



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Youth Sports



YMCA OF GREATER SAN ANTONIO

YMCA Mission: To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

YMCA Pledge:

Players Pledge:

Win or Lose,
I pledge before God
To play the game as well as I know how,
To obey the rules,
And to be a good sport at all times,
And to Improve myself,
In Spirit, mind, and body.

Parents Pledge:

I pledge before God,
To always support my team,
With good sportsmanship
And sound judgment,
And to develop my child's self-respect,
And support their participation in the program,
The child first, the sport second.

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UIL rules will be followed unless otherwise noted below in YMCA rules.

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TEAM DUTIES

1. Both teams are responsible for cleaning up their bench immediately after the game.
2. During the game, there will be a maximum of three (3) coaches on the sideline. One (1) head coach and two (2) assistants.
 - a. Only ONE coach is allowed on the field for offense or defense. Offensive coaches may be in the huddle with their team while the defensive coach must be behind all defensive players. Coaches must not interfere with an active play.
 - b. Coaches on the sideline must remain on their side of the field and may not cross the 50 yard line to the other team's sideline.
3. All spectators must be seated on the sideline opposite the team and cannot stand or sit in the end zone. Only cleared coaches and registered participants are allowed on the bench.

SPORTSMANSHIP

1. The YMCA does not keep official game scores or records. However, the score is documented during the game to promote a learning environment.
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct of the players or coaches is not tolerated. If the behavior persists, the individual will be asked to leave the facility.
3. **Any player, coach or spectator ejected may be suspended for at least (1) game and/or may be placed on season probation. If ejected again during a program, the individual will be subject to permanent removal from the program. The YMCA sports cabinet will meet to review suspensions and removal. Cases will also be reviewed by the sports cabinet for reinstatement.**
4. If the atmosphere of the game feels unsafe or the YMCAs Values are not being adhered to, the referee or YMCA staff member can end the game.
5. If a team has less than the number of required players, the game can be played with less players on each team (i.e. 5v5). Alternatively, the opposing team can "share" player(s) in order to provide competition and play the game. We make every effort to play each scheduled game.
6. Coaches are expected to adhere to YMCA Values and are responsible for team actions. This includes parents and players.
7. The YMCA Players and Parents Pledge is required prior to the start of each game. A YMCA Staff will lead the pledge, however in the event a staff member is unavailable, the coach, a parent or player can administer the pledge.

YMCA YOUTH SPORTS KEY PHILOSOPHIES

- Everyone must play at least half the game.
- Coaches are volunteers. They are not paid.
- Our focus is on fun and skill development.
- Sportsmanship above all.
- We promote a family atmosphere.

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

PLAYER SAFETY

- To protect the safety of all players in the program, any participant wearing a cast will prohibit them from participating in YMCA games or practices. Exceptions can be made with approval from the Sports Director and documented approval from a physician.
- Soft casts will be permitted if approved by officials.
- All types of jewelry (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.) must be removed before the game.
- Adaptive aids are approved on a case by case basis.

UNIFORM

- Each player must wear their YMCA issued jersey. The jersey must be tucked into the player's shorts or pants.
- The player's shorts or pants cannot have pockets. Hats may not be worn. Additionally, only rubber-soled/cleated shoes may be worn.
- Metal cleats and Bulldog cleats (cleat on the front of the shoe) are not permitted.

EQUIPMENT

- The YMCA furnished flags must be used. Three flags will be worn (one on each hip and one in the back). Flags may not be wrapped, tied, or tucked around the flag belt and must be in clear view of the defending player. Excess belt material must be wrapped around the belt or tucked in the waistband so as not to have the appearance of a flag.
- Football Size
 - 8 and under = Pee Wee
 - 9 - 10 years = Junior
 - 11 - 12 years = Junior
- Only knee pads may be worn.
- Mouthpieces are required. Players may not play without a mouthpiece; checked pregame
- Braces must be inspected and approved by the game official prior to the game.
- Players must wear shorts/sweats without pockets (teams may want to bring a roll of duct tape in case players arrive at the game wearing shorts/sweats with pockets)
- Player uniforms (shirts) are required to be tucked into their shorts/sweats at all times during the game.

GAME FIELD

- Games will be played on half of a regulation size field - 45 yards. (53 yards wide - field size can vary based on facilities).
- There is only one end zone, all drives start at the 45-yard line going in.
- All age groups will play 7-vs-7. However, if a team is unable to field 7 players for a certain game, teams may play with a minimum of 5-vs-5. Additionally, teams may "loan/share" player(s), if necessary, to play the game.
- The field will be divided into three, 15-yard zones. The offense will have three (3) plays to advance the ball into the next zone to get a first down.
- In the last 15-yard zone, teams will have four (4) downs to score a touchdown

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COACHES

- Maximum of three (3) coaches. One (1) head coach and two (2) assistant coaches.
- Only one coach is allowed on the field for both offense and defense.
- Players and coaches are the only individuals permitted on the sideline during the game.
- Players and coaches are to be on one side of the field and spectators and parents on the other side. There will be no coaching from the spectator area.

GENERAL RULES

- Each YMCA Flag Football game will consist of four 10-minute quarters. There will be a:
 - One (1) minute break after the first quarter and third quarters.
 - Two (2) min halftime.
- All players are eligible receivers.
- Three (3) one-minute timeouts are allowed per game. Unused timeouts carry over to the 2nd half.

1. SCORING

- Game clock and play clock will stop after PATs and for injuries and will restart when the referees have reset the field and are in place to officiate the game for the following possession/play.
- Touchdown is legal when a player's hips with flags attached and possession of the ball cross the goal line; touchdown = 6 points
- Point(s) after Touchdown (PAT) = ball is placed on the 3-yard line for the extra point.
- PAT = 1 point for a run, 2 points for a pass.

2. STARTING THE GAME

- Each team will provide a team captain.
- A coin toss will determine which team will receive the ball first. The home team will call the toss in the air. Winner of the coin toss will select offense, defense, or defer the second half.
- The ball will be given to the team that chooses to play offense.
- Play will start on the 45-yard line (no kickoff)

3. AVOIDING CONTACT

- It is the defensive player's responsibility to avoid contact with the offensive player on routes.
- The defender may not intentionally push or shove a ball carrier out of bounds.
- The offensive player must run around the defender(s), not over or through the defender(s).
- The offensive player may not lower their shoulder/head or stiff arm a defender when running with the football.

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4. NO FLAG STRIPPING

- The defender may not intentionally pull the flag from an offensive player who does not possess the football.

5. NO STRIPPING THE BALL

- Players may not intentionally strip the ball from the ball carrier's arm.

6. NO LUNGING/DIVING FOR FLAG

- The player's feet leaving the ground by lunging or diving for the flag is illegal.

7. NO TRIPPING

- Tripping or using the leg to stop an offensive player is illegal.

8. FLAG PULLING

- A ball carrier will be down where their flag is pulled.
- Offensive flag guarding is illegal. Flag guarding is when the ball carrier pushes a defender's hand(s) away, stiff arms, or covers/blocks flags in any way. (Discretion of the referee)
- The ball carrier may not jump/dive while running with the ball to avoid being stopped by a defensive player. Spin moves are allowed provided one of the ball carriers' feet remain on ground. (Discretion of the referee)
- Flag guarding is a spot foul. Penalties will be assessed 5-yards from the spot of the foul.
- The ball is dead when it hits the ground, the offensive player's flag is pulled, the ball-carrier steps out of bounds, or the ball-carrier's body—outside of their hands or feet—touches the ground

9. BLOCKING IS NOT ALLOWED.

- Players may not run beside/shield/screen a teammate who is carrying the ball.
- Screen/shield blocking is illegally obstructing an opponent without contacting him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body. (Discretion of the referee)

10. THERE IS NO PUNTING.

11. NO SAFETY

- There is no safety if the passer/ball carrier's flag is pulled by the defense behind the 45-yard line. Down is counted and the ball is placed back at the 45-yard line or it is a turnover on downs (if 3rd down).

12. NO ROUGHING THE PASSER.

- When rushing the passer, defensive players will go for the flag belt ONLY.
- Roughing the passer is when a defensive player tries to block a pass and contacts the passer's arm OR runs into the passer in any way; even after the pass is released.
- This rule applies whether the ball is blocked or not by the defender.

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DEFENSE

- All defensive linemen will be in a two-point stance.
- Any defensive pass rusher will not run over an offensive player. They must go around the offensive player.
- All players who rush the passer at the snap must be a minimum of 7 yards (marked with a cone) from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback; however, all must start their rush behind the 7-yard marker.
- Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage or secondary.
- Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- A unique marker/cone, or the referee, will designate the rush line 7-yards from the line of scrimmage.
- A legal rush at the ball snap is:
 - Any rush from the cone 7-yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), they must return to the rush line, reset, to then legally rush the quarterback beyond the line of scrimmage.

OFFENSE

- Any snap where the ball hits the ground will be considered dead and the down is lost (i.e. if the ball hits ground during shotgun snap, that is counted as a down).
- The offensive team has 25 seconds to snap the ball into play **AFTER** the referee marks the ball ready for play. The referee will give a 10 and 5-second play clock count.
- Once the ball is snapped, the play is LIVE. All offensive players are eligible ball carriers and receivers.
- All players on offense will be in a two-point stance.
- There will be NO swinging gate formations and no QB sneaks.
- The ball may be snapped by either: (a) the center may turn and hand the ball to QB, (b) a traditional under center snap, or (c) a shotgun.
- A minimum of **FOUR** (4) players must line up on the line of scrimmage.
- Only ONE player may be in motion when the ball is snapped. All other players must be set prior to the snap of the ball.
- In the case of a fumble, the ball will be marked dead and considered a down of play at the place where the ball touches the ground.
- Interception returns are not permitted. Possession will switch on interceptions - New offense, ball on the 45 yard line.
- The quarterback (or the player who takes a direct snap from center) cannot run directly up the middle.
- QB's can run **ONLY** when the defense sends a rusher(s) **AND** that rusher crosses the line of scrimmage. (i.e. no QB runs without a rusher who crosses the line of scrimmage)
- If the defense does not send a rusher, the QB will have 7 seconds to pass/handoff ball.

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- Offensive players going out for a pass may not impede defensive pass rusher(s)
- Offensive team may not design a play where the runner takes a handoff and runs directly up the middle for short yardage (i.e. goal line, first down). If running the ball, the play must be designed for the offensive player taking the handoff/pitch to run 5 feet outside (left or right) of where the ball is snapped. i.e. no short yardage "dive plays". (Discretion of the Referee - 5 yard penalty)

PENALTIES

1. Personal Foul Penalties

- 10 yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.
- If the personal foul is called on the offense, the penalty will also result in a loss of down. If the foul is called on the defense, the penalty will be 10-yards and an automatic first down.
- Examples of personal fouls (10-yards) include but are not limited to: pass interference, taunting, spiking the ball, swearing, pushing, roughing the passer (if not deemed flagrant/excessive), using one's voice to deceive the opponent. (Discretion of the referee)
- Personal fouls may be judgment calls by the referee which could result in an unsportsmanlike conduct if considered overly aggressive, egregious or malicious.
- Examples of personal fouls (10-yards) rising to an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty: throwing a player to the ground, punching or striking the ball/player, intentional tackling, elbowing, tripping, cheap shots, roughing the passer (if deemed flagrant/excessive), coach/bench unsporting or misbehavior. (Discretion of the referee)
- If the site director or referee witnesses any acts of unsportsmanlike conduct, the game will be stopped, and the offending player(s)/coach may be disqualified/ejected from the game. (Discretion of the referee)
- All unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are subject to current game disqualification/ejection with possible suspension for the next game. (Determined by YMCA Sports Cabinet)
- Offensive or Defensive pass interference is deemed a personal foul and the penalty is 10 yards from the line of scrimmage; not a spot foul.

2. Common Foul Penalties

- Common fouls: 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage (exceptions below), down replayed if on the offense.
- Examples of Common Fouls (5-yards) include but not limited to: flag stripping, holding, diving for the flag, illegal contact (offensive or defensive), offsides, blocking/screening, illegal rush, QB 7-second count, illegal QB run, illegal forward pass, offensive dive play, illegal formation (not 4 players on the line).
- If the Common Foul penalty is on the defense resulting in the offensive advancing into the next zone, it is a first down.
- Any penalty on the offense on the 45-yard line results in a loss of down; offense cannot go back beyond 45 yards.
- **Exception**—defensive holding (i.e. grab jersey) or illegal contact with the runner (spot foul - 5 yds added to end of run).
- **Exception**—offensive flag guarding (spot foul - 5 yds subtracted from where the referee observed the illegal flag guard).
- Everything else will be a 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage.

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REFEREES

- The official shall be the sole judge on the field of play. The official's decision is final.
- The official can ask coaches, parents, players, and spectators to leave the field of play or the facilities to maintain a pleasant atmosphere, and control of the game.
- If a coach, player, or spectator is disqualified/ejected from a game, that person(s)/situation will be subject to review by the Competition Director and/or Sports Director with a potential one (1) game suspension. Should another incident occur within the same season and the same person(s), that coach, spectator, or player may be disqualified/ejected from the league permanently.
- The official may stop, suspend, or terminate the game because of the elements of interference.
- There will be no disrespectful words, gestures, or actions toward an official during the game from a player, coach, or spectator.

SUBSTITUTIONS

- A primary goal of the YMCA is to provide all children with equal playing time. All players must play a minimum of 50% of the game. If a player is sick or injured, the referee must be notified before the start of the game.
- If a player ends up becoming ill or injured during a game, he or she can be substituted out.