FIYA Flag Football Rules

Effective August 1, 2026

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.
- See Exhibit A for a diagram of the standard FIYA Football field.

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 line of scrimmage for the offense is a vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest that team's goal line. The line of scrimmage for the defense is 1 yard beyond the vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest that team's goal line.
- 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. Teams shall automatically switch directions to start the second half.
- 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
            - Note: If the ball hits the ground because of a fumble or a muffed snap the clock does not stop.
        - Running out of bounds
        - Penalties
        - Change of possession
        - Scores (touchdowns and PATs)
    - The clock 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

- The player in position to receive the snap must be a minimum of 2 yards behind the snapper.
- 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:
    - A snap is the legal act of passing the ball backward from its position on the ground and ahead of the snappers body.
    - 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 and touches a back or the ground.
    - The snapper may be over the ball, but the snapper's feet must be behind the neutral zone and no part of the snapper's person, other than a hand(s) on the ball, may be beyond the foremost point of the ball.

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.
- An offensive player shall not push, pull, or lift the ball carrier to assist the ball carrier's forward progress.
- The ball carrier may not steer his/her blockers using physical contact.
- There are no restrictions on "running up the middle".

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.
- 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.

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:
    - Screen blocking is taking position to obstruct the path of an opponent without contacting the opponent with any part of the blocker's body.
    - Blocking by any player is illegal unless it is a screen block.
    - After assuming a legal position, a screen blocker may move to maintain legal position by moving in the same direction or path as the opponent. Screen blocking shall take place without initiating contact during the process of the block. A screen blocker shall not extend the arms, or use hands, arms, elbows or legs to initiate contact.

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 short is not hindering the pulling of the flag.
    - strip or attempt to strip the ball.
    - cross the LOS prior to the snap.
    - Girls
        - Initiate contact with an opponent.
        - Initiate contact with an eligible receiver.
- 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.
- 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.

Assessment of Penalties

- **Offensive Penalties**
    - Dead ball, spot of foul, loss of down
    - Five yards from original line of scrimmage, repeat down:
        - Delay of Game
        - Offsides
    - Five yards from spot of foul, loss of down:
        - Flag Guarding
        - Charging
        - Illegal Forward Pass
        - Intentional Grounding
            - Note: If foul occurs after first down is gained, first down stands.
    - 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
    - 10 yards from spot and repeat down
        - Holding the Ball Carrier, including by shirts and/ or shorts.
            - If holding occurs behind the line of scrimmage, the 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.

Sportsmanship

- Each student athlete participating in FIYA shall endeavor to exhibit good sportsmanship at all times. FIYA reserves the right to discipline any student athlete who does not exhibit good sportsmanship.
- In addition, game officials have the authority to remove a player from a game if the officials determine that the player needs a cooling off period in order to maintain control of the game as well as to assist the player in question to regain his/her composure. It is within the game officials' discretion in consultation with the coach to allow the removed player to re-enter the game.
- Game officials also have the ability to eject a player from a game. Any ejected player shall automatically serve a *minimum* one game suspension.

Exhibits to this document can be found on the pages below as follows:

Exhibit A

FIYA Flag Football Field