

Loudoun NFL Flag Football Rule Book

(10/26/19)



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I. Game

1. At the start of each game, captains and coaches from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to pick up a first down and an optional 4th down. If they succeed in getting the first down then they will have 3 plays, plus the optional 4th, to score the touchdown. On 4th down the offense has two choices:
 - a. "Punt" the ball: The ball will be spotted on the opponent's 5-yard line and possession will change. There is no kicking the ball.
 - b. Go for it: If the offense picks up the first down then the drive continues. If they fail to pick up the first down then possession goes to the opposition at either the original line of scrimmage (incomplete pass) or wherever the offensive player's flag had been pulled that was short of the line to get.
4. All possession changes, except interceptions and failed 4th down attempts, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
5. Teams change sides after the first half. The team that started on defense in the first half will get the first offensive possession in the second half going in the opposite direction that they did in the first half.
6. If the referees or the league Commissioner witnesses lightning than the game will be suspended for 30 minutes and, if needed, the game will be rescheduled to be finished at another time.
 - a. Should this happen with less than 10 minutes in the game, the game will not be made up and the score of the game when the game was called for lightning will be the final score.

II. Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter of the field; marked by lines or boundary walls.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS), an imaginary line running through the football which indicates where each offensive play will start.
Line-to-gain	The line/marker the offense must get beyond in order to pick up a first down or a touchdown
Rush Line/Marker	An imaginary line running across the field 7 yards downfield from the LOS. Marks the points all pass rushers may blitz from.
Offense	The team in possession of the football and attempting to score.
Defense	The team on the field who is working to prevent the offense from scoring.
Passer	The offensive player who throws the football from behind the LOS. May or may not be the quarterback (QB).
Rusher	The defensive player blitzing the quarterback in an attempt to prevent him from completing a pass, usually by pulling the QB's flags.
Downs (1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd)	The specific play (or try) that the offense is on. Offenses have three plays to pick up a first down or score a Touchdown.
Live Ball	Refers to the time when a play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties to determine if a penalty is during the play.
Dead Ball	Refers to the time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	Sound made by an official to indicate the end of a play, start of a half, etc.
Touchdown (TD)	When the ball carrier enters his designated endzone with his flags still on.
Charging	The movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has an established position. This includes lowering the head, driving through with the shoulder, forearm, or chest. Results in a penalty against the ball carrier.
Flag Guarding	An act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering the elbow, or by blocking access to the runner's flag with a hand or arm. Results in a penalty against the ball carrier.
Shovel Pass	A legal pass attempted beyond the LOS by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiving in a shot put type manner.
Lateral	An illegal toss by the ball carrier to a teammate that travels backwards or sideways.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language committed by a player, a coach, or a fan.

III. Eligibility

1. All players' legal guardians must agree to the online waiver form at NFLFLAG.com for their specific league before participating.

IV. Equipment

1. The league provides each player with a flag belt and NFL FLAG powered by USA Football NFL jersey.
 - a. Teams may use their own football as long as it is of **equal or larger** size to the league's division size. Referees and the Commissioner will have the final say. If a football is deemed too small then a league ball will be used.
2. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are NOT allowed.
4. Players must remove all watches, earrings, and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Mouth Guards and Official NFL FLAG powered by USA Football NFL jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into their pants if they hang below the belt line. The extra part of the flag belt needs to be wrapped or taped away.

7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped. The league will not provide tape for coaches/players. If a player has pockets they will still be permitted to play however they will not be permitted to wear flags and will be down upon gaining possession of the football.

V. Field

1. The field dimensions are different for the different grade divisions:
 - a. K/1, 2/3, and 4/5 divisions play on a field that is 30 yards wide and 50 yards long with two 10-yard end zones (70 yards total). The first down is at midfield, the 25 yard line. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
 - b. MS Division plays on a field that is 35 yards wide and 60 yards long with two 10-yard end zones (80 yards total). The first down is at midfield, the 30 yard line. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
2. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zone (a 5-yard imaginary zone before the first downs and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays. Handoffs are permitted but the ball carrier may not advance past the line of scrimmage.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from the first down and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

VI. Rosters

1. Home teams wear dark color jerseys; visiting teams wear light color jerseys.
2. Teams will play 6 v 6 and must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with five players on the field, but no fewer than five.

VII. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40 minutes continuous clock with two twenty minute halves. The clock stops in a variety of circumstances:
 - a. Timeouts called by the coaches or referees (See VII.4)
 - b. Injuries (See VII.5)
 - c. 1 minute warning of each half
 - d. Change of possession in the last minute of each half
 - e. Extra points in the final minute of each half
 - f. If the score is within 8 points in the final minute of the game the clock will stop for:
 - i. Incomplete Passes
 - ii. Running out of bounds
2. Halftime is 3 minutes long (may be lengthened or shortened due to weather conditions)
3. Each team will have a 35 second play clock which will start the moment the previous play has ended.
4. Each team has two timeouts per half. Timeouts are a minute long. The timeout must end before the next play can be run.
5. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play. An injured player must sit out at least one play if the clock had to be stopped.
6. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will be determined a tie. There is NO overtime during the regular season.

7. During the end of the season tournament if the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes then an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. OT format is as follows:
 - a. The captains and referees will conduct a coin toss to start the OT period.
 - b. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - c. There are NO time-outs
 - d. Each team is allowed a minimum of one possession. Should both teams still be tied after the first two drives, the period will go to Sudden death with the winner being determined by the first team to score.

VIII. Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT (Point After Touchdown)** 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (12-yard line)
 - a. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt conversion (pass only) or a 2-pt conversion (run or pass). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decisions cannot be changed after a penalty. A 2-pt conversion is returnable in all divisions except the Pre/K/1 Division.
3. **Safety:** 2 points
 - a. A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They are ruled down when their flag comes out, they step out of bounds, or they hit the ground with their knee or arm (not hand). A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.
4. **Mercy Rule:** After one team is winning by twenty eight (28) points or more, the losing team gets one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game goes into scrimmage mode:
 - a. The scoreboard will no longer change and the game will be recorded as that score.
 - b. The winning team must change up their rosters and pull out their stronger players.

IX. Coaches

1. Coaches are volunteer parents, family members, or individuals who enjoy coaching youth sports. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all times.
2. Coaches are expected to adhere to the NFL FLAG powered by USA Football philosophies, coaching guidelines, and codes of conduct.

3. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division.
Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball.
 - a. K/1 and 2/3 Div: 2 coaches on the field for offense and defense
 - b. 4/5 Div: 1 coach on the field for offense and defense.
 - c. MS and HS Div: No coaches on the field, except during time outs.

x. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. An official will indicate the line of scrimmage by spotting the ball and lining up on the sideline. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped. The official may give both teams a “courtesy” offside notification to let the players know to back up.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play (must be before the second foot touches out of bounds).
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - b. The ball carriers flag is pulled/falls out
 - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PA, or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - g. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - h. Inadvertent whistle.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at the time of losing the ball.

7. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball at the spot when the whistle was blown and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
8. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule was interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged, and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call. Calling the Commissioner is also acceptable.

XI. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's forward most foot is when the flag is pulled. Not the ball.
2. The quarterback (QB) cannot directly run with the football. The QB may scramble in the back field, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The QB is the offensive player that receives the snap.
3. Teams are permitted to pitch the ball once per play. The player who receives the pitch may hand the ball off, advance the ball, or throw a pass to another offensive player. The offense may use multiple handoffs in a play.
 - a. Defenders may cross the line of scrimmage the moment the ball leaves the QB's hands on a pitch.
 - b. If the ball is pitched and it lands on the ground the play will be ruled dead and the new line of scrimmage will be where the ball landed, not where the offense touched it last.
4. The "Center Sneak" play is illegal. The center must lose possession of the football fully and stand up before regaining possession of the ball.
5. Offenses may not run the football when in the designated No-Run Zones. Handoffs are permitted but the offensive player may not advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.

6. The player who receives the handoff or pitch may throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage without a pass clock.
7. Once the ball has been handed off/pitched, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Diving or leaping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
 - a. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid contacting another player (i.e. Stepping on them). Referee's discretion.
9. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier is permitted.
 - a. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
10. Flag Obstruction: All jerseys must be tucked in before the play begins. Flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Coaches are encouraged to switch players out if a player's jersey needs to be fixed.
 - a. Jerseys that come untucked during the play are acceptable but need to be tucked back in before the next play.

XII. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage. Passes may be received behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. When in a no-run zone all passes must be beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. The QB has a seven-second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the allotted time then the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. No yardage is penalized or safeties if in the endzone.
 - a. Once the ball has been handed off/pitched, the "Pass Clock" is no longer in effect.

XIII. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage first).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motions must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point where the defender who intercepted the pass is ruled down.

XIV. Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB. Players not rushing the QB may defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.
3. A referee will designate the “Rush Line” seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players are advised to verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play if they intend on rushing.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush 7 or more yards from the defensive line of scrimmage
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the QB.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the QB.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage they may continue their rush.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:

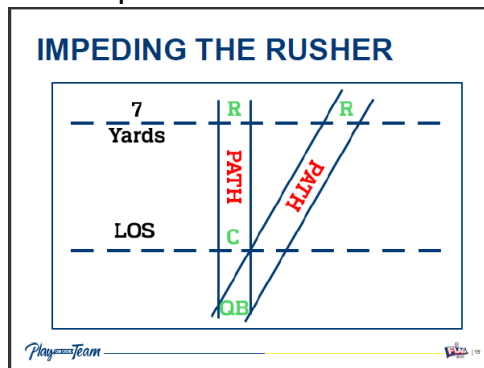
- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – Illegal Rush (5 yards, LOS and 1st down).
- ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offside (5 yards LOS and 1st down).
- iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line, crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – Illegal rush (5 yards LOS and 1st down).

c. Special circumstances:

- i. Teams are not required to rush the QB.
- ii. If a rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.

4. Players rushing the QB may attempted to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the QB 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.

5. The rusher is able to rush the QB regardless of where they line up prior to the snap (*see diagram below*). If an offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to avoid contact. If there is contact between a rusher and an offensive player it is up to the discretion of the referees to determine who initiated the contact. Both players should attempt to avoid contact at all costs.



- 6. A sack occurs if the QB’s flags are pulled, or fall off, behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the QB’s feet are when the flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.
- 7. In the PK1 division blitzing the QB is not permitted.

XV. Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot *tackle, hold* or *run through* the ball carrier when pulling flags. This will result in a penalty. It is the responsibility of the defender to pull the flags without committing the above offenses.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession at any time. If a receiver and a defender are going up for a ball then the defender may push it away from the receiver's hands.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, prior to gaining possession, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
 - a. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
5. Flag guarding occurs when the ball carrier makes contact with a defender who is attempting to pull their flag. This can be by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.
6. If an offensive player has a significant amount of his extra flag belt hanging out and a defender grabs it then it is a flag guarding penalty against the offense. Offensive players should wrap up the extra part of their belt or tape it so there is nothing hanging.

XVI. Formations

1. The offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to five players on the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.

3. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball MUST completely leave his/her hands.
5. Shifting is allowed. Shifting is when multiple offensive players move around. However they must all, save one, come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped.

xvii. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
2. Offensive or confrontational language is not tolerated. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player (s), coaches, or parents will be ejected from the game.
3. Players and coaches may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, parent, or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. Defenders have the right to their spot.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through a ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs, and tents away from the field.
 - b. Help keep fields clean of trash during and after your games.

Determination of First Down When a Spot Foul Occurs - If a spot foul penalty is enforced against the offense and the resulting penalty yardage spots the new line of scrimmage behind the first down line then a first down was not achieved.

Loudoun NFL Flag Penalty Sheet

Offensive Penalties	
Offside/False Start	-5 yards from L.o.S
Delay of Game	-5 yards from L.o.S & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion (more than one, or towards the L.o.S)	-5 yards from L.o.S.
Illegal Forward Pass/Run (part of the QB was over/on the L.o.S)	-5 yards from L.o.S. & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from L.o.S. & Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from L.o.S. & Loss of Down
Downfield Blocking	SPOT FOUL, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging/Trucking	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down

Defensive Penalties	
Offside	+5 yards from L.o.S. & Replay the Down
Illegal Rush	+5 yards from L.o.S. & Replay the Down
Illegal Flag Pull (player did not have ball)	+5 yards from L.o.S. & Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+10 yards from L.o.S. & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	+15 yards from L.o.S & Automatic First Down
Holding	SPOT FOUL, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards & Automatic First Down
Tackling	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards, & Automatic First Down

Unsportsmanlike/Miscellaneous Penalties	
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards & Automatic First Down
Too Many Players on the Field (Offense)	-5 yards from L.o.S. & Loss of Down
Too Many Players on the Field (Defense)	+5 yards from L.o.S & Replay the Down
Two Forward Passes in a Play	Loss of Down
7-Second Pass Clock Expired	Loss of Down