



The Rules  
Fall/Winter Seasons



# YYAA Flag Football Rules

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**PLEASE NOTE:** While these rules are similar to those of the official NFL Flag rules, certain changes have been made to ensure a more competitive experience for the participants of the Yorkville Youth Athletic Association.

## 1. BASICS

- A coin toss will determine first possession and direction. The winning team will get to determine either their direction or who has the ball first. The team who loses the coin toss will get the other choice (direction or possession). In the second half the teams will change directions, and whichever team opened the game on defense will be on offense to start the second half.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has 4 plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has 4 plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line. In the Playmakers, Touchdown, and Gridiron Divisions, a player can run back an interception and change of possession is at the point at the end of the run back. In the Pee Wee and Mighty Mite Division, interceptions cannot be run back and change of possession is at the point of the interception.
- Players must wear a protective mouthpiece.
- Official NFL Flag jerseys must be worn during play, and must be tucked into pants.
- Players will have 2 flags, 1 on each hip.
- Parents and spectators will occupy one sideline, while coaches and Players (of both teams) will be on the other sideline.
- Players must wear grey or black pants or shorts that do not camouflage a flag.
- In the Touchdown and Gridiron Divisions coaches are permitted to be on the field and in the huddle prior to the play. However, they must move to the sideline or away from the play (e.g. behind the end zone) before the ball is snapped. In the Pee Wee and Mighty Mite Divisions, coaches may stay on the field as long as they do not interfere with the play. Coaches are not permitted on the field in the Playmakers Division.

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## 2. PLAYERS

### A) The Team

- Teams will play with five players on the field.
- If a team only has 4 players then the game is played 4 on 4 and it is an official game.
- Teams with less than 4 players will forfeit, however the game can still be played as an exhibition.

### B) Substitutions

*NOTE: A drive is considered the length of time that a team controls possession.*

- With 10 players present, all players will play an even amount of drives. With less than 10 players present, no player will play more than one drive more than any other player. At the beginning of the season, the league will number players. Before each drive players will inform the referee of their number. This will be recorded on a Drive Sheet and, if there is a question regarding playing time, the Director will review the Drive Sheet after the game. Penalty for playing a player too many times or a player too few times will result in losing the game by a score of 1-0. Coaches must plan their line-ups and be fair to every player on their team.
- Substitutions cannot be made between downs.
- A player is not permitted to play in a second drive until all other players have played (or are currently playing) in at least one drive.
- In the Gridiron and Playmakers Divisions, during the final 10 minutes of the game, and in OT, free substitutions are allowed between downs.

## 3. TIMING

- Games are played to 60 minutes running time (2 30-minute periods).
- The clock will stop during the following:
  - Time-outs (clock resumes at first snap after TO)
  - Injuries (clock resumes at Official's discretion)
  - Penalties (clock resumes once ball is spotted after penalty is assessed)
  - At the discretion of the Official (clock resumes at Official's discretion)
  - After a TD. (Clock does not run during a point after try. Clock resumes once ball is spotted for the next offensive play).
  - During the final 2 minutes of the game the clock will also stop for the two-minute warning, each incomplete pass, each out of bounds play, and change of possession.
- 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.
- Each team has 3 60-second time-outs per half. Each team has 1 60-second time-out in OT. Time-outs do not carry over.
- In the regular season, if the score is tied at the end of regulation, the final results of the game is a tie. IN THE PLAYOFFS, if the score is tied at the end of 60 minutes, teams move into overtime. The first OT possession is decided by a coin toss. The team winning the coin toss will have the same choice as the pregame coin toss winner. Both teams will be given at least one chance to score starting at mid-field. If

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the score is still tied after this, then the first team to score wins. Both teams must play at least one offensive possession, even if there is an interception on the first possession.)

## 4. SCORING

### A) Offensive Scoring

- Touchdown:
  - 6 points
- Points After Touchdown:
  - 1 point (played from 5-yard line);
  - 2 points (played from 10-yard line): or
  - 3 points (played from the 20-yard line)
  - If there is a defensive penalty on a point after try and the offense accepts the penalty, the offense can choose to run the play from the prior line of scrimmage or run the play after the penalty yards are marked off. Under both options, the new point after try will be worth the same points as the original point after try. The no running zone will be in effect.
    - Example: Team A chooses to go for a two point try from the 10 yard line. Team B is offsides. If Team A accepts the penalty, they can choose to either go from the 10 yard line again and is allowed to run or pass, or they can go from the 5 yard line but can only pass. However, under both options, the play will count for two points.

### B) Defensive Scoring

- Interception:
  - 2 points (Pee-Wee/Mighty Mite Division only)
- Sack (defined as any flag-pull tackle, of any player, behind the line of scrimmage):
  - 1 point
- Safety:
  - 2 points

Note: There is no defensive scoring on a point after try.

## 5. OFFENSE

### A) Running

- After 5 seconds, the quarterback may run with the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Handoffs, laterals, and pitches are permitted only behind the line of scrimmage.
- Offense may use multiple handoffs, laterals, and pitches.
- “No-running zones,” located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations.
- The player who takes a handoff, lateral, or pitch behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off, lateralled, or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

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- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot dive or jump to avoid being tackled.
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is. If a ball carrier is ruled down because he runs out of bounds or his knee hits the ground, the ball is spotted wherever his feet were when ruled down (even if his feet were ahead of the ball).
- A ball carrier cannot charge into a defensive player who is not mobile.
- An offensive player cannot block a defensive player. A block occurs when an offensive player, who is not the ball carrier, hinders a defensive player from making a tackle by contacting the defensive player, running between the ball carrier and the defensive player, or other similar act.

## B) Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off, lateralled, or pitched behind the line of scrimmage).
- A player must have at least one foot in-bounds when making a reception.
- If an offensive player's flag falls out, they are eligible to receive a pass but cannot advance the ball after the reception. The play is dead at the spot of the reception.

## C) Passing

- A forward pass may be thrown to a receiver who is either behind or beyond the line of scrimmage.
- A forward pass may be thrown either underhand or overhand as long as the passer is behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is released. A passer is considered to be beyond the line of scrimmage if any part of the passer's foot is in contact with the ground beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Only one forward pass may be thrown during a play.
- Intentional grounding will be called when a passer, who is about to be sacked, intentionally drops the ball or throws a pass that is not in the direction and general vicinity of a receiver.
  - Intentional grounding will not be called if the passer throws a forward pass that lands out of bounds (including out of the end zone) beyond the line of scrimmage.
  - A passer may intentionally spike the ball to stop the clock in the last two minutes of a game if he is under center and immediately, after receiving the snap, throws the ball directly to the ground in front of him.
- The quarterback has a 5-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the 5 seconds, any defensive player may rush, and the quarterback may run beyond the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, lateralled, pitched, or passed forward, the 5-second rule is no longer in effect.
- If a QB's flag falls out prior to a pass being made, the ball is dead and the next play begins from the spot that the flag fell out (including in a no-running zone).
- In a no-running zone, if a pass is not thrown within 5 seconds, the play is dead. It will be considered an incomplete pass.

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- Only the quarterback can throw a forward pass in the no-run zone. Handoffs, laterals, and pitches are not allowed in a no-running zone.
- A forward pass thrown in the no-running zone must be thrown beyond the line of scrimmage.
  - Note: Kneeling is allowed in the no-run zone ... including a kneel-down to move the ball back to a position where running can be allowed on the following play
- If an offensive penalty is called on a team while they are in the non-running zone, the offense will be moved back and they will be permitted to run. However, the defense has the option to decline the penalty to keep the offense in the no-running zone.
  - Note: If the defense declines the penalty there is no loss of down.

## D) Formation

- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play.
- At least 2 receivers in addition to the center must line up at the line of scrimmage on every play.
- In the Pee-Wee and Mighty Mite Division, there must be at least one receiver on each side of the center.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. A player in motion cannot be moving forward at the time of the snap.

## 6. BLITZING THE QB (FOR GRIDIRON & PLAYMAKERS DIVISIONS)

- Players may blitz by rushing the quarterback prior to 5 seconds.
- All players who blitz the quarterback must be a minimum of 10 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- Any number of players can blitz the quarterback, as long as they are 10 yards from the line the scrimmage.
- Once a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage on a blitz, the quarterback can run beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball is handed off, lateralled, or pitched the 10-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may rush.
- GRIDIRON ONLY: Gridiron teams are limited to one blitz per set of four downs. Teams may also blitz on PATs (unless it is a no-run, no-blitz situation).

## 7. DEAD BALLS

- Play is ruled “dead” when:
  - Ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - A touchdown, safety, or interception (Pee-Wee/Mighty Mite) is scored.

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- Ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- The ball hits the ground. There are no fumbles. If the ball carrier fumbles the ball backwards, the ball is spotted where it first hits the ground. If the ball carrier fumbles the ball forward, it is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble. Unless the fumble is on 4<sup>th</sup> down in the final two minutes of the game, the clock continues to roll, as if it were a fumble recovered by the offense.
- If the ball is dropped by an offensive player in their own end zone, it is not a safety. The down will be lost and, unless it was fourth down, the offensive team will retain possession, and the ball will be spotted on their 1 yard line.
- Ball carrier's flag falls out. (Note: If a ball carrier's lead on his belt is out so that it appears to be a flag, it will be treated as if his flag fell out.)
- An illegal forward pass is thrown. (Note: An illegal forward pass is a dead ball as soon as it is released. Therefore, the pass cannot be intercepted.)
- An illegal run. (Note: An illegal run is a dead ball as soon as the QB's foot lands across the line of scrimmage or as soon as there is a handoff, lateral, or pitch.)

## 8. PENALTIES (NOTE: All penalties will be called by the Official.)

### A) Defensive Penalties

- *Offsides*
  - 5 yards and repeat down
- *Illegal Rush (rushing prior to 5 seconds)*
  - 5 yards and repeat down
- *Illegal Blitz (starting blitz from inside 10--yard marker)*
  - 5 yards and repeat down
- *Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)*
  - 5 yards from the point of the penalty or the end of the play (whichever is greater) and automatic first down
- *Holding*
  - 5 yards and automatic first down
- *Too Many Players on the Field*
  - 5 yards and repeat down
- *Pass Interference*
  - automatic first down at point of penalty
- *Tackling*
  - 10 yards from point of penalty and automatic first down
- *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*
  - 15 yards from point of penalty and automatic first down

### B) Offensive Penalties

- *Illegal formation (players not on line, more than one player in motion or the player in motion moving forward at the time of snap, false start, etc.)*
  - 5 yards and repeat down

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- (Note: Illegal formation will result in the immediate stop of play)
- Intentional Grounding
  - 5 yards from the point of the penalty and loss of down
- *Delay of game*
  - 5 yards and repeat down
- *Too Many Players on the Field*
  - 5 yards and repeat down
- *Flag guarding*
  - 10 yards from the point of the penalty and loss of down
- *Charging*
  - 10 yards from the point of the penalty and loss of down
- Blocking
  - 10 yards from the point of the penalty and loss of down
- *Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)*
  - 5 yards, no reception, and loss of down
- *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*
  - 15 yards from the point of the penalty and loss of down

## Notes:

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
- A half cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.
- Loss of down means that the penalty is assessed and the play moves to the next down. For example, if on 2<sup>nd</sup> down and 20 the offense runs for 15 yards and is then called for charging, the penalty of 10 yards from the point the charging took place is marked off and it is 3<sup>rd</sup> down and 15.

## 9. SPORTSMANSHIP

- If the official witnesses any acts of elbowing, cheap shots, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
- Trash talking is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams or spectators.) If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
- There will be a Zero Tolerance policy with regard to the behavior of volunteer adult coaches. Any coach who exhibits unsportsmanlike conduct while in attendance at any YYAA sports contest will be immediately relieved of his coaching responsibilities for the duration of the season.

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**PLEASE NOTE: THE ON-SITE DIRECTOR HAS THE DISCRETION, AND FINAL SAY, ON ANY RULE DECISIONS OR MODIFICATIONS DURING THE COURSE OF A GAME OR SEASON.**

