

GSL Flag Football Rules

Eight Player Variation



Attire:

Cleats are allowed, but must be rubber. There may be inspections prior to the game. All players must wear a protective mouthpiece. Players must tuck in all loose clothing to allow clear access to the flag. All players must wear the team jersey over any other clothing. The supplied flag belt and Velcro attached flag is the only approved flag belt to wear and the flag must be attached loosely as intended on the outside of the belt. Frayed flags should be replaced. Toques are allowed but baseball caps, if worn, must be reversed to prevent injury by contact with the brim to another player.

Field Dimensions and Markings:

Length: 60 yards

Width: 30 yards

End Zones: Maximum 10 yards deep, minimum 7 yards deep

Possession:

A coin toss determines first possession. Loser of the coin toss has choice of end zone to defend. The team that loses the coin toss gets possession at the beginning of the second half.

Timing/Overtime:

Game length is approximately 50 minutes running time (two halves, 24 minutes each).

Officials do not stop the clock.

Each time the ball is spotted the offense has 25 seconds to snap the ball.

Each team has 2 x 60-second time outs per half. These cannot be carried over to the second half or overtime.



The teams will be warned when there are two minutes left to play in the second half. There will be a halftime period of 5 minutes between the first and second half.

If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, teams move directly into a five-minute overtime. A coin toss determines first possession of overtime. The team that wins the coin toss starts with the ball on the defense's 10 yard line. If the team scores, they can then go for either a one-point or two-point convert. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on the 10 yard line. Play continues until one team has more points after at least one possession to win the game or five minutes expires. There will be no timeouts granted during the overtime period.

Scoring:

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra point: 1 point (played from 5-yard line)
- Extra point: 2 points (played from 10-yard line)
- Kicked convert: 2 points
- Safety: 2 points

Game:

Eight players on the field at a time. All kids must play; there is a ten-play minimum. If you are up by a couple of touchdowns, work in your less experienced players. Do not continue to run up the score.

Each team has 4 downs to reach the next cone for a first down and a new series of downs.

The rushers have to start 1 yard from line of scrimmage.

Any fumble is a dead ball at the spot to protect players from injury trying to recover a loose ball. This includes fumbles, muffed kicks and any pitches that hit the ground are dead balls at point of contact. If it is forward it is the point of contact of the person who last touched the ball. Snaps to the



quarterback in the shotgun position are allowed to bounce to a quarterback but if he touches it and it hits the turf again it is a dead ball on contact with the turf. Punts or kick offs can bounce but once the ball touches a player and then the turf it is dead.

Offense:

Running:

Five players must be on the line of scrimmage, and any other players may be in motion at the snap as long as a player doesn't cross the line of scrimmage before ball snapped.

To start the play, the ball must be snapped between the legs of the center. The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap. The center cannot take a direct handoff back from the quarterback (no center sneak play). The center may adjust the ball before signals are called. Direct snaps under the centre are allowed, as are snaps to a quarterback in the shotgun position.

The quarterback is the player who receives the ball directly via the snap. The quarterback and any other player must observe safe play when running with the ball past the line of scrimmage directly ahead. In order to prevent rough play, a ball carrier must not charge directly through the defense such that tacklers are pushed back or towards the ground. A charging penalty will be called if a defensive player is planted and the offensive player charges him while making no attempt to run around him.

There is no running the ball up the middle (or A gap) between the guards, but rather running plays must be off-tackle.

An offence may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward or lateral handoffs are allowed during a down.



Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed and are running plays.

The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

If a defensive player can take a hand-off from the quarterback then the ball will be considered a dead ball. The rationale being that if the defensive player can take the ball then they can grab the flag.

Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving or hurdling).

The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.

An offensive player with possession of the ball that falls down may get up and continue running. If a defensive player touches him (doesn't have to pull flag) while he is still on the ground the play is blown dead and it is the same as pulling the flag.

Rushers cannot cross pattern of centre/ snapper- snapper/centre cannot run pattern in front of rusher.

No down field blocking is allowed. Blocking has to be above the waist and no hands to the face or neck area. Offense can have as many blockers as they want.

Receiving:

All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).

A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception. (A player cannot return on to the playing field from an out of bounds position.)



Passing:

The quarterback has no time limit to throw the ball and must be behind the line of scrimmage at the time of releasing the ball.

Interceptions are allowed and can be run back. The defense can return interceptions *except on extra-point plays*.

On interceptions that occur and remain in the end zone, the ball will become dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team at its 5-yard line. Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leave the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead. However, should the ball carrier return to the end zone and be de-flagged, or the ball be ruled dead the result would be a safety for the other team.

Shovel passes are allowed but must begin from behind the line of scrimmage

Punting/Kickoffs:

Kickoffs commence from the 25 yard line. The receiving team lines up at their 30 yard line and need not catch the ball cleanly but the kicking team must allow the receiving team to pick up the ball. The ball must travel at least 10 yards or the kickoff is redone without penalty. The kicking team coach should pick up the tee immediately after the kickoff.

The offensive team must declare and make understood by the opposing coach if there will be a punt. The centre must long snap the ball to the punter standing some distance away from the centre. The punter is allowed to drop the ball but must pick up and kick the ball immediately thereafter. **There are no onside punts** and every effort must be made to allow the defensive team to pick up the punted ball.

The defensive team is not allowed to rush the punter and **must have at least four players on the defensive line at the beginning of the play.**



Defense:

Tackling (Flag Capture only):

“Tackling” in Flag Football means to capture the flag from the opposing offensive player who is carrying the ball. This can be done by one or both hands but the defensive player is not allowed to wrap both hands around the offensive player such as is done in Contact Football. The defensive player is not allowed to grab the offensive player and must concentrate on grabbing only the flag.

Defensive players may dive to capture a flag as long as there is no intention to knock down the offensive player. When chasing the ball carrier, an honest and reasonable effort must be made to grab the flag. If the defensive player throws him/herself at the ball player, particularly if the ball carrier looks to be running for a touchdown, and halts his/her progress with no hope of getting a flag, there will be a 10-yard penalty applied at the point of the infraction. If this type of penalty occurs again, the ball will be advanced to half way to the goal line. If it happens any subsequent times in the same game, the ball will be advanced to the one-yard line.

A maximum of three D lineman are allowed to rush while the quarterback is inside the pocket. Once a QB runs outside of the pocket any defensive player can rush. If it is a run play any defensive player can rush.

D Lineman have to be no further than outside shade of guards. No wide angle of rushing against the O Line. No blitzing, D is only allowed to rush the three D Lineman

Defensive players have the right of way, and offensive players have to run around defenders. There is no intentional contact, no press coverage, no straight arms, no blocking.

A defensive player cannot knock the ball out of an offensive player's hands once a player has possession of the football. The defensive player has to go for the flag. A defensive player can knock the ball from a player in the act of catching a pass but once they have possession, they have to go for the flag.



A rusher cannot cross pattern of centre/ snapper- snapper/centre cannot run pattern in front of rusher.

Dead Balls:

Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- Official blows the whistle.
- Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal.
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- Touchdown or safety is scored.
- Ball is intercepted in the end zone on an extra-point attempt.
- When any forward pass is not caught or any lateral or shovel pass is not caught.
- When a defensive player takes the ball from the ball carrier, whether the quarterback, running back or receiver.

If the ball carrier's flag falls off, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off.

Players are ineligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's feet were when the fumble was made, i.e. a bad snap, other than for a punt, will be blown dead and the ball will be spotted at the centre's feet. There is no stripping of the ball.

Penalties:



Sportsmanship/Roughing:

If the referee witnesses any acts of flagrant contact, body tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, head or body blocking other than by hands extended flat to the chest, or any unsportsmanlike act, the play will be stopped and the player will be warned and a 10-yard penalty will be called. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

Trash talking is not permitted or tolerated. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators.) Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.

Penalties:

All other penalties are 5 or 10 yards except for Pass Interference which is 15 yards, unless otherwise noted. The down will be repeated unless otherwise noted, and will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.

Most penalties can be declined.

Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted.

Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.

Only the team captain may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.

Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.



Defensive Penalties:

Offside

Pass Interference — 15 yards and automatic first down

Illegal contact (holding, aggressive blocking or tackling, rough play of any kind etc.) Some examples are:

- overrunning the centre without giving the centre time to stand up
- tackling with both hands such that ball carrier is pulled down or knocked out of bounds.
- counter blocking by thrusting hands to the face of the opponent

Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)

Substitution fouls (player enters field after ball is blown ready for play, i.e. to deceive opponents, or too many players on the field)

Disconcerting signals (signals to distract opponent or simulate offensive signals prior to snap)

Pushing the ball carrier out of bounds is a 10-yard penalty on defense at the point of infraction.

Interference with opponent or ball at the snap

Illegal formation especially as it has to do with punting when the minimum amount of Defensive players on the line of scrimmage must be four. A warning may be issued before the snap of the ball.

Offensive Penalties:

Delay of game. Coaches are reminded that there is only 25 seconds to call a play and even though Referees are generous with this common contravention, coaches must ensure that their actions do not delay the game, especially as it pertains to the game situation when an opposing team needs all the time available to overcome a scoring deficit. Five yard penalty.

Illegal procedure (lining up offside). Often, warnings will be issued unless there are continual infractions by any particular player. - Five yard penalty.

Substitution fouls - Five yard penalty



False Start, before the referee is ready - Five yard penalty

Illegal Snap - Five yard penalty

Offensive holding - Ten yard penalty

Illegal contact (holding, aggressive blocking by pushing players to the ground, rough play of any kind etc.) - Ten yard penalty. Some examples are:

- blocking by thrusting hands towards the face of the opponent
- ball carrier charging opponents directly without any attempt to avoid collisions

Player out of bounds (if player goes out of bounds, player cannot return to the field and catch ball) - 10 yard penalty

Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) — 5 yards and loss of down

Flag guarding, hands cannot be used to deflect the defense away from capturing the flag— 10 yards from the point of foul and loss of down.

Diving to gain additional yards at any time. Diving into the end zone as an act of exuberance is not a penalty if such act does not hurt anyone and players will be warned.

Unintentional blocking the flag is dead ball at infraction. Intentional blocking the flag is loss of down and 10-yard penalty. (This has to be an obvious attempt to block the flagger from pulling the flag).

No downfield blocking, intentional contact, or picks. Once the receiving team has possession of the football, the offensive players cannot interfere with the defensive players attempt at flagging the ball carrier. Offensive players have to remain still or they can run behind the ball carrier to receive a pitch. - 10-yard penalty

While spinning is allowed as an attempt to avoid one's flag being grabbed,



jumping to avoid a flag is not allowed and blown dead at the point of infraction. It has to be an obvious jump with both feet clearly leaving the ground.

Coaching Penalties:

Coaching interference. Some examples are:

- Over coaching: Coaches active in shouting directions, giving hand signals, running alongside players, moving players to counter the opposing formation **after** the players break out of the huddle. The coaching ends after the call of the play in the huddle and coaches must be patient to see how the players carry out the play. Coaching flag on the field is not designed to allow the coach to make adjustments to the player's positions because of the advantage of adult analysis. Coaches are not allowed to approach the line of scrimmage. If a player is offside, a warning will be issued by the Referee.
- Arguing with the Referee or the opposing coach over interpretation of the rules or any other matter. In any case, such issue will require the use of one of only two time outs possible per half to initiate the conference. Respect for the Referee is paramount and a Referee may conclude that a penalty is warranted.
- If a coach or any member of the coaching staff uses any inappropriate language, toward either a player, coach, official, or parent, will given a 15-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage or where the play ended, whichever is the better; a second offence will result in the coach being removed from the game (and possibly suspended) and the ball moved halfway to the goal line.



Penalty Summary:

Five Yard Penalties:

- Offside
- Illegal procedure
- Substitution fouls
- False Start
- Illegal Snap
- Delay of game
- Offensive pass interference (and loss of down)

Ten Yard Penalties:

- Sportsmanship/Roughing:
- Trash talking:
- Pushing the ball carrier out of bounds
- Offensive holding
- Illegal contact
- Player returning from out of bounds
- Flag guarding (and loss of down)
- Intentional blocking the flag (and loss of down) Unintentional blocking the flag is dead ball at infraction.
- Downfield blocking, intentional contact, or picks.

Fifteen Yard Penalties:

- Pass Interference — 15 yards and automatic first down
- Illegal contact (holding, aggressive blocking or tackling, rough play)
- Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)
- Substitution fouls or too many players on the field
- Disconcerting signals
- Interference with opponent or ball at the snap
- Illegal formation
- Coaching interference.
- Arguing with the Referee or the opposing coach
- Using inappropriate language, toward either a player, coach, official, or parent
- Jumping to avoid a flag is blown dead at the point of infraction