Game Rules for Flag Football

NOTE: All rules must be followed as stated herein. No exceptions are allowed even if opposing coaches mutually agree to a rule change prior to a game **(i.e. the rules are NOT negotiable).**

YMCA Pledge

- Before each game both teams will recite the YMCA pledge at midfield

Game Ball

- Kindergarten- Nerf ball
- 1st and 2nd Grade- Pee Wee sized ball
- 3rd and Up- Junior sized ball

ALL TEAMS WILL PROVIDE THEIR OWN GAME BALL

The Field

a. The field size is approximately 50 yards in length (goal line to goal line) by 30 yards in width for Kinder and 1st Grade and 60 yards in length by 30 yards in width for 2nd grade and older.

b. The end zones are 5 yards deep.

Required Players

a. 6 players for ALL grades (minimum of 5 players must be present to start the game);

Uniforms

- All players are required to wear a jersey with a YMCA logo. In case of jersey color conflicts of opposing teams (even if the color of the lettering is different), **the Visiting team is responsible for wearing a different colored replacement jersey for that game (e.g. pennies).** The replacement jersey does not need a logo.
- Flags must be at least 15 inches long and cannot be the same color as the player's shorts
- Shirts/Jersey must be tucked in for flags to be visible
- Velcro flags are not permitted

Timing of Game

a. The game will consist of two halves.
b. The first half will be 20 minutes with a running clock.
c. The second half will be 18 minutes with a running clock followed by 7 offensive plays to end the game.
d. **Extra points do not count towards the 7 plays**.
e. The game may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines the penalty.
f. Halftime is three-minutes.
g. Each team is allowed two (30 second) timeouts per half. The clock will stop when a timeout is called and not resume until the snap of the next play.
h. **No overtime period will be played during the regular season. Games tied after completion of regulation will remain tied.** In the case of a playoff game, each team will receive one offensive possession (winner of coin flip will decide offense or defense first). Each team's possession will begin at midfield. If the score is tied after each possession the first team to be on offense will be on defense and the first team to complete a two-point conversion will win.

Player Participation/Substitution (All Grades)

a. Each player must play at least ½ of each half of the game.
b. Coaches will be allowed to freely substitute players. Generally speaking, a player who is on the sideline during an entire offensive series should be on the field during the following defensive series, and vice versa.
c. A coach may freely rotate players in and out on offense or defense, but it is the responsibility of each coach on a team to make sure that each player plays ½ of each half of a game.
d. If a coach is found to have violated this rule, the punishment shall be determined by the YMCA Sports Department. Such punishment may include game forfeiture by the offending team and/or suspension of any coach on the offending team for one or more games or for the entire season.

The Basics

- A coin toss determines the first possession. The visiting team will call "heads" or "tails". The winner of the toss may choose to, take the ball, or defer. The team that does not win the toss may choose which end they will defend.

- **Snaps**
  - Kinder: Coach QB must snap directly from the line of scrimmage (snaps must be initiated from the ground itself) (centers are optional)
  - 1st grade/2nd grade: Side snaps are allowed
  - 3rd Grade and up: Snaps must occur between the legs.
  - Center will not be allowed to run the ball after the snap

    - Center must advance the 1 yard in order to be eligible to receive a pass

- One coach per team is allowed on the field at any given time. Defensive coaches must position themselves before the snap as to not physically aid a defensive player or interfere with any offensive player. Players not in the game must be outside the field of play on the sidelines. (For 3rd – 6th Grade, one coach is allowed on the field for <u>offense only.</u> No coach may be on the field for the defense.)

Scoring

- **Touchdown:** 6 points

- **Extra point:** 1 point-played from the 6 yd line, **pass only** (as in "no-run zones" pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage) or 2 points-played from the 12 yd line (run or pass)

- **Safety:** 2 points

- **Interception return on extra point:** 2pts (Coach QB and 3rd grade and up leagues)

Running

- <u>**In all leagues- whichever player receives the snap (i.e. the quarterback) cannot carry the ball across the line of scrimmage under any circumstance (e.g. defensive rush).**</u>

- Offense may use multiple handoffs or laterals behind the line of scrimmage (one forward lateral only)

- "No-run zones" are located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards from the offense's side of midfield. "No-run zones" are designed to avoid short yardage, power running situations. **Passes (including shovel) must be past the line of scrimmage in the "no-run zones".** A pass or forward lateral behind the line of scrimmage does not allow the defense to defend the ball in the air and effectively translates to a "run" in the "no-run zone"

- Any player who takes a handoff or backwards lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

- Once the ball has been handed off or there is a fake handoff, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving).

- The ball is **spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled**, not where the ball is.

- Absolutely no laterals or pitches, after the ball crosses the line of scrimmage.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).

- Only one player is allowed in motion when the ball is snapped. Shifts prior to the snap are permitted.

- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.

Passing

- Shovel passes are allowed.

- The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock" if no rush. Seven-second clock is no longer in effect if a rusher passes the line of scrimmage (3rd and up).

- If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds (no rush), the play is called dead resulting in a loss of down.

- Once the ball is handed off or a rusher passes the line of scrimmage, the seven second rule is no longer in effect.

SPECIFIC RULES FOR COACH QB

- Coach is the QB
- The Coach QB should remain within two strides of the position he/she received the center exchange
- The Coach QB has 7 seconds to distribute the ball (the line judge will keep official time)
- Once the Coach QB hands, pitches or passes the ball to a player, the Coach QB can no longer handle the ball on that play (i.e. no "flea flickers")
- No rushing the Coach QB
- Coach QB must keep the ball visible to defense at all times (e.g. no turning your back to the defense to make a handoff or play action fake)
- Coach QB cannot make pass fakes (i.e. no pump fakes)- play will be ruled dead at the line of scrimmage
- No defensive player may progress past the line of scrimmage until a hand-off or play action fake has taken place.
- No offensive player may be targeted for 2 consecutive plays (running or passing)

- This includes if player did not catch the pass

Dead Balls (play is ruled "dead when)

- Ball carrier's flag is pulled
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds
- Touchdown or safety is scored
- Any part of the ball carrier's body hits the ground, other than his feet and hands
- Ball carrier's flag or belt falls off
- Ball snapped over QB's head is returned to the line of scrimmage with a loss of down (all leagues)
- Quarterback may pick up a bad snap in the area or a fumbled snap (Referee discretion)
- There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground (except for the center-QB exchange).

Rushing the Quarterback (Grades 3rd – 6th)

- **The defensive team is allowed <u>to pass-rush one player</u> on every play.** The pass-rusher is the only defensive player that may cross the line of scrimmage prior to a hand-off, lateral, pass, or play-action fake.
- Game referee, will designate ten yards from the line of scrimmage (10-yard rule). The pass-rusher must remain behind the marker or referee until the ball is snapped (the rusher may displace himself laterally from the marker or referee). The pass-rusher is free to rush as soon as the ball is snapped.
- **Any and all defensive players may cross the line of scrimmage immediately after the ball leaves the QBs hands on a hand-off, lateral, or pass (the 10-yard rule is no longer in effect). All defenders may also rush on any play-action pitch or hand-off.**

Kickoffs- No kickoffs will take place. At the beginning of each half, after touchdowns and safeties, the ball will be placed on the "receiving team's" 5-yard line.

Blocking- No Blocking or contact BEYOND/AT/BEHIND the line of scrimmage. This includes intentional picks and screens.

Ball Carrier

a. The ball carrier may not stiff arm defensive players.

b. The ball carrier may not deliberately run into/over a defensive player.

c. The ball carrier cannot lower his head in a spearing manner to prevent a defensive player from removing his flag.

d. The ball carrier may not use his arms and/or hands to protect the flag (Flag Guarding)

e. The ball carrier may not leave his feet in order to protect the flag.

Tackling (Removing the Flag)

a. **A ball carrier is considered tackled when any or all flags are removed from his belt. It does not matter who removes a flag or if the flag falls out.**

b. A player who has a flag removed is considered down if he comes into possession of the ball by pass, handoff, lateral, or interception. He is considered down at the spot of possession. A flag removed by the opponent prior to possession is a penalty.

c. A ball carrier is also considered down if any part of his body, excluding his feet and hand(s), touches the ground. Accidental slips or tripping over own teammates are included.

d. A ball carrier is considered down if his shirt, belt or shorts are determined to have impeded the defenders' ability to remove a flag (e.g. shirt becomes untucked or flags are not properly placed on carrier's hips)

e. Defensive players may not hold onto a ball carrier in order to remove the flag.

f. Defensive players may not push a ball carrier down.

g. Defensive players may not touch or grab the ball carrier's face.

h. Defensive players may not block or push a ball carrier out of bounds.

i. Before each snap every player must have all their belts fastened properly and all flags attached.

j. No alternative methods of securing flags to a player (i.e. taping or tucking) are permitted. Flags must be worn in the manner they were designed.

Offense

- The offensive team must have a minimum of three players (including the center) on the line of scrimmage.

- The quarterback or any player who receives the snap may not advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage directly after receiving the snap.

- All players are eligible for a pass, pitch or hand-off.

- The ball may be handed off or thrown in any direction behind the line of scrimmage.

- In order for the center to be eligible for a forward pass, he must advance one yard beyond the line of scrimmage.

- A pass caught by the passer is dead and will be ruled incomplete.

- A pass must be caught by a player who gains possession with at least one foot in bounds (and no foot touching out of bounds) to be ruled a completed pass.

- The offense will have 25 seconds to snap the ball from the time the referee sets the ball.

- Once the ball is set, no one (including the center) may pick up the ball other than to snap the ball to begin a play.

- First downs are gained by advancing the ball to midfield.

- Teams have 3 downs to gain a first down or a touchdown. If the offense does not achieve a first down after 3 downs, the defense gains possession at their own 5 yard line.

Fumbles and Interceptions

- All fumbled balls are considered dead balls and will be spotted at the point of contact with the ground.

- A ball that is fumbled forward or caught by a defender will be spotted back at the point the fumble occurred.

- Offensive fumbles in their own end zone are safeties.

- Interceptions can occur in all divisions.
  - Interceptions in coach QB leagues may not be advanced. Play will begin on their own 5-yard line
  - Interceptions can be advanced in 3rd grade and up leagues.

- An intercepting player must have at least one foot in bounds (and no foot touching out of bounds) when possession takes place.
  a. A tipped or deflected pass is live and may be caught and advanced by the offensive team or intercepted and advanced by the defensive team.

Defensive Penalties and Enforcement (not an all-inclusive list)

- Illegal tackling by the defense – 10 yard penalty, automatic first down and a team warning will be issued. Repeated offenses by a team or player could result in ejection (referee discretion)

- Offsides - 5 yard penalty and repeat down

- Illegal rush, 3rd grade and up (e.g. more than one rusher, rusher begins in front marker at the snap) – 5 yard penalty and automatic first down

- Illegal Contact (holding, pushing, etc.)- 5 yard penalty and automatic first down

- Illegal flag pull (i.e. pulling a player's flag before he has the ball)- 10 yards and automatic first down

- Illegal moving of the ball once it has been set by the referee – 5 yard penalty.

- Defensive pass interference – 10 yard penalty and automatic first down.

Offensive Penalties and enforcement-

- Illegal blocking or screening by the offense –5 yard penalty from the spot of the foul

- Pass Interference by the offense – 10 penalty yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

- Illegal forward pass – 5 yard penalty from line of scrimmage.

- Offense runs ball across line of scrimmage without completing 2 exchanges – 5 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

- False start, illegal motion or illegal formation – 5 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage

- Delay of Game – 5 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.

- Ball carrier flag guards, stiff arms, jumps to avoid flag pull, runs into/over, or spears- 10 yard penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down

General Penalties and enforcement (not an all-inclusive list)

- Illegal securing of the flags – 5 yard penalty from line of scrimmage and loss of down

- Unsportsmanlike conduct – 15 yards automatic first down and loss of down. Team warning issued

- Any flags that are deemed shortened or altered in a manner as to gain a competitive advantage – Automatic forfeiture