

SPRING INDOOR NFL FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE

2024 League Manual & Rules



LEAGUE DIRECTOR

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The Spring Indoor NFL Flag Football League is a RECREATION league. No standings will be kept. There are no playoffs or awards!

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. A player's age must fall within the specific Grades 1st – 4th.

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) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elect 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 field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
6. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	Official's whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.
Shovel Pass	A legal pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

EQUIPMENT

1. The League provides each player with flag belts and each team one football. Extra footballs are available to use at practices, but must be returned to the SportsPlex to be shared amongst teams.
2. Players must wear shoes. Molded cleats are allowed, however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed.
3. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Official NFL Flag jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Player jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line.
7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
 - a. **Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants!**

FIELD

1. The Field size is 25 yards by 60 yards with two 8- yard end zones and a midfield line to gain. NO-Running Zones precede each line to gain by 5 yards.
2. No run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays.
3. While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard line before midfield and before the end zone), teams may not run the ball in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must be pass plays.
 - a. **1st/2nd grade: "no run zones" are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.**
4. Stepping on the boundary lines is considered out of bounds.
5. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

ROSTERS

1. Home teams wear dark jerseys, visiting teams wear light jerseys.
2. Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.

TIMING AND OVERTIME

1. Games will consist of (4) ten 10 minute quarters. The clock will stop the last minute of each half.
2. Each player must play at least half of the game.
3. Substitutions may only be made at the five minute mark and between quarters. Coaches must sub all players not currently in the game in at the 5 minute mark of each quarter. The clock will stop for these substitutions and start on the official's whistle.
4. Halftime is two minutes long.
5. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
6. Each team has two 60-second time outs per half. Timeouts do not carry over.

7. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
8. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will go into overtime.
9. **Overtime:** Each team receives one try from either the 5-yard line for 1 point, or the 12-yard line for two points. This is not sudden death. If tied after one attempt, teams will alternate who goes on offense first and attempt the tries again. If tied after the second attempt, the game will end in a tie.
10. First possession in overtime will be determined by a coin flip.
11. Games in overtime can end in an interception return for a touchdown.

SCORING

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. PAT (Point after Touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (12 yard line) Note: 1 point is pass only, 2 point PAT can be run or pass.
3. Safety: 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when a ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knees or arm. A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone, or if the ball is dropped and hits the ground in the end zone.
4. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2 pt conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time-out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
5. After one team is winning by 20 or more points, the clock will run continuously.

COACHES

1. One coach per team is allowed on the field.
2. Only two coaches per team are allowed on the sidelines.

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. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regards to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a courtesy neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back beyond the line.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive line signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals.
5. **Substitutions may only be made at the five minute mark and between quarters.**
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

7. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits 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 out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one flag.
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires
 - i. An inadvertent whistle is performed (at the spot where the ball was whistled dead).
8. In case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where the whistle blew.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage
(Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.)
9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

RUNNING

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. If one foot precedes the other, the forward foot marks the spot.
2. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap. The quarterback cannot directly run beyond the line scrimmage to advance the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the back field, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
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. "Center Sneak" Play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
 - b. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind. Tosses are allowed if it is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage to in front of the line of scrimmage.
4. "No Run-Zones" 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 to gain is live. (Reminder: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive-one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD 5 yards).
 - a. **1st/2nd grade: "no run zones" are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.**
5. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off by the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.

9. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
12. 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.

PASSING

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received 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, 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 no longer is in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).

RECEIVING

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions are returnable in regulation and overtime. If returned for a touchdown in regulation, they are worth 6 points. If returned in overtime, they are worth two points and result in the end of the game. Interceptions on conversion attempts cannot be returned.

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 may defend the line of scrimmage.
 - a. **1st/2nd Grade: Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there has been a legal handoff executed in the backfield.**
 - b. **1st/2nd Grade: Defenders must line up at least **three (3)** yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.**
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.

3. A special marker will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. **A legal rush is:**
 - *Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - *A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - *If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - *If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the passer.
 - b. **A penalty may be called if:**
 - *The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass- **Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down)**
 - *Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped-Offsides (5 yards LOS and First Down)
 - *Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed-Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
 - *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 that 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:**
 - *Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock in effect.
 - *Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play, however if they do send a rusher, the rusher must check in with the official.
 - *If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforce.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way.
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 to avoid contact.**
6. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10 yard penalty.
7. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the Quarterbacks feet are when 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 or pull from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
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 by stiff arming, dropping of head or arm, or intentionally covering flags with the football, shorts or jersey.

FORMATIONS

1. An offensive team 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.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the one player in motion.
3. 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
4. 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 referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player(s) and/or coach(es) will be ejected from the game.
3. Players and coaches 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 releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. **Fans and coaches must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:**
 - a. **Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams/players.**
 - b. **Keep comments clean and profanity free.**
7. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense: +10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense: -10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

1ST/2ND GRADE MODIFICATIONS

1. NFL Flag recommended and adopted adjustments to the rules will be in place for the 1st/2nd grade division. These are in place to assist with teaching the game in the younger age group.
2. “No run zones” are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.
3. Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there has been a legal handoff executed in the backfield.
4. Defenders must line up at least **three (3)** yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.
5. If the ball falls to, or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled a ‘Do Over’ with no loss of down, once per down. On a second consecutive occurrence, the down is consumed.