

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, flag belt and a mouth guard.
- 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.
- All NFL flags belts are approved for game play. 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. Players **may be ejected immediately** due to elbowing, tackling or cheat shots. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

Team formation process:

- Player rankings from coaches previous End of Season (EOS) ratings will be the main tool used to equally distribute the wealth of athleticism and on field ability to the best of our ability.
- All players and coaches will be created into teams and pre-distributed by the league director to a subset of the coaches in each division as a peer review to ensure that the teams are "equal and fair to the best of their ability" before distribution to the all coaches at the Coaches Meeting.
- The team formation process is as follows:
The league director will list each player based on the rankings from the evaluations and from historical End Of Season (EOS) 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).
- New coaches will be paired with an experienced coach. Exceptions to this rule could be relatives coaching together like husband and wife, or HS students that are former or current players.

Game Time and Overtime Rules

- Fall and spring season 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. Summer Lightning League will run 24 min with 12 min each half.
- In fall and spring referees can extend halftime to 5 min based on weather conditions such as extreme heat.
- Fall, winter and spring each time the ball is spotted, teams have 25 seconds to snap the ball. Summer season teams have 15 seconds.
- Each team has three 30-second time-outs per game.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- If the score is tied at the end of gametime, 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 Information

- Teams playing each other should line up on opposite sidelines unless instructed by the Commissioner
- Teams may have up to 3 approved coaches per game.
- Teams may only have coaches 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

All on field coaches should assist their offensive and defensive players to be in position and then move as quickly as possible towards the sideline in order to be outside of the field of play to ensure they are not an obstruction. Coaches that cause an obstruction will get one warning. A second obstruction will be result in a team penalty including a TD awarded if the play warrants.

Player Positions and Rotation Rules

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

- Teams consist of a maximum of 10 players
- **Coaches are encouraged to 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 can either forfeit by a score 28-0 or the game can officially continue 4 v 5.
- If an official forfeit has been logged a team may borrow a player borrowed from the opposing team with 5+ players so that kids can still play a balanced game.

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. 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.** This means that the coach can not replace a single player for another “just because”
- 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 be encouraged to 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 and must raise their hand and identify themselves to the referee. A maximum of 2 players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
- Rush **MUST** be immediate. NO delayed rushing permitted. (Safety reasons)
- Once the ball is handed off or a completed pitch or lateral or backwards pass, the seven (7) yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go past 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

- Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted.
- The quarterback cannot run with the ball directly from the center snap.
- Offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.
- **“Center sneak” play is NOT allowed. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center.**
- **Any player who receives a handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.**
- **Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or a backward pass, pitch or lateral has occurred, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.**
- “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.
- Ballcarriers may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, or 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, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runners flags with a hand, arm or ball. This includes “windmilling” by the ball carriers free hand. It also includes see Flag Obstruction, see next bullet..
- 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, pitched or lateraled or backwards passed behind the line of scrimmage)
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offense and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense
- 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.

Passing

- Shotgun is allowed.
- **A player in motion cannot take the snap.**
- Only 1 forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage is permitted each offensive play. The ball must be out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
 - A.** Passes may be thrown forward or backwards behind the line of scrimmage.
 - B.** There is no intentional grounding.
 - C.** All passes, except backwards passes, that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - D.** The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- All passes must go beyond the line of scrimmage. Shovel passes are allowed.
- 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 fall 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 – Is defined as a player “launching” themselves after a ball carrier either from the side or behind in order to pull a flag.

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.

Sliding Flag Pull – Players should stay on their feet and are allowed to go to a knee to pull a flag. However, the defender cannot slide into or near a ball carrier in order to attempt a flag pull

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

Illegal Contact - Spot foul 5-yards and Automatic First Down (AFD) if defensive or Loss Of Down (LOD) if offensive

Offense:

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

FLAG guarding - 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, or the football jersey not tucked; flags not at side; hands blocking defender even in the case of motion of running and swinging their arms during the action of running.

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

Delay of game – 25 seconds to snap ball - loss of down; game clock continues

Illegal forward pass - pass must be thrown beyond line of scrimmage only once

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

Illegal Contact - Spot foul 5-yards and Automatic First Down (AFD) if defensive or Loss Of Down (LOD) if offensive