

EPYFL Spring Flag Rules

LEVELS:

1. **8U, 10U, 12U, 14U and High School.** *Players age as of August 1st of that playing season is considered to be their league age for a given level. Rosters with player's name and birthdate are to be turned into the spring league officials by March 15th.
2. **This is a 5v5 format that is similar to NFL Flag rules with some variations.**

GAME:

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) down to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
 - a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield on 3 downs and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield, the opposing team will start its possession from that spot.
 - b. Offensive teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", when asked by the referee and prior to the 'Ready for Play'.
 - c. Teams may use a timeout only change the declaration of 'Play' at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - d. If the declaration is "Punt", the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing team's 5-yard line, 1st down, with NO option to change the declaration.
 - e. If the offense fails to score after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts at its 5-yard line.
4. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game of defense.

EQUIPMENT:

1. All players must wear belts with pop-in flags.
2. All players must wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.
3. Game balls will be age specific:
 - a. U8 and under – K-2 footballs
 - b. U12 – TDJ footballs
 - c. U14 – TDY footballs
4. No metal tip football cleats are allowed.
5. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
6. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.
7. Players may wear soft shell helmets, but they must be secured at all times while on the playing field. Headgear is mandatory for U8 and under levels.
8. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants in they hang below the belt line.

9. Players are encouraged to wear shorts and pants that do not have pockets.
10. Flags cannot be the same color as the shorts or pants.

FIELD:

1. The field will be 30-yards wide by 70-yards with two 10-yard end zones.
 - a. The field has a midfield line to gain. No-run zones are located five yards prior to the line to gain and five yards prior to the end zone in the offense's direction.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches on two no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a touchdown).

TIMING and OVERTIME:

1. All games are played with a continuous clock consisting of two 24-minute halves, officials will track scoring for each team, there is no mercy rule in effect. Officials will record winner of each contest and report to league. The clock stops for injuries and the official's discretion.
2. Halftime is four minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
4. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half. They do not carry over.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. Overtime is only applicable for tournament games. Regular games can end in a tie.
8. For overtime in tournament games, the following occurs:
 - a. The home team calls the toss to determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
 - b. Each team gets one play from the 10-yard line to score. If only one team scores, then the game is over.
 - c. If both teams score, or neither team scores, overtime continues with one play from the 10-yard line for each team until only one team scores.
 - d. Interceptions can be returned for a score in overtime.
9. There are no timeouts in overtime.

SCORING:

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. PAT (point after touchdown): 1 point (from 5-yard line) or 2 points (from 10-yard line)
 - a. Note: a 1 point PAT is pass only; a 2 point PAT can be a run or pass
3. Safety: 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flag is pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls off, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.

4. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
5. Organization league reps will provide EPYFL officials the game results and EPYFL will track winner of each game .

COACHES:

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to EPYFL philosophies, guidelines and code of conduct.
2. Coaches are permitted to coach from the sideline.
 - a. 1 offensive coach is allowed on the playing field at all levels.
 - b. 1 defensive coach is allowed on the playing field at the U9 and under levels. This defensive coach must be by the defensive side referee by the start of the play.
3. All team photographers, manager, position coaches, team moms, fans, etc. are required to remain a minimum of 10 yards off the field in a designated viewing area.
4. Coaches are responsible to keep your fans and any other team associated members in the designated areas.

LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL:

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul in any player on offense or defense enters the neutral zone. The official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls off.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 seconds pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.

- j. Ball-carrier leaves their feet other than jump cuts, spinning or to avoid a downed player on the field of play.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. If the ball is fumbled forward, then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.

- 8. If inadvertent whistle occurs, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where the whistle blew and the down is consumed
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage

If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.

RUNNING:

- 1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- 2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
- 3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. A center sneak play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
 - b. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - c. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- 4. Absolutely NO pitches or laterals of any kind.
- 5. No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE.
- 6. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- 7. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
- 8. Ball carriers may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB's passing progression or if there is clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player and the play will continue without stoppage.
- 9. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
- 10. Offensive players in close proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
- 11. Flag obstruction – ALL jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
- 12. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- 13. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

PASSING:

1. All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and ball out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
 - a. There is no intentional grounding.
 - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
 - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second 'pass clock'. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second play clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. If the QB throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

RECEIVING:

1. All players are eligible to receive passes, including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Only one player is allowed at a time. All motions must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

RUSHING THE PASSER:

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. (For the U5 division, defenders may not rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield.)
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:

- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage & first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from the line of scrimmage & first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage & first down).
 - iv. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during the play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.
- c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- 4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass, however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- 5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. The PATH is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the QB. PATH does not move once the quarterback moves. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and avoid contact.
- 6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flag(s) are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where the possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled.
 - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

FLAG PULLING:

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier’s possession at any time.
4. If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during a play while the player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender’s access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, ball, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

FORMATIONS:

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least one second before the ball is snapped.
 - b. One player at a time may go in motion at least one yard behind the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT:

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is **NOT** allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders must give free release off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. **ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
6. Fans must adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer your players, not to harass the officials or other team.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
 - b. Stay in the end zone areas, not between fields.
 - c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense: 10 yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down.
 - b. Offense: 10 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down.

PENALTIES:

- A. General:
 1. The referee will call all penalties.
 2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
 3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)

4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about the rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
8. Spot fouls in end zone:
 - a. Defensive: Ball on one-yard line, first down
 - b. Offensive: Safety
- B. Defensive spot fouls:
 1. Defensive pass interference: automatic first down
 2. Holding: +5 yards & automatic first down
 3. Stripping: +10 yards & automatic first down
- C. Offensive spot fouls:
 1. Screening, blocking or running with the ball: -10 yards & loss of down
 2. Charging: -10 yards & loss of down
 3. Flag guarding: -10 yards & loss of down
- D. Defensive penalties:
 1. Defensive unnecessary roughness: +10 yards & automatic first down
 2. Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct: +10 yards & automatic first down
 3. Offside: +5 yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down
 4. Illegal rush: +5 yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down
 5. Illegal flag pull: +5 yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down
 6. Roughing the passer: +5 yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down
 7. Taunting: +5 yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down
- E. Offensive Penalties:
 1. Offensive unnecessary roughness: -10 yards & loss of down
 2. Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct: -10 yards & loss of down
 3. Offside / false start: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 4. Illegal forward pass: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 5. Offensive pass interference: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 6. Illegal motion: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 7. Delay of Game: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 8. Impeding the rusher: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 9. Illegal procedure: -5 yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down