



# Flag Football Rules All Ages 2026 Seasons

The mission of all our programs is to strengthen the individual, the family, and the community through participation in youth sports. Each program is centered around sportsmanship and emphasizes fun and the importance of fair play.

Our goal is to offer an amateur sports program, through a volunteer base, for all participants to grow in physical, mental, and moral development through recreational competition and to promote excellent citizenship, sportsmanship, and teamwork, exemplified by our coaches and parents.

## SECTION A: THE GAME

1. It is the object of the game for one team to carry or pass the ball across the opponent's goal line. The game is won by the team which accumulates the most points. NYS has adopted the NFL Flag Rulebook. Anything not outlined in this rulebook can be found [here](#).
2. The referee(s) has the authority to rule promptly and in the spirit of good sportsmanship in any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.
3. The NYS staff and officials shall assume authority for the contest, including penalizing unsportsmanlike acts while teams are present at the game site. This includes before/after the game and extends from the field to the parking lot.
4. **The referee's decision is final.**
5. **Protests of NYS flag rules are not recognized.**
6. Dogs are not allowed at NYS game sites.
7. NO TOBACCO, VAPE, ALCOHOL OR DRUGS ALLOWED AT ANY NYS EVENTS

## SECTION B: GAME LENGTH AND STOPPAGES

1. Each game will consist of two (2) 20-minute halves.
2. Halftime is 3-minute half time.
  - a. Referees and site staff reserve the right to modify intermissions to speed up the game.
3. Each team is allowed two 30-second timeouts per half.
4. The play clock is 30 seconds, and will begin when the ball is set, and referees are in correct position.
5. The clock will run continuously.
  - a. **The clock will only stop in the final two minutes of the game for the following:**
    - i. Incomplete pass (clock begins on the snap)
    - ii. First down (clock begins once the ball is spotted)
    - iii. Out of bounds (clock begins on the snap)
    - iv. Following a touchdown (PAT is untimed)
    - v. Change of possession
    - vi. Defensive Penalties
    - vii. Point after touchdown attempt
6. The clock will continue to run inside the last two minutes of the game if a team is ahead by 14 points or more unless a timeout is called.
7. The clock will not stop for any reason if a team is up by 21 or more points.
8. If a team is up by 21 points or more with 2 minutes left in the game, the game will end.
9. The 2-minute warning near the end of the second half is NOT a timeout. The referee should stop the clock and inform both teams of the playing time remaining in the half. The clock starts again on the next snap. If the current play runs past the 2-minute warning, the clock is stopped immediately after that play completes.
10. No overtime in the event of a tie.

**SECTION C: THE FIELD**

1. Length: Approximately 70 yards + two 10-yard endzones (90 yards, backline to backline)
2. Width: Approximately 30 yards
3. No run zones” precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards. located 5 yards from each end zone.
  - a. No run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays.
  - b. While in no run zones (5-yard zones before midfield and each end zone), teams cannot run the ball. Only pass plays are allowed, even with a handoff.
4. Team Area: Two yards from each sideline between each 15-yard line. All coaches and players who are not in the game must stay inside the team area.
  - a. 9U each team is allowed one coach on the field at all times
  - b. 12U all coaches must be on the sidelines.
5. Spectator Area: 5 yards away from each sideline and backline
  - a. The Home team (listed first on the schedule) will occupy the West or North Sidelines
  - b. The Away team (listed second on the schedule) will occupy the East or the South Sideline
    - i. If a team has a double header, they will keep the sideline they use in the first game.
6. Spectators must sit on the side they are associated with.
7. The head coach is responsible for his/her sideline. This includes the behavior of players, assistant coaches, parents, and other spectators. If a coach needs assistance with a parent or spectator, please alert onsite NYS staff immediately.

**SECTION D: PLAYERS & EQUIPMENT**

1. The sporting age of a player is their age ON August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.
2. The roster maximum is 10 players unless approved by the Head Coach and League Director or Coordinator.
3. The game is played 5 vs 5. All players are eligible receivers, including the center.
4. All players must be registered with NYS and listed on the roster to play. Playing with ineligible players will result in a forfeit of the game even after the fact.
5. Players must wear approved NYS uniforms. Custom Uniforms must be approved by the NYS office and have the NYS logo present.
  - a. Failure to obtain approval for custom uniforms may result in a team being forced to wear NYS issued uniforms if their customs conflict with an opponent’s uniform colors
6. Shorts MUST be free of pockets.
  - a. Shorts must contrast with the color of the flag belt (ie. No red shorts with red flags)
  - b. Shorts may not have stripes the color of their flag belt
7. Coaches or Organizations with teams in multiple age groups must have different colored uniforms for each team.
8. Each player must start each half of the game.
9. The Head Coach has the authority to limit game playing time of any player on their team who continually misses practice without a valid excuse, or if the player has caused disciplinary problems during a prior practice or game. Uniforms must be tucked in
10. No jewelry, hats, open toed shoes, or metal cleats allowed.
11. In age divisions where playoffs are present, teams with custom uniforms may be required to register through National Sports ID(NSID). This is in addition to any other league fees.
12. Players may play up one age division if they are within one year of the bottom of that age division.
13. The football size is as follows:
  - a. 9U Pee-Wee Football
  - b. 13U: Junior Football
  - c. Each Offenses may play with their own ball.



# Flag Football Rules All Ages 2026 Seasons

14. The football must be brown in color, leather, composite leather or rubber. Playground footballs are prohibited.
15. NYS will provide flags to teams. Flags will be one piece with three flags (triple threat) All other flags are prohibited.
16. All players must wear a mouthpiece.

## SECTION E: GAMEPLAY

1. For age divisions with playoffs incorporated, IF a team begins the match with less than 5 players, the score will be reported as a loss for the team with less players, but the match will be played as a scrimmage (with teams sharing players, if needed). Teams without playoffs incorporated will share players to complete the scheduled match.
2. Each game will begin with a coin toss.
  - a. The away team (listed FIRST on the schedule) will call heads or tails.
  - b. The winner of the toss will elect to choose offense or defense.
  - c. The team who begins the game on defense will start the second half on offense.
3. Possession of the ball at the beginning of the half or following a score will begin at the 5-yard line.
4. The offense has four downs to make it to midfield
  - a. On 4<sup>th</sup> down the offense has the choice to:
    - i. Declare a punt. Possession will be exchanged with the opposing team beginning on their 5-yard line.
    - ii. Go for it. If the play results in turnover on downs, the opposing team takes possession at the previous line of scrimmage
5. The offense then has 3 downs to score. Failure to score results in the opposing team taking possession on their 5-yard line.
6. The offense can run or pass at any time.
7. Scoring is as follows:
  - a. Touchdown – 6 points
  - b. PAT Conversion from 5-yard line -- 1 point (Must be a pass)
  - c. PAT Conversion from 10-yard line – 2 points (run or pass)
  - d. Safety – 2 points
8. Huddles are optional.
9. Center snaps may be traditional between the legs or from the side. The ball must be snapped from the ground to the QB in one fluid motion.
  - a. A fumbled or skipped snap in front of the quarterback will be allowed and not stopped for play. The defense may not cross the LOS on a fumble.
  - b. A fumbled snap that goes over the QB will be blown dead and spotted where it lands.
10. No wildcat formations (The player who receives the snap is considered the Quarterback.)
11. The QB can not directly run with the ball. Once he has given the ball away(run/pass) he is eligible to receive a pass or handoff.
12. The offense has 7 seconds from the snap of the ball to throw the forward pass or complete a hand-off / lateral.
  - a. If a pass / hand-off / lateral is not attempted before the 7 seconds allotted, the play is whistled dead, and the offense will start the next play from the original line of scrimmage.
  - b. The throw clock will stop if a defensive blitz(s) crosses the line of scrimmage.
13. The offense may not throw more than one forward pass per play.
  - a. A forward pass is a pass that is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, by an offensive player, in any forward motion including underhand, sideways or shuffle pass.
14. The offense may throw an unlimited number of backward passes, pitches, or handoffs during any play.
  - a. The offense is only allowed one forward pass per play.

15. Regular rules of shifting, motion, and procedure apply. Only one offensive player may be in motion at the snap, not moving toward the Line of Scrimmage. All other players must come to a full stop for at least one second before the snap.
16. Catches must be made with a minimum of one foot in-bounds.
17. The ball carrier must avoid contact with defenders.
18. Spearing: It is illegal to run with your head down.
19. It is illegal to block, swat, grab your flag, use the ball to block the flag, or lower your shoulder to place the arm over the flag to prevent its removal. This is referred to as flag guarding.
20. A ball carrier is down when the belt is unclipped, NOT when it falls off.
21. If a player's flag falls off, then the player is immediately down at that spot and the play is over.
22. A fumble behind the LOS or backward pass cannot be recovered and is marked down where the ball first hits the ground.
23. A fumble past the LOS will be blown dead where the ball carrier loses possession. The defense may not recover a fumble.
24. Offensive players may not block.
25. The defense may blitz an unlimited number of players, if they begin behind the 7-yard blitz line.
  - a. The 7-yard blitz line will be marked by the back judge
    - i. If a player crosses the blitz line before the snap, they can not blitz
  - b. Any defensive player not behind the blitz line can only cross the L.O.S. after the ball leaves the hand of the qb.
26. The defense can intercept and return passes.
  - a. Interceptions on PAT are blown dead.
27. Defensive players may not initiate any contact that alters an offensive player's route. (No bump and run)
28. Defenders are NOT allowed to play through the receiver to make a play on the ball.
29. Physical contact may not be used to stop the ball carrier or be used to remove their flag.
30. Direct handoffs to the Center are prohibited.
31. There are no kickoffs. New possessions begin on the 5-yard line.

#### Onside Kick/Keep the Ball

1. Keep the Ball refers to a decision by a scoring team to keep the ball rather than give back possession. This option only applies in the second half to a team losing after scoring.
  - i. The scoring team will retain possession of the ball at their own 5 yard line. The down will be 4<sup>th</sup> They have one play to gain a 1<sup>st</sup> down. If a first down is not accomplished, the defense will take over possession at the spot of the ball.

#### SECTION G: PENALTIES

- I. All penalties are spotted from the Line of Scrimmage except for excessive contact penalties.
- II. All offensive penalties are 5 yards, and a replay of down.
- III. All Defensive Penalties are 10 yards and an automatic first down.
  - a. Any Defensive Penalty inside the 15-yard line is half the distance to the goal line and an automatic first down.
- IV. Any unsportsmanlike conduct, by any player, coach, or spectator will result in immediate ejection, a 15-yard penalty, and loss of down. The game will resume once the violator has left the premises.
- V. If the player who receives the snap advances the ball past the line of scrimmage, without first handing off, or throwing the ball, an offensive penalty will be called
- VI. Last Man standing rule – When a ball carrier has broken away and a defender commits a penalty to prevent that player from scoring (tackle, tripping, illegal contact etc.) a touchdown will automatically be awarded.



# **Flag Football Rules All Ages 2026 Seasons**

Sideline infractions will be penalized as followed:

- a. First Offense: Warning
- b. Second Offense: 15-yard personal foul. If this occurs on a scoring play, it will cancel the score and the penalty will occur from the previous spot.
- c. Third Offense: Forfeiture of Game