

Rules Unique to KidsGames Flag Football

Down Format

- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 10-yard line.
- The offensive team will have four (4) downs to obtain a first down. A first down is obtained by crossing mid field or scoring a touchdown.

U8 ONLY—A first down can be obtained by crossing mid field, scoring a touchdown or crossing the “first down” line on either side of mid field.

- On 4th down, a team has two options.

1 A team may play the 4th down to attempt to gain a first down or a touchdown. If a team fails to convert on 4th down (either score or pick up a first down), the ball changes possession at the point of the failed attempt.

2 If a “punt” is selected as the fourth down play, the referee is notified of this choice. The ball is then moved to the 10 yard line and the possession changes.

Clock Format

- **Games consist of two (2) twenty minute halves with a running clock and a 5-minute halftime.**
- A 45-second play clock will begin after the referee spots the ball ready for play.
- Clock stops in the following instances with *less than one minute before half-time and the game*:
 - After an incomplete pass
 - After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
 - After a touchdown
 - An extra-point attempt
 - Official’s time-out
 - After an interception
 - During a called time-out until the ball is snapped to begin play
- Each team has one (1) 20-second time outs per half. There is no carry over of unused time-outs. The clock will stop during the time-out.

Game Format

A unique element of this league is the game format:

- Referees lead both teams in prayer at midfield before every game.
- The visiting team receives the ball first at the beginning of the game. The home team receives the ball first in the second half.
- Teams will switch ends of the field following halftime.
- No league standings are maintained.
- Each team will have seven players on the field at a time.
- Coaches are allowed to walk the sidelines and encourage their players without stepping in the playing area. ***One coach per team is allowed in the huddle throughout the season.***

Offense

- A minimum of three players will be on the line of scrimmage at all times.
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time.
- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play. (U8 may use the side snap.)
- A low profile field cone or beanbag will be used to mark the line-of-scrimmage.

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra point: 1 point (played from 5-yard line) or 2 points (played from 10-yard line)
- Safety: 2 points (scoring team will receive the ball at their own 10-yard line)

Running

1. The player who receives the snap cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage.
2. Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Offense may use multiple handoffs. After the ball passes the line of scrimmage, there will be no handoffs or laterals.
3. The Quarterback may run down the line and pitch the ball or pass the ball. He cannot run the ball.
4. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage (halfback pass).
5. Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
6. The ball carrier may not dive or jump. A dive or jump will result in a 5-yard penalty from where the player left his feet (and the down will count). The ball carrier may spin, but may not leave his feet.
7. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.
8. Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
9. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping is considered flag guarding.
10. **Flag Obstruction** – All jerseys **MUST** be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
11. No "active" down field blocking will be allowed. Offensive players may run alongside teammate and obstruct the defense from grabbing ball carriers flag.

No Run Zone

"No-Run Zones," located 5 yards before each end zone are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones. In a no-run zone **ONLY**, no halfback passes are allowed. The quarterback must throw the ball—no handoff then pass.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
- If a player catches a pass with his knee(s) on the ground, the play is blown dead and the ball is spotted at the point of completion.

Passing

- All forward passes must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Screen passes and lateral pitches, behind the line of scrimmage, are allowed.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

Dead Balls

Play is ruled “dead” when:

- Ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- Touchdown or safety is scored.
- A pass falls incomplete.
- Ball carrier’s knee hits the ground.
- Ball carrier’s flag falls out.
- The ball hits the ground as a “fumble”. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble.

Defense

- Teams may run man-to-man or zone defenses.
- Interceptions may be returned in all leagues.
- Only one defender may rush the quarterback in the U8 league.
- U10/U12—As many rushers as you want are allowed as long as they begin at the 7 yard marker.

Rushing the Passer

1. All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin seven-yards back from the line of scrimmage. Any number of players may rush the quarterback (except U8). Players not rushing the quarterback may defend along the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the seven-yard rush-line.
3. A special marker will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
4. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
 - 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 first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offsides (5 yards LOS and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).

c. Special circumstances:

- i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
- ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play, however if they do send a rusher, the rusher must be at or behind the 7 yard mark.
- iii. If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.

5. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way.

6. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard penalty.

7. A Sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled 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.

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 ball carrier when pulling flags.

3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball or pull from the ball carrier's possession at any time.

4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.

5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering flags with the football or jersey.

Penalties

The referee will call all penalties.

Defense

- Offsides – 5 yards and replay down
- Interference – 10 yards from the l.o.s. and automatic first down
- Illegal contact (holding, blocking, pushing) – 10 yards from l.o.s. and automatic first down
- Illegal tackle (pulling jersey or holding up ball carrier to get to flag) – 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
- Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball) – 10 yards from the l.o.s. and automatic first down
- Illegal rushing (start rushing from inside 7-yard marker) – 5 yards and replay down

Offense

- Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start) – 5 yards
- Illegal forward pass (pass received behind l.o.s, pass made while passer is beyond the l.o.s.) – 5 yards and a loss of down (down counts)

- Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) – 10 yards and loss of down (down counts)
- Flag guarding (intentional or unintentional use of ball carrier's arm to prevent flag from being pulled.) – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and replay the down.
- Delay of game – 5 yards.
- Illegal use of the hands – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage
- Stiff-arming – 10 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down (down counts)
- Illegal run (running play in the no-rushing zone) – 5 yards from the l.o.s. and loss of down (down counts)

Flag Football Drills and Skills

Passing Skills

Proper passing technique is the foundation of becoming a good passer.

- Gripping the football correctly affects the throwing mechanics and balance of the ball. An appropriate grip varies from one person to another. Size of hands and length of fingers always influence placement of the hand. There is no one specific way to grip the football. Generally one to three fingers need to cross the laces to provide enough control and pressure on the surface of the ball. Hold the top half of the ball with one to three fingers spread across the laces. Players need to practice different grips to find which one works best for them.
- Turn sideways with your non-throwing shoulder pointing towards the target.
- Pull throwing arm back to an “L” position with football up by the ear.
- Step toward target with the front foot as you release the ball.
- Follow through towards target with the thumb pointing to the ground and palm facing out.
- To get the most control, speed, and distance; a spiral should be thrown. A spiral is also easier for your receiver to catch. Proper release of the football will promote a spiral. The index finger should be the last finger to leave the football.

Pass Drops - Teaching quarterbacks how to drop back properly is important.

- As the quarterback receives the snap, he should turn sideways in the direction of his throwing arm.
- The first step is a reach step. It is a powerful, quick deep step with the back foot.
- The next steps (middle steps) are crossover steps.
- The last step is the plant step. It is a small reach step. As the plant step takes place, the front shoulder should dip down slightly to help maintain balance.

It is important to drop back quickly to keep your eyes looking downfield for the open receiver.

- *Distance Passing* – Players will pair off and begin 5 yards from each other. Players throw the ball back and fourth. Make sure players use the appropriate touch on the pass according to the distance they are from one another. After a few throws, have each player take a step back.
- *Hand Targets* – Have players pair off and begin 10 yards from each other. The player receiving the pass should give a target with his hands for the passer to hit with the pass. Players pass the ball back and fourth trying to hit the hand targets. Players should move the target to different areas.
- *Drop Backs* – Have players work on dropping back and getting their feet set and ready to throw. A football should not be used in this drill. Begin with a three-step drop and work to a five step. Have players work on keeping their eyes downfield and keeping the imaginary football up in a secure position between the armpits.
- *Drop Back and Throw* - Have players pair up and face a partner with about 5 yards in between them. One side will be the QB side. When the coach gives the command, the QBs will drop back, set up, and throw a pass to their partner. Repeat the drill several times then switch sides. Be sure QBs are keeping proper technique and their eyes up field.

Receiving Skills

Catching

- Proper technique when catching the football needs to be taught. Most kids do not know how to properly catch a football.
- Always catch the ball with your hands away from the body. Arms should be extended out about 3/4 to allow room to cushion the catch.
- For balls above the waist, put your index finger and thumbs together to form a triangle. For the low ball, keep the little fingers and elbows together to cradle the catch.
- Keep your eyes on the ball. The most important part in catching the ball is to keep your eyes on the ball all the way into your hands.
- Once the ball is in your hands, secure it by quickly tucking it away high under your armpit with a strong clamp tight to your body. Cover the front tip of the football with your fingers. Use your free arm to maintain balance.

Routes

- Running good pass routes will have a tremendous impact with helping your team move the ball. There are four main parts of a good route. 1. Start, 2. Stem, 3. Break, 4. Burst.
 1. *Start* - A good route begins with a good stance and start. It is important to gain as much ground as quickly as possible.
 2. *Stem* - The stem is where the receiver forces the defensive back up the field. Run towards the outside shoulder of the defender in an attempt to get him to turn his hips away from the l.o.s.
 3. *Break* - The break is the part of the route where the receiver transitions from the stem to the burst by making a direction changing cut. In order to get in and out of a break quickly, the receiver must stay low and maintain proper balance by keeping their shoulders directly over their feet.
 4. *Burst* - The burst is where the receiver comes out of the break and attempts to create additional separation from the defender. Different routes require different bursts. A curl requires the receiver to come off the break with two steps back to the quarterback and then stopping. A post requires a full speed continued burst after the break.

Teaching the importance of everyone running their assigned route will be a challenge. It is a good time to explain and teach teamwork. Be patient with players, especially the younger ones.

Receiving Drills

- *Moving Catch* - Players will line up in a single file line. One at a time, players will begin to jog across the field looking toward the coach. The coach will pass the ball to the player. Players should work on catching the ball away from their body, using their hands. Use the up, slant, curl and out as well. This is a half speed drill, working on hands and catching the ball while in motion.
- *Route Running* - Players will line up, single file. One at a time, players will run a predetermined route. Begin with the curl and work up the passing tree (pg. 28) from there. Coaches should watch each route and teach as players run the routes. After players feel comfortable with the route, add a pass from the coach.

- *Quick Turns* - 4 footballs will be needed for this drill. This drill will teach players to turn quickly and use their hands to catch the ball. 4 players will make a small circle surround a middle player. Each player should line up 3 yards from the middle player. Each of the 4 outside players will have a football. The drill starts when the man in the middle faces one of the outside players and the ball is tossed to him. The middle player catches the ball, flips it back to that player and turns quickly to his right. The next player does the same thing. The middle player should go right a few times around, then left.

Flag Pulling Skills

Flag Pulling

- Sprint to the ball carrier.
- As the defender approaches the ball carrier, he should come to a good defensive position and shorten his strides into short choppy steps (break down), being ready for the ball carrier to make a move.
- Reach for the top of the flag (near the plug). Firmly grab the flag and pull hard.

Breaking Down

- Shorten your steps. Use fast choppy steps.
- Be balanced and in control of your body. Be ready for the ball carrier to make a move.
- Stay low with your arms slightly out to for balance and shoulders above feet.
- Watch the players belly and move towards your target (the flags).

- *Break Down* - This can be done with the entire group at once. Have players run at 3/4 speed towards you. On the command "Break down" players should come to a good break down position using proper technique.

- *Angle Drill (basic)* - Place two cones about 5 yards apart. Players will form two lines, one offense and one defense. One at a time, a ball carrier from the offensive line will run the football through the cones attempting to juke and run past the defender without getting their flag pulled. The defender will practice taking good angles and attempt to pull the flag of the ball carrier as they enter the cones.

- *Angle Drill (advanced)* - Set up several cones 5-yards apart. The ball carrier will run down the line and choose a set of cones (zone) to run between. Once a zone is passed, the ball carrier cannot run back through that zone. The defender needs to mirror the ball carrier and pull the flag once he commits and enters a zone. The defender should be slightly behind the ball carrier until he cuts between two cones.

- *The Gauntlet* - Three defenders will line up in an a 10-yard alley with 5 yards between them. The ball carrier will run through the alley attempting to get passed the defenders, one at a time until the end line. This will develop open field techniques on both the offensive and defensive sides of the ball. Be sure players rotate and play all positions.

- *Open Field Flag Pull* – Set up cones 5-7 yards apart making a box. Designate a sideline with three cones. The offensive player will receive the pitch from the coach. The defender will take a proper angle to make the tackle on the ball carrier. Have the defender work on breaking down into a good defensive stance as they approach the ball carrier. Teach defenders to use the sideline to their advantage by "forcing" the ball carrier towards it.

- *Pull Tag* - This drill will help players get used to pulling flags and avoiding defenders. Players spread out in a designated area (20 yards x 20 yards). On the coach's command, players will begin to pull others player's flags. The object is to see how many flags you can pull. At the end of 1 minute, the player who pulled the most flags is the winner of that round. Flag guarding is illegal.

Coverage Skills

Backpedal - In order to play effective defense, all players must learn how to backpedal. A backpedal is necessary to keep a defender in a position where he can make a play on the receiver while maintaining a cushion so he doesn't get beat on a deep pass.

- Begin in a good defensive stance. Knees bent, back straight, head and shoulders over feet.
- Push off front foot and step with the back foot.
- Shoulders should be parallel to the LOS
- When the receiver gets within 3 yards the defensive back turns to run with the receiver.

Coverage Drills

Backpedal - All players will need to work on backpedaling. Repetition is the best way to get your players comfortable with backpedaling.

- Have players line up across a line.
- On the command, players will backpedal 10 yards focusing on proper form.
- Start slow, then encourage players to speed up as they become comfortable with it. The goal is to backpedal as fast as a receiver runs forward.

Backpedal Break - This drill will work on players transitioning from the backpedal to a forward run. The quicker the transition, the better defender they will be.

- Two players line up on a line facing the coach. The coach will command the players to backpedal by holding the football out in front of him. After backpedaling for about 6-8 yards, the coach will command players to break into a forward sprint by pulling the football up around his ear.
- Players need to work on staying low and coming out of the break quickly.

Backpedal and React – Players will backpedal and react to the pass.

- One player will begin facing the coach about 5-yards out in front. The coach will give the backpedal command by pulling the football up towards his chest. When the player backpedals for about 5-6 yards, the coach will turn 45-degrees left or right. The player should react by making a 45-degree break in that direction.

Backpedal Break Backpedal and React

After the player breaks, the coach will throw the ball in the defenders direction.

- *One on one* - Have players run one-on-one routes against each other. Players will get a chance to work on their technique at receiver and defensive back. Begin with the coach as the QB. Then work toward a player QB.
- *Two-on-two* - Same as one on one but with two receivers and two defenders.
- *Three-on-three* - Same as one on one but with three receivers and three defenders.