



# OFFICIAL RULE BOOK

## FLAG FOOTBALL

Revised - March 2022

[www.PlayMoreNJ.com](http://www.PlayMoreNJ.com)

### **1. EQUIPMENT AND FIELD**

- I. PlayMore asks that all players participating wear their PlayMore issued shirt.
- II. Field (Spring & Fall): 35x75 - The field is approximately 35 yards wide and 75 yards long; plus end zones. The field is divided into three twenty five yard zones.
- IV. Field (Summer & Winter): 30x50 - The field is approximately 30 yards wide and 50 yards long; plus end zones. The field is divided into two twenty five yard zones.
- V. Timeouts: Teams get 2 timeouts per half.
- VI. Football: The football should be a high school, college, or NFL ball. Each team supplies their own ball.
- VII. Gloves: Players may wear gloves which must consist of a soft, pliable and nonabrasive material.
- VIII. Shoes: Sneakers, turf shoes, or plastic/rubber spikes are to be worn. No metal spikes are permitted.
- IX. Pants/Shorts: Players must wear pants or shorts without any belt(s), belt loop(s), or exposed drawstrings.
- X. Players should have their shirts tucked into their pants or shorts / Flags must be worn over shirts/hoodies. A player's clothing egregiously covering the flag belt is considered a flag guard.  
**Penalty: Flag Guard - 10 Yards** from the **Spot of the Foul**; **Loss of Down** (Ball Carrier)
- XI. Hand Warmers & Towels: If a hand warmer impedes a defender's ability to pull a flag, it is determined to be a flag guard. If a defensive player pulls a towel out of an offensive player's shorts, it is determined to be a successful flag pull.

### **2. PLAYER CONDUCT**

- I. If a player receives two (2) unsportsmanlike conduct penalties / personal fouls in the same game, that player will be ejected for the remainder of that game.
- II. If a player is ejected from a game, that player is put on probation for the following two (2) games. A

player will be ejected from a game if charged with one unsportsmanlike conduct penalty or personal foul during his time on probation.

- III. If a player is ejected from a game for a second time during the same season, that player will be suspended. If either ejection was a result of that player being penalized for physical contact made, that player will serve a two (2) game suspension. If a player has been ejected from a second game without having any penalty occur because of physical contact, that player will serve a one (1) game suspension.
- IV. Once a player serves his suspension, that player is allowed to continue playing but will be on probation for the remainder of that season (including playoffs). If a player is ejected from a third game during a season, that player will be suspended for the rest of that season.
- V. A punch thrown by any player, unless determined by PlayMore to have been thrown in self-defense, will result in a permanent ban from PlayMore.

### **3. GAME PLAY RULES**

#### **I. Periods, Time, Substitutions**

- 1) Coin Toss: The winner of the coin toss has 3 options: Defend a Goal, Kick/Defense or Receive/Offense. The loser of the coin toss will choose from the remaining options. The second half will automatically start in the exact opposite fashion of the first half.
- 2) Length of Game: Two 20-Minute Halves.
- 3) Clock: During the first 19 minutes of each half, the clock runs continuously. During the final 1 minute of each half, the clock stops in accordance with high school rules; with the exception that the clock will continue to run when an offense advances the ball into a new zone to earn a new set of downs.
- 4) Extended Periods: A half may be extended by an untimed down when, during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:
  - a. If there was a foul by the defensive team and the penalty is accepted.
  - b. If there was an inadvertent whistle, the team in possession of the ball has these options:
    - i. Accept the result of the play at the spot of the ball when the inadvertent whistle occurred.
    - ii. Replay the down from the previous spot.
- 5) Time-Outs: Each team is entitled 2 timeouts per half.
  - a. The Referee shall declare an official's time-out when a team is illegally manipulating the clock and administer a five-yard (delay of game) penalty.
  - b. Captain-Referee Conference - When a team requests a charged time-out for a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, the referees will confer. The request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes live following the play to be reviewed unless the period has officially ended. At the end of the half the team has until they have exited the playing field to protest. If the referees determine that the initial ruling was incorrect and proceed to correct the call, the team who requested the time-out will not be charged with that time-out.
  - c. An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime

intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, has an open wound, or has blood on the uniform shall be considered injured.

- 6) Timing Errors: The Referee shall have the authority to correct obvious timing errors.
- 7) Delay of Game: The game clock stops during the admission of a delay of game penalty and does not start until the next snap of the ball.
  - a. Unfair Tactics - The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time by tactics obviously unfair.

**Penalty: Delay of Game - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- 8) Substitutions: No substitute shall enter during a down. All substitutions must enter the game during a dead ball. Players entering/exiting a game during a substitution should do so on the same sideline. If a substitution is made by the offense using both sidelines, the defense must be given enough time to make any adjustments that they would like to. The offense cannot gain an advantage by using two sidelines while making a substitution.

**Penalty: Illegal Substitution - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

## II. **Series / Number of Downs**

- 1) Touchbacks - (Grass Field) 10 Yard Line / (Turf Field) 10 Yard Line
- 2) Each team receives four (4) downs to advance the ball into a new zone (or into the end zone).
- 3) A team will be awarded a first down once they advance the ball into a new zone.
- 4) If a live ball penalty is committed and that penalty brings the ball back behind the zone-to-gain before being spotted, that zone has not been successfully gained and is still the intended line to gain.
- 5) Once the ball is spotted in a zone and upcoming zone-to-gain is established, that will remain the line to gain regardless of any penalty which brings the offense back into a previous zone.
- 6) If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down shall be repeated.
  - a. Exception: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of team possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not prior to the final change of possession and it declines all penalties for its opponent's fouls, other than unsportsmanlike.

## III. **Kicking, Punting, Fair Catch**

- 2) Punt (Protected Scrimmage Kick)
  - a. Prior to making the ball ready for play on fourth down, the referee will ask the offense if he wants a protected kick (punt). The referee must communicate this decision to the defensive captain and the other officials; while allowing the defense enough time to make an adjustment to the decision made by the offense. No fake punts are allowed.
  - b. The offense must have all players except the punter on the line of scrimmage. The “gunners,” defined as the widest player on each side of the line of scrimmage, may move cover the kick once

the ball is snapped. All other players on the line of scrimmage must remain still until the ball is punted.

**Penalty: Illegal Participation - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- c. Coed Flag - The defense can line-up where ever they would like to (on their side of the l.o.s.)
- d. Men's Flag - The defense must have at least four players within 1 yard of their scrimmage line, and only the gunners can move when the ball is snapped. All other players on the line of scrimmage must remain still until the ball is punted.

**Penalty: Illegal Participation - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- e. The kicker must be at least three yards behind the scrimmage line when receiving the snap and cannot cross the line of scrimmage before punting the ball. After receiving the snap, the kicker must kick the ball immediately and in a continuous motion.

**Penalty: Delay of Game - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- o The delay of game will be called immediately as it occurs; stopping the clock and play.
- o During the replayed down, the clock will not start until the ball is punted.

- f. Any kick caught by the receiving team behind the line of scrimmage cannot be advanced.

#### 4) Fair Catch

- a. Any receiver may signal for a fair catch while any kick is in flight and is beyond the kicker's free kick line. Once a fair catch signal is given, no receiver may advance the ball.

**Penalty: Illegal Participation - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Penalty**

- b. The player must signal intention by extending one arm above his head and waving laterally from side to side more than once.
- c. If any receiver gives a valid signal for a fair catch and catches the kick beyond the kicker's line and between the goal lines, it is a fair catch and the ball becomes dead.

### **Offense**

#### 1) Prior to the Snap

- (Following the ready for play whistle) Once the center has positioned himself/herself at the cone which marks the line of scrimmage and possesses the ball, the ball is considered set; therefore, penalties which involve the line of scrimmage can be enforced.

- a. The player who receives the snap must be at least three yards behind the line of scrimmage.

**Penalty: Illegal Procedure - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- b. The offensive team must have at least 4 players on their scrimmage line at the snap. (If a team has less than five players in the game, all players except one must be on the l.o.s.)

**Penalty: Illegal Procedure - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

## 2) Fumbles

- a. A runner may pass the ball backward or laterally (parallel to the goal line) or lose player possession by a fumble at any time except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds to conserve time or to avoid being deflagged.
- b. There are no fumbles on the ground. Fumbles will be declared a dead ball as soon as the ball hits the ground. The defense can only attain possession of a fumble if the ball is intercepted in the air.
- c. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the last team in possession unless lost on downs.
- d. A backward pass or fumble that goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the out-of-bounds spot. If out-of-bounds behind a goal line, it is a touchback or safety.
- e. If an offensive player fumbles the ball forward (and that fumble is not caught in the air by the defense), the ball will be placed where the runner last had possession of the ball.
- f. If an offensive player fumbles the ball forward prior to reaching the end zone and the ball lands in the end zone, the defense is awarded possession of the ball.

## 3) Passing

- a. All offensive players are eligible to catch a pass.
- b. A forward pass is illegal:
  - i. If the quarterback does not have both feet behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.

**Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Loss of Down**

- ii. If there is more than one forward pass per down.

**Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Loss of Down**

- c. The line of scrimmage remains throughout the play. A team may advance the ball across the line of scrimmage by running the ball; then retreat or lateral the ball back behind the line of scrimmage and attempt a forward pass.
- d. There is a rule for passing the ball in the “Red Zone”:

In our flag football league, the red zone is considered to be the space between (including) the ten yard line of the end zone that the offense is attacking up to the goal line.

While in the red zone, any pass thrown must fully cross the line of scrimmage before being touched by an offensive player.
- e. Intentional Grounding is a penalty. Since there is no tackle box, the quarterback’s only requirement to avoid an intentional grounding penalty is to either throw the ball in the area of a receiver (any offensive player) or throw the ball within the field of play beyond the line of scrimmage. The ball must cross the line of scrimmage within the boundaries (and can continue to travel out of bounds after that point).
- f. If a player attempts a catch or interception while in the air, the player must contact the ground inbounds with the ball in his possession prior to touching out-of-bounds in order for the ball to be

declared caught.

- i. If one foot first lands in-bounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch or interception.
- g. A player may, while jumping in the air to attempt a catch, may pass/tip the ball forward provided he/she has not touched the ground yet.
- h. Duel possession will result in the catch being rewarded to the offense.
- i. Pass Interference: Contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference unless it occurs when two or more eligible players make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass.
- i. Offensive Pass Interference - the receiver may not intentionally initiate contact with the defender beyond the line of scrimmage.

**Penalty: (O) Pass Interference - 10 Yards from the Previous Spot**

#### 4) Running and Flag Belt Removal

- a. The quarterback is only eligible to run one time per set of downs.

**Penalty: Illegal Participation - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- b. There is a rule for running the ball in the “Red Zone”:  
In our flag football league, the red zone is considered to be the space between (including) the ten yard line of the end zone that the offense is attacking up to the goal line.  
While in the red zone, the ball may not be advanced by a running play.

**Penalty: Illegal Participation - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- c. Flag Belt Removal: When a pop flag or flag belt clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. (A player who removes the flag belt from the runner should immediately hold the flag above his head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred.)
  - i. When a runner does not have a flag on or if his/her flag falls off on its own, that player must be touched to be downed.

(In the instance that a ball carrier’s lack of flags is noticed after the play, the referees may retroactively spot the ball at the spot that the ball carrier was first in the vicinity of a defender.)

- ii. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged. A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct - 10 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- iii. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct - 10 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

Any player who tampers with their flag belt will be ejected from the game.

iv. In Men's Flag Football, a ball carrier within one yard of the sideline may be pushed out of bounds by a defender (provided contact is made legally in accordance with our rules)

5) Flag Guarding: A runner shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, legs, head, body or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. A player may use a spin move, however; must keep their arms away from their flag to avoid flag guarding. A player may jump, however; must not have their lifted knees/legs impede a defense player's ability to pull the flag. A player may dive, however; must not dive directly into an opponent. In a sense, the principles of a block/charge call in basketball are applied to a ball carrier and a defender. An untucked shirt that egregiously impedes the defenders ability to pull the flag is considered a flag guard.

**Penalty: Flag Guarding - 10 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Loss of Down**

6) Stiff Arm: A runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with an extended hand or arm which includes the use of a "stiff arm" to flag guard

**Penalty: Flag Guarding - 10 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Loss of Down**

7) Helping the Runner: A player shall not grasp, pull, push or aid any teammate runner.

**Penalty: Helping the Runner – 5 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Result of Play**

8) Blocking: In Coed and Women's Flag Football, there is no blocking. No blocking, attempt to block, shadow blocking, or any action which impedes the defense's ability to get to and/or pull the flag of the ball carrier is permitted.

**Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Loss of The Down**

Blocking: In Men's Flag Football, we permit extended arm blocking. Players are permitted to block as long as they do not lead with any part of their body except their hands. No forearm, shoulder, or body blocking is permitted.

**Penalty: Illegal Block – 10 Yards from the Spot of the Foul; Loss of The Down**

## **Defense**

### I. Defensive Rush

- Defensive players must wait until the referee's "Rush" call before crossing the line of scrimmage.
- In the Coed Flag Football League, the defense must wait four seconds before crossing the line of scrimmage to rush the passer. Once the ball is snapped, the referee will count (out loud) "One Thousand One, One Thousand Two, One Thousand Three, One Thousand *Rush*". The referee will say the word "Rush" in place of saying the number four. Once the referee says the word "Rush", defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage to rush the passer.

**Penalty: Encroachment – 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- In the Men's Flag Football League, the defense must wait two seconds before crossing the line of scrimmage to rush the passer. Once the ball is snapped, the referee will count (out loud) "One Thousand One, One Thousand *Rush*". The referee will say the word "Rush" in place of saying the number two. Once the referee says the word "Rush", defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage to rush the passer.

**Penalty: Encroachment – 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

- If the quarterback releases the football, the defense no longer has to wait to cross the line of scrimmage. They can cross the line of scrimmage as soon as the ball is out of the quarterback's hand(s).

II. Defensive Holding (of a non-ball carrier) The defensive player may not hold the receiver prior to the pass being thrown.

**Penalty: [D] Holding (of non-ball carrier) - 5 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

III. Defensive Holding (of a ball carrier): In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, defensive players may contact the body of the opponent (not the face, neck or any part of the head) in a nonaggressive fashion. A defensive player may not hold (impeding progress), push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt. Note: If a defender grabs the clothing of an offensive player while grabbing the flag, it is not considered a penalty if the flag is pulled before progress is impeded.

**Penalty: [D] Holding (of ball carrier) - 5 Yards from the Succeeding Spot; Replay the Down**

IV. Flag Belt Removal: When a flag / the flag belt is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. (A player who removes the flag belt from the runner should immediately hold the flag belt above his head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred.)

- i. In Men's Flag Football, ball carriers who are within one yard of the sideline can be pushed out of bounds by the defense, as long as it is done within the same guidelines of our blocking rules (extended arm / with hands).
- ii. When a runner does not have a flag on or his/her flag falls off on its own, that player must be touched to be downed.
- iii. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged. A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.

**Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct - 10 Yards from the Previous Spot; Replay the Down**

V. Pass Interference: Contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference unless it occurs when two or more players whom are eligible to catch the pass make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass.

Defensive Pass Interference - After the pass is thrown, and until it is touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage while the ball is in flight.

**Penalty: (D) Pass Interference - 10 Yards from the Previous Spot; Automatic 1<sup>st</sup> Down**

VI. Roughing the Passer: Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown, also there should be no attempts to hit the player's arm during a throwing motion. There shall be no attempt to make contact with the football while the ball is in the quarterback's hand. The defensive player should attempt to grab the flag.



**Penalty: Roughing The Passer - 10 Yards from the Previous Spot; Automatic 1<sup>ST</sup> Down**

VII. "Face Guarding": Face guarding is not a penalty.

**Scoring Plays and Touchbacks**

1) Mercy Rule

a. At the two minute mark of the second half, the clock will run continuously if there is a differential of more than two scores (17+ point differential in Men's & 23+ point differential in Coed).

2) Extra Point Try = 1 or 2 Points

a. 1 Point Conversion from the 5 Yard Line

b. 2 Point Conversation from the 10 Yard Line

c. Coed Flag - The play is Open. The 'red zone' rules apply.

d. Men's Flag - The 'red zone' rules apply.

e. The defense is eligible to return/advance an extra point. If the defense successfully gains possession of the ball and advances it into their opponent's end-zone, they will be awarded two (2) points.

f. If the offense commits a penalty after having turned the ball over. The penalty will be accessed, and the defense (who was attempting to return the conversion) will get one play from the new line of scrimmage (set after the penalty has been enforced) to earn their two (2) points.

3) Safety = 2 points

a. When a safety is scored, the ball belongs to the defending team, and they shall put the ball in play from their own 15 yard line.

**Coed Rules**

1) Players

a) A team may not have more than the maximum amount of guys on the field at any time.

b) If a team is not able to produce at least 1 female player then that team will forfeit.

2) "Closed Plays" / "Girl Plays"

a) After two consecutive plays without attempting to involve a female player, the third play then becomes "closed" [the options to advance the ball are 'closed' (limited)].

b) The ball may not be advanced unless a female throws, catches, or runs the ball.

c) To be considered "part" of the play, one of the following must occur:

o Female player must receive snap and:

▪ Attempt Pass

• If a pass is thrown to a male, the pass must be caught beyond the line of scrimmage to be considered a legal pass.

▪ Run The Ball (with/without gaining yards)

o Male player can receive the snap and:

▪ **Attempt Pass to Female**

- On a pass from a male player, a female receiver must be the first offensive player to contact the pass.
- On a pass from a male player, a female receiver must be the receiver who catches the pass. ▪

**Hand The Ball to Female who:**

- Remains with the ball throughout the play
- Laterals the ball to another female player
- Crosses the line of scrimmage with the ball before lateralling it to a male player who is also beyond the line of scrimmage.

▪ **Penalty: Illegal Participation – 5 Yards; Replay the Down**

**OVERTIME**

I. *Is there overtime during the regular season?* **Yes.**

II. During the regular season, one overtime will be used in the attempt to determine a winner. If the game is still tied after one overtime, the final result of the game is a tie.

III. During the playoffs, an unlimited amount of overtimes will be used to determine a winner.

IV. Each team will have one timeout per overtime period.

V. The first overtime period begins with a coin toss.

The winner of the coin toss shall be given the options of offense, defense, or direction. The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.

VI. Each overtime period, after the first, will after in the opposite fashion of the previous overtime (meaning the team on offense first will change/rotate).

VII. All overtime periods start from the twenty yard line and will be played towards the same goal line.

**FORFEIT POLICY:** The score will be recorded as 21-0 for the winning team.