



FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

THE FIELD

The dimension of the field is approximately 45 yards long for 1st through 6th grades and 80 yards long for 7th through 12th grades. The width of the field is approximately 25 yards for 1st through 6th grades and 35 yards for 7th through 12th. Each field is divided laterally into equal halves within which the offensive team has four downs to cross into the next half.

THE GAME

DOWNS

There are four equally divided quadrants on the field. Each team shall have four downs to gain entry into the next quadrant, upon which another four downs shall be awarded. If penalties or poor play cause the offense to lose ground into a rear half, the forward half or goal line remains the amount to gain. The offense must then pass through the half in which the penalty occurred and cross into the next half in order to achieve a first down or a touchdown. However, on a change of possession, when a penalty sends the ball into a rear half, the offense has four downs to make it back into the half in which the penalty occurred, in order to achieve a first down. **A down is declared** when the person having the ball is tackled (knee touches ground, flag is pulled, or merely loses flag) and no penalty is called. If a penalty is called and accepted, the down remains the same, barring some exceptions, and yardage is walked off.

DEAD BALL

A dead ball is declared anytime the ball touches an offensive player and then touches the ground. The offense always keeps possession. Exceptions to the dead ball rule are:

1. When the ball touches the ground during the snap, before the designated rusher gets to the quarterback, in which case only the quarterback may pick the ball up and continue play.
2. If the ball touches the ground before a punt attempt on a scrimmage kick, the ball may be picked up and punted.

SCORING

Touchdowns count as six points, point after counts as one point, and a safety is two points and the ball.

Note: A player scoring the touchdown must raise his arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player. If the player is not de-flagged with one pull and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed, resulting in a penalty of loss of down.

TIMING

The game shall consist of two 25-minute halves. Halftime will be three minutes long. Second grade coaches will officiate their games, which helps the players learn about the game in a less intimidating fashion. Officials will be provided for third grade teams and above.

OUT OF BOUNDS

Players are considered out of bounds when they step on or over the perimeter lines.

THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE (LOS)

The scrimmage line is an imaginary line that runs the width of the field at the front tip of the football.

POINT OF INFRACTION (POI)

That point at which a violation of the rules has occurred and often the point from which the penalty is enforced. Examples of infractions are: hiding the flag, pass interference, illegal runs, tackles, and blocks.

THE EQUIPMENT

SHOES

All players must wear shoes. Most turf shoes and soft rubber cleat shoes (no metal), that are approved for soccer and/ or little league baseball are legal. Players wearing illegal shoes are ineligible to play until the problem is resolved.

FLAGS

All players shall wear a flag belt with three flags attached. A flag shall be positioned just to the rear of each hip and one down the back. The belt must be worn outside of the uniform shirt and may not be hidden. The flags cannot be secured in any way that would prohibit access or from being pulled.

PENALTY – HIDING THE FLAG: Blown dead at first tackle attempt

UNIFORM SHIRTS

All players are supplied with a uniform shirt from the Cedar Hills Recreation Department. Uniform shirts must be worn on the outside of any other clothing, including a jacket or sweatshirt. It is recommended that all upper body clothing be tucked in, but it is not required as long as the opposing players have access to the belt and flags.

WATCHES, JEWELRY, CASTS, ETC.

All watches and jewelry must be removed prior to the start of the game. Casts, hats, or anything dangerous to the player or others are not allowed. The referee or supervisor will be the judge to determine which items may be dangerous.

THE PLAYERS

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Six players shall constitute a team playing on the field at any one. More players on the field than the amount agreed upon is a violation.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION: Five steps from the LOS

THE KICKING GAME

THE KICKOFF

WHO: Team captains shall meet with the referees before the game to decide who will kick and who will receive.

HOW & WHERE: The kickoff shall be a place kick. The offense shall line up at the designated spot for each grade, using the width of the field, if desired. The defense can line up on their half of the field.

RECEIVING THE KICKOFF: The kickoff ball may be caught before or after touching the ground and returned. However, if the ball touched the ground after being touched by the receiving team, it becomes dead and is marked at that spot. Any kick going beyond the back line of the end zone will be placed on the two-point hash line in front of the goal line.

RECEIVING TEAM: The receiving team may not throw a forward pass; however, the receiver / runner may pass the ball laterally at any time.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL PASS ON KICKOFF: Dead ball and POI

OUT OF BOUNDS: Once the ball is kicked, the ball shall belong to the receiving team, regardless of the outcome. The receiving team will take possession of the ball two yards behind the closest down-field forward mark, unless it is in the front half of the field.

PENALTY – KICK OUT OF BOUNDS: Two yards behind the nearest forward mark, unless it is in the front half of the field

OFFSIDES ON KICKOFF: Breaking the LOS before the ball is put into play with a kick will result in an off-sides penalty.

PENALTY – OFFSIDES: Five steps from the LOS

(cont.)

THE SCRIMMAGE KICK (PUNT)

ANNOUNCE INTENTION TO KICK

A team must announce its intention to kick. If a kick is not intended, no announcement needs to be made. All players on the LOS and every member of the kicking team, except the kicker, may not move off the line or in any other direction until the ball is kicked.

RECEIVING THE SCRIMMAGE KICK

The receiving team may not attempt to block the kick, even from their side of the line. If this is attempted, the kicking team may elect to re-kick. The kicked ball may be caught and returned; however, if the ball touches the ground before being caught by the receiving team, it becomes dead and is marked at that spot. The kicked ball will be the possession of the receiving team: (1) where the ball touches the ground; (2) at the point it goes out-of-bounds; (c) where the receiver, after catching the ball on the fly, is tackled.

THE PASSING AND RUNNING GAME

OFFSIDES

Neither the offense nor the defense may in any way cross the LOS until the ball is put into play, either by kicking or hiking.

PENALTY – OFFSIDES: Five steps from the LOS

OFFENSIVE FORMATION

Any offensive formation is legal as long as: (1) The ball is hiked from between the legs or from the side to someone behind the line of scrimmage (2) **There is at least one player** on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. Players are considered on the LOS, if they are within two yards of that line.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL FORMATION: Five steps from the LOS

RUSHING

DESIGNATED RUSHERS

An Official will stand 10 steps from the line of scrimmage into the defense and act as a marker for all defensive players who want to rush the quarterback. NO defensive player can rush the quarterback unless he/she starts behind the official at 10 steps downfield. Any defensive player can rush the ball when the ball is handed off and in possession of an offensive player who did not receive the ball from the center.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL RUSH: 5 STEPS/ LOS-REPLAY DOWN

ROUGHING THE PASSER

Defensive players rushing the quarterback may not make any contact with the quarterback's upper body or arm as he releases the ball for a pass. Pulling the flag is the preferred method of stopping the pass.

PENALTY – ROUGHING THE PASSER: 10 steps from LOS - REPLAY DOWN

PASSING

The person receiving the initial snap of the ball cannot run the ball unless he hands it off or passes it laterally one time.

EVERYONE ELIGIBLE

All players are eligible to receive or throw passes.

ONE FORWARD PASS

Only one forward pass may be thrown during a play. Any pass thrown after ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage is an illegal pass.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL PASS: 5 STEPS FROM LOS and LOSS OF DOWN

LATERALS

Any pass thrown or tossed backwards is called a lateral. Any lateral which touches the ground shall be dead and that spot becomes the new LOS.

DEFENDING THE PASS

The defense may not hold, trip, or in any way interfere with or impede the pass receiver in his attempt to catch a thrown ball.

PENALTY – DEFENSIVE INTERFERENCE: 10 STEPS/ LOS and REPLAY DOWN

OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE

The offense may not hold, trip, or in any way interfere with a defensive player in his attempt to catch a thrown ball.

PENALTY – OFFENSIVE INTERFERENCE: 10 STEPS/ LOS and LOSS OF DOWN

RUNNING

BALL CARRIER

Ball carrier may jump or spin in a controlled manner. Ball carrier **may not** jump or spin in a way that the official views as dangerous to himself or any other person. (Jumping into defenders or spinning two times consecutively may be considered dangerous.)

PENALTY – ILLEGAL RUN: 5 STEPS/ POI and LOSS OF DOWN

Ball carrier may not stiff-arm, guard his flag to avoid a tackle, jump over other players, or run through tacklers. (Ball carrier must attempt to run around defenders to avoid head on collisions.)

PENALTY – ILLEGAL RUN: 5 STEPS/ POI and LOSS OF DOWN

Ball carrier may not intentionally fumble a ball forward in order to take advantage of field position or achieve a first down. In the case of an intentional forward fumble, the ball will be spotted at the point of release.

Ball carrier may not dive with ball to gain field advantage. Ball will be placed where dive was initiated.

NO CENTER SNEAK

The player who snaps the ball to the quarterback must hike between his legs and turn around to receive the handoff in order to carry the ball. (The center is still eligible as a receiver.)

PENALTY – ILLEGAL PLAY: REPLAY THE DOWN

MAN IN MOTION

The man in motion, or any person in the offensive backfield, may receive the ball from the Center, but cannot advance the ball past the line of scrimmage, unless a lateral is made.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL PLAY: REPLAY THE DOWN

TACKLING

PULLING THE FLAG

Tackling is the process of pulling the flag of the ball carrier. The tackler may not hold, pull down, or run through the ball carrier himself in order to pull the flag, nor may he deliberately trip the ball carrier, or intentionally push him out of bounds. The defense may not deliberately pull the flag of any player not in possession of the ball, or knock the ball out of the ball carriers hands. Once the flag has been pulled, it must be immediately dropped to the ground. Flags swung around in the air can be unsafe.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL TACKLE: 10 STEPS/ POI. (IF UNSAFE OR FLAGRANT: 10 YARDS/ POSSIBLE EJECTION)

LOST FLAG

A player is considered tackled if he has lost his belt and has possession of the ball.

DROPPED BALL

A dropped ball is a dead ball (not a fumble) with one exception. If the ball is dropped by a quarterback during the initial snap and before the rusher can pull the flag, the quarterback can pick up the ball once and continue the play.

UNFAIR CIRCUMSTANCE CLAUSE

If the defense makes an attempt to pull the flag of a ball carrier, but is unsuccessful because of some unfair circumstance, the official may blow the play dead and spot the ball at that point.

SPOTTING THE BALL

The ball will be spotted at the location of the ball carrier's torso when tackled. The ball will not necessarily be spotted where the flags fall on the field.

BLOCKING

OFFENSE

There is no blocking! Players may not run over, push, shoulder, hold, trip, or deliberately impede the defense, except by being an obstacle, stationary or moving, which the defense must run around in order to gain access to the ball carrier.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL BLOCK: 5 STEPS/LOS IF BLOCK OCCURRED BEHIND LOS, OR 5 STEPS POI and LOSS OF DOWN IF INFRACTION OCCURRED BEYOND LOS

Referee may impose harsher penalty if he feels the infraction was flagrant or dangerous.

DEFENSE

The defensive players must run around the offensive players in order to gain access to the ball carrier. **Elbows may not be raised from the body** with forearms or hands aimed toward the opponent when contact is made. They may not run over, push, shoulder, hold, trip, or in any deliberate way remove the offensive player from his station, even if that player is moving.

PENALTY – ILLEGAL BLOCK: 5 STEPS/LOS OR 5 STEPS/POI IF INFRACTION OCCURRED BEYOND LOS

Referee may impose harsher penalty if he feels the infraction was flagrant or dangerous.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND PENALTIES

SPORTSMANSHIP

Players or coaches shall not swear, scream, fight, spike the ball, complain about the referee's judgment, deliberately deter the official in his attempt to officiate the game, or in any manner show unsportsmanlike conduct.

PENALTY – UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT: 10 STEPS/LOS ASSESSED AT END OF PLAY

A more severe penalty may be assessed at the referee's discretion, depending on severity of offense. Ejection from the game or from the field is within the power of the official.

OFFICIAL

The official shall have the right to rule on anything not specifically covered in the rules. Judgment calls are not to be questioned or protested. Improper application of the rules by the official may be questioned by the coach, if done in prudent, mannerly way. The official is in charge of the game; his ruling shall be final. There will be a field supervisor at each location to assist with official/coach questions.

INADVERTENT WHISTLE

If the referee blows his whistle by mistake, the ball shall be placed at the spot of the ball when the whistle was inadvertently blown and the down counted, or the down may be replayed at the discretion of the offensive team.

WIN/ LOSS

There will be win/ loss records kept during the season for the 5th – 9th grades. We will end the season with a small tournament.

COACHING

Coaches will be allowed to coach on the field for the entire season in the 2nd grade leagues. 3rd – 4th grade offensive coach is allowed to stay on the field for the season. No 3rd – 4th grade defensive coach is allowed on the field. Fourth grade offensive coach will only be allowed to coach on the field of play

for the first four games. Coaches will **not** be allowed on the field of play for the 5th - 12th grade teams.

PENALTY SUMMARY

<u>INFRACTION</u>	<u>PENALTY</u>
Unsportsmanlike conduct	10 Steps/LOS assessed at end of play
Offensive Interference	10 Steps/LOS and Loss of Down
Defensive Interference (Pass interference)	10 Steps/LOS and FIRST DOWN
Roughing the Passer	10 Steps/LOS and Replay the down
Hiding the Flag	Blown dead at first tackle attempt
Flag Guarding	Blown dead and 5 yd. POI, penalty
Offsides	5 Steps/LOS
Illegal Participation	5 Steps/LOS
Illegal Rush	5 Steps/LOS
Illegal Formation	5 Steps/LOS
Illegal Pass	5 Steps/LOS and Loss of Down
Illegal Tackle	10 Steps/POI
Illegal Run	5 Steps/POI and Loss of Down
Illegal Pass on Kickoff	5 Steps/POI
Illegal Block on Offense	5 Steps/LOS if occurred behind LOS 5 Steps/POI and Loss of Down if infraction occurred beyond LOS
Illegal Block on Defense	5 Steps/LOS if occurred behind LOS 5 Steps/POI if occurred beyond LOS
Kickoff Out of Bounds	Ball placed 2 yards behind first down marker
Illegal Play	Replay the down

Official may assess 10-step penalty if any of the above infractions were flagrant or occurred in a dangerous manner.

When an infraction occurs, the offended team usually has the choice to accept the result of the play or assess the penalty for that infraction.