

2017 NWRAA Flag Football Rules

Rules

The offensive team begins the game and second half by taking possession of the ball at its 10-yard line. With the no-contact rule, this also means no blocking. Lineman can put hands behind their back and block the path of the defender but can't use hands as that is contact. Defenders can not use hands to move the offensive blocker but can rush the backfield without making contact.

Down Format:

The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by gaining 10 yards. Once a team gains 10 yards for a first down they will get a new set of downs.

If the team fails to gain 10 yards in four downs or score a touchdown, the other team takes possession at their own 10 yard line. There will not be any punts therefore all 4 downs will be used to gain a first or score a touchdown without fear of losing field position.

Offensive Starting Points

Situation	Starting Field Position After Change of Possession
After a touchdown and extra point attempt	Offense's ten-yard line
After a turnover on downs	Offense's ten-yard line
After an interception	At spot of the interception

Clock Format

- Games consist of four seven-minute quarters with an eight-minute halftime.
- The game clock stops briefly at the end of every quarter for predetermined substitutions.

- Each team has one sixty-second timeout per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half. The clock will stop during the timeout.
- A thirty-second play clock begins after the referee spots the ball as ready for play.
- The clock will stop in the final minute of the first half and in the final minute of the game for the following situations:
 - After an incomplete pass
 - After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
 - After a touchdown
 - During an extra-point attempt
 - For an official's timeout
 - After an interception
 - During a called timeout until the ball is snapped
 - On a change of possession

Other Notes

- The visiting team calls the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss may choose to play offense or defense first or choose which goal to defend. The other team has the choice (possession or end to defend) not made by the team winning the toss. The team that plays defense first will play offense first to start the second half.
- Because the end of a quarter does not signal a change of possession, the team with possession at the end of the quarter will retain possession after substitutions take place.
- Teams will switch ends of the field at the half, not after each quarter.
- Each team will have six players on the field at a time. This equips the offense with an appropriate amount of players without crowding the field.
- Coaches are allowed on field and in huddle for all age groups

- All coaches will adhere to the substitution system. The substitution system allows for equal playing time for all players.
- When possible, referees will advise players of potential violations before the violation occurs. Through words of encouragement and warning, referees are often able to prevent a violation from occurring.

Facilities and Equipment Recommendations

Rules of Play

Offense

Offensive Basics

- A minimum of three players must be on the line of scrimmage at every snap. This mirrors traditional football format which requires seven players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. The three players on the line for Upward Flag Football will consist of a center and at least two receivers positioned anywhere along the line of scrimmage to add structure to offensive sets.
- Only one player can be in motion when the ball is snapped to ensure the integrity of the game.
- players may use the side snap, since the traditional snap can be difficult for the younger players with small hands.
- Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete possession of the ball. This helps clarify the center sneak play. A possession change between the center and quarterback must occur in order to run the play.
- A low-profile field cone or beanbag may be used to mark the line of scrimmage.

Running the Football

- A pitch from the quarterback can be executed immediately after the snap or on a delay (similar to an option play without the quarterback being able to advance the football).
- The quarterback is the only player who can make the pitch. The pitch can occur at anytime while behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the pitch is received, the ball carrier can run the ball, hand off the ball or pass the ball.

- Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Multiple handoffs may be used. After the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, handoffs and laterals are not permitted. This rule exists for safety reasons and to discourage the multiple laterals that would occur to avoid a flag pull.
- A player receiving a handoff or immediate pitch can pass the ball (halfback pass) from behind the line of scrimmage.
- A ball carrier will be penalized for a dive. This is for safety and abides with the no-contact rule. Diving for advancement of the football can bring on injury or contact.
- The ball carrier's feet determine the spot of the football when a flag is pulled, not the location of the football. This is to discourage a dive for advancement.

Receiving the Football

- All six players are eligible to receive passes. (The quarterback becomes eligible after a handoff or immediate pitch.) With the no-contact rule, no blockers can be used thus allowing all offensive players to be eligible.
- A completion consists of a receiver gaining control of the football while having at least one foot in bounds. This rule is to keep the integrity of the game.
- If a player catches a pass with his knee(s) on the ground, the play is dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the completion. This rule helps to keep the no-contact rule intact.

Passing the Football

- All forward passes can be completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass can be completed per play. Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the defender can make a play on the ball. The defender must avoid contact with the receiver.
- The quarterback has 10 seconds to throw a pass. If a pass is not thrown within 10 seconds, it is treated as an incomplete pass resulting in the loss of a down. A handoff or pitch will end the 10-second pass count. This rule keeps a scrambling quarterback from taking too much time with each possession.

Dead Balls

Play is ruled dead when one of the following occurs:

- The ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out.

- The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- The ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- A touchdown or safety is scored.
- A pass falls incomplete.
- At the point of an interception.
- The ball hits the ground as a fumble. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble. One exception to this rule is with the center/quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback and only the quarterback may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack.)

Defensive Basics

- Teams may run man-to-man, zone defenses or a combination of both. This rule allows for defensive schemes and helps equal ability match-ups. Players can have an easier time covering a zone than a receiver man-to-man in the open field.
- Interceptions may not be returned. Change of possession will be awarded at the point of the interception. This rule will force a substitution so players will not sit out more than one possession at a time.
- Interceptions made in the end zone will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted at the five-yard line. Interceptions cannot be returned, so the touchback is used for all end zone picks.

Rushing the Passer

- All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin seven yards behind the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the seven-yard rush line. With no blocking allowed, this gives the quarterback enough time to make a play or escape a rush.
- Teams only rush one defender.

- Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier. This allows the defense to react quickly to a play behind the line of scrimmage.

Scoring

- Touchdown: Six points
- Extra point: One point if played from the five-yard line with a pass or two points if played from the ten-yard line with a run or pass. The five-yard attempt is from the no-run zone.
- Safety: Two points. The scoring team will also receive possession on its own five-yard line. No physical kicks will occur in Upward Flag Football.
- Penalties: All penalties will be called by the referee. If a penalty happens near the end zone, where the penalty yardage would place the ball in the end zone, then the penalty will be half the distance to the goal.