

FIYA Flag Football Rules

Effective August 1, 2024

Rules in black apply to both Boys and Girls

Rules in blue apply only to Boys

Rules in red apply only to Girls

Overview

- The game is played between two teams of seven players.
- A team may begin a game with six players but cannot play with less than six at any time.
- All players are eligible pass receivers.
- Field goals, kickoffs, & punts are not permitted.
- Prior to the game, both teams meet at midfield to recite the 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.
- Field sizes may need to be adjusted based on the facility being used.

Ball

- FIYA reserves the right to provide a game 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).

Game Officials & Operators

- FIYA will provide at least two (2) referees per game.
- FIYA will provide all host facilities with a scoreboard and down marker.
- The team listed first on the schedule is responsible for operating the scoreboard and the team listed second on the schedule is responsible for operating 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 mandatory for all players.
- 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 8 points or less AND there is 2 minutes or less remaining in the 2nd half only, the clock stops for the following:
 - Issuance of the two minute warning
 - Incomplete passes
 - Running out of bounds
 - Penalties
 - Change of possession
 - 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.

Timeouts

- Each team will have two timeouts per half.
- A maximum of one unused timeout may carry over to the second half for a total of three.
- No timeouts carry over to overtime.

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.
- Flag Check:
 - After all scores the player must go to the nearest official for flag check if requested by the officials.
 - Player removing their own flag prior to a flag check will result in no score, loss of down and a warning. Next infraction results in Unsportsmanlike Conduct foul.

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.

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

- For safety concerns and for game efficiency, there will be NO KICKOFFS.
- The offense will start with the ball on its own 20 yard line.
- Punts
 - For safety concerns and for game efficiency, there will be NO PUNTS.
 - 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.
 - 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 twenty (20) yards from the spot and the defensive team will take over on offense.

Snapping the Ball

- One player may be in motion during the snap provided he is moving parallel to the LOS.
- QB cannot give an immediate handoff to the center after the snap.
- No minimum number of players need to be on the LOS besides the center.
- Boys
 - A legal snap occurs when the:
 - snapper has his/her shoulders parallel to the LOS.
 - ball travels between the snappers legs
 - ball is released by the snapper in a continuous backward motion
 - ball is not lifted for adjustment.
- Girls:
 - The snap begins when the snapper first moves the ball legally other than in adjustment. In a snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous backward motion of the ball during which the ball immediately leaves the hand(s) of the snapper.
 - The ball must be snapped from the ground but does not have to be snapped between the legs.
 - The ball must be snapped to any person whose feet are at least 2 yards behind the LOS.
 - The person who receives the snap is considered the quarterback for that play.

The Ball Carrier

- The ball carrier must attempt to avoid the defense using his/her agility
- The runner shall not make any movement of the hand or arm, even if unintentional, that restricts access to the runner's flag. Flag guarding can and does occur with the normal motion of a runner's arms and hands, and is a foul.
- 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.
- 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.
- Girls:
 - QB can run the ball once per series of downs.
 - There is no limit on the number of times players other than the quarterback can run.
 - The PAT shall be treated as a new series (QB can run).
 - Once a receiver possesses the ball after a completed forward, backward, or lateral pass they become a runner and all rules pertaining to running with the ball apply.

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 LOS. The length of the rectangle is 8 yards from the LOS 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.
- The offensive team may NOT throw more than one forward pass per play.
- The offensive team may throw an unlimited number of backward passes during any play.
- No player may throw the ball forward if that player is beyond the LOS.
- 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:
 - 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.
- Boys:
 - A receiver may be bumped at the LOS until he makes a move in either direction.
- Girls:
 - Passing Clock - The Quarterback has 7 seconds to release the ball. At the expiration of the passing clock, the officials will signal the play dead.
 - Once any other offensive player possesses the ball, the Passing Clock dissolves.
 - The quarterback may intentionally ground the ball by throwing the ball into the ground or out of bounds to avoid a sack. If the ball is thrown laterally or backwards it is considered a fumble and the ball will be placed at the spot where the ball crossed the out-of-bounds demarcation or hits the ground. If the pass is thrown forward it is considered an incomplete pass and will be placed at the previous spot.
 - Once any other offensive player possesses the ball all restrictions placed on the offense or defense regarding the quarterback are dissolved, even if the offensive player who received the snap possesses the ball again during the play.

Blocking

- Boys:
 - Blocking is allowed.
 - 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.
 - Arms may not be bent at the point of contact and then extended.
 - A blocker must have one foot on the ground.
 - Downfield blocking on a passing play is not permitted until the ball is caught or is thrown behind the line of scrimmage (LOS).

- Girls:
 - Offensive blocking shall take place without contact. Blocking may only occur at or behind the LOS. Blocking beyond the LOS is illegal.
 - The blocker shall have their arms and hands at their side, across their chest, in front of the body, or behind their back. Any use of hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive block is illegal.
 - An offensive player who is attempting to block shall not move their feet or lean into a defensive player.
 - The defense is responsible for avoiding contact with a stationary blocker.
 - To be deemed as stationary, the blocker must be stationary for a distance of at least 1 yard in advance of the defender.

Defense

- A defensive player may not:
 - strike a player on the head.
 - hold an opponent.
 - push a teammate into another player.
 - push the ball carrier.
 - pull a flag prematurely.
 - touch the offensive center until the center stands up or takes a snap.
 - pull an opponent's shirt provided the shirt is not hindering the pulling of the flag.
 - strip or attempt to strip the ball.
 - cross the LOS 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.
- A ball intercepted in the end zone may be run out or downed.
- 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.
- Boys
 - A defensive player may use his hands.
- Girls
 - No Blocking or Moving Screens allowed at any time
 - No excessive contact will be allowed.
 - The defense is responsible for avoiding contact with a stationary blocker.
 - Any defensive player who crosses the LOS with any part of their body is considered a Rusher.
 - A legal rusher must be 5 yards or more from the LOS at the time of the snap.
 - Prior to the snap, a legal rusher may be lined up anywhere along the rush line that is set 5 yards from the LOS
 - No more than two defensive players shall cross the LOS during a down in which the QB is the only player to possess the ball.
 - Rushers must attempt to avoid any stationary offensive players. No contact is allowed with a stationary offensive player.
 - There is no limit on the number of rushing attempts by a team.

Assessment of Penalties

● **Offensive Penalties**

- Dead ball, spot of foul, loss of down
 - **Girls: Passing clock expiration**
- Five yards from original line of scrimmage, repeat down:
 - Delay of Game
 - Offsides
- Five yards from spot of foul, loss of down:
 - Running Up the Middle
 - Flag Guarding
 - Charging
 - Illegal Forward Pass
 - Intentional Grounding
 - Note: If foul occurs after first down is gained, first down stands.
 - **Girls: Illegal Quarterback Run (When the quarterback runs the ball more than once per series of downs.**
- Ten yards and repeat down:
 - Clipping/ Holding at the line of scrimmage or in the backfield is a 10 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.
 - Clipping/ Holding down field is a 10 yard penalty from the spot
 - Note: If foul occurs after first down is gained, first down stands.
- Ten yards and loss of down:
 - Offensive Pass Interference
 - From line of scrimmage, loss of down
 - Pushing the ball carrier
 - From spot of foul, loss of down

● **Defensive Penalties**

- 5 yards from line of scrimmage and repeat down
 - Offsides
 - Too Many Players on the Field
 - **Girls: Illegal Rush:**
 - **When a defensive player rushes the QB after being less than 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage at the snap.**
 - **When more than two (2) players rush at a time during a down in which the QB is the only player to possess the ball..**
- 10 yards from spot and repeat down
 - 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
 - Pass Interference
 - Roughing the Passer
 - Illegal Contact of the Center
 - Stripping the ball from the Ball Carrier
 - 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.

