



NFL FLAG FOOTHILLS

RULE BOOK

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GAME PLAY

- At the start of each game, team captains shall meet at midfield for the official coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the coin toss.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of field direction.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield (25 yard line). Once a team crosses midfield, they have four plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.



TERMINOLOGY

- **Boundary Lines:** the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
- **Line of Scrimmage:** (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
- **Line to Gain:** the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- **Rush Line:** an imaginary line running across the width of the field 8 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage. All rushers must start their rush / blitz from behind the 8 yard marker. Referees will designate the 8 yard rush line.
- **Offense:** the squad with possession of the ball.
- **Defense:** the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Passer:** the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the team's quarterback
- **Rusher:** the defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass.
- **Downs (1-2-3-4):** the offensive squad has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Live Ball:** refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- **Whistle:** sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, half-time, or the end of the game.
- **Inadvertent Whistle:** official's whistle that is performed in error.

TERMINOLOGY (CONT.)

- **Charging:** the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender using a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.
- **Flag Guarding:** an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering the arm, elbow, or head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.
- **Shovel Pass:** a legal pass attempted before the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner.
- **Lateral:** a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.



ELIGIBILITY

- Players are only eligible to play if they have registered and paid to play, or received a scholarship to participate in the current season.
- No player will be allowed to play if they are not on a team roster from the current season.
- No participation of a player that is considered ineligible to play will be allowed.
- All player accounts must be considered in good standing.
- Any player that is deemed ineligible to play will be removed from the field of play until they register in full and their account is in good standing.

EQUIPMENT

- NFL Flag Foothills provides each registered player with a flag belt, a reversible team jersey, and reversible team shorts. Teams will also use the age appropriate football provided by their league.
- Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however, cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals or hard casts are not allowed.
- Official NFL Flag jerseys must be worn during game play.
- Player's jerseys must be tucked into their shorts if they hang below the belt line.
- Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
- Soft-shell helmets are OPTIONAL, not mandatory.



FIELD

- All NFL Flag Foothills divisions are played 5 vs 5 on a field 25 yards wide by 50 yards long, with two 10 yard end zones, and a mid-field line-to-gain.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- NO - RUN ZONES are in effect 5 yards before gaining a first down, and 5 yards before entering the end zone. No runs are allowed within the restricted area. ONLY forward passes PAST THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE ALLOWED. NO backwards passes or handoffs prior to the forward pass.
- Mid-field or the line-to-gain will be designated by a green cone directly half-way down the sideline.
- Referees will place a rush marker 8 yards from the line of scrimmage before each play (Major, All Girls, Pro, and Legend Division ONLY).
- Down indicators will be placed on the home team's sideline.



ROSTERS

- All teams must wear the color of jersey designated by the league each week. The home teams wear dark colored uniforms while visiting teams wear light colored uniforms.
- It is best practice to look at the game field schedule under the league canopy each week to ensure you are wearing the correct uniform color.
- Teams must consist of at least 7 players.
- Teams are capped at 11 roster players. 12 team rosters will only be accepted under special circumstances.
- Teams must start a game with a minimum of four players.
- If one team only has four players, then the other team must play with only four players on the field as well.
- Any team that does not have the required four players to start a game will forfeit their game with a final score of 7-0 for the other team.
- In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.
- If a team ends up with less than four players on the field due to injury, the game will be considered a forfeit with a final score of 7-0 for the other team.
- Teams change directions after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

GAME CLOCK

- Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock divided up by two 20-minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts (at any point), incomplete passes (only last 2 minutes of 2nd half), when player goes out of bounds (only last 2 minutes of 2nd half), and change of possession (only last 2 minutes of 2nd half).
- Halftime is 2 minutes long.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Referees will be counting down the play clock before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured players is removed from the field of play.



OVERTIME

- If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will move into overtime (OT). For Regular Season OT games, OT rules will be in effect and if there is no winning team at the end of the third (3rd) OT period, the regular season game will end in a tie.
- In playoff situations, an overtime (OT) period will be used to determine a winner if the game is tied after 40 minutes. OT format is as follows:
 - Each team is allowed a minimum of one possession.
 - First possession choice goes to the winner of regulation coin toss.
 - Each team gets a minimum of one possession.
 - All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - There are no time-outs.
 - Change of Possession:
 - Each team will receive one play from the 10 yard line per OT period.
 - Interceptions are not returnable in OT play.
 - Multiple OT Periods
 - Second OT Period and Beyond
 - Teams will switch who starts the OT Period on offense. The team that started the first OT period on defense will start the second OT Period on offense.
 - The team that started the second OT period on defense will start the third OT Period on offense.
 - Scoring
 - All OT scores are worth two (2) points.

SCORING

- Touchdowns: 6 points
- PAT (Point After Touchdown)
 - 1 point (5-yard line)
 - Pass Only
 - 2 point (10-yard line)
 - Run or Pass
 - A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1 point or 2 point conversion.
 - Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
 - Interceptions on conversions CAN be returned for 2 points.
- Safety: 2 points
 - A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds, or they hit the ground with their knee or arm.
 - Offensive penalty in the end zone will result in a safety.
 - Any bad snap or hike that lands on the ground in the end zone will be considered a safety.

COACHES

- Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all times.
- Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. The only divisions that allow a coach on the field are the PeeWee, Junior, Major, and All Girls Division.
- All coaches are required to move at least 5 yards behind the deepest offensive player on offense and at least 10 yards behind the deepest defensive player while on defense. Coaches must move to the designated areas before the ball is snapped or a delay of game penalty will be enforced.
- Coaches CAN be on the field for PeeWee, Junior, Major, and All Girls Division. Coaches must be on the SIDELINES for the Pro and Legend Division.



LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the QB is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - The ball hits the ground
 - The ball carrier’s flag is pulled
 - The ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored
 - The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground
 - The ball carrier’s flag falls out
 - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s)
 - Inadvertent whistle
- Note: there are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were

LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL CONT.

- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed
 - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage
- A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.



RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
- **The QB cannot directly run for yardage with the ball, UNLESS the QB is blitzed / rushed (Major, Pro, and Legend Divisions ONLY).**
- **The QB can run ONLY after the rusher gets PAST THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE.**
- **The QB CANNOT run in a NO RUN zone EVEN if they are blitzed / rushed.**
- **If the QB passes the LOS, they cannot go back and throw the ball.**
- Direct handoffs and pitches are permitted behind the line of scrimmage. Handoffs may be in the front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - “Center Sneak” play- the ball must completely leave the center’s hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
- Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind past the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off or pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. Jump cuts (jumping / hopping to the side) is allowed.

RUNNING CONT.

- Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet going forward to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
- Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
- Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
- Flag Obstruction: All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
- There will be no running plays in the No Run Zones. Only passes past the line of scrimmage are allowed.



PASSING

- Passes can be thrown forward or backward. Any pass with a forward trajectory cannot be thrown forward a second time. Passes with a backwards trajectory can be thrown again by the receiving player (double pass, trick play) as long as the initial throw is behind the line of scrimmage. Only one backwards pass per play is allowed.
- Shovel passes are allowed.
- All passes within the “No-Run” zone MUST BE COMPLETED PAST THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE.
- A 7-second pass clock will be in effect from the moment the quarterback receives the snap and until he/she either passes the ball or hands the ball off to another player. The referee will call out the seconds on the pass clock. In the event that the pass clock runs out before the quarterback passes the ball, it will be considered an incomplete pass and the ball will be placed back at the previous play’s line of scrimmage and the down will be consumed. The pass clock is in effect for all divisions.
- There is no “intentional grounding”.



RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
- Offensive Shifts are allowed as long as every player comes to a complete stop for 1 second before the ball is snapped.
- A player must have at least ONE FOOT inbounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both the offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of the end of the interception. Interceptions are the only change of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
- Interceptions are returnable for a TD or positive yardage
- **Interceptions during 1 or 2 point conversions are returnable. 2 points will be awarded if INT is returned to opposite end zone.**



RUSHING THE PASSER

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 8 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Up to (2) players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage. Rusher MUST WAIT for the ball to be snapped before rushing in.
- **The Quarterback can scramble / run ONLY if they are rushed. They cannot run if the defense doesn't rush. QB MUST WAIT for rusher to get past the line of scrimmage before taking off.**
- Once the ball is handed off, the 8-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- The referee will designate a “Rush Line” 8 yards from the line of scrimmage with a special marker.
 - A legal rush is:
 - Any rush from a point 8 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - A penalty may be called if:
 - The rusher leaves the rush line before the ball is snapped and he or she crosses the line of scrimmage.
 - Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped (Offsides, 5 yard penalty)
 - Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off (Illegal Rush, 5 yard penalty).

RUSHING THE PASSER CONT.

- Special Circumstances
 - Teams are not required to rush the quarterback
 - Rusher is NOT required to identify themselves prior to rushing.
 - **There is NO rushing the passer in the PeeWee OR Junior Division.**
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block a pass and then making contact with any part of the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s straight line path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact. Once the quarterback scrambles, the straight line path is no longer in effect.
- A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when the flag is pulled.
 - A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally cover the flags with the football or jersey.



FORMATIONS

- Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - One player at a time may go in motion parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
- Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs towards the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.



UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

- If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
- Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the players will be ejected from the game.
- Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official.
- Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - Any coach or fan that uses verbally abusive or confrontational behavior will be given one warning. If it happens again, it will be an automatic ejection from the venue and a 15-yard penalty will be enforced against their team.
 - If any coach or fan physically abuses any one, at any time, they will automatically be ejected from the venue and banned from the league. A 15-yard penalty will be enforced against their team.
 - All fans are to sit in the designated area set aside by the league to watch the game.

PENALTIES

➤ General

- The referee will call all penalties.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot Fouls).
- Only the head coach may ask the referee for a rule clarification. Players may not question judgement calls.
- Head coaches, parents, and players CANNOT excessively question calls or be hostile towards referees, coaches, parents, players, or anyone on site. This will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty. If on offense -10 yards and loss of down. If on defense +10 yards and automatic first down.
- Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- If a penalty backs up the team out of no run zone, the team can throw or pass.

➤ Spot Fouls

- Defensive Pass Interference
 - Automatic First Down
- Holding
 - +10 yards & Automatic First Down
- Stripping
 - +10 yards & Automatic First Down
- Defensive Unnecessary Roughness
 - +10 yards & Automatic First Down
- Screening, blocking, running with ball carrier
 - - 5 yards from spot & loss of down
- Charging
 - -10 yards and loss of down
- Flag Guarding
 - -10 yards from spot and loss of down
- Offensive Unnecessary Roughness
 - -10 yards & Loss of Down

PENALTIES CONT.

➤ Defensive Penalties

- Offside
 - +5 yards from LOS
- Illegal Rush
 - +5 yards from LOS
- Illegal Flag Pull
 - +5 yards from LOS
- Roughing the Passer
 - +10 yards from LOS & 1st down
- Taunting
 - +10 yards from LOS & 1st down
- Pass Interference
 - Spot Foul & 1st down
- Holding
 - Spot Foul, +10 yards, & 1st down
- Stripping
 - Spot Foul, +10 yards, & 1st down
- Unnecessary Roughness
 - Spot Foul, +10 yards, & 1st down

➤ Offensive Penalties

- False Start
 - -5 yards from LOS, & loss of down
- Illegal Forward Pass
 - -5 yards from LOS, & loss of down
- Offensive Pass Interference
 - -10 yards from LOS, & loss of down
- Illegal Motion
 - -5 yards from LOS, & loss of down
- Delay of Game
 - -5 yards from LOS, & loss of down
- Impeding the Rusher
 - -5 yards from LOS, & loss of down
- Screening, Blocking, Running
 - Spot Foul, -5 yards & loss of down
- Charging
 - Spot Foul, -10 yards, & loss of down
- Flag Guarding
 - Spot Foul, -10 yards & loss of down
- Offensive Unnecessary Roughness
 - Spot Foul, -10 yards, & loss of down



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