

GSL Flag Football Rules - 2023

6 Player Variation

1. Attire:

- a. Cleats are allowed but must be rubber. There may be inspections prior to the game.
- b. All players must wear a protective mouthpiece.
- c. All players must wear the team jersey over any other clothing. Players must tuck in all loose clothing to allow clear access to the flag.
- d. 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.
- e. Toques are allowed but baseball caps, if worn, must be reversed to prevent injury by contact with the brim to another player.

2. Field Dimensions and Markings:

- a. Length: 60 yards
- b. Width: 30 yards
- c. End Zones: Maximum 10 yards deep, minimum 7 yards deep

3. Possession:

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

4. Timing/Overtime:

- a. Game length is approximately 50 minutes running time (two halves, 24 minutes each).
- b. Officials do not stop the clock.
- c. Each time the ball is spotted the offense has 25 seconds to snap the ball.
- d. Each team has 2 x 60-second time outs per half. These cannot be carried over to the second half or overtime.
- e. 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.
- f. If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, teams will play the ball from the 15-yard line. Each Team has 3 chances to score and coin toss/Paper Rock Scissor determines who will play ball first.
 1. If score remains tied after each team has had possession, the ball will be placed at the 10-yard line and possession will be reversed.
 2. There will be no timeouts granted during the overtime period.

5. Scoring:

- a. Touchdown: 6 points

- b. Extra point: 1 point (played from 5-yard line)
- c. Extra point: 2 points (played from 10-yard line)
- d. Safety: 2 points

6. Game:

- a. Six 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.
- b. Each team has 4 downs to reach the next cone for a first down and a new series of downs.
 - 1. First down markers are at each 20-yard line and center field.
- c. The rushers have to start 7 yards from line of scrimmage.
- d. 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.

7. Offense:

- a. Running:
 - 1. Three 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.
 - 2. To start the play, the ball must be snapped between the legs of the center.
 - 3. The center is the player who gives the ball to a player 5 yards behind the LOS.
 - 4. 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.
 - 5. Direct snaps under the centre are allowed, as are snaps to a quarterback in the shotgun position.
 - 6. 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.
 - 7. An offence may use multiple handoffs. Only backward or lateral handoffs are allowed during a down.
 - 8. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - 9. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving or hurdling).
 - 10. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's ball is when the flag is pulled.
 - 11. 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.

12. Offensive players cannot interfere with path of rusher.
13. No down field blocking is allowed.

b. Receiving:

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. 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.)

c. Passing:

1. 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.
2. Interceptions are allowed and can be run back. The defense can return interceptions including on extra-point plays.
3. 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 20-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 player is flagged. 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.
4. Shovel passes are allowed but must begin from behind the line of scrimmage.

8. Special Teams

a. Kickoff/Kick Off Return:

1. Kickoffs commence from the 25-yard line.
2. The ball must travel at least 10 yards, or the kickoff is redone without penalty.
3. The receiving team must line up at least 10 yards away from the ball.
4. Receiving team need not catch the ball cleanly but the kicking team must allow the receiving team to pick up the ball.
5. Laterals and hand offs are allowed on kick return.
6. No blocking is allowed by kick return team.

b. Punt/Punt Return

1. The offensive team must declare and make understood by the opposing coach if there will be a punt.
 1. For the U10 teams, no punting is required. A team can choose to change possession on 4th down if they choose to not attempt a play for a first down. In this case, the opposing team will take the ball at their 20-yard line.
2. The centre must snap the ball to the punter standing 5 yards away from the centre. The punter is allowed to drop the ball but must pick up and kick the ball immediately thereafter.
3. There are no onside punts, and every effort must be made to allow the defensive team to pick up the punted ball.

4. The defensive team is not allowed to rush the punter.
5. Receiving team need not catch the ball cleanly but the punting team must allow the receiving team to pick up the ball.
6. Laterals and hand offs are allowed on punt return.
7. No blocking is allowed by punt return team.

9. Defense:

- a. "Tackling" in Flag Football means to capture the flag from the opposing offensive player who is carrying the ball.
- b. 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.
- c. 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 halfway to the goal line. If it happens any subsequent times in the same game, the ball will be advanced to the one-yard line.
- d. Once a QB runs outside of the pocket any defensive player can rush. If it is a run play any defensive player can rush.
- e. Defensive players have the right of way, and offensive players have to run around defenders.
- f. There is no intentional contact, no press coverage, no straight arms, no blocking.
- g. A defensive player cannot knock the ball out of an offensive player's hands once a player has possession of the football. 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.
- h. 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.
- i. **A rusher cannot cross pattern of centre/ snapper.**

10. Dead Balls:

- a. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 1. Official blows the whistle.
 2. Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal.
 3. Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 4. Touchdown or safety is scored.
 5. When any forward pass is not caught or any lateral or shovel pass is not caught.
 6. When a defensive player takes the ball from the ball carrier, whether the quarterback, running back or receiver.

7. 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.
- b. Players are ineligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off.
- c. 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.

11. Penalties:

a. Sportsmanship/Roughing:

1. 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.
2. 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.

b. Penalties - General:

1. 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.
2. Penalties can be declined.
3. Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage unless otherwise noted.
4. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of
5. play.
6. Only the team captain may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations.
7. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.

12. Defensive Penalties:

- a. Offside – 5 yards
- b. Pass Interference — 15 yards and automatic first down
- c. Illegal contact (holding, aggressive blocking or tackling, rough play of any kind etc.) penalty. Some examples are:
 1. overrunning the centre without giving the centre time to stand up – 5 yards.
 2. tackling with both hands such that ball carrier is pulled down or knocked out of bounds. – 5 yards
 3. counter blocking by thrusting hands to the face of the opponent – 10 yards.
- d. Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball) – 5 yards.
- e. Substitution fouls (player enters field after ball is blown ready for play, i.e., to deceive opponents, or too many players on the field) – 5 yards.

- f. Disconcerting signals (signals to distract opponent or simulate offensive signals prior to snap) -10 yards.
- g. Pushing the ball carrier out of bounds - 10-yard
- h. Interference with opponent or ball at the snap – 5 yards

13. Offensive Penalties:

- a. 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.
- b. Illegal procedure (lining up offside). Often, warnings will be issued unless there are continual infractions by any particular player. - Five-yard penalty.
- c. Substitution fouls - Five-yard penalty
- d. False Start, before the referee is ready - Five-yard penalty.
- e. Illegal Snap - Five-yard penalty
- f. Offensive holding - Ten-yard penalty
- g. Illegal contact (holding, aggressive blocking by pushing players to the ground, rough play of any kind etc.) - Ten-yard penalty. Some examples are:
 - 1. blocking by thrusting hands towards the face of the opponent
 - 2. ball carrier charging opponents directly without any attempt to avoid collisions.
- h. Player out of bounds (if player goes out of bounds, player cannot return to the field and catch ball) - 10-yard penalty.
- i. Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) — 5 yards and loss of down.
- j. 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.
- k. Diving to gain additional yards at any time. 5-yard penalty
- l. Unintentional blocking the flag is dead ball at infraction.
- m. Intentional blocking the flag is loss of down and 10-yard penalty.
- n. 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
- o. 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.

14. Coaching Penalties:

- a. Coaching interference.
 - 1. Some examples are:
 - 1. 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.

- b. 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.
- c. 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.

15. Penalty Summary:

- a. Five Yard Penalties:
 - 1. Offside
 - 2. Illegal procedure
 - 3. Substitution fouls
 - 4. False Start
 - 5. Illegal Snap
 - 6. Delay of game
 - 7. Offensive pass interference (and loss of down)
- b. Ten Yard Penalties:
 - 1. Sportsmanship/Roughing:
 - 2. Trash talking:
 - 3. Pushing the ball carrier out of bounds
 - 4. Offensive holding
 - 5. Illegal contact
 - 6. Player returning from out of bounds
 - 7. Intentional Flag guarding (and loss of down)
 - 8. Downfield blocking, intentional contact, or picks.
- c. Fifteen Yard Penalties:
 - 1. Pass Interference — 15 yards and automatic first down
 - 2. Illegal contact (holding, aggressive blocking or tackling, rough play)
 - 3. Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)
 - 4. Substitution fouls or too many players on the field
 - 5. Disconcerting signals
 - 6. Interference with opponent or ball at the snap
 - 7. Illegal formation
 - 8. Coaching interference.
 - 9. Arguing with the Referee or the opposing coach
 - 10. Using inappropriate language, toward either a player, coach, official or parent
- d. No Yard Penalties:
 - 1. Jumping to avoid a flag is blown dead at the point of infraction.