



NFL FLAG



REGULAR SEASON RULES 2023



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These rules have been simplified to and designed to assist the understanding of individuals new to American football.

1. ELIGIBILITY

- 1.1 Waivers may be required for any NFL Flag events and tournaments, should waivers be required this will be communicated in advance of tournament attendance.

2. EQUIPMENT

- 2.1 Players must use an official NFL flag belt and approved footballs.
- 2.2 Players must wear suitable shoes. Cleats/boots may not be allowed at certain locations. This will be specified in the tournament details you receive prior to the tournament. Metal studs are not permitted.
- 2.3 Players must wear a gumshield.
- 2.4 Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Sports braces or support with exposed metals are not allowed.
- 2.5 Players must remove all jewellery and peaked hats.
- 2.6 Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or bottoms.
- 2.7 We recommend players wear shorts or bottoms that do not have pockets. Shorts or bottoms with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.



3. GAME



- 3.1 At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
- 3.2 The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offence or defence. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defence.
- 3.3 The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
- 3.4 If the offence fails to score or fails to cross midfield with their first set of downs the ball changes possession, with play starting on the 5 yard line of the team obtaining that possession.
- 3.5 If the defending intercepts the ball the player in possession of the ball can advance the ball to score. if the player fails to score the ball is spotted where the flag pull is made, or the player runs out of bounds.
- 3.7 The tempo of the game is to be dictated by the referee and not the players or coaches involved. The ball can only be spotted by an official. This dictates the Line of scrimmage.



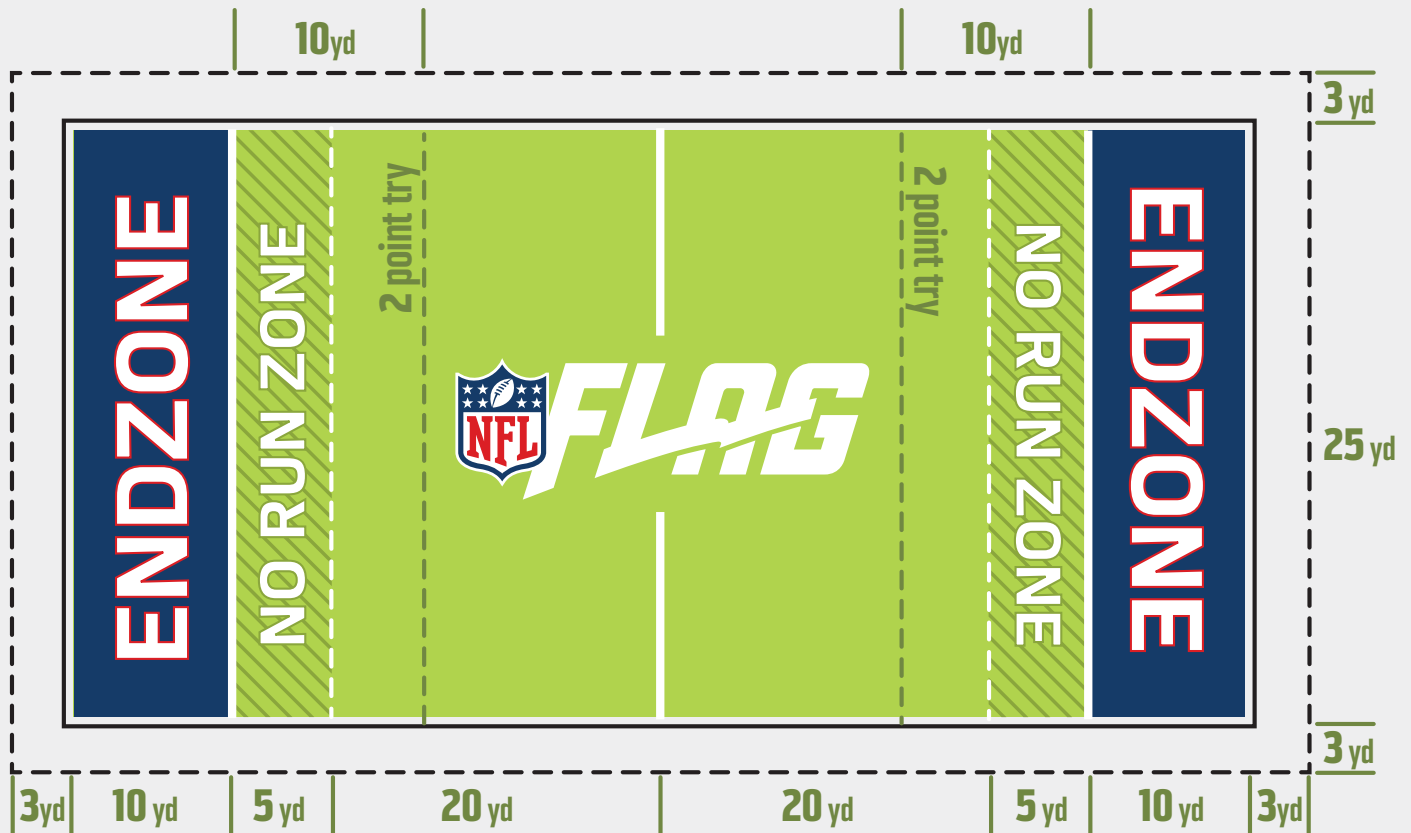
4. FIELD



4.1 The field of play should have the following dimensions:

Length 50 yd (45,75 m), additional end zones 10 yd (9,15 m), width 25 yd (22,90 m).

Total required space for one field including safety area is 76 yd (69,55 m) x 31 yd (28,40 m).



4.2 If the ball is spotted within the no run zone only passing plays are permitted.

4.3 Field equipment should consist of endzone pylons in the front and back corners of each endzone, cones to mark out the 5-yard line 10-yard spot and halfway line to create the sidelines.

- 5.1** A touchdown is scored when a player has possession of the ball in the endzone by crossing the line with the ball or catching the ball in the endzone. A touchdown awards 6 points.
- 5.2.1** Point After Touchdown (PAT): Following a touchdown, the scoring team can select either a one or a two-point PAT attempt. A one-point PAT is taken from the 5-yard line and must be a passing play. If the attempt is successful one point is awarded. A two-point PAT is taken from the 10-yard line and can be either a run or a pass play. If the attempt is successful two points are awarded.
- 5.2.2** During a PAT attempt, should the defending team intercept the ball they can progress it and attempt to score. Should the interception be returned to the endzone 2 points are awarded from a 1- or 2-point attempt.
- 5.2.3** A PAT is always a standalone play. Regardless of PAT outcome, play resumes from the 5-yard line.
- 5.3** Should the ball carrier have their flag pulled, fumble the football, or step out of bounds in their own endzone, a safety is awarded to the defending team. This also occurs if the snap goes out the back of the endzone. A safety is worth 2 points.
- 5.4** Once a team has a 28-point advantage the game is ruled complete and the game will continue as a scrimmage with no score being added.
- 5.5** Forfeits are recorded as a 28-0 win in the favour of the winning team.



6. TIMING AND TIE BREAKERS



- 6.1 Games are played on a 20-minute rolling clock with no halftimes. The clock only stops for injuries. Times are subject to change based on the specific tournament's details.
- 6.2 Each time the ball is spotted the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will be reminded of the play clock when only 10 seconds remain. Teams will also, receive one warning before delay of game is called.
- 6.3 In the event of an injury, the clock will stop until it is safe for play to resume.



- 6.4.1 In the event of a tie in the playoffs or final teams will compete in overtime.
- 6.4.2 Overtime will be played in a sudden death format which consists of:
 - i) A coin toss to decide who begins with the ball.
 - ii) Teams will take turns attempting a 1-point PAT in a sudden death format.
 - iii) Overtime will progress in rounds of each team attempting a PAT. Overtime ends following a round in which one team scores and the other team does not.
 - iv) The final point scored by the winning team will be added to the final score. For example, if the score is 14 - 14 at the end of regulation Team A wins in overtime the score will be recorded as 15 -14 (OT).

7. ROSTERS



- 7.1.1 All team can submit a roster of maximum 10 players.
- 7.1.2 A team cannot submit a roster of fewer than 7 players to enter a tournament. Teams attending National Championships should submit an initial roster of 10 players.
- 7.2 A team cannot have more than 5 players active on the field at one time. Substitutions are unlimited. Substitutions can only take place when the ball is dead (see section 9).
- 7.3 If a team of 5 sustains an injury, the team can continue with 4 players but no fewer.
- 7.4 Primary school tournaments must be made up of players from years 5 and 6.
- 7.5 Secondary school tournaments must be made up of players from years 7 and 8.
- 7.6 As a commitment to helping grow girl's participation in sports, a minimum of one out of 5 players on a team must be a girl.
- 7.7 Home teams must play in coloured jerseys with away teams playing in white.

8. COACHES



- 8.1 Coaches are expected to adhere to the NFL Flag philosophies and values.
- 8.2 Coaches may be allowed on the field to direct players and give instruction. This will be determined on a tournament-to-tournament basis and will be communicated during the pre-tournament briefing. Coaches must not be on the field of play when the ball is snapped.

9. LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL



9.1 The ball becomes live on the snap and remains live until the official whistles, declaring the ball dead.

9.2 It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player enters the neutral zone pre-snap. As a courtesy, an official is encouraged to give players a warning and an opportunity to reposition themselves into an onside position pre-snap.

9.3 Any official can whistle the ball dead.

9.4a The ball is ruled dead when:

- i) The ball hits the ground (if the ball hits the ground as the result of a bad snap the ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground as a loss of yardage).*
- ii) The ball-carriers flag is pulled or falls out.
- iii) The ball-carrier steps out of bounds, a touchdown, PAT, 2PAT or safety is scored.
- iv) The ball-carriers knee, elbow, back or torso hits the ground.
- v) The ball carrier receives possession with one or no flag (s).
- vi) The 7 second pass clock expires.
- vii) Following an incomplete pass.
- viii) The ball is deliberately kicked at any time.
- ix) Inadvertent whistle.
- x) Including for a flag or penalty.

* unless by penalty or flag pull for a loss, the ball cannot be spotted any further back than the offensive team's own 5-yard line

9.5.1 The act of fumbling (dropping a live ball on the floor and the ball remaining live) doesn't occur in NFL Flag football.

9.5.2 If a fumble occurs the offence retain the ball. The ball is spotted in line with the feet of the ball carrier at the point at which the ball was fumbled.



10. RUNNING



- 10.1.1** Offensive player may progress the ball by carrying in hands towards the opponents endzone.
- 10.1.2** A run will be deemed to be over, and the ball will be spotted, at the foremost position of the ball:
- i)** when a flag pull is made.
 - ii)** when the ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - iii)** when an offensive foul is committed.
 - iv)** the ball crosses the end zone line under possession of an offensive player.
- 10.2** The ball carrier is ruled out of bounds when any part of the ball carriers body touches the ground over the boundary line.
- 10.3** The quarterback is defined as the offensive player who receives the snap. The quarterback cannot run with the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 10.4** Only direct handoffs may take place behind the line of scrimmage. Handoffs may be forwards, laterally or backwards. An offence may use multiple handoffs per play. (A handoff is the complete transfer of possession from one offensive player to another, conducted behind the line of scrimmage, excluding transfer through the air.)
- 10.5** Lateral passes are not permitted beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 10.6** Running plays are not permitted on a down that is inside the no run zone.
- 10.7** Any player who receives a handoff or lateral pass behind the line of scrimmage is eligible to attempt a forward pass, providing that player has not yet crossed the line of scrimmage.
- 10.8** Ball-carriers must always remain under control. Deliberate jumping, diving and leaping is not permitted.
- 10.9** Spinning is permitted but ball carriers cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. If a player spins out of control, they will be ruled as flag guarding.
- 10.10** Ball-carriers may leave their feet if there is clear indication that the ball-carrier is doing so to avoid a collision.
- 10.11** Offensive players cannot impede defenders at any point. Once the ball-carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage offensive players without possession of the ball must remain still. No running with the ball carrier.
- 10.12** Clothing cannot obstruct a player's flag belt.

11. PASSING



- 11.1 Each team is only allowed one forward pass per play. Forward passes don't have to travel beyond the line of scrimmage.
- 11.2 All passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. A passer is ruled behind the line of scrimmage if they have any part of the body on or behind the line of scrimmage.
- 11.3 The quarterback is allowed to throw the ball away to avoid a sack.
- 11.4.1 The quarterback has a 7 second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within those 7 seconds the play is ruled dead. The down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the most recent line of scrimmage.
- 11.4.2 Once the ball is handed off the 7 second rule is no longer in effect.
- 11.4.3 If the quarterback is standing in their own endzone when the pass clock expires the ball is returned to the previous line of scrimmage and is not ruled a safety.

12. RECEIVING

- 12.1 All players are eligible to receive a pass. Including the quarterback should the ball have been handed off behind the line of scrimmage.
- 12.2 A player who receives possession of the ball in the air is ruled inbounds if the player has placed at least one foot inbounds before stepping out of bounds.
- 12.3 In the case of simultaneous possession of the ball by both an offensive and defensive player the ball is awarded to the offence.



13. DEFENDING



- 13.1 A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- 13.2 Defenders can leave the floor and dive to pull the ball carriers flag but cannot impede, hold or hit the ball carrier.
- 13.3 It is illegal to attempt to strip or hit the ball out of the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- 13.4 Interceptions gain the defensive team possession of the ball. Interceptions are the only change in possession that don't begin at the 5 yards line.
- 13.5 Interceptions are returnable for touchdowns and for 2 points on both PAT and 2PAT attempts.
- 13.6 Once the quarterback has lowered their hands (simulating a handoff) the defence are able to cross the line of scrimmage and flag pull offensive players. This is the only time a quarterback can be sacked.

14. FORMATIONS

- 14.1 Offences must have a centre on the line of scrimmage before the ball can be snapped. The quarterback must always be off the line of scrimmage.
- 14.2.1 Only one player can motion at a time.
- 14.2.2 If a player motions forwards the player must be set still for 1 second before the ball is snapped.
- 14.2.3 The ball can be snapped while a player is in motion if the player is motioning laterally.
- 14.3 Forward motions by any player that is set and not signalled by the quarterback will be ruled a false start.
- 14.4 The centre must snap the ball with a single continuous backwards motion towards the quarterback.

15. PENALTIES



15.1 The referee will call all penalties.

15.1.1 Games will be refereed by between one and four on field referees. The NFL may add an off field and/or video referee at Championship events.

15.2 All fouls and penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage apart from otherwise mentioned “spot fouls.”

15.3 The game may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offence declines it.

15.4 Penalties within 5-yards from the goal line will be made half the distance to the goal.

15.5 Flag guarding is a ball-carriers attempt to physically prevent a defender from pulling their flag by: intentionally covering their flags, dropping the head / shoulder or extending the arm towards a defender.

15.6 Ball carriers must try to avoid colliding with defenders exercising their right of place.

15.7 Defenders must try to avoid colliding with ball carriers exercising their right of way.



15. PENALTIES (cont.)



15.8 Spot fouls against the defense:

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down at the spot of the foul
Holding	-10 yards automatic first down
Stripping the ball	-10 yards automatic first down
Obstructing (the ball carriers right of way)	Automatic first down

15.9 Penalties against the defense:

Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	-10 yards and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull	-5 yards
Offside	-5 yards
Illegal blitz/rush	-5 yards
Taunting	-10 yards and automatic first down

15.10 Spot fouls against the offence:

Charging (unnecessary roughness)	-10 yards, loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards
Screening or running downfield with ball carrier	-10 yards, loss of down
Blocking downfield	-10 yards

15.11 Offensive penalties:

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and a loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and a loss of down
Offside/False start	-5 yards
Illegal forward pass	-5 yards
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards and loss of down
Illegal motion	-5 yards
Delay of game	-5 yards and loss of down
Taunting	-10 yards and loss of down

16. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT



- 16.1** Unsportsmanlike conduct is a foul awarded to a player, coach or fan who uses violent or abusive language and actions towards another participating member of the fixture.
- 16.2** All unsportsmanlike conduct penalties will result in at least an immediate 10-yard penalty and possibly a player ejection. (Player ejections will be at the discretion of the referee.)
- 16.3** The defence must not make sounds that mimic offensive signals.
- 16.4** Players must always avoid contact where possible.
- 16.5** At the official's discretion a player may be ejected from participation if found to be playing dangerously. Appeals will not be considered.
- 16.6** Fans, coaches and player must always adhere to good sportsmanship. Offensive or confrontational language will not be tolerated at any time. Offenders may be asked to leave the facility.



Belt line	The line in which the NFL flag belt wraps around the waist.
Cleats	American football boots.
Downs	A unit of the game that starts with a legal snap after the ball is ready for play and ends when the ball next becomes dead. First down is the first of the plays; fourth is the last down before the ball is turned over to the other team. A first down occurs after a change of possession of the ball, after advancing the ball past the midfield line, following a previous first down and after certain penalties.
Formation	An arrangement of the offensive skill players.
Handoff	A move in which the Quarterback transfers the ball to another player. The receiving player takes possession of the ball before it leaves the hands of the Quarterback.
Huddle	An on-field meeting of team members to communicate instructions for the upcoming play.
Interception	The legal catching of the ball by a player on the defence.
Jersey	American football playing shirt.
Line of Scrimmage	The imaginary line through the ball that the defence cannot cross until a handoff or play action handoff has been executed by the quarterback.
Midfield (Line to gain)	The line that represents the midway point of the field. The offence is granted a first down once the ball carrier crosses the line with possession of the ball.
Neutral Zone	When the ball is dead, the area between the offensive and defensive lines of scrimmage (i.e. the width of the ball) is referred to as the neutral zone. No player other than the centre can enter this area until the ball is live.
No Run Zone	The 5-yard zone before the goal line that indicates the quarterback must pass the ball. The ball can be handed off if the ball doesn't cross the line of scrimmage.
Offside	An infraction of the rule that requires both teams to be on their own side of the line of scrimmage as or before the ball becomes live.

17. GLOSSARY (cont.)



Pass Clock	The seven (7) seconds is the time period that the Quarterback must pass the ball within once receiving the snap. Once this has expired the ball is ruled dead.
Pass Play	A play in which the ball is passed forwards.
Plays	1) See “Down” 2) The plan of action for either team on that specific down.
Run Play	A play in which the ball is handed off and then carried across the line of scrimmage.
Sideline (out of bounds)	The boundaries of the field. Once the ball carrier has and part of their body land out of bounds the play is ruled dead.
Spot Foul	A penalty committed by either team that are assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred.
Spotting the Ball	The act of setting the ball in the centre of the field on the line of scrimmage in-between plays. (Done by the referee)
Touchdown	The scoring of six (6) points occurs when the ball carrier is stood in the opponents endzone.

