

Tallahassee Parks and Recreation

Youth Flag Football Rules Manual

A. REGULATIONS

1. **Number of Coaches per Team** – Each team will have two (2) coaches, a head coach and an Assistant Coach, if possible. **Rookie and Pee Wee ONLY:** One (1) Coach allowed on the field per defense and offense.
2. **Player Eligibility** – September 1 of the current year is the age determining date. A child may play up one division but may not play down.
 - a. Rookie: 4-6 year olds
 - b. Pee Wee: 6-8 year olds
 - c. Junior: 8-10 year olds
 - d. Intermediate: 11-13 year olds
3. **Team Pictures/Trophies** – TPRNA cannot endorse or take responsibility for team activities beyond what is established as standard procedure in conducting this program. For parents choosing to participate in activities such as photography sessions, etc., these activities are based on personal choice and the parent is ultimately responsible. If parents choose to undertake additional activities, asking for mandatory donations from team members is prohibited. All donations must be voluntary and cannot affect a participant's rights to any benefits afforded to other participants.

B. UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

Each player shall be furnished with a team shirt which they may keep. Coaches will be furnished with a duffle bag, two balls, flag belts, and kickoff tees (Junior and Intermediate only). All uniforms and/or equipment not provided by TPRNA must be approved by a park supervisor.

1. **Balls**
 - a. Rookie & Pee Wee – Pee Wee Size
 - b. Junior – Junior Size
 - c. Intermediate – Intermediate Size
2. **Belts** – If a flag belt does not fit a player, the park supervisor may request another belt for the player.
3. **Shirts** – Team shirts must be worn at all times and cannot be altered in any way. All shirts must be tucked into the pants. **Please Note:** *If, in the judgement of an official, a shirt that is out of the pants prevents a defensive player from pulling the flag belt, the ball carrier is down, and a three (3) yard penalty will result.*
4. **Shorts** – A player's shorts may not be the same color as the flags on the flag belt. Player's shorts must also not have pockets or belt loops. **Please Note:** Any child that has shorts with pockets or belt loops will not be allowed to participate.
5. **Shoes/Hats** – Players must wear close toed shoes at all times. No metal or screw-on cleats allowed. Hats or other head garments may not be worn during play.

C. FORMAT OF THE GAME

1. **Playing Field** – All divisions will play on a field measuring thirty (30) by sixty (60) yards with yardage lines every fifteen (15) yards. There shall be end lines that extend eight (8) yards beyond the goal line.
2. **Length of Playing Time** – The length of a quarter shall be ten (10) minutes. There will be one (1) minute between quarters and five (5) minutes between halves. The clock shall not stop except for injury and thirty (30) second timeouts. However, in the 2nd and 4th quarters, the clock shall be stopped in the last two minutes as in regulation football.

3. **Timeouts** – Each team is granted two (2) timeouts per half. Each time out shall be a maximum of thirty (30) seconds. Play that has been stopped because of injury does not constitute a time out.
4. **Play Clock** – There will be a twenty-five (25) second play clock which begins when the ball is marked for play. A delay of game will be called if the ball is not snapped before the (25) second play clock expires.
5. **Scoring**
 - a. Touchdown = Six (6) points
 - b. Safety = Two (2) points
 - c. Extra Point = 1 point will be awarded if the attempt is made from the two (2) yard line, 2 points will be awarded if the attempt is made from the five (5) yard line. If the defensive team intercepts the pass and runs it back, 2 points will be awarded.
6. **Safety** – A safety is when a defensive player pulls the flag belt of an offensive player behind that offensive player's own goal line. Two points are awarded to the team on the defense, and the ball is put into play at the kick-off mark with the team scoring the points receiving the ball as in regular football. A place kick or punt may be used.
7. **Choice of Goals** – A coin toss will determine whether a team is receiving the ball to begin the game or deferring to the second half. Teams will change directions after the first half.
8. **Offense and Defense**- Seven (7) players from each team participate at any one time.
 - a. Offense – A team may have one to six players on the line. No player on the line of scrimmage may simulate action prior to the snap.
 - b. Defense – There is no limit to the number of players that may be on the line of scrimmage. However, defensive linemen must be three (3) yards behind the line of scrimmage and cannot rush until the ball has been snapped.
9. **Player Participation Rule** – All players must play in every game, and all players should be treated equally, regardless of ability. To ensure this occurs, the player participation rule will be mandatory.
 - a. Coaches may only designate seven (7) players for offense each quarter. Those players cannot play defense in the same quarter unless they have been designated to play both ways. If a team has less than 14 players, the coach must identify which players will play both ways per quarter. This must be done per quarter. All players must have an opportunity to play both ways before a player may be used again.
 - b. In regard to playing time, the coach may use their own judgement if a player is late without a good reason or has completely missed scheduled practices/games. A coach should always check with the parents first to determine the circumstances surrounding late arrival(s) or missed practices/games.
10. **Kickoffs** – The ball is put into play by a place kick from the kickoff line. The receiving team will have its linemen at the mid-field line. Neither team may advance until the ball has been kicked. If the ball touches the ground after coming into contact with any player of the receiving team, the ball is considered dead. If the ball goes out of bounds on the 1st kick off, a three (3) yard penalty will be assessed on the 2nd kick-off attempt. In the event a kick-off goes out of bounds the second time, the receiving team will put the ball in play at the mid-field line – **NO OPTION.**
 - a. Rookie and Pee Wee – Start possession on the 15-yard line
 - b. Junior and Intermediate – Kick from the 15-yard line and the opposing team will stand behind the 30-yard line (mid-field) line.
11. **Neutral Zone and Line of Scrimmage** – A neutral zone of three (3) yards will be observed; however, if the line of scrimmage is less than three (3) yards from the defense's goal line or first down line, this rule does not apply, and the neutral zone will be the goal line or first down line.
12. **First Downs** – A first down is gained when a team crosses the next closest forward yard line. The field will be marked off at fifteen (15) yard intervals. A team will have a series of four (4) consecutive downs in which to

advance the ball to or across the next first down line. If a team loses yardage, they must still cross the original line established before obtaining a first down.

13. **Passes** – All players are eligible to receive passes. Any defensive player may intercept a pass. An incomplete forward pass is returned to the line of scrimmage even though it may have been preceded by a successful lateral pass. A forward pass may be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage. A player may not pass the ball to himself. On an incomplete lateral pass, the ball is dead at the point it hit the ground. A team may throw as many forward passes as desired, as long as each pass is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. A pass may not cross the line of scrimmage and be thrown back over the line and thrown forward again. A completed pass is when a receiver comes down with the ball with at least one foot down in bounds (like college football).
14. **Downed Ball** – A ball carrier is considered down and the ball dead when an opposing player secures possession of the ball carrier's flag belt. The defensive player should stand as close to the point of possession of the flag belt as possible. In the event of a flag belt dropping without being pulled, the runner is not down until the defender has touched the ball carrier with one hand anywhere.
15. **Dead Ball** – An incomplete sideward or backward pass is a dead ball. The same applies to a pass or snap from the center which is fumbled. In both cases, a loss of down is the result. The rule for fumbles applies. The ball is dead where it first hits the player or possession is lost.
16. **Fumble** – Fumbles are declared dead the instant the ball hits the ground and goes to the team who fumbles. In the case the forward fumbles, the ball is placed where the player fumbled. If fumbled backward, the ball is placed where it hits.
17. **Punting** – Fourth down punts must be declared, and the defense cannot rush. Quick kicks are illegal and will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
 - a. **Rookie and Pee Wee Only:** Coaches may opt to place the ball two (2) lines from the line of scrimmage or if across midfield on the extra point line instead of punting procedures.
18. **Center** – The center must snap the ball between the legs. Once the center hikes the ball, he or she cannot be given the ball back from the quarterback by just touching the quarterback's hand. Once the center has crossed the line of scrimmage they may receive a pass from the quarterback.
19. **Quarterback** – The quarterback may hand-off the ball to the side, front or behind them. He or she may throw to anyone including the center once the center has crossed the scrimmage line.
20. **Inadvertent Whistle** - If the whistle blows inadvertently before the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, the down is replayed. If the ball carrier is past the line of scrimmage, the offensive team will have the option of accepting the play at the time of the whistle or replaying the down. **NOTE:** *If, in the judgement of an official, the ball carrier would have scored had there been no whistle, a touchdown may be awarded.*

D. PENALTY DEFINITIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

LOS = Line of Scrimmage

POI = Point of Infraction

Previous Spot = The spot where the ball was last snapped (LOS) or where ball was kicked off.

Succeeding Spot = The spot where the ball is next snapped or kicked off.

The basic spot in a loose ball play is the previous spot. The basic spot on a running play is the end of the run. A loose ball play includes all action from the time of the snap until a legally thrown ball is caught, intercepted, or incomplete. A running play includes 1) any run or scramble behind the LOS in which the ball carrier does not throw a pass or pitch, and 2) beyond the LOS, any run and/or action during any part of a run after a catch of a pass, kick or punt. On kick-off and punts, any action before the catch is part of a loose ball play.

1. **Illegal Pass** – A forward pass or forward lateral beyond the LOS, or a player passing the ball behind the LOS after the player or ball had previously crossed the LOS. **PENALTY:** 5 yards, loss of down and play continues.
2. **Hurdling/Jumping** – Jumping and making contact with a defensive player in a set position. It is not hurdling when a ball carrier jumps over a defensive player on the ground (to prevent injury). **PENALTY:** 5 yards from POI, same down, and play continues.
3. **Flag Guarding** – Dropping a shoulder toward a defender or using an arm to prevent a defender from detaching a flag belt. **PENALTY:** 10 yards from POI, same down, and play continues.
4. **Spinning** – A ball carrier that rotates his or her body more than 180 degrees in an attempt to avoid having their flag belt pulled. A ball carrier may spin 180 degrees or less, take at least two running strides (backwards) and continue to spin, providing the second rotation is not more than 180 degrees. **PENALTY:** 10 yards from POI, same down, and play continues.
5. **Charging/Ducking Head into Defender** – A ball carrier must attempt to avoid contact with a defensive player. Deliberately charging an opponent will not be tolerated and will result in a penalty. **PENALTY:** 10 yards from POI, same down, and play continues.
6. **Extending Ball from Body/Diving** – A ball carrier may not attempt to gain additional yardage by extending the ball from their body or diving in the vicinity of a defensive player. A ball carrier may not attempt to do this in order to gain a first down or break the plane of the goal line. **Exception:** A defensive player can dive to pull a flag belt. **PENALTY:** 10 yards from POI, same down, and play continues.
7. **Illegal Screen** – Screening is defined as maintaining a position between a defender and the ball carrier. Moving screens are not allowed, screening must be stationary. A player setting a screen, must set his or her screen four (4) yards or approximately (2) running strides from a defender. His or her arms and hands must remain straight down by their sides. No part of their body, except their feet, shall be in contact with the ground throughout the screen. Sticking a knee, hip, foot, elbow, etc. out and making contact is an illegal block. This would also apply to an illegal pick by an offensive player who is not the primary receiver. **PENALTY:** 10 yards from POI, same down, and play continues.
8. **Illegal Block** – Not only does this apply to the definition of illegal screen as described below, but it would also apply to a stationary block where the “blocker” uses his hands, arms, elbows, hips or any part of the body to make contact with or impede the progress of a defensive player attempting to “down” the ball carrier or rush the quarterback. **PENALTY:** 10 yards POI, same down, and play continues.
9. **Illegal Participation** – This violation occurs when an offensive player steps out of bounds or touches the sideline/end line during a pass route, returns to the playing field and touches or catches a thrown ball. **PENALTY:** 10 yards, same down, and play continues.
10. **Offensive Holding** – This violation occurs when an offensive player impedes the progress of a defensive player from making a play on the ball carrier, the quarterback or defending a pass. Grabbing the shirt, shorts, or any part of the body, would be construed offensive holding. **PENALTY:** 10 yards, same down, and the play continues.
11. **Illegal Procedure** – This violation may include an offensive player more than fifteen (15) yards from the ball prior to the snap, excluding the player in motion. A violation occurs when the center does not snap the ball between the legs or when he carries the ball from the line of scrimmage. Another example of illegal procedure occurs when more than one player is in motion. **PENALTY:** 5 yards, same down, and play continues.
12. **Illegal Motion** – This violation occurs when a player in motion moves in the direction of his opponent’s goal prior to the snap of the ball. However, the player in motion may move parallel to the line of scrimmage or in the direction of his own goal before the snap of the ball. **PENALTY:** 5 yards, same down, and play continues.
13. **False Start (offense) / Encroachment (defense)** – This violation occurs when there is any movement by the offense or defense, excluding a player in motion, before the snap of the ball. Once detected, the official should sound their whistle immediately to kill the play and stop subsequent action that could result in injury. **PENALTY:** 5 yards, same down, dead ball.

14. **Offsides** – This violation occurs when a player (offense or defense) lines up with any part of their body extending over the line of scrimmage or the defensive rush line. This a live ball infraction with play continuing. The defending team has the option of taking the result of the play or penalty from the previous spot. PLEASE NOTE: Do not confuse this infraction with a false start. Do not sound your whistle once the violation occurs. Remember to exercise preventative officiating in your attempt to have the players back up prior to the snap of the ball. **PENALTY:** 5 yards, same down, and play continues.
15. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – Unsportsmanlike conduct is defined an inappropriate behavior, verbal or other, toward an opposing player, coach or official and may result in ejection from the game. Inappropriate behavior includes, but is not limited to cursing, explicit gestures, throwing equipment, spiking the ball, punching or kicking the bench, etc. This applies to all players and coaches. If ejected, a coach and/or player must leave the field within one (1) minute, or the game will be forfeited. Please Note: If a coach and/or player ejected, they will be suspended for the next game and may be removed for the remainder of the season depending on the severity of the offense.
- a. In addition, any parent or spectator that displays unsportsmanlike conduct toward an opposing player, coach or official will be ejected from the playing area. If the parent or spectator does not comply within one (1) minute, the associated team will forfeit the game. Any player, coach or fan that threatens an official will be subject to suspension for the remainder of the season. **PENALTY:** 15 yards, succeeding spot (if flagrant, automatic 1st down also)
16. **Unnecessary Roughness** – An illegal action where a player uses methods beyond what is necessary to “block” or pull the flag of another player.
- a. Offensive Penalty – 15 yards, live ball, loss of down
 - b. Defensive Penalty – 15 yards from succeeding spot, live ball, automatic 1st down.
17. **Pass Interference** –
- a. Defensive Pass Interference – Making intentional physical contact with an intended receiver after a ball has been thrown and before it has been touched by the receiver, in order to hinder or prevent a catch. The offensive team may accept the result of the play or the penalty. **PENALTY:** Ball is placed at the spot of the interference, first down. If penalty occurs in the end zone, the ball will be placed on the one-yard line, first down.
 - b. Offensive Pass Interference – This violation occurs when a player on offense interferes with a defensive player’s attempt to intercept the pass. Offensive pass interference does not apply on a ball that is overthrown or not catchable. However, such action could result in unnecessary roughness against the offence. **PENALTY:** 15 yards, previous spot, loss of down. If interference occurs on the 4th down and penalty is accepted, after measurement, the ball belongs to the defense.
18. **Defense Holding** – This violation occurs when a defender holds an offensive player. This includes grabbing the shirt, shorts, or body part of the offensive player. **PENALTY:** 5 yards, same down and play continues.
19. **Spiking the Ball** – This violation occurs when a player intentionally spikes the ball after completing a play. **PENALTY:** 15 yards, same down and play continues. A warning for unsportsmanlike is issued. If this occurs after a touchdown or two-point conversion, the 15 yards will be accessed on the kickoff.
20. **Stripping the Ball** – this violation occurs when a player strips the ball or takes the ball from the offensive players hand during either a hand-off from quarterback to running back or during an offensive run. **Penalty:** ten yards, and an automatic first down.