



Flag Football Rules

Revised: 19 January 2016

Co-ed specifications in pink.

Major recent changes in red.

TEAM SIZE, ROSTERS & UNIFORMS

- A normal game consists of 7 players on the field though a legal game can be played with a minimum of 5 players.
- Co-ed: There can be no more than 4 guys on the field at any time.
- Each registered player will be given a t-shirt for uniform purposes. Substitutes must wear their teams' color of shirt or something that does not match the opposing team.
- Metal cleats are not allowed.
- Pockets and pants worn should not have pockets.
- Flag belts should sit on a player's waist so that one flag is worn directly on the tailbone and the other two at the middle of each hip.

FORFEITS

- Teams will have until 10 minutes past the designated start time to field a legal team. If a team does not have at least 5 players present the game will be ruled a forfeit*. If both teams have enough players to play after the grace period the referee/coordinator (at his/her discretion) can shorten the length of the halves in order to finish the game on time. *Exception: Teams may play a "legal game" with less than 5 players with the opposing teams consent. Teams who agree to play under these conditions will lose the option of receiving a forfeit win.
- If you know in advance that your team is going to forfeit a game, we encourage you to call our office in order to help us schedule your opponent a game. However, this does not mean that your team will not receive the loss as a forfeit.
- If your team forfeits a game during the season, the following rules apply:
 - First Offense: Loss of game and warning issued.
 - Second Offense: Loss of game and staff reserves the right to remove team from playoffs.
 - Third Offense: Removal from the league

COIN FLIP/BEGINNING OF GAME

- The beginning of the game will start with a coin flip. The team that wins the coin toss may choose to either kickoff or receive the ball. A team choosing to kickoff in the first half will receive in the second half and vice versa in the second half. Teams switch directions at the start of the second half.

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TIME

- Play will be divided into two 20-minute halves. The clock will be managed by a game official. Teams switch directions at the start of the second half.
- Teams will have 2 timeouts per half that may be used at any time.
- For the first 18 minutes of each half, the clock will run continuously with the exception of time-outs and serious injury. If a team calls a timeout after a touchdown the clock will not start again until the defensive team takes possession and snaps the ball on offense.
- There will be a running clock until the final 2 minutes of each half. (The clock does not stop for a 2-minute warning.)
- During the final 2 minutes of each half, the referee shall stop the game clock if*:
 - an incomplete pass is thrown
 - a player ends a play by going out of bounds
 - either team scores (the clock does not run during extra points; clock will remain off until the opposing team snaps the ball after the PAT attempt;)
 - change of possession
 - a penalty which must be marked off occurs
 - a team calls a time out.
- For a first down during the final two minutes, the game clock will stop briefly for the referee to reset the line of scrimmage markers. The game clock will resume when the markers are reset and the referee signals the clock to start.
- *Exception: If a team is up by 17 points or more, the clock runs continuously during the last two minutes of play.
- For the entire game, the offensive team has 25 seconds to snap the ball once the line of scrimmage markers have been placed (or a moment after an incomplete pass). A referee will give a verbal warning when there are 15 seconds remaining. If the offense fails to snap the ball before the play clock expires there will be a 5-yard penalty and the down will be repeated.

KICKOFFS

- Teams will kickoff from 5 yards behind the 20-yard line at the start of each half. (Teams will punt after safeties from the 20-yard line.)
- During a kickoff, if the ball goes out of bounds the receiving team has the choice to take the ball where it went out of bounds or take the ball at the 30-yard line.

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- If an offensive player receiving the ball makes a fair catch, the catch will be awarded where it is caught, or where the ball hits the ground after touching the offensive player.

OFFENSE

BEFORE THE PLAY

- There must be 4 players on the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. (Penalty: illegal formation, 5 yards)
- A player can be in motion as long as he/she is not moving toward the line of scrimmage. (Penalty: illegal motion, 5 yards)
- Quarterbacks cannot snap the ball to themselves. (Penalty: illegal snap, 5 yards)

DURING THE PLAY

- Blocking is allowed at and behind the line of scrimmage. Blocking on and behind the line of scrimmage should be done with hands behind the back. Blockers and rushers should not extend their elbows, arms, or legs. (Penalty: illegal contact, 10 yards from the previous spot and repeat the down, unless penalty is declined)
- NO downfield blocking! Players may run with their teammates downfield, but no contact is allowed. A player who changes his/her pace depending on defenders has blocked downfield. This is considered "a pick." PICKING off a defensive player by initiating contact is considered downfield blocking, this is not allowed. Due to the danger of picking, a player may be ejected if such an action persists. (Penalty: illegal contact, 10 yards)
- If a defensive player is on the ground all blocking rules above still apply. Offensive players may not "pile on" or "lay on" the defensive player to keep him on the ground. They may still block him as stated above. (Penalty: illegal contact, 10 yards. Or may be personal foul resulting in 15 yards depending on the severity.)
- If the ball hits the ground on the snap for either a pass or running play, the play is "dead", the ball is spotted where it hit the ground, and it is a loss of down (i.e. if it was 1st down during the bad snap, it is now 2nd down).
- A backward pass is a pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the passer's and runner's end line.
- All fumbles will be ruled dead balls with the offense retaining possession at the spot of the fumble.
- Players may not handoff the ball. The ball must leave one player's hands before entering another's (tossed). (Penalty: illegal handoff: 5 yards from spot of foul)

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- Spin moves, jumping, and diving will be allowed for a ball carrier, as long as the runner does not initiate contact with defender in doing so.
- Any ball carrier whose flags are (in ref's opinion) not accessible to be pulled will be down at 1st point of contact with the defense.
- Any ball-carrier who has a flag missing for whatever reason (falls off, accidentally pulled before reception, not noticed before snap, etc.) will be down at the first point of contact.
- Receivers need only one foot in bounds for a reception. If in the referees eyes a receiver would be able to legally catch a pass but was pushed out of bounds by a defender while in the air a catch will be awarded and may also result in a penalty for the defense.
- The ball will be spotted where the ball is at the time the ball carrier's flag has been pulled. If the ball crosses the plane of the goal line before the ball carrier is touched, it will result in a touchdown (ball extension).
- Loss of down penalties that occur on 4th down will result in change of possession.
- **The quarterback (player who receives the snap) cannot run past his/her line of scrimmage unless a defensive player first crosses his/her line of scrimmage. (5 yard penalty, loss of down)**

FIRST DOWNS

- Each team shall have 4 downs to either score or earn another first down. First downs are earned each time the ball reaches the 1st number marker from where the ball was originally spotted on the first down (the 20, 40, and 20). If a team fails to score or earn a first down, possession will go to the other team. Offensive teams may elect to punt on fourth downs.
- **Co-ed: A girl must be involved in each series, unless the team gains a first down before 4th down. A play in which girl attempts a run from the line of scrimmage, or is thrown a pass counts as a girl play. Or, a girl QB who attempts a pass beyond the line of scrimmage also counts as a girl play. Example: If a team attempts a play to a girl on first down, the series is open to any player at that point. However, if a team attempts to a guy for the first three downs, the fourth down is closed and must be attempted to a girl (unless the team punts). Whether or not a pass is intended for a girl is at the referees' discretion.**

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- During a play, if the ball carrier crosses a first down marker and then commits a foul, the first down will count and the penalty will be marked off which may result in double-stakes or the first down being two field markers away. Example: The ball carrier crosses the 20-yard line and flag guards at the 23-yard line. The next down will be first down to the 40-yard line, but the series will start from 18-yard line which is 5 yards behind where the foul was committed (1st and 22).

PUNTING

- A punt must be declared and cannot be faked.
- If a punt is declared late into the play clock (or decides to not punt) the defense will be given time to adjust. If the defense cannot adjust before the play clock expires or the ball is snapped, the offense is guilty of delaying the game (5 yards, replay).
- Punts must be snapped from the ground like any other play. The punter has five seconds to kick the ball. Punts must be kicked and cannot be thrown. As on any offensive play, there must be 4 players on the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is snapped, players must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. Players may not get a running start of any kind. If it is deemed that a player gained an advantage in moving downfield before the ball is kicked a 5-yard penalty and replay of the down may be accepted by the defense/receiving team.
- **NO DOWNFIELD BLOCKING.** The kicking team may not cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. The receiving team may raise hands or jump to block a punt.
- If the ball comes into contact with the ground after being touched by the return team, it is a dead ball, spotted at the point where it hit the ground, and may not be returned.
- A punt through the endzone, caught and downed in the endzone, or dropped in the endzone is considered a touchback. The receiving team will begin their offensive series 5 yards behind the 20-yard line.
- If an offensive player receiving the ball makes a fair catch, the catch will be awarded where it is caught, or where the ball hits the ground after touching the offensive player.
- During a punt, the offensive player must be given room to attempt to make the catch (generally a one-yard halo). (kick-catch interference, 10 yard penalty)

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TOUCHDOWNS & POINT AFTER

- Male: 6 point touchdowns
- Co-ed: A girl who scores a touchdown is worth 9 points. (However, a girl who throws a TD pass to a guy is worth 6 points).
- After a touchdown, the offense has the choice to attempt 1 extra point (5-yards) or 2 extra points (10-yards).
- Extra point attempts may be intercepted and returned for 3 points.
- Receivers intentionally leaving the field of play are ineligible to receive a pass if they are the first person to touch the ball. (Penalty: illegal touching, 5 yards, loss of down. Exception: no yards penalized if turned over on 4th down.) This includes the back of the endzone. (no yards, loss of down)
- Only the ball needs to cross the plane of the goal line in order for a touchdown to be awarded.
- A player who catches the ball and lands with 1 or 2 feet across the goal line, but has his flag pulled after possession and before he puts the ball across the plane of the goal will not be awarded a touchdown. The ball will be spotted at the point of where the ball was at the time he was called “down”.
- If the ball-carrier appears to be on his/her way to scoring a touchdown, and a defender uses unnecessary roughness to bring the player out of bounds or to the ground, a touchdown will be automatically awarded to the offense. The defender will receive a warning, unless this is his/her second personal foul in the game, or the contact was so great, that the player will be ejected.

DEFENSE

- Laterals may be intercepted and run back for a touchdown or yardage.
- Defenders rushing the quarterback may not grab an offensive player by the jersey to move them. (Penalty: illegal contact, 10 yards)
- Safeties: A safety will be scored if a player is:
 - Flag pulled in their own endzone (not on a punt return);
 - Runs out of bounds in their own endzone;
 - Snaps the ball out of the endzone;
 - If the offense fumbles the ball in their own endzone.
 - As a result, the team on defense receives 2 points, and the team on offense must now punt a “free” kick from their own 20-yard line.
 - If the clock is stopped, it will begin when the receiving team has touched the ball.
 - Note: a player having intercepted a pass or received a punt in the endzone, cannot be called for a safety in the endzone unless he has previously crossed the plane of the endzone with the ball.
- Players may leave their feet to pull flag.



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OTHER

- Shirt must be tucked in and flags must be securely attached. Loose hanging articles (i.e. sweatshirts, long T-shirts, etc.) that are held/ripped will not result in a holding penalty, unless in the officials' eyes the player was not attempting to go for the flag.
- If a team substitutes players during the game, they must do so from the same sideline the entire game. Eligible receivers must be on the playing field before the ball is snapped and so not as to deceive the defense. (Penalty: illegal substitution, 5 yards)
- If the defense participates in a play with more than 7 players on the field, they are guilty of too-many-men. (5 yards and repeat or 5 yards added to play)
- Play shall continue until:
 - Ball-carrier has at least one flag pulled by an opponent (see flag specifics for the few exceptions/additions concerning flag pulling)
 - Ball-carrier leaves the field of play
 - Ball-carrier scores
 - Ball touches the ground as a result of a fumble, punt or incomplete pass (the ball is not an extension of the arm. If the ball is pinned between the ground and the ball-carrier's hand, the play is dead)
 - Ball-Carrier's knee touches the ground
- A change of possession can only occur on an interception of a forward pass or a lateral. A fumble is not a turnover. The ball is dead at the point of the fumble and the offense retains possession. A lateral is not a forward pass and can be picked off in mid-air. A picked off lateral will result in a change of possession, and can be returned for a touchdown. Exception: A lateral intercepted in an overtime period of a playoff game cannot be returned for points. This is simply a turnover.
- Regular season games ending in a tie score will be recorded as tie. Please refer to the OVERTIME section for ties during the playoffs.

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PENALTIES

GENERAL

- Normal rules and penalties of the NCAA apply unless exceptions have been made herein.
- A measurement cannot take the ball more than half the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team's goal line. If the penalty is greater than this, the ball is placed halfway from the enforcement spot to the goal line.

OFFENSIVE

- 5 yard penalties, replay the down
 - blown dead immediately, enforced from the line of scrimmage
 - False start: Once the line is set no player, unless in motion or shifting/resetting, shall move before the snap, especially if the motion simulates the snap.
 - Illegal snap: The snap must be in one continuous motion and should not stop before again moving the ball to the quarterback. Also, the quarterback may not snap the ball to himself.
 - Illegal formation: There shall be at least four players on the line of scrimmage, and all players shall be set for at least one second before the ball is snapped. Exception: one player may be in motion laterally.
 - Illegal Motion: Players may not be in motion towards the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
 - live ball fouls, enforced from the spot of the foul, loss of down
 - Intentional Grounding: When a passer facing an imminent loss of yardage because of pressure from the defense, throws a forward pass, without a realistic chance of completion. Note: enforced as in high school: tackle box and ball reaching line of scrimmage has no bearing.
 - Flag Guarding: No player shall obstruct their flags with the hand, arm, ball, clothing, etc. so that a defender cannot pull the flag, regardless of whether or not it was intentional.
 - Illegal Forward Pass: A forward pass is illegal if any part of a player's body has crossed the line of scrimmage before releasing the ball.
 - **Illegal QB Run: Quarterback (player receiving the snap) may not run unless rushed first by the defense.**



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- 10 yard penalties
 - live ball fouls, enforced from the line of scrimmage, replay the down
 - Illegal Contact: When a blocker, at or behind the line of scrimmage, extends or uses his elbow, arm, or leg against an oncoming rusher.
 - Offensive Holding: It is illegal to grab any part of a defensive player when blocking on offense. Holding will result in a safety if the ball carrier (ball) is in the endzone.
 - live ball fouls, enforced from the line of scrimmage, loss of down
 - Pass Interference: An offensive player may not initiate contact with a defender in such a way that he gains an advantage to make a catch.
 - live ball fouls, enforced from the spot of the foul, loss of down
 - Illegal Contact - When an offensive player, beyond the line of scrimmage, blocks downfield or sets a pick on a defender so that the defender's route to the ball carrier is obstructed. Or, when the ball carrier initiates contact on a defender (for example, by dipping his shoulders, stiff-arm with contact, or running through a defender.

DEFENSIVE

- 5 yard penalties
 - dead ball fouls, enforced from the line of scrimmage, replay the down
 - Offsides: When a defender crosses through the neutral zone and past the offensive line of scrimmage before the snap. This will be treated like an unabated rusher when he/she crosses both pucks, and the play will be blown dead.
 - live ball fouls, enforced from the line of scrimmage, replay the down
 - Neutral zone infraction: When a defender is between the defensive line of scrimmage and the offensive line of scrimmage (neutral zone) when the ball is snapped. This is a free play for the offense, and they have the option to accept or decline the penalty after the play.
 - Illegal contact: When a defensive player extends or uses his hands, arms, etc. to make contact with an offensive player, the ball in possession of an offensive player or bring him to the ground. Examples: rusher who knocks over a blocker, defender who tackles a ball carrier, pushes the ball carrier out of bounds, or strips the ball from the ball carrier's possession. If the penalty is accepted by the offense, the down is replayed.



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- o live ball fouls, enforced from the line of scrimmage, automatic first down
 - Pass Interference: A defensive player may not initiate contact with an offensive player in such a way he obstructs the player from attempting to make a catch. If this penalty is accepted it results in a ten yards from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down. Exception: half the distance where appropriate. If the penalty is declined, the play and any yardage gained stands.
 - Roughing the Passer: Any player who attempts to knock the ball out of the quarterback's arm or hits the arm of the quarterback while in delivery. However, if contact is made on the quarterback's follow through it will be up to the referee's discretion to determine if a penalty was committed. If accepted, ten yards and automatic first down. Yardage can be added to the end of the play.

- o live ball fouls, enforced from the end of the play
 - Illegal contact: When a defensive player extends or uses his hands, arms, etc. to make contact with the ball carrier. Examples: defender who tackles a ball carrier, pushes the ball carrier out of bounds, or strips the ball from the ball carrier's possession. If the penalty is accepted, ten yards is added to the end of the play. Exception: half the distance when appropriate.

PERSONAL FOULS

- 15 yard penalties
 - o dead ball, automatic first down
 - Unnecessary Roughness: A player deemed using unnecessary roughness via illegal contact. Examples: pushing a player out of bounds, tackling a player, or any other physical contact with players, fans, officials, staff, etc. that does not belong in flag football.
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Examples: using inappropriate language, especially to opposing players, fans, officials, staff, etc.
 - o dead ball, automatic touchdown
 - When a defender uses unnecessary roughness to bring the ball-carrier out of bounds or to the ground when it appears the ball-carrier is going to score a touchdown.



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- Note: In most cases, a player who receives a personal foul also receives a warning. A player who receives a second personal foul in the same game will be ejected and may be asked to leave the field. Depending on the severity of the foul, a player may be immediately ejected after the first offense. If they ejected player does not comply with the official/league coordinator, the game may be suspended and/or forfeited. Ejections may also lead to further league suspension.

OTHER

- If an inadvertent whistle blows the play dead during possession, the offensive team has the choice to take the ball where it was blown dead or may repeat the down from the original line of scrimmage.
- Fighting – Fighting is not allowed and will NOT be tolerated. All parties involved in fighting will be subject to ejection from the game at the referee's discretion and subject to ejection from the league at PLAYNOLA staff discretion.

STANDINGS

- After each week of games, the scores and standings will be posted and updated on the league's page on the PLAYNOLA website.

PLAYOFFS

- Typically, playoffs will follow the last week of regular season and are single elimination, lasting between 1 and 2 weeks. However, due to league size, the playoff format may differ between leagues. The league coordinator will notify team about that season's playoff format before the end of the regular season.
- Teams will be seeded based upon their record. Ties in team records will be broken in this order: head-to-head, points allowed, then points scored.
 - Note: Depending on the league size, not all teams are guaranteed a spot in the playoffs, though they will be offered at least one consolation game following the regular season.
- Playoff games will follow the same format during regulation as the regular season. However, if teams are tied at the end of regulation in the playoffs, overtime will be used.



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- **OVERTIME** - In the playoffs the Four-Downs and Out format will apply. The beginning of the game will start with a coin flip with the winning team deciding on offense or defense, (there is no option to decline). The losing team will decide which endzone to use. Teams will attempt to score in the same end zone. Each team will then have 4 downs to score from the 20 yard line. If a team scores, they will have the opportunity to go for one or two on the PAT. The game will be decided when one team scores more points in the rotation. No 1st downs will be awarded except in the case of a penalty. Interceptions will result in a turnover and may not be returned for any points. If the score is still tied after two complete overtime periods, each team must attempt a two-point conversion after they score a touchdown. From this point on all subsequent overtime periods will continue with each team attempting a two-point conversion after they score a touchdown.

REFEREES

- Each week PLAYNOLA will provide at least two officials for each game.

WAIVERS

In order to participate in the league, each participant must sign the team waiver. Participants who register online electronically “sign” the waiver when they complete the transaction. Waivers are provided and must be completed and handed in no later than the first night of play. Players not present the first week of play will still be required to sign a waiver with our staff before participating.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

Any questions regarding rules, policies, or eligibility of players must be addressed before the start of the game. Any team that would like to challenge the eligibility of an opposing player must do so before the start of the game. Players who have been placed on the roster and signed the waiver are eligible for playoffs. A formal protest may be filed before a game if an opposing player’s eligibility is in question. The player in question will be required to provide his player information (name, address, phone #, signature) in writing to a PLAYNOLA staff member prior to the start of the game. This qualifies as an official protest. Any protest made during a game or after a game will NOT be considered a formal protest. The game will then be played in its entirety as scheduled. Teams will be notified of all rulings on the identified eligibility discrepancy by the following business day – decisions will not be made on site. If the protest is proven to be legitimate, it will result in the forfeiture of the game in question. Games subsequent to the protested game may be



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rescheduled. The above procedure will also apply for any other “logged” protests. All rulings by PLAYNOLA staff are considered final.

SPORTSMANSHIP

The idea of PLAYNOLA is to have fun: Meet. Greet. Compete. We hope that all participants keep that in mind when becoming involved. Although the games may become intense, you still can be competitive while maintaining good sportsmanship. With this said, any behavior deemed unacceptable by staff may result in suspension and/or ejection from a game or the league. Abuse of officials, referees, and other staff will not be tolerated. PLAYNOLA reserves the right to remove a player from a game or a league if they are considered to be bringing down the quality of the league. PLAYNOLA will not tolerate fighting! Fighting will be an automatic ejection from any game and in most cases ejection from the league for the remainder of the season.

STAFF

To coordinate and run the league, our refs and/or staff will be available at all times to help the league run as smoothly as possible. If you have questions regarding schedules, policies, rule interpretations, directions to the bar, etc. please ask.

LEAGUE CANCELLATION/RAINOUT

Leagues may be cancelled due to existing weather conditions, dangerous or unplayable field conditions, facility constraints, etc. PLAYNOLA staff makes every effort to play all scheduled games, thus we will not cancel games until absolutely necessary. Therefore, if you are calling concerning a decision on a cancellation, remember we will not have an answer until close to the start of the league. If the league is cancelled, PLAYNOLA staff will update the website & voicemail immediately. If we do cancel, follow next week’s schedule unless otherwise notified, (i.e. If April 13 is cancelled teams should follow the April 20 schedule for their next game). The games that are cancelled will be made up towards the end of the season if time allows. In extreme circumstances, PLAYNOLA reserves the right to run a shortened season without a refund. PLAYNOLA also reserves the right to schedule games on days other than your regularly scheduled league day/night if necessary.

These policies are designed to make the league run as smoothly and safely as possible, and provide continuity for its participants. Each player in the league is responsible for this information: please advise your team of these rules and thanks for playing.

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