



FIYA FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Effective as of September 1, 2022

Rules in **black** apply to both Boys 7 v 7 and Girls 5 v 5

Rules in **red** apply only to Girls 5 v 5

Rules in **blue** apply only to Boys 7 v 7

Overview.....	Page 2
Field.....	Page 2
Ball.....	Page 2
Referees, Scorekeepers, Down Marker...	Page 3
Equipment.....	Page 3
Game Procedures.....	Page 3
Time.....	Page 4
Scoring.....	Page 4
Overtime.....	Page 5
Timeouts.....	Page 5
Mercy Rule.....	Page 5
Kicks.....	Page 6
Blocking.....	Page 6-7
Snapping the Ball.....	Page 7
The Ball Carrier.....	Page 8
Running Up the Middle.....	Page 8-9
Passing & Receiving.....	Page 9-10
Defense.....	Page 10-11
Assessment of Penalties.....	Page 11-12
Conclusion & How to Stay Connected.....	Page 13

OVERVIEW

- The boys' game is played between two teams of seven players. A boys' team may begin a game with six players but cannot play with less than six at any time.
- The girls' game is played between two teams of five players. A girls' team may begin a game with four players but cannot play with less than four at any time.
- All players are eligible pass receivers.
- Field goals, kickoffs, & punts are not permitted.
- Prior to game, both teams meet at midfield to recite FIYA Sportsmanship Pledge. The home team takes the sideline with the score table and is responsible for assisting with the scorekeeping. The away team takes the opposite sideline with the down marker and is responsible for assisting with the down marker.

FIELD

- The field shall be 80 yards by 40 yards, with two end zones of 10 yards each.
- The field shall be divided into four 20 yard zones.
- Players and coaches must remain in between the twenty-yard lines at all times.
- No unauthorized personnel may be on the sidelines without direct permission from the game officials.
- Note - Field sizes may need to be adjusted based on facility being used.

BALL

- Division 1 Boys games shall use a youth size 7 football (one size below official high school ball).
- Division 2 Boys shall use a junior size 6 football (two sizes below official high school ball).
- Girls shall use a junior size 6 football (two sizes below official high school ball).
- FIYA reserves the right to provide a game ball.

REFEREES, SCOREKEEPER, DOWN MARKER

- FIYA will provide at least two (2) referees per game.
- At playoffs and as much as possible during the regular season, FIYA will endeavor to supply a site supervisor to assist with scorekeeping and down marker duties.
- However, the designated HOME team on the schedule is responsible for assisting with the scorekeeping (a flip chart portable scoreboard on top of a score table) and the designated AWAY team on the schedule is responsible for assisting with the down marker.

EQUIPMENT

- No pads, gloves, casts, jewelry, or any hard surface material, with the exception of athletic supporter and cup, are permitted.
- Grip enhancing substances are prohibited.
- Metal and/or screw on cleats are prohibited.
- Uniform shorts or pants MAY NOT contain pockets, belt loops or rivets.
- FIYA will provide all flags. Flags not issued by FIYA cannot be used in FIYA games. Flag belts are attached by Velcro and there are 3 flags that should be oriented on the sides and in the back.
- Shirts must be tucked in so that flag belt is visible.
- A mouthpiece is highly recommended but not mandatory.
- Permission to wear any equipment not specifically mentioned above will be allowed at the discretion of the game officials and/or FIYA officials on a case by case basis.

GAME PROCEDURES

- The ball shall be placed at the middle of the field for all downs.
- The offensive team has four downs to advance the ball to the next zone.
- Any ball that hits the ground is dead.

TIME

- The game shall be two 22 minute halves with running time.
- Except as noted below, the clock stops ONLY for timeouts.
 - **Exception: If the score margin is 16 points or less AND there is 2 minutes or less remaining in the 2nd half only, the clock stops for the following:**
 - incomplete passes;
 - running out of bounds;
 - penalties;
 - change of possession; and
 - scores (touchdowns and PATs)
 - The clocks resumes following a timeout or for the above listed exceptions when the center snaps the ball.
- Except as noted above, the game clock runs after a touchdown. There is a normal 30 second play clock to snap the ball for the PAT.
- Except as noted above, the game clock runs after the point after touchdown play and there is a normal 30 second play clock once the referee places the ball on a 20 yard line for the offense.
- There shall be a 3 minute halftime intermission.

SCORING

- A touchdown is worth six points
- **Point(s) after touchdown may be attempted as follows:**
 - One point from the two yard line.
 - Two points from the five yard line.
- Safeties are worth two points plus the ball on own 20 yard line.
- The Defense CANNOT score on PATs.
- Ball carrier must have his/her foot ON OR PAST THE LINE for a score. It is irrelevant WHERE the ball carrier has the ball during the play.

OVERTIME

- A coin flip shall be held and the coin flip winner has the choice to play offense or defense first.
- The offense shall choose to either attempt a one or two point conversion.
- The defense will then go on offense and have the same choice on whether to attempt a one or two point conversion.
- The game continues until the tie is broken after each team has had an equal number of offensive downs.
- Teams will alternate who begins on offense for each overtime period. There will be a MAXIMUM OF THREE (3) OVERTIME PERIODS DURING THE REGULAR SEASON.

TIMEOUTS

- Each team gets three (3) thirty second time outs per half which may not be carried over to the second half.
- No additional timeouts will be granted for overtime but any timeouts remaining from the second half may be used.

MERCY RULE

- If a team leads by 25 points at the ten minute mark of the second half or any point thereafter the game shall be ended with the leading team declared the winner.
- **The game may continue at the mutual agreement of the coaches providing:**
 - Substitutes must be used.
 - Score may not be kept.
- Officials and/or site supervisors may shorten or end a game in which the mercy rule had been invoked at their discretion if:
 - Games are behind schedule.
 - Poor sportsmanship is being displayed by players, coaches, or spectators.
- Playoff games will end immediately when the mercy rule is invoked. That is, there is no opportunity to continue 'friendly' play.

KICKS

- **Kickoffs**
 - o For safety concerns and for game efficiency, there will be NO KICKOFFS.
 - o The offense will start with the ball on its own 20 yard line.
- **Punts**
 - o For safety concerns and for game efficiency, there will be NO PUNTS.
 - o On 4th down, if the ball is at midfield or past midfield closer to the defensive team's end zone, then the offense MUST go for it on 4th down.
 - o On 4th down, if the ball is before midfield or closer to the offensive team's end zone, then the team may either (A) go for it or (B) elect to forfeit the ball. If the team elects to forfeit the ball, the referee will move the ball forward ten yards from the spot and the defensive team will take over on offense.

BLOCKING

- **Girls:**
 - o NO Blocking is allowed. OFFENSIVE BLOCKING is a 10 YARD penalty from the spot and loss of down. Offensive players purposefully screening or impeding a defender's path is considered BLOCKING and shall be penalized in accordance with the rule. "Purposefully" is a judgment call by the officials.
- **Boys:**
 - o Blocking is allowed.
 - o A teammate of a runner may block with any part of the hands, shoulder, or outer part of the arm provided the blocker's hands are:
 - in advance of the elbow.
 - inside the frame of the opponent's body.
 - between his shoulders.
 - apart and never in a locked position.

- open with the palms facing the frame of the opponent.
 - never used in a striking motion.
 - above the waist and below the neck of the opponent.
 - not in the back of the opponent.
- o Arms may not be bent at the point of contact and then extended.
 - o A blocker must have one foot on the ground.
 - o Downfield blocking on a passing play is not permitted until the ball is caught or is thrown behind the line of scrimmage.

SNAPPING THE BALL

- **A legal snap occurs when the:**
 - o snapper has his/her shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - o ball travels between the snappers legs.
 - o ball is released by the snapper in a continuous backward motion.
 - o ball is not lifted for adjustment.
- One player may be in motion during the snap provided he is moving parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- QB cannot give immediate handoff to the center after the snap.
- No minimum number of players need to be on the line of scrimmage besides the center.
- **Girls:** No defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage until 3 seconds after a snap. The referee will hold arm up and count to 3. Once 3 seconds is called, defense may cross the line of scrimmage. Exception to the 3 second rule: If QB makes a direct handoff to another player, then defensive players may cross the line of scrimmage.

THE BALL CARRIER

- **Girls:** QB cannot run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. Only exception: QB receives a direct handoff from another offensive player behind the line of scrimmage.
- The ball carrier must attempt to avoid the defense using his/her agility.
- **Boys:** The ball carrier may not steer his blockers using physical contact
- **Boys:** The ball carrier may not run up the middle. See Running Up the Middle below.
- The ball carrier may not guard his/her flag. Ball carriers running with arms below the waist can be deemed as illegal flag guarding.
- The ball carrier may spin, jump, or hurdle to avoid a flag pull but in doing so may not charge into a defensive player.
- The ball carrier may not dive to advance the ball.
- If the flag falls off the ball carrier the play will be dead where the flag fell off.
- If the flag falls off a player and the player subsequently receives the ball (with no flags), the reception of the ball is valid but the play is dead at the spot of reception.
- If a ball carrier loses possession of the ball unintentionally and it is caught before it hits the ground by either team the ball is live.
- In order for a ball carrier to enter a zone he/she must have his/her foot and/or flag and ball on or over the line he/she is attempting to cross. It does not matter where the ball carrier has the ball during the play.

RUNNING UP THE MIDDLE

Boys:

- For purposes of this rule, the “Middle” is a rectangular area as follows: The width of the rectangle is 1 yard on either side of the football as it lays on the line of scrimmage. The length of the rectangle is 8 yards from the line of scrimmage to the offensive backfield.
- In general, running up the middle is NOT ALLOWED. The main purpose of the rule is to protect the center from immediate contact on the snap exchange.

Similarly, defensive players may rush up the middle so long as they do not make immediate contact with the center.

- An offensive player may run up the middle under a delayed action. For purposes of this rule, what constitutes a ‘delayed action’ is ultimately at the sole discretion of the referee. For guidance purposes only, a delayed action means approximately two to three seconds after the snap. In other words, an offensive player may run up the middle if the player’s initial and immediate movement is not toward the middle. For example, a quarterback drops back to pass and then decides to run up the middle. This delayed action is acceptable and not considered Running Up the Middle.
- In addition, it is not considered “Running Up the Middle” when the football leaves the Middle as defined after the center snap. That is, the quarterback receives the ball from the center and gives the ball to another offensive player outside of the Middle or the quarterback receives the ball from the center and moves laterally outside of the Middle. Once the ball goes outside the Middle, the Running Up the Middle is no longer in effect. Moving the ball outside the Middle as defined in this rule is equivalent to a delayed action.

PASSING & RECEIVING

- A complete pass occurs when a player has possession of the ball and one foot in bounds.
- If both feet are off the ground and a defender causes the receiver to go out of bounds the pass is considered complete
- A receiver who goes out of bounds on his/her own accord is ineligible.
- An offensive player may not intentionally ground the ball.
 - Exception: In the last two minutes of the game an offensive player who receives a direct snap from the center may ground the ball to stop the clock.
- A defensive player may not make unnecessary contact with the passer or ball while the ball is in possession of the passer.
- If the contact is caused by the passer’s forward motion there is no infraction.

Boys:

- A receiver may be bumped at the line of scrimmage until he makes a move in either direction.

- A team may make multiple forward passes provided they are all from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball passes the line of scrimmage no further forward passes are permitted.

Girls:

- Only one forward pass per play.
- All passes must be forward and must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Absolutely NO laterals, pitches or screen passes of any kind are allowed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Only direct handoffs (unlimited as long as behind the line of scrimmage) allowed.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- All players are eligible to receive a pass (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage)
- Once the ball is advanced beyond the line of scrimmage, the current ball carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is dead.
- Once the ball is advanced beyond the line of scrimmage, the remaining offensive players cannot impede the defense from attempting to pull the offensive player's flag.

DEFENSE

- **Boys:** A defensive player may use his hands.
- **A defensive player may not:**
 - o strike a player on the head.
 - o hold an opponent.
 - o push a teammate into another player.
 - o push the ball carrier.
 - o pull a flag prematurely.
 - o touch the offensive center until the center stands up or takes a snap.

- o pull an opponent's shirt provided the shirt is not hindering the pulling of the flag.
- o strip or attempt to strip the ball.
- o cross the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.
- If the last defensive player with a chance to make a play on the ball carrier commits a penalty on the ball carrier the play will be ruled a score.
- **Boys:** A defensive player may rush up the middle so long as the defensive player does not make any immediate contact with the offensive center.
- A ball intercepted in the end zone may be run out or downed.

ASSESSMENT OF PENALTIES

A. Offensive Penalties

- **Five yards from original line of scrimmage, repeat down:**
 - o Delay of Game
 - o Offsides
- **Five yards from spot of foul, loss of down:**
 - o Running Up the Middle
 - o Flag Guarding
 - o Charging
 - o Illegal Forward Pass
 - o Intentional Grounding

Note: If foul occurs after first down is gained, first down stands.
- **Ten yards and repeat down:**
 - o Clipping/ Holding at the line of scrimmage or in the backfield is a 10 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.

- o Clipping/ Holding down field is a 10 yard penalty from the spot
- o Note: If foul occurs after first down is gained, first down stands.
- **Ten yards and loss of down:**
 - o **Offensive Pass Interference**
 - From line of scrimmage, loss of down
 - o **Pushing the ball carrier**
 - From spot of foul, loss of down

B. Defensive Penalties

- **5 yards from line of scrimmage and repeat down**
 - o Offsides
 - o Too Many Players on the Field
- **10 yards from spot and repeat down**
 - o Holding the Ball Carrier including by shirts and/ or shorts. If holding occurs behind line of scrimmage, penalty is enforced from the line of scrimmage.
- **10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down**
 - o Pass Interference
 - o Roughing the Passer
 - o Illegal Contact of the Center
 - o Stripping the ball from the Ball Carrier
 - o Unsportsmanlike and Unnecessary Roughness enforced from Spot
- No distance penalty shall exceed half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line.
- When a live ball foul is followed by a dead ball foul the penalties are administered separately and in order of occurrence.
- An inadvertent whistle when a player has possession will result in either replay of the down or possession at the spot it was blown dead, by choice of the team in possession.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THIS YEAR'S FLAG FOOTBALL SEASON WITH YOU!

All current season schedules, standings, playoffs, and more will be updated throughout the season on our Flag Football page at: onfiya.org/sports/flag-football/



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