



Play 4 Fun Sports NFL Youth Flag Football Program Rules

The Basics

- A coin toss determines first possession. The home team will call the coin flip. The winner of the coin toss can choose to play offense or defense first or defer to the second half. If they choose to defer to the second half, the loser of the coin toss then chooses whether to play offense or defense in the first half.
- There are no kickoffs or punts. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three plays to cross midfield. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield within three plays, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three 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.
- Teams change sides at halftime. Possession changes to loser of coin toss unless deferred.
- Arguing with referees sets a poor example for the players. Coaches and parents should set a positive example for the children! Coaches or parents may be dismissed for arguing with referees or other parents.
- In the event of an emergency and the referee does not show up, the home team will provide a reliable person to act as a referee. The visiting team will provide a person who will keep time and score.
- After your game, teams are expected to form a line at midfield and shake hands and congratulate the opposing team regardless of the outcome of the game.

Coaches Responsibilities

- Coaches are responsible for knowing and understanding the rules of the league. If there is a question regarding rule interpretation, it is expected a coach will calmly question the referee for clarification. Questions regarding rule interpretations should be infrequent during games.
- **Coaches are responsible for the conduct of themselves, their assistant coaches, and their players.**
- **It is also expected that coaches will help control their player's families and games may be stopped if sideline behavior is inappropriate. Please assist us in maintaining a very positive environment for the kids.**
- Teams must choose opposite sides of the field as their sidelines. Home teams will always be located on the West sideline.
- A 6 foot "Safety Zone" will be maintained surrounding the playing field, which will aid the league in maintaining the safety of our players and spectators during games. Coaches, players, and league personnel only are allowed within this zone while a game is in progress. Coaches will be asked to assist in insuring that this zone is maintained throughout the game.
- After each game, each team is responsible for cleaning up their sideline area.
- NO pets are allowed on Troy facilities – no exceptions

Coaching Presence on Field

- In any situations where coaches are allowed on the field, coaches MUST back out and stay out of the way of play. Offensive coaches must move back from play before ball is snapped. Defensive coaches must move out of the way when the offense breaks its huddle. On defense, all coaches, after setting their players, must back up and get out of the way.
- PreK4-JK & K/1 Grade: Two coaches per team will be allowed on the field for both offensive and defensive sides. Please be conscientious and help your kids without interfering in the play. In the PreK4-JK division, the coach is “all-time quarterback” for the team.
- 2/3 Grade: Only one coach per team will be allowed on the field for both offensive and defensive sides. Please be conscientious and help your kids without interfering in the play.
- 4/5 & 6/7 Grade: The offensive coach will be allowed on the field to call the play, and then the coach must move back from the play. The defensive coach will be allowed on field during the offensive huddle to set the defense. After the huddle breaks, the defensive coach must leave the field.

Players/Game Schedules

- Games are played in a 5-on-5 format. Teams are expected to play 5-on-5 unless injuries or attendance prohibits fielding a team of 5 players.
- Games will be forfeited if one team does not show within five minutes of their game time.
- ALL POSSIBLE EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO GIVE PLAYERS EQUAL PLAYING TIME.
- Players are only eligible to play on one Troy NFL Youth Flag Football team during the season – no exceptions. If a player does play on a team for which they are not on the roster, that team will forfeit their current game and be eliminated from playoff participation. Rosters will be checked before each game.

Timing/Overtime

- Games are divided into two 22 minute halves with a 3 minute halftime. Officials will notify coaches of the halfway mark of each half and inform coaches when 2 minutes remain in each half.
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, games will end in a tie during league play. In a playoff game, teams move directly into overtime. Possession will be determined by a coin toss. Possession will start at the offensive team’s twelve yard line. Both teams will be given a three down possession. In the first overtime series, the teams may opt for a one or two point conversion after scoring. If the score is still tied after each team has an offensive series, teams will continue until one team wins after each has equal possessions. For every series after the first overtime series, each team must opt for a two point conversion.
- If a team leads by 8 points or less in the last minute of the game, the clock will stop on incomplete passes, if the offense goes out of bounds, on a change of possession, a touchdown, safety or for an extra point. The clock does not run on extra points. If a team leads by 8 points or less in the last minute of the game and a first down is obtained, the clock will stop to set the line of scrimmage marker and will re-start once the line of scrimmage marker is set and referee indicates play is ready to begin. On a defensive penalty, the clock will re-start once the ball is set and referee indicates play is ready to begin.
- 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 one 60-second time-out per half. The first half timeout does not carry over to the second half if it is not used.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

Scoring

Touchdown = 6 points

Extra point options:

1 point (played from 5-yard line) – Must Pass to score

2 points (played from 12-yard line) – May Pass or Rush to score

Safety = 2 points

Running

- The quarterback cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage, unless the QB receives a direct handoff from another player. A direct handoff is defined by a physical **exchange** of the ball between two players.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a hand-off. Offense may use multiple handoffs. Clarification: The snap from center does not count as a handoff.
- Once the ball has been handed off, the seven-second pass rule is no longer in effect.
- Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage, as long as they do not cross the line of scrimmage prior to making the throw.
- “Pass Only Zones” (2nd-3rd, 4th-5th grade and 6th-7th grade divisions only) located five yards from each end zone and five yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. These “Pass Only Zones” come into effect only when offensive team is approaching a first down or the end zone. Exception: If the offensive team has already achieved a first down, but has been pushed back into a “Pass Only Zone”, then the “Pass Only Zone” is no longer in effect.
- Defensive players cannot pass the line of scrimmage, during a direct hand-off play, until the ball is handed off.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving or jumping). If a player is whistled for leaving the play will stop immediately, and the ball will be spotted where the player’s feet left the ground.
- ***New Rule*** Laterals or pitches are now allowed, if the quarterback is still behind center when pitch is made. There is no option game. Ball may never be pitched, except by the quarterback immediately after taking the snap. If the pitch goes backward and the receiving player drops the ball, the ball is dead where it hits the ground.
- The offensive team is responsible for collecting and setting both the line of scrimmage marker and the 7-yard marker based off of the referee’s positioning. Offensive teams are expected to move markers promptly, to maintain speed of play. The 30 second play clock starts when referee spots the ball.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- As in the NFL, only one player is allowed in motion at a time.
- Receivers may not be in motion toward the line of scrimmage, until after the ball has been snapped.
- The Receiver must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
- A player may tip the football to a teammate, as long as the initial receiver does not show possession of the ball.
- If a receiver’s flag belt falls or is pulled off or their flags fall out before a catch is made, the receiver must then be touched with two hands to be downed.
- Defenders may not bump or intentionally attempt to impede the progress of receivers.

Passing

- Only one forward pass per down. ***New Rule*** Passes may be caught behind or beyond the line of scrimmage, but all passes must go forward or laterally.
- Shovel passes are allowed
- The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.
- Interceptions cannot be returned. Ball is spotted at point of interception.
- The offensive team is responsible for collecting and setting the line of scrimmage marker and the referee is responsible for setting the 7-yard marker based off of the referee’s positioning of the ball. Offensive teams are expected to move markers promptly, to maintain speed of play. The 30 second play clock starts when referee spots the ball.

Dead Balls

- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - Ball carrier’s flag is pulled
 - Ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - Touchdown or safety is scored
 - Ball carrier’s knee hits the ground
 - The ball touches the ground.
 - Ball carrier’s flag falls out
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.
- Exception: In order to achieve a first down, or a touchdown, the ball carrier’s flag belt and ball, must cross the plane of the first down line and/or goal line.
- If the offensive team fumbles the ball, the play is dead. The offensive team retains possession of the ball and it is spotted where the player lost possession of the ball, determined by where the player’s feet are when the fumble occurs.
- If the defensive player takes the ball directly from the offensive player, the ball is ruled dead where the offensive player’s feet are and the offensive team retains possession of the ball
- PreK4 – 3rd grade divisions will be allowed to continue play through a dropped or dribbled snap that is in front of the QB, except in the shotgun formation.

Rushing the Quarterback

- PreK4 - 3rd grade divisions will not be allowed to rush the QB, unless there is a handoff.
- All players who rush the passer must start a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped, as marked by a “bean bag” placed by the referee. Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. A “bean bag” will designate seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- No blocking or tackling is allowed. At no time, can an offense player intentionally impede the path of the rusher to the quarterback. If rusher is interfered with a penalty will be assessed.
- The rusher may attempt to block the pass but it is a penalty to make contact with the quarterback’s body or arm.
- Rusher can not intentionally make contact with offensive players.

Sportsmanship/Roughing

- Trash talking is not allowed. Trash talking is offensive language used against opposing coaches, players, officials, league personnel or fans. Officials will give one and only one warning. If this trash talking continues, the player(s) may be ejected from the game.
- If any league personnel or official witnesses any acts of rough housing, including but limited to, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or any other unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and that player may be ejected. Further disciplinary action may follow including expulsion from this event.

Point Differentials

- 4th/5th and 6th/7th Grade Leagues: If there is a point differential of 18 points or more, the winning team may no longer rush the quarterback, when they are on defense. If the point differential is 24 points or more, the center on the winning team is no longer an eligible receiver.
- K/1st and 2nd/3rd Grade Leagues: If there is a point differential of 18 points or more, the winning team may only pass the ball on offense. If the point differential is 24 points or more, the center on the winning team no longer is an eligible receiver.

Penalties

- All penalties will be called by the referee and will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except for flag guarding, defensive pass interference, diving and jumping (penalties will not be called for diving or jumping unless it puts another player in danger or is a repeated problem) which will be marked off from the point of infraction.
- Any type of blocking or screening is illegal and will result in a penalty. This also means that an offensive player cannot intentionally impede the path of the defender to the ball carrier.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. Any offensive penalty in their end zone will result in a safety (2 points).
- A second penalty on an extra point, will equate to the amount of points the offensive team was going for and will be awarded.
- Only the Head Coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players, coaches and fans cannot question judgment calls.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- If the offensive team throws an interception and commits an infraction after the interception, the opposing team will get an additional 10 yards from the newly established line of scrimmage and takes offensive possession of the ball.
- If a flagrant foul or intentional foul occurs on an extra point attempt, the penalty will still be assessed from the line of scrimmage after change of possession.
- If a player intentionally tackles an offensive player who is clearly on his/her way to scoring a touchdown, the referee may award a touchdown, if he believes the player would have scored if it weren't for the tackle.
- Only the offensive coach(es) and 5 players are allowed in huddle.

Defensive Penalties: All defensive penalties, except pass interference, are 10 yards (or half the distance to goal line, when spot is within 10 yards of goal line) and an automatic first down for the offense.

- Offsides
- Interference
- Pass interference (penalty will be enforced at the spot of the interference)
- Illegal contact (holding, blocking, tackling, etc.)
- Illegal FLAG pull (before receiver has ball)
- Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)

Offensive Penalties: All offensive penalties are 10 yards and a loss of down (or half the distance to goal line, when spot is within 10 yards of goal line). All offensive penalties are 10 yards and loss of down from the line of scrimmage except for flag guarding, diving and jumping which will be marked off from the point of infraction.

- Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.)
- Illegal forward pass (pass thrown beyond line of scrimmage)
- Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)
- FLAG guarding
- Delay of game - Clock stops
- Too many players in huddle

Attire

- The determination of who wears dark and light jerseys will be made based on the game schedule. The team listed on the right on the schedule will be designated the home team and wear the dark jersey. The team listed on the left will be designated the visiting team and will wear the light jersey.
- All players must wear a protective mouthpiece; there are no exceptions.
- Cleats are allowed, except for metal spikes. Inspections will be made prior to each game.
- All players must start with their flag belts on. If a player starts without his flag belt properly secure with all flags attached, his team will be assessed a 10 yard and loss of down penalty.
- Official NFL FLAG jerseys must be worn during game play. Players will not be allowed to enter the game unless wearing the league-provided NFL jersey.
- Only Play 4 Fun Sports / NFL Flag issued flag belts and flags may be used during games.
- Jerseys must be the top layer of clothing and flag belts must be worn on top of jerseys. Flags may never be covered or obstructed by clothing. Flag guarding will be called if the jersey is hanging over the flag belt, as it will interfere with the defense's ability to access the flag. Flag belts must be cut to a proper length so as not to resemble a flag hanging from the belt. If the flag belt is not cut to a proper length, the referee will call flag guarding.
- Pants and shorts worn during game play must not have pockets.
- No jewelry of any kind is permitted to be worn on the field at any time.
- Players who have any kind of cast or metal/plastic brace will not be allowed to play, whether or not it is covered with padding, foam or any other protective material. An Ace, Adhesive or soft bandage without metal bracing or potentially injurious clips may be permitted at the discretion of the Referee.

Field Diagrams - All yardages are approximate and may change due to field constraints

