

CENTRAL JERSEY FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

NFL FLAG Football is a popular five-on-five **Non-Contact** game filled with fun and action. In this game, the offensive team plays for a first down at midfield and a touchdown in the end zone. Running and passing plays are allowed, although there are “**no-run zones**” at midfield and near each goal line. The defensive team covers receivers, rushes the passer, and grabs flags to make “tackles.”

The Basics

- A coin toss determines first possession.
- There are no kickoffs.
- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.
- 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 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross mid-field, the opposing team will start its position from the spot.
- All possession changes, except interceptions and missed 4th down attempts, start on the offense’s 5-yard line.
- Interceptions may be returned.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

Equipment

- All players will receive NFL FLAG Jersey, shorts, socks and flag belt as a uniform.
- Mouth guards at all times while on the playing fields.
- Players must wear closed toed shoes. Cleats are allowed.
Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed. Hard casts are not allowed.
- Jewelry such as rings, necklaces and hanging earrings must be removed. Stud earrings are permitted.
- Players’ jerseys must be tucked in to the shorts.
- No player may use custom flags including STORM flags during recreational league play

Sportsmanship/Roughing

If the field monitors or referees witness any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, pushing, blocking, ball stripping, rude, confrontational or offensive language or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, the **player and coach** will be warned.

If it continues, the **player** will be ejected from the game. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

Draft Procedure: Blind Cooperative Draft

- **Blind Cooperative Draft.** Coaches should be present at Draft Night. Like friend requests with kids which are not considered, coaches cannot predetermine who they are they are co-coaching with. This is in order to avoid coaches forming an alliance. Trust the process and if it works out that coaches can work together it must done within the context of fair and equal teams for the league and approval from the other coaches.
- Player rankings from coaches End of Season (EOS) will be the main tool used to equally distribute the wealth of talent.
- In a Blind Cooperative Draft, all players will be pre-distributed by the league director to the coaches involved in their respective division. No one coach is drafting for his/her team because no one knows whom his/her team will be until the team formation process is over. Unlike a traditional draft where each coach picks a player and then the next coach picks a player etc, we will have all the coaches pick work together to ensure that the teams are “equal and fair to the best of their ability”
- The team formation process will begin as follows:
The league director will list each player on a large white board draft board based on the rankings from the evaluations and from comments from the End Of Season report provided by previous coaches. The draft board will list the number of teams (i.e. #'s 1-6 for a 6 team league). For example, the top 6 players (for a 6 team league) will be placed them on separate teams. Then, place the next highest ranked 6 players (#'s 7-12) in reverse order (the 7th ranked player is placed with the 6th ranked player etc). Make sure each team has at least one player with speed, can throw and catch.
- When all the teams are completed, ask each coach if he/she would be happy coaching each of the drafted teams. If yes – proceed. If no – find out what the coach(s) don't like about the teams (i.e. Team 1 needs a quarterback etc.) If yes, take a cup with folded pieces of paper each representing the number of teams in the division and present it to the highest ranked coach in column 1. The coach will pull a number out of the cup. If it is not the column they are currently residing, then move the coach's child to the column pulled and move the player residing in that row to back to the spot the coach's child was removed.
- **No team will be formed of a single coach that is not present at the team formation meeting unless approved by the Commissioner. No team will be formed of two coaches that neither are present at the team formation meeting.**

Game Time and Overtime Rules

- Games are played to 40 minutes running time. 20 minutes each half with a maximum of 3-minute half time. Clock stops only for timeouts and injuries.
- Referees can extend halftime to 5 min based on weather conditions such as extreme heat.
- Each time the ball is spotted, teams have 25 seconds to snap the ball.
Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has three **60-second** time-outs per game.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, teams move directly into overtime.

Overtime Format

A. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first

B. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts or not, the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.

Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the 5-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.

C. If the score is still tied after the 1st playoff round, a 2nd playoff round will occur with both teams going for 2pts.

D. Starting with the 3rd overtime, each team will get 1 play from the 5 yard line going out from the endzone. The team with the most yards will be the winner. The team with the most yards will be awarded 1 point added to their final score.

E. All regulation rules and penalties are in effect

F. There are no timeouts

G. Interceptions are returnable in OT and worth 2pts

* Both teams must have an offensive possession in OT (Example-if first possession results in interception that is returned, they must still take an Offensive Possession.

Scoring Rules

- Touchdown: **6** points
- PAT (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
NOTE: 1-point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass
- Safety: **2** points
A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, 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.
- Extra points that are returned equals 2 points
- After one team is winning by 28 points or more in the second half, the game is officially over.
- Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team

Coaching Rules

- Teams must line up on same (far) side line during the game.
- Teams may have 3 coaches per game on the field/sideline.
- Teams may have a coach on the field per table below.

Division	Offense	Defense
8u	2 coaches	2 coaches
10u	1 coach	1 coach
12u	1 coach	0 coaches
15u	0 coaches	0 coaches

8u and 10u defensive coaches should assist their players to be in position and then move as quickly as possible towards the sideline to be out of the field of play to ensure they are not being an obstruction to either offense or defense.

Player Positions and Rotation Rules

"A fair and equitable, not equal, distribution of positions and touches for all the players."

- **Teams must use the on-line rotation forms to facilitate equal playing time.**
- Teams must field a minimum of five players at all times.
If one team only has 4 players, that team forfeits with a score 28-0.
The game can continue 4 v 4 or a player borrowed from the team with 5+ players so that kids can still play
- Teams consist of a maximum of 10 players – five on the field, with five substitutes.

What is a Rotation?

- A rotation is when the same set of 5 players play 1 offensive series and 1 defensive series (in any order) before there is a substitution.
- If an interception occurs early in a series (1st or 2nd play), it is up to the coach's discretion to leave that group in for more playing time.
- The second half should try to continue the rotation from the first half. But a onetime adjustment at half time is allowed.

Rotation Rule

- Each 5-player rotation consists of 1 offensive series and 1 defensive series.
- **No free substitution.**
- No player can sit more than 1 rotation in a row.
- No player can play more than 2 rotations in a row. (Unless 7 players or less show up)
- No player can play the entire game without being substituted. (Unless only 5 players show up)
- All offensive players should play QB, RB, WR/TE, and C during the course of the game/season. (those who want to and ask to)

Rushing the Passer

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven (7) 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.
- 8u Division: Only one defensive player can rush the quarterback
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven (7) yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.

Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in **a roughing the passer penalty**.

Running

- No Trick Plays – if you see it on Youtube, don't run it.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. **No** laterals or pitches.
- Offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback cannot run with the ball directly from the center snap.
- The center **cannot** run with the ball.
- "No-run zones" are located five (5) yards from each end zone and five (5) yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations.
- The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Spinning is allowed, but players **cannot** leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving).
- Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player.

- 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, arm or shoulder or covering the flags with the football jersey (Flag obstruction).
- 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.
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is located.
- Offensive players without the ball **MUST** stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.

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 at a time.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offense and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense
- Interceptions are returnable on conversions after touchdowns (2pts)

Passing

- Shotgun is allowed.
- **A player in motion cannot take the snap.**
- Shovel passes are allowed. All Passes must be beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Pass must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock" to pass the ball.
 - 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.
- If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.

Dead Balls

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- Ball carrier hits the ground.
- Ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- Ball carrier's flag falls out.
- Touchdown or safety is scored.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.

Official – Inadvertent whistle

When an inadvertent whistle is blown by an official, the ball is dead at the point when the whistle is blown. The team against which the inadvertent whistle was blown dead has the option of:

- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew and the down consumed
- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout 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.

Non-Penalties (Warnings)

All warnings can be called by the referee or coach prior to the next play.

Illegal attire - After the first warning to player and coach, the next player with untucked shirt at the inception of play that touches the ball will be charged with "Flag guarding"
(jersey not tucked in that falls below the flags and waistline; flags not at side.)

Penalties

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. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
5. Spot fouls in end zone: Defensive (Ball on one-yard line, first down)/Offensive (Safety)

Defense: Games or halves cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

Holding – The defense shall not (intentionally or accidentally) hold, grasp or obstruct forward progress of a ball carrier when in the act of removing the flag belt.

Diving – If a player attempts to remove a flag by diving and trips the ball carrier, there is a 10 yard penalty from the spot of the ball and an automatic first down unless a first down is achieved.
If the trip happens and in the opinion of the referee a touchdown was prevented the referee can award the touchdown.

Spinning out of control – Called for Flag Guarding

Illegal FLAG pull - Defenders cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time
A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball

Illegal rush – Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker, crossing line before hand-off etc.

Roughing the Passer – Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer intentionally or inadvertently

Flag Spiking – The first incident player & coach are warned. Future incidents in the game are Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalties
Ex Throwing the flags to ground after pulling them in unsportsmanlike manner

Offense:

Illegal contact –Tackling, holding, blocking (includes screening defenders), pushing, diving, interference etc.

FLAG guarding - Jersey not tucked in that falls below the flags and waistline; flags not at side; hands blocking defender even in the case of motion of running and swinging their arms.

QB delay/sack –QB holding ball for more than 7 seconds behind line of scrimmage

Delay of game - 25 to snap ball - loss of down - clock stops.

Illegal forward pass - pass thrown beyond line of scrimmage

Illegal backward pass – a lateral

Impeding the Rusher – A player (usually the center) can not run directly at the Blitzer in order to slow or prevent them from reaching the quarterback.

SPOT FOULS

Defensive

- Defensive pass interference Automatic First Down
- Holding +5 yards & Automatic First Down
- Stripping +5 yards & First Down
- Defensive unnecessary roughness +10 yards & First Down

Offensive

- Screening, blocking -5 yards & Loss of Down
- Charging -5 yards & Loss of Down
- Flag guarding -5 yards & Loss of Down
- Offensive unnecessary roughness -10 yards & Loss of Down

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

- Offside +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Illegal rush +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Illegal flag pull +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Roughing the passer +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Taunting +5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
- Unsportsmanlike conduct +10 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

- Offside / false start -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Illegal forward pass -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Offensive pass interference -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Illegal motion -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Delay of game -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Impeding the rusher -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Illegal Procedure -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Taunting -5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
- Unsportsmanlike conduct -10 yards from LOS & Loss of Down