

# YMCA of Greater St. Louis

## Flag Football Rules

### The Basics

- A coin toss determines first possession.
- 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 four (4) plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line. There are no punts.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line. Interceptions are dead where they occur.
- 6-8 year olds will be using a Junior Ball. 9-11 year olds will use a Youth Ball.

### Players

- Teams must field a minimum of five (5) players at all times.
- Players must be properly equipped at all times. Participants must wear no jewelry. Mouth guards are recommended. Jersey must be tucked in at all times.
- In following the YMCA youth sports philosophy of "everyone plays", all team members are to have an **equal amount of playing time**.

### Timing

- Two 20-minute halves will be played.
- Running clock except for time-outs, injuries, and official time-outs. The clock will stop the last minute of each half on dead balls (Touchdown, incomplete pass, out of bounds, interception, penalties). Offense/Defense cannot conserve time by committing penalties.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has a 30-second play clock to snap the ball. Officials will give a countdown under 5 seconds. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.
- There is no overtime played. No official score is kept by officials.

### Scoring

Touchdown:	6 Points
Extra Points:	1 Point (Played from 5-yard line)
	2 Points (Played from 12-yard line)
Safety:	2 Points

Teams can keep score for themselves, but no official score is kept.

### Running

- The quarterback cannot run across the line of scrimmage with the ball.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs.
- NO laterals or pitches of any kind are allowed beyond/behind the line of scrimmage.
- "No-running zones" located 5 yards from each end zone and 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.
- Once the ball has been handed off or a fake handoff has been shown, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defender (no diving).

- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.
- The ball is considered dead when a player fumbles. The ball is spotted where the player's feet are when the ball was fumbled.
- If a player holding the ball loses their flag the play is dead, and the ball will be spotted where the flag dropped.

### **Receiving**

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- As in the NFL, only one player is allowed in motion at a time.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.

### **Passing**

- Shovel passes are allowed.
- The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock". This will be counted out loud by the Referee. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play blown dead by the Referee, with a loss of down resulting. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.

### **Dead Balls**

- No players can enter the neutral zone until the ball is snapped. The neutral zone is marked by two orange cones marked 1-yard apart. Violation of this will result in a dead ball and a 5-yard penalty.
- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start a play.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
  - Ball carrier's flag is pulled
  - Ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - Touchdown or safety is scored
  - At the point of an interception
  - Ball carrier's knee hits the ground
  - Ball carrier's flag falls out
  - Ball is fumbled

### **Blocking**

- Blocking with hands is not allowed. Players should never extend their arms to block. Players can only use their bodies to block. Think of setting a screen in basketball.
- Excessive contact, as determined by the official, will result in a penalty of 5 yards.

### **Flag Guarding**

- Flag guarding is an illegal act. A player cannot hold their flags, block the flags with the ball, use their hands to push away a defender's hand or body (NO Stiff Arms).
- Violation will result in a penalty of 5 yards from the spot of the foul and you play the proceeding down. If a first down was established on the play and the penalty moves spot of ball behind first down marker, then the play results in no first down and you play the next down. So if it was 4<sup>th</sup> down, then the play would result in a turnover to the other team.

## Sportsmanship

- Sportsmanlike behavior is expected from all coaches, players, and spectators at all times. If an individual is asked to stop their unsportsmanlike conduct and they fail to comply, the individual will be asked to leave. Examples of unsportsmanlike conduct include, but are not limited to: intimidating officials, players, and/or coaches, arguing, taunting, swearing, pushing, and fighting.
- Only one (1) **coach is allowed on the field at a time**. No exceptions will be made. The coach on the field must be coaching. Any coach that is on the field and arguing will lose the privilege to be on the field.

## Penalties

Penalty	Enforcement
Offsides (Offense/Defense)	Dead Ball, 5 Yard Penalty—Repeat Down
Pass Interference (Offense)	5 Yard Penalty, Previous Spot—Loss of Down
Pass Interference (Defense)	5 Yard Penalty, Previous Spot—Automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down
Illegal Contact (Offense)	5 Yard Penalty, Spot of Foul—Loss of Down
Illegal Contact (Defense)	5 Yard Penalty, End of Run—Automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down
Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has ball)	5 Yard Penalty, End of Run—Automatic 1 <sup>st</sup> Down
Illegal Rushing (rushing QB too soon)	5 Yard Penalty, End of Run—Repeat Down
Illegal Motion	5 Yard Penalty, Previous Spot—Repeat Down
Illegal Pass (Laterals)	5 Yard Penalty from spot of foul
Delay of Game	5 Yard Penalty
Flag Guarding	5 yard Penalty from spot of foul

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.