scrimmage must be above the waist and the offensive blocker in this situation may not leave his feet.
- E. Reverses, draws, screen passes, counters and other such offensive plays are allowed.
- F. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- G. All players are responsible for their own insurance.

## **XIII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct**

- A. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
- B. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- C. Ejections will lead to a one-game suspension.
- D. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official. Keep celebrations within reason.
- E. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- F. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- G. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
  - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.

- b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
  - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
- H. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
- a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
  - b. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.
  - c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
- I. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
- a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
  - b. Offense – 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

#### **XIV. Penalties**

- A. The referee will call all the penalties.
- B. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from a normal run of play.
- C. Excessive celebrations may be penalized at the referee's discretion.
- D. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot Fouls)
- E. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
- F. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines.
- G. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- H. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

#### Defensive Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic first down
Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

#### Offensive Spot Fouls

Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag Guarding	-10 yards and loss of down

## Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down.

## Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside/false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal forward pass	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of Game/Sideline Violations	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage