

FLAG FOOTBALL OFFICIAL RULES

2026 SEASON · KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 8TH GRADE

6 v 6

PLAYERS ON THE FIELD

20:00

MINUTES PER HALF

4

DOWNS TO MIDFIELD

0

KICKOFFS OR PUNTS

A fun, safe, and inclusive game for every kid on the roster. These rules exist to protect players, keep play fair, and keep the game moving. Coaches, parents, and players: please read them before Week 1.

UPDATED JULY 2026 · RULES APPLY TO ALL DIVISIONS UNLESS NOTED

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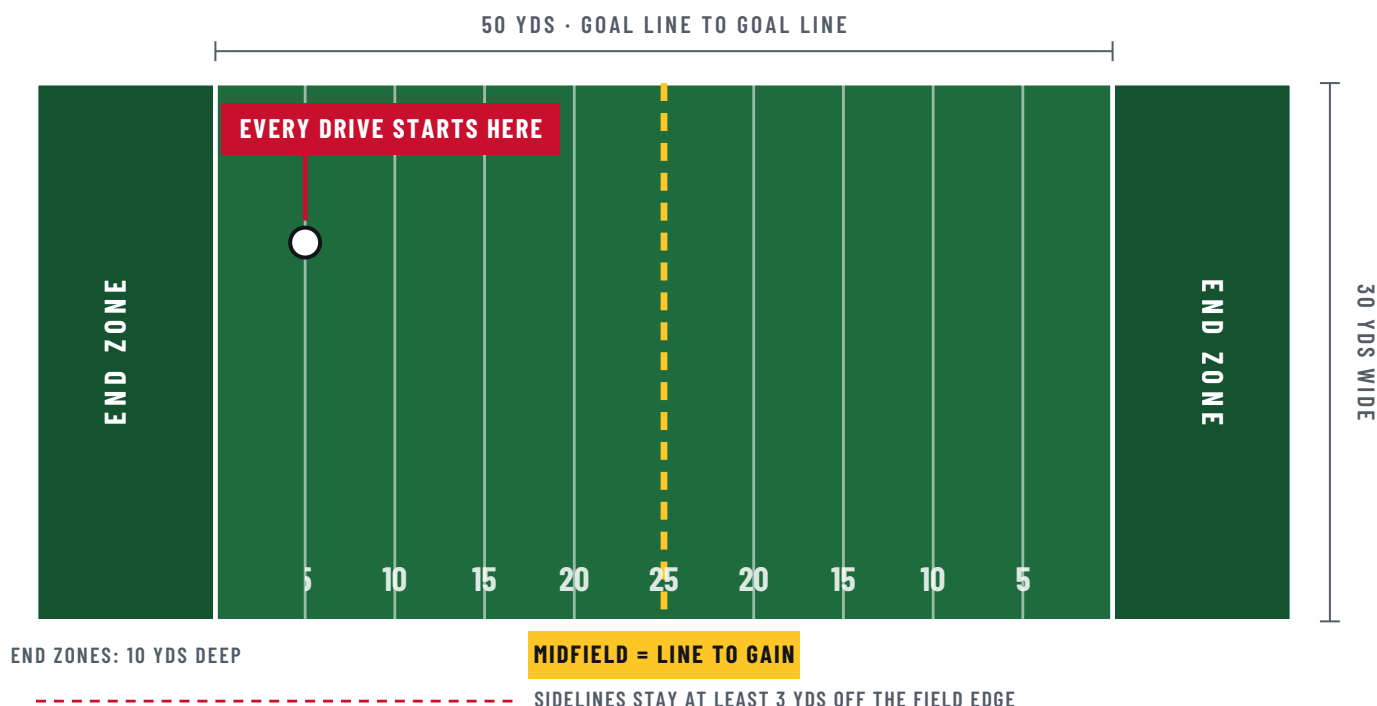
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—01—

SECTION 01

THE FIELD & THE BASICS



SETUP: THREE FIELDS FIT SIDEWAYS ON A 100-YD FOOTBALL FIELD · 3 × 30 YDS + TWO 5-YD BUFFERS

/ TEAMS & THE SIDELINE

- **6 on 6.** A team needs at least 5 players to start. Dropping below 5 mid-game is a forfeit unless both coaches agree to adjust numbers for a fair match.
- **Two coaches on the field.** One for offense, one for defense.
- **Boundaries are marked.** In Kindergarten only, a 5-yard neutral zone separates offense and defense at the snap... all other divisions line up at the line of scrimmage.

/ UNIFORMS & EQUIPMENT

- **Matching jerseys, unique numbers.** Shirts stay tucked in so the flag belt is always visible.
- **Good condition only.** No exposed drawstrings, loose equipment, or anything hazardous.
- **No metal cleats.** Wear shoes that grip without endangering anyone.
- **No jewelry.** Watches, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets come off before the game.
- **Division-sized footballs.** Pee Wee for K and 1-2, Junior for 3-4 and 5-6, Youth for 7-8.
- **Mouthguards recommended.** Not mandatory, but strongly encouraged.

-02-

SECTION 02

POSSESSIONS & DOWNS



ONE LINE TO GAIN PER DRIVE: CROSS MIDFIELD WITHIN FOUR DOWNS, THEN SCORE.

/ HOW A DRIVE WORKS

- **Every drive starts at your own 5-yard line.** The only exception is an interception, which is spotted where the return ends.
- **Midfield (the 25) is the line to gain.** Cross it within four downs and the official announces "first down." Fail, and it's a turnover on downs.
- **No kickoffs. No punts.** After any touchdown or turnover on downs, the other team simply takes over at its own 5. Quick, smooth transitions keep the game moving.

/ WHEN THE BALL IS DEAD

- **There are no fumbles.** The moment the ball hits the ground, the play is over at that spot.
- **Interceptions are live.** The defense may return a pick for yardage, all the way to the end zone.
- **A lost flag ends the play.** If a ball carrier's flag falls off, the ball is dead right there.
- **There are no safeties.** A player downed in their own end zone brings the ball out to the 1-yard line.

STARTING THE GAME

Captains and officials meet at midfield for the coin toss. The winner chooses offense or defense to start. The team that does not begin on offense gets the first possession of the second half. Teams then head to their sidelines and start on time.

OFFICIAL'S DISCRETION

Officials may make judgment calls on anything these rules don't explicitly cover. Bring questions or disputes to the official, calmly, for resolution.

/ OVERTIME

- **Regular season:** games can end in a tie.
- **Playoffs:** new coin toss, then alternating possessions starting at midfield. Four downs to score, no line to gain. Conversion attempts follow any touchdown.
- **Equal shots.** Both teams get a possession each round; if it's still tied, play another round. Interceptions stay live, and a returned score wins the game.

—03—

SECTION 03

SCORING & THE CLOCK

/ POINTS

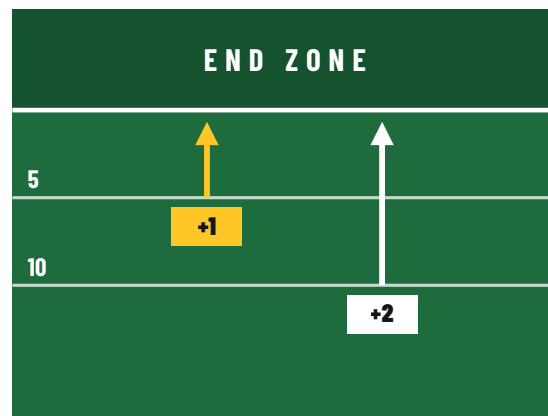
- 6** **Touchdown.** Cross the goal line with a flag still on, worn legally.

- 1** **Conversion from the 5.** One point for punching it in from the 5-yard line.

- 2** **Conversion from the 10.** Two points from the 10-yard line. Scoring team's choice.

- 2** **Defensive conversion return.** The defense can take a turnover on a conversion attempt back the other way for 2.

- 0** **No safeties.** Downed in your own end zone? Ball comes out to the 1-yard line. Play on.



AFTER A TOUCHDOWN, PICK YOUR CONVERSION DISTANCE.

/ TIMEOUTS

- **Three per half, per team.** Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half.
- **Dead ball only.** Timeouts can only be called while the ball is dead.

/ CLOCK RULES

- **Two 20-minute halves,** running clock during play. Halftime is 5 minutes.
- **Final two minutes of each half:** the clock stops on out-of-bounds plays and incomplete passes.
- **Scores stop the clock.** Conversion attempts are untimed; the official restarts the clock afterward.
- **18-point lead = running clock.** Automatic: once the lead hits 18, a continuous clock runs the rest of the way.
- **No play clock, but keep it moving.** Huddle quickly and be ready to snap. Repeated delays can draw a penalty.

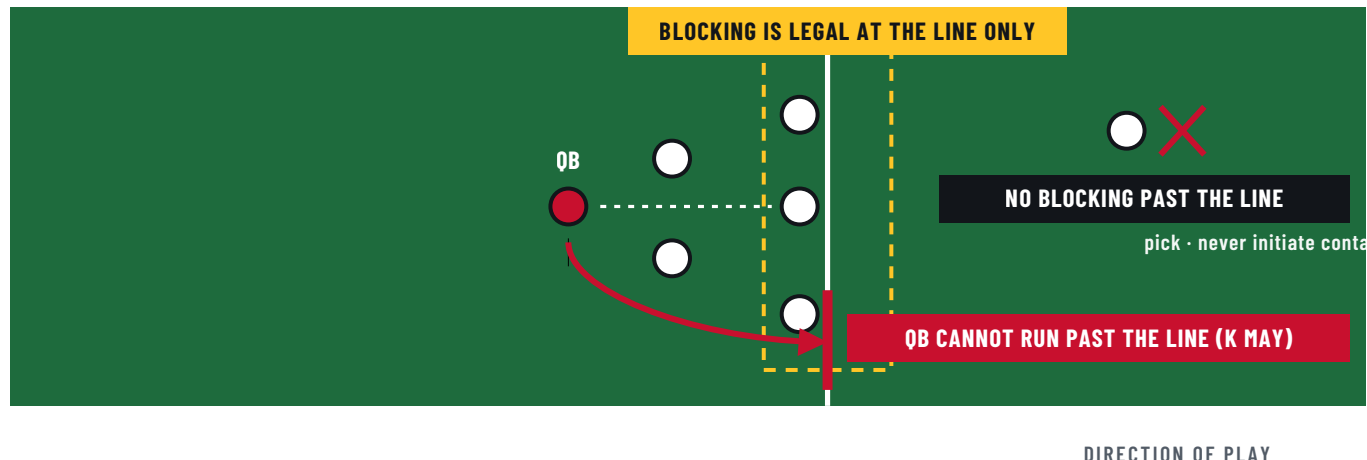
OFFICIAL'S DISCRETION

04

SECTION 04

OFFENSE

OFFENSE (WHITE) AT THE SNAP · LINE OF SCRIMMAGE IN SOLID WHITE



/ THE SNAP

- **K and Grades 1-2:** the QB starts every play with the ball, on the line or in shotgun. No center exchange needed.
- **Grades 3-8:** a center-to-QB exchange is required, either a traditional snap or a turn-and-hand. The ball stays on the ground until the QB says "hike."
- **No silent counts.** Ever.
- **The line doesn't have to be balanced.** Line up how you like.

/ WHO CAN RUN & CATCH

- **Everyone but the QB** may advance the ball past the line.
- **The QB joins the play** after a handoff or pass: once someone else has the ball, the QB is a legal runner or receiver.
- **Kindergarten exception:** K quarterbacks may run the ball past the line.
- **QB crosses the line with the ball (Grades 1-8):** play is blown dead, ball returns to the previous spot. **LOSS OF DOWN**

/ PASSING

- **Forward passes must be thrown from behind the line.** If the QB crosses first, the ball comes back to the previous spot. **PENALTY**
- **Laterals are legal** anywhere on the field.

/ BLOCKING

- **At the line only, hands inside.** No shoving, grabbing, pushing, or throwing opponents.
- **Front and side only, on your feet.** No blocking in the back, and no leaving your feet to block.
- **Release when the runner is through.** Once the ball crosses the line, all blocking ends.
- **Never allowed:** drive, punch, double, trap, crack-back, cut, chop, and peel-back blocks.
- **Downfield:** position yourself like a basketball pick if you want, but any intentional contact past the line is illegal.

/ THE BALL CARRIER

- **Don't shield your flags** with hands, arms, or the ball. Any deliberate move to block a defender's pull is flag guarding. **SPOT FOUL**
- **No hurdling or diving** for extra yards. The ball is dead where the runner's feet left the ground.

-05- SECTION 05 DEFENSE

DEFENSE (X) MAY PLAY MAN, ZONE, OR ANY COMBINATION - CANNOT DROP ALL 6 INTO COVERAGE



/ THE RUSH

- **Five-second count (Grades 1-8):** count it out at normal talking speed before rushing. Rushing a fast count costs you. **10-YD PENALTY**
- **Handoff or fake handoff = green light.** The defense may rush immediately the moment the QB hands off, or fakes it. A fake is treated exactly like a run play.
- **Someone must rush.** Every play needs at least one rusher on the QB. Dropping all six into coverage is illegal.

/ PULLING THE FLAG

- **One clean hand.** Grab the flag only, never clothing or any part of the body.
- **Ball carriers only.** Pulling a flag from a player who doesn't have the ball is a foul. **5-YD PENALTY**
- **Stay controlled.** Intentional or forceful contact during the pull draws a penalty.

/ COVERAGE & CONTACT

- **No bumping or holding receivers** off the line, and no deliberate interference with routes.
- **Pass interference:** contact that takes away a receiver's chance at the ball. **10 YDS + REPLAY THE DOWN** A receiver push-off goes 5 the other way.
- **Engaging blockers:** open hands and arms only. No pushing, striking, or tackling, and never dive at legs when taking on a blocker.
- **No deliberate tackles.** Incidental contact happens and isn't penalized. Diving at a ball carrier's legs is unnecessary roughness. **10-YD PENALTY**
- **Defensive holding.** **5-YD PENALTY**

PROTECTING THE SIDELINE

Shoving a ball carrier out of bounds is dangerous and has no place in this league. If a deliberate tackle or a shove out of bounds prevents a touchdown, the official may award the touchdown based on where the runner was when it happened.

06

SECTION 06

WEARING THE FLAGS



ONE FLAG ON EACH HIP

secure · visible · jersey tucked



TIED FLAGS



DOUBLE-LOOPE



UPSIDE-DOWN SOCKET



NOT ON EACH SIDE

/ LEGAL FLAGS

- **Two pop flags, one on each hip**, securely attached and clearly visible.
- **Contrasting colors.** Flags must contrast with the player's shorts or pants so officials and opponents can see them.
- **Never tied, looped, or tampered with.** No double loops, no knots, no upside-down pop sockets.
- **Jersey tucked.** Nothing covers the belt.

/ ENFORCEMENT

- **Officials check after touchdowns** and may pull a scorer's flags to confirm they were attached legally.
- **Tampered or improper flags** can nullify a touchdown or bring a play back. **TD NULLIFIED**
- **Missing a flag at the catch?** The receiver is down at the spot of the catch. No run after.
- **Flag falls off mid-play?** The ball is dead at that spot.

SECTION 07 -07- PENALTY QUICK REFERENCE

THE FOUL	ENFORCEMENT
Rushing before the 5-second count (or racing the count)	10 YARDS
Diving at a ball carrier's legs (unnecessary roughness)	10 YARDS
Defensive holding	5 YARDS
Pass interference / receiver push-off	DEF: 10 YDS + REPLAY THE DOWN · OFF: 5 YDS
Illegal block: in the back, downfield, off your feet, or a prohibited technique	10 YARDS
Hurdling or diving by the ball carrier	DEAD BALL WHERE THE FEET LEFT THE GROUND
Pulling the flag of a player without the ball	5 YARDS
Flag guarding	SPOT FOUL · BALL PLACED AT THE FOUL
QB advances past the line with the ball (Grades 1-8)	DEAD BALL · PREVIOUS SPOT · LOSS OF DOWN
Forward pass thrown from beyond the line	BALL RETURNS TO PREVIOUS SPOT
Improper or tampered flags on a scoring play	TOUCHDOWN NULLIFIED / PLAY CALLED BACK
Deliberate tackle, or shove out of bounds, that prevents a TD	OFFICIAL MAY AWARD THE TOUCHDOWN
Slow huddles / delaying the game	MAY BE PENALIZED · OFFICIAL'S DISCRETION
Unsportsmanlike conduct (taunting, trash talk, aggression)	PENALTY OR EJECTION

Enforcement basics: yardage penalties come with a replay of the down unless a loss of down is listed. All distance penalties are half the distance to the goal inside the 10. The offended team may always decline.

SECTION 08 -08- DIVISIONS AT A GLANCE

	K	GR 1-2	GR 3-4	GR 5-6	GR 7-8
THE SNAP	QB starts with the ball. No exchange.	QB starts with the ball. No exchange.	Center-QB exchange required. Ball stays on the ground until "hike."		
QB RUNNING	Allowed past the line.	Not allowed past the line.			
THE RUSH	Lines up 5 yds off the line... the neutral zone.	5-second count at talking speed, then rush.			
GAME BALL	Pee Wee		Junior		Youth
HANDOFFS	All divisions: the defense may rush immediately on any handoff or fake handoff.				



SECTION 09

SPORTSMANSHIP & COACHING

/ THE STANDARD

- **Respect is non-negotiable** for opponents, officials, teammates, and parents.
- **No taunting, trash talk, or aggression.** Violations draw penalties or ejection, and the league may suspend or expel repeat offenders, players, coaches, or spectators alike.
- **Celebrate good football**, including the other team's. Acknowledging a great play sets the tone we want.
- **Coaches set that tone.** Your players will conduct themselves the way you do.
- **Spectators: stay positive.** Nothing from the sideline should ever escalate a game.

/ PLAYING TIME & ROTATION

- **Everybody plays.** Strive for balanced involvement, recognizing exactly equal snaps won't always happen.
- **Plan it before kickoff.** Build a rotation plan ahead of each game and rotate kids through different positions.
- **Development first.** Substitute strategically so every player gets meaningful reps and a positive experience.



SECTION 10

WEATHER & CANCELLATIONS

- **Safety decides.** Thunderstorms, heavy rain, or anything that compromises player safety or field condition can cancel games on short notice, protecting both kids and the grass fields we all share.
- **How you'll hear:** official cancellation notices go out from the program's mailbox to all registered emails, and coaches will relay the word to their teams.
- **When weather looks iffy,** check email and team channels before heading to the field.

ONE LAST THING

These rules exist so every kid from kindergarten through 8th grade gets a fun, fair, and safe season. When in doubt, choose the safer play, the kinder word, and the official's judgment. See you at the field.