



# 2026 RULEBOOK

Updated: 2.10.2026

## League Authority & Rule Interpretation

The League Commissioner has final authority over all rules and how they are enforced. If the Commissioner is not present, that authority passes to the Site Manager, and then to the Lead Referee.

These league officials may:

- Interpret and apply rules as needed in any situation
- Correct or override an on-field ruling if necessary
- Clarify, adjust, or revise a rule during the season — or even during a game — if a rule is unclear or poorly written
- Establish a rule that was not previously listed if it is needed for safety, fairness, or game flow

Judgment calls made by referees on the field (such as spot of the ball, flag pulls, or incidental contact) are final and cannot be appealed or challenged.

### Player Age Eligibility:

A player's age as of **August 1, 2025** determines the **youngest division** that player may play in. Each division name (for example, 12U) represents the **oldest age** a player may be as of August 1, 2025

#### Example:

If a player is **9 years old or younger on August 1**, they are eligible to play in the **10U division**. That player may also be allowed to “play up” into an older division (such as 12U), if approved.

The league may **deny a request to play up** if there is a safety concern. Coaches and parents are strongly encouraged to use good judgment when considering whether a player should move up to an older age group.

Players who are approved to play up may participate on **both teams during the regular season and end-of-season tournament**, however **schedule conflicts are possible and not guaranteed to be avoided**.

Players are **not allowed to play down** an age division unless they receive **prior written approval from the league** before the season begins.

To be eligible for the end-of-season tournament, a player must have participated in **at least three (3) regular-season games**.

During the regular season, a player may play on **multiple teams within the same age division** for additional development and repetitions. Once tournament play begins, the player must select **one (1) team only** to compete with for the tournament.

## **End-of-Season Tournament & Champions**

Each age division will have a **Regular Season Champion** determined by the League standings (Wins, head to head, point differential)

For **End-of-Season Play Offs** teams will be seeded by the league commissioners based on regular-season performance to ensure fair and competitive games. Formats may vary.

This league values competition and development and is **not a participation-trophy league**.

**No more than ten (10) championship rings** will be awarded to any team.

## **EQUIPMENT:**

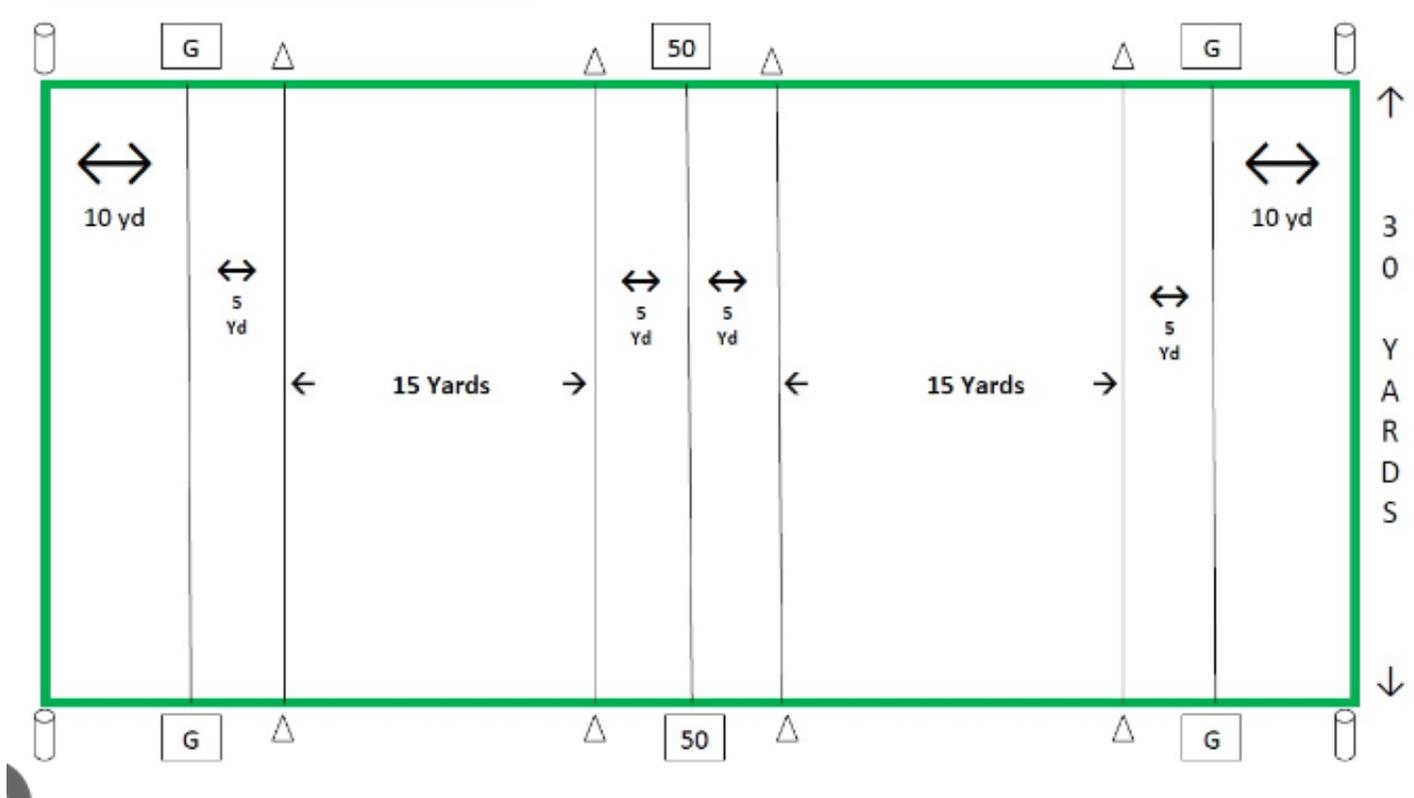
For player safety and fairness, the following equipment rules apply to all games:

- **Flags:** Teams must use **Gridiron, NFL, or Shruumz flags**. Flags may not match jersey or shorts colors. Any flag tampering may result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Flags must be worn with the **phalange facing outward**.
- **Mouthguards:** All players must wear a **soft plastic mouthguard** while on the field. Hard plastic mouthguards are not allowed.
- **Clothing:** Shorts, pants, or leggings **may not have pockets**, unless fully taped. Jerseys must be similar in appearance across the team and may not display offensive language. The league has final say on what is considered offensive. Pinnies may be required if uniforms do not match and may result in forfeiture if not worn when instructed.
- **Shoes:** Players must wear shoes. **Metal cleats are never allowed**.
- **Jewelry & Headwear:** All jewelry and baseball-style hats must be removed. Winter beanies or headwear for warmth or hair control are allowed.
- **Uniform Fit:** Jerseys must remain tucked in and not cover flags. Officials may rule a uniform illegal if it provides an unfair advantage.
- **Protective Gear:** Hard casts are not allowed. Soft casts are permitted. Players may wear gloves, tape, elbow pads, knee pads, and **soft-shell helmets (optional)**. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.

## THE FIELD:

Please treat our fields appropriately. Do not litter, spit, or dig up our fields. Do not intentionally erase lines, throw gum, or cigarette butts. Be sure to treat our cones and pylons with care and ensure children in your care do the same.

- **Field Size:** The field is **30 yards wide by 70 yards long**, with **two 10-yard end zones**. There are 25 yards from each end zone to midfield. Field dimensions may be adjusted for space or tournament needs.
- **Field Markings:** End zones are marked with pylons or cones. Yard lines and no-run zones may be marked with cones or field paint. Sidelines and end lines are marked by paint or cones.
- **No-Run Zones (8U–12U):**
  - A **5-yard no-run zone** exists before midfield and before the goal line.
  - Teams **may not run the ball** in these zones — all plays must be passes (even with a handoff).
  - Each offense encounters **only two no-run zones per drive**: one to gain a first down and one to score.
- **6U & 7U Divisions:**
  - **No-run zones do not apply.** Teams may run or pass anywhere on the field.
- **Out of Bounds:** Any player who steps on or beyond the boundary line is **out of bounds**.



## **COACHES, TEAMS, & PLAYING TIME:**

Teams in this league are formed in one of two ways:

- **League-formed teams**, made up of individual players (free agents) placed together by the league with a volunteer coach, or
- **Club teams**, which register together with their own coach and custom jerseys. Club team names must be appropriate and non-offensive.

The league carefully assigns free agents and builds schedules to create fair competition.

### **Playing Time:**

Playing time is determined by the team's coach. Coaches are encouraged to distribute playing time fairly, especially in recreational divisions. Competitive divisions may have stricter playing-time expectations. Families are encouraged to discuss concerns directly with coaches.

**Playing time is not guaranteed.**

### **Uniforms:**

Home teams wear **dark jerseys**. Visiting teams wear **light (white) jerseys**. Teams must have pinnies available if they do not have the correct jersey color.

### **Roster & Game Minimums:**

- Teams may roster **5–10 players (more with league approval)**
- Games must start with **at least 4 players**
- Teams may continue with 4 players if injuries occur, but never fewer

### **Sidelines & Conduct:**

Coaches are expected to follow **coaches code of conduct**.

Only **two coaches per team** are allowed on the sidelines. All other adults must remain **at least 5 yards off the field**.

Coaches play a critical role in setting the tone of the league. Positive leadership is expected at all times. Inappropriate behavior — including offensive language, aggressive conduct, substance use around players, or negative public comments about the league or others — will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, up to removal from the league.

## TIMING:

- **Game Length:** Games consist of **two 20-minute halves** (40 minutes total).
- **Timeouts:** Each team has **three (3) 30-second timeouts per game**, which may be used at any time. The game clock stops for timeouts.
- **Mercy Rule / Scrimmage Mode:**
  - If a team leads by **28 points**, the trailing team will receive **one possession** to reduce the margin.
  - If that possession does not result in a score, the game will enter **scrimmage mode** and will not return to normal play.
  - The score is frozen when scrimmage mode begins.
  - During scrimmage mode:
    - The clock runs continuously (no timeouts)
    - Interceptions are dead balls
    - The leading team may not blitz
  - Scrimmage mode is intended for development, additional playing time, and instruction. Officials may end the game early if the spirit of scrimmage mode is violated.
- **Final Two Minutes:**
  - In the second half, if the score is **within 8 points or fewer** at the 2-minute mark, **NFL Pro Clock rules** apply.
  - If the score exceeds an 8-point difference at any time during the final two minutes, Pro Clock rules no longer apply.
- **Kneeling:** Kneeling to run out the clock is permitted in the final minute.
- **Halftime:** Halftime is **2 minutes**. Teams with only five players may request a **one-minute extension**.
- **Clock Management:** Officials may stop the clock at their discretion but will avoid doing so during hurry-up situations that unfairly affect either team.
- **Injuries:** The clock stops for injuries and resumes once the injured player is removed from the field.
- **Discussing Calls:** A coach must have a **timeout available** to stop the clock to discuss or challenge a call. Timeouts may be restored at the referee's discretion if the ruling is changed.
- **Overtime:** If the score is tied at the end of regulation, **overtime will be played**.
- **Defensive Penalties:** A game **may not end on a defensive penalty**. The offense will be awarded an untimed down.
- **Play Clock:**
  - The referee starts the play clock once the line of scrimmage and rush line are set.
  - For **6U**, the play clock begins when both teams are ready.
  - Timing on change of possession may vary slightly at the referee's discretion.

## **OVERTIME (*League Play Only*):**

Overtime is used to determine a winner in league games and is designed to give **both teams an equal opportunity** to score and defend, similar to college overtime.

- **Field & Coin Toss:**  
The referee will choose the end zone used for overtime. The **visiting team calls the coin toss**, and the winner chooses to start on offense or defense.
- **Timeouts:**  
Each team receives **one (1) 30-second timeout total for all overtime rounds**. Timeouts from regulation do not carry over.
- **Overtime Format:**
  - In the first overtime, the team on offense runs **one conversion play**, choosing either a **1-point or 2-point attempt**.
  - The opposing team then gets the **same opportunity**, regardless of the outcome of the first attempt.
  - If the game remains tied, a second overtime is played with **offensive and defensive roles reversed**.
  - This format continues, alternating possession order, until a winner is determined. There is **no limit** to the number of overtime rounds.
- **Alternate Procedures:**  
The league representative and referee may implement an **alternate overtime format** if necessary due to time constraints, field availability, weather, or tournament conditions.
- **Turnovers & Penalties:**
  - An **interception returned for a score immediately ends the game**.
  - **Any offensive penalty** during overtime results in a **turnover**.
  - Defensive penalties are enforced as they are during regulation.

## **SCORING:**

- **Touchdowns:**  
All touchdowns — by run, pass, or interception during live play — are worth **6 points**.
- **Extra Points (After a TD):**  
After scoring, the offense may choose:
  - **1-point attempt** from the **5-yard line** (*pass only*)
  - **2-point attempt** from the **10-yard line** (*run or pass*)
  - Or, in the spirit of sportsmanship, **no attempt**
- **Declaring the Attempt:**  
The scoring team must clearly declare its choice (**1 or 2**) immediately, as confirmed by the referee. Once declared, the choice may **only be changed using an offensive timeout**.
- **Penalty Enforcement on Conversions:**
  - **Offensive penalties** result in a **failed conversion attempt**.

- **Defensive penalties**, when the conversion fails, result in a **retry at half the distance** to the goal line (and repeat if additional defensive penalties occur).
- **Safeties:**  
A safety is worth **2 points** and occurs when:
  - The ball carrier is down in their own end zone
  - A flag is pulled or falls off in the end zone
  - The ball carrier steps out of bounds through their own end zone
  - Any body part that causes a player to be ruled down contacts the ground in the end zone  
*The position of the ball — not the player's feet — determines a safety.*
- **Defensive Scores on Conversions:**  
Any interception returned for a score on a conversion attempt is worth **2 points**, regardless of whether a 1-point or 2-point attempt was chosen.
- **Kicking:**  
**No points are scored by kicking** in this league.
- **Forfeits:**  
All forfeited games are recorded as a **28–0 win**.
- **Score Verification:**  
Coaches, officials, and the scorekeeper must sign the score sheet. If a coach leaves without signing, the scorekeeper will note it and the score will be **final**.

## **LIVE BALL & DEAD BALL:**

The ball becomes **live** at the snap and remains live until an official blows the whistle to end the play.

A play is ruled **dead** when any of the following occur:

- A player enters the **neutral zone** before the snap
- The ball carrier's **flag is pulled or falls off**, or the ball carrier receives the ball without both flags
- The quarterback receives the snap **without both flags properly attached**
- The ball touches the ground for any reason, including:
  - An incomplete pass
  - A fumble or dropped snap (*fumbles are always dead and cannot be advanced*)
- The ball carrier steps **out of bounds**
- A **touchdown, safety, or any score** is made
- Any part of the ball carrier's body **other than a hand or foot** touches the ground
- The ball touches the ground **while still in the ball carrier's possession**
- The **7-second pass clock expires** before the quarterback releases the ball or before the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage

Additional rules:

- **Substitutions** may be made on any dead ball
- **Any official** may whistle the play dead

### **Inadvertent Whistle:**

If an official accidentally blows the whistle and acknowledges it was a mistake:

- If **no time remains** on the clock, the offense may choose to:
  - Accept the result of the play, or
  - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage
- If **time remains** on the clock, the result of the play stands
- This ruling is not discretionary and may not be altered

### **SPOTTING THE BALL:**

The ball is spotted based on **where the play ends**, as outlined below:

- **Flag Pulls:**

The ball is spotted **where the ball is located** when the ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls off.
- **Fumbles & Dropped Snaps:**
  - On a **fumbled snap or backward fumble**, the ball is spotted **where it hits the ground**.
  - On a **forward fumble**, the ball is spotted **where the player lost control of the ball**.
  - **No score may result from a fumble.**
- **Out of Bounds:**

The ball is spotted where the ball is located when the ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- **Completed Passes Near the Sideline:**

If a receiver catches the ball with **at least one foot in bounds**, the ball is spotted at the location of that foot.

  - **Exception:** For a touchdown, the **ball must cross the goal line**, regardless of foot placement.
- **Start of Possession:**
  - The ball is spotted at the offense's **own 5-yard line** to begin the game.
  - After a punt, the ball is spotted at the **receiving team's 5-yard line**.
- **Fourth Down Decisions (Before Midfield):**

If the offense goes for it on **fourth down before reaching midfield** and fails, the ball is spotted at the **previous spot**.
- **After Crossing Midfield:**
  - **9U–16U:** If a team crosses midfield and fails to score after **three downs**, the defense takes over at **their own 5-yard line** (as if punted).

- **6U & 8U:** If a team crosses midfield and fails to score after **four downs**, the ball is returned to the **previous spot**, but never closer than the 5-yard line.
- **Interceptions:**  
Interceptions in the end zone are spotted at the **intercepting team's 5-yard line**.
- **Overhead Snap into the End Zone:**  
If an overhead snap lands in the end zone:
  - The ball is spotted where the quarterback **first touches it**
  - If the quarterback touches the ball **while in the end zone**, the result is a **safety**

## **RUNNING WITH THE BALL:**

The following rules apply to all running plays:

- **Center Restrictions:**  
The center may **not** be the first player to run with the ball. Center sneaks are not allowed, regardless of timing.
- **Handoffs & Laterals:**  
All handoffs, pitches, laterals, or backward passes must occur **behind the line of scrimmage**. Lateraling downfield (e.g., “hook and ladder” plays) is not permitted.
- **No-Run Zones (8U–12U):**  
No-run zones exist **5 yards before midfield** and **5 yards before the goal line** to prevent power running.  
Each offense encounters **only two no-run zones per drive**—one to gain a first down and one to score.
- **6U Division:**  
No-run zones **do not apply**.
- **Advancing the Ball:**  
Any player receiving the ball behind the line of scrimmage has **7 seconds to cross the line of scrimmage**. This count resets with each legal handoff.
- **Passing After a Handoff:**  
Any player who receives a handoff may **throw the ball** as long as they remain behind the line of scrimmage.
- **Defensive Rush:**  
Once a handoff occurs (in any direction), **all defenders may rush** from anywhere on the field.
- **Flag Guarding:**
  - Jumping forward or diving with the ball is considered **flag guarding**.
  - Lateral moves such as spin moves or jump cuts are **legal**.
  - Officials use discretion when determining flag guarding versus natural movement.
- **Contact & Charging:**  
Ball carriers must avoid contact. Running into or cutting into a stationary defender is **charging**. Jumping to avoid a fallen defender is permitted.

- **Blocking:**  
Traditional blocking is **not allowed**. Offensive players without the ball may remain stationary but may not actively block.
- **Off-Ball Movement:**  
Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage or is caught, offensive players without the ball must **stop moving immediately**. Running with the ball carrier is not allowed.
- **Quarterback Running:**  
The quarterback may **not run** unless rushed or pursued by a defender.  
Quarterbacks may not run alongside a running back to execute a run-pass option and may take **no more than one step** in that situation.

## PASSING:

The following rules apply to all passing plays:

- **Forward Pass Location:**  
All forward passes must be **thrown from behind the line of scrimmage** and **caught beyond the line of scrimmage**.
- **Throwing the Ball Away:**  
When the quarterback is rushed, they may throw the ball away, but the pass **must cross the line of scrimmage**.
- **Laterals & Backward Passes:**  
Lateral or backward passes must be **thrown and caught behind the line of scrimmage**.
- **Shovel Passes:**  
Shovel passes are allowed but **must be caught beyond the line of scrimmage**.
- **7-Second Pass Clock:**  
The quarterback must release the ball **before the referee finishes counting “seven.”**
  - If the ball is not thrown in time, the play is dead, the down counts, and the ball returns to the line of scrimmage.
  - If the ball is handed off, the 7-second clock **resets** and may reset multiple times with legal handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.
- **Quarterback in the End Zone:**  
If the quarterback is still in the end zone when the 7-second clock expires, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
- **Roughing the Passer:**  
For roughing the passer, the ball is considered an **extension of the quarterback’s arm**. Contact with the ball while it is still in the quarterback’s hand is treated the same as contact with the arm and will result in a penalty.
- **Illegal Forward Pass:**  
An illegal forward pass is called if:

- The quarterback throws the ball while **any part of the front foot** is beyond the line of scrimmage, or
- A forward pass is **caught behind the line of scrimmage**

*Note: A forward pass that does not cross the line of scrimmage and is **not caught** does **not** result in an illegal forward pass penalty.*

## RECEIVING:

The following rules apply to all receivers:

- **Eligible Receivers:**  
All players are eligible to receive a pass, including the quarterback **after the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage.**
- **Inbounds Requirement:**  
A catch is valid if the receiver has **at least one foot in bounds** at the time of the catch.
  - If the other foot is **simultaneously touching the sideline or out of bounds**, the pass is incomplete.
- **Simultaneous Possession:**  
If an offensive and defensive player gain possession of the ball at the same time, the ball is **awarded to the offense.**
- **Leaving the Field of Play:**  
A player who voluntarily leaves the field **without contact** and returns during the same play may **not** be the first player to touch or receive the ball on that play. This applies to both the sidelines and the end zone.
- **No Hand Checking:**  
Hand checking is not allowed. Defenders may not hold, push, slap, or otherwise impede a receiver's hands, arms, or body in a way that creates an advantage, including at the line of scrimmage or elsewhere on the field.

## RUSHING (BLITZING) THE PASSER:

The following rules govern how defenders may legally pressure the quarterback:

- **Rush Positioning:**  
Any player rushing the quarterback must start **at least 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage** at the snap and at least **1 yard to either side of the center or the designated rush marker.**
- **Number of Rushers:**  
**Any number of players** may rush the quarterback.

- **After a Handoff:**  
Once the ball is handed off (including laterals or backward passes), the **7-yard rush restriction no longer applies**, and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage.
- **Rush Line:**  
A rush line will be marked on the field or designated by the referee. Defensive players are responsible for confirming proper alignment before each snap.
- **Illegal Rush Penalties:**  
A penalty will be called if:
  - A defender crosses the rush line early and then crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or backward pass
  - A defender crosses the line of scrimmage **before the snap**
  - A rusher jumps the snap, crosses the rush line, and continues to rush the quarterback without resetting before the snap

*A rusher who jumps early may reset **only if the reset occurs before the snap.***

- **Optional Rush:**  
Teams are **not required** to rush the quarterback and are **not required** to identify rushers before the play.
- **Rusher Alignment:**  
Rushers may line up **anywhere on the defensive side of the ball**, as long as they start at least 7 yards back.
- **Contact with the Quarterback:**  
Rushers may attempt to **bat down a pass** but may not make contact with the quarterback, especially above the waist. Reasonable contact while attempting to pull a flag is allowed.
- **Sacks:**  
A sack occurs when the ball carrier's flag is pulled **behind the line of scrimmage**. The position of the ball determines the spot or a safety.
- **Fake Handoffs:**  
If the quarterback fakes a handoff and, in the referee's judgment, **physically contacts the running back**, all defenders may pursue the quarterback from anywhere on the field.
- **6U Division:**  
**Blitzing is not allowed** in the 6U division.

## **IMPEDING THE RUSHER:**

Impeding the rusher occurs when the offense interferes with a defender who is legally rushing the quarterback.

- **Rusher's Right to a Path:**  
A rusher who starts at least **1 yard off the rush marker** is entitled to a **clear, direct path**

**to the quarterback.** This path is established **before the snap** and does **not change** if the quarterback moves.

- **Offensive Responsibility:**

If an offensive player is **moving into or through the rusher's path**, it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher.

- **Any disruption of the rusher's path**—with or without contact—may result in an impeding the rusher penalty.
- **Contact is not required** for this penalty to be called.

- **Rusher Responsibility:**

If an offensive player is **stationary after the snap**, the rusher must go around the player and avoid contact.

- **When Impeding Does NOT Apply:**

Impeding the rusher is no longer enforced when:

- The offense executes a **handoff or lateral**, or
- The rusher **deviates from their original path** to the quarterback

- **Referee Judgment:**

All impeding-the-rusher calls are made **at the referee's discretion**. Players and coaches are expected to avoid aggressive contact on both sides.

- **Clarification:**

The **“outside of the pocket” rule is no longer in effect**.

## **FLAG PULLING:**

The following rules apply to all flag-pulling situations:

- **Legal Flag Pull:**

A flag pull is legal only when the ball carrier has **full possession** of the ball.

- **How Flags May Be Pulled:**

Defenders may **dive to pull flags**, but may not tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier.

- **No Stripping the Ball:**

Defenders may **not attempt to strip or pull the ball** from the ball carrier at any time.

- **Flag Falls Off:**

If a ball carrier's flag **falls off unintentionally**, the play ends immediately when the player has possession. The ball is spotted where the ball is located at that moment.

- **Pulling Flags Early:**

Defenders may not intentionally pull the flags of a player **who does not have the ball**. Doing so may result in a penalty.

- **Flag Guarding:**

Flag guarding occurs when the ball carrier uses their arm, hand, shoulder, head, jersey, or the ball itself to **block or shield their flags** from a defender.

- **Handling the Flag After a Pull:**

After pulling a flag, defenders must make a reasonable effort to **drop the flag at the spot** or return it to the player.

- Throwing flags will result in **one warning**, followed by an **unsportsmanlike conduct penalty** if it continues.

## **FORMATION & PRE-SNAP MOTION:**

The following rules apply to offensive formations and movement before the snap:

- **Line of Scrimmage:**

The offense must have **at least one player on the line of scrimmage** (the center) and may have **up to four players on the line**. The quarterback must line up **off the line of scrimmage**.

- **Motion & Shifts:**

Up to **four players** may shift or be in motion before the snap.

- At least **four offensive players must be set** for **one full second** prior to the snap.
- A player in motion may move **laterally or parallel** to the line of scrimmage only.

- **Quarterback Movement:**

The quarterback may make reasonable movements such as head movement, clapping, or slight foot adjustments while initiating the snap.

- Excessive movement intended to draw defenders offside may be ruled a **false start**.

- **No Forward Motion:**

No offensive player may be moving **forward** at the moment the ball is snapped.

- **The Snap:**

The center must snap the ball in a **single, continuous motion** between the legs to a player in the backfield. The ball must **fully leave the center's hands**.

## **PENALTIES:**

Penalties are enforced to promote safety, fairness, and sportsmanship.

- **Offensive penalties** result in **yardage and a loss of down**.
- **Defensive penalties** result in **yardage and an automatic first down**.

### *General Enforcement*

- Penalties are called by referees. The league director may also assess penalties for coach or spectator misconduct.

- Officials consider **age and skill level** when distinguishing incidental contact from true violations.
  - Penalties may be assessed as **spot fouls** or **from the line of scrimmage**. The referee will clearly announce the enforcement.
  - Only **one coach** may address the referee regarding a call. Players may not argue calls.
  - A coach must have a **timeout available** to stop the clock to discuss a call. Judgment calls **cannot be overturned**.
  - Live-ball penalties are enforced first. Dead-ball penalties may follow.
  - If the penalty yardage exceeds half the distance to the goal, enforcement will be **half the distance**.
- 

## Spot Fouls

### Defensive Spot Fouls

- **Stripping (attempted or successful):** 10 yards, automatic first down
- **Holding:** 5 yards, automatic first down

### Offensive Spot Fouls

- **Screening, blocking, or running with the ball carrier:** 10 yards, loss of down
  - **Charging:** 10 yards, loss of down
  - **Flag guarding:** 10 yards, loss of down
- 

## Penalties From the Line of Scrimmage

### Defensive

- Unnecessary roughness – 10 yards, first down
- Unsportsmanlike conduct – 10 yards, first down
- Pass interference – 10 yards, first down
- Roughing the passer – 10 yards, first down
- Offside – 5 yards, first down
- Illegal rush – 5 yards, first down
- Illegal flag pull (intentional) – 5 yards, first down
- Taunting (including throwing flags) – 5 yards, first down
- Hand checking – 5 yards, first down

### Offensive

- Unnecessary roughness – 10 yards, loss of down
- Unsportsmanlike conduct – 10 yards, loss of down

- Offside / false start – 5 yards, loss of down
- Illegal forward pass – 5 yards, loss of down
- Offensive pass interference (includes hand checking) – 5 yards, loss of down
- Illegal motion – 5 yards, loss of down
- Delay of game – 5 yards, loss of down
- Impeding the rusher – 5 yards, loss of down
- Illegal procedure – 5 yards, loss of down

## GENERAL BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES:

Our league is committed to providing a **safe, respectful, and family-friendly environment** for all players, coaches, and spectators.

- **Player Safety & Conduct:**

Any intentional tackling, elbowing, blocking, cheap shots, or unsportsmanlike behavior may result in **immediate ejection**. Depending on the severity or timing of the incident, additional **suspension** (including carryover to future games or seasons) may be imposed at the referee's discretion. These decisions are **not subject to appeal**.

- **Language & Sportsmanship:**

Offensive, confrontational, or inappropriate language is not allowed. Officials determine what language is considered inappropriate and will follow this progression:

1. **Verbal warning** issued to the head coach
2. **Unsportsmanlike conduct penalty** assessed to the team (10 yards; automatic first down or loss of down)
3. **Game stoppage**, involvement of the Site Manager, and removal of the offending individual from the facility

Removed individuals may not return until the league commissioners review the situation.

- **Sideline Responsibility:**

All attendees—including coaches, parents, and spectators—are subject to these guidelines.

The **head coach is responsible for the behavior of their sideline**.

- **Positive Environment:**

Coaches are encouraged to coach with enthusiasm and integrity. Spectators should cheer positively and respectfully.

Parents may not confront or taunt players, officials, coaches, or other spectators.

- **Abuse & Harassment:**

Any player who physically or verbally abuses an opponent, coach, or official may be **ejected or suspended**.

- **On-Field Safety:**

- Ball carriers must make a reasonable effort to **avoid defenders**.
- Defenders may not **run through** ball carriers when pulling flags.

- Defenders may not **mimic offensive signals or cadence.**
- **Spectator Area & Field Safety:**  
Spectators must keep younger children, chairs, tents, and equipment **at least 5 yards off the field**, including end zone areas.  
All trash must be disposed of in designated containers.

## Rules by Age Division

These rules highlight **key differences by age group**. For full rule explanations, refer to the applicable sections earlier in this rulebook.

---

### 6U Division

- **Ball Size:** Pee Wee
- **Downs:** 4 downs to midfield, 4 downs to score
- **No-Run Zones:** None — teams may run or pass anywhere
- **Extra Points:**
  - 1 point from the 5-yard line (run or pass)
  - 2 points from the 10-yard line (run or pass)
- **Blitzing:** Not allowed
- **Quarterback:**
  - Player receiving the snap may not rush
  - QB has **7 seconds** to pass or hand off
  - After a handoff, the 7-second clock resets
- **Timeouts:** 3 per game
- **Play Clock:** 30 seconds
- **Coaches on Field:**
  - 1 offensive coach and 1 defensive coach allowed
  - Coaches may help align players but must step out of play once the ball is snapped
- **Defense:**
  - Any legal formation (must be onside)
  - Defenders may cross the line of scrimmage after a handoff, pitch, lateral, or dual possession

---

### 8U Division

- **Ball Size:** Pee Wee
- **Downs:** 4 downs to midfield, 4 downs to score
- **No-Run Zones:** In effect (pass-only zones apply, even if blitzed)
- **Blitzing:** Allowed
- **Quarterback & Pass Clock:**
  - 7-second pass clock applies

- Clock resets after a handoff
  - Ball carrier has 7 seconds to cross the line of scrimmage or pass
  - **Timeouts:** 3 per game
  - **Play Clock:** 25 seconds
  - **Coaches on Field:**
    - 1 offensive coach and 1 defensive coach allowed
    - Coaches may align players but must exit the play area at the snap
  - **Defense:**
    - Any legal formation (must be onside)
    - Defenders may cross the line of scrimmage after a handoff, pitch, lateral, or dual possession
- 

## 10U / 12U Divisions

- **Ball Size:** Junior
- **Downs:** 4 downs to midfield, 3 downs to score
- **No-Run Zones:** In effect (pass-only zones apply, even if blitzed)
- **Blitzing:** Allowed
- **Quarterback & Pass Clock:**
  - 7-second pass clock applies
  - Clock resets after a handoff
- **Timeouts:** 3 per game
- **Play Clock:** 25 seconds
- **Coaches on Field:**
  - **No coaches allowed on the field**
  - All play calls must come from the sideline
- **Defense:**
  - Any legal formation (must be onside)
  - Defenders may cross the line of scrimmage after a handoff, pitch, lateral, or dual possession

## Additional Rules & Clarifications

Over time, certain game situations have required added clarification. The rules below are intended to address those scenarios and ensure consistent, fair enforcement.

---

## 1. Dual Possession

Dual possession occurs when **two offensive players are simultaneously in contact with the ball** (for example, when a quarterback places the ball into another player's stomach during an exchange).

- When dual possession occurs, **all defenders are immediately allowed to cross the line of scrimmage.**
  - A full change of possession is **not required** for dual possession to be ruled.
  - Dual possession is determined **at the referee's discretion.**
- 

## 2. Offensive Penalties in Pass-Only Zones (8U–12U)

If an **offensive penalty** occurs while the offense is in a **pass-only zone**, and that penalty moves the ball **out of the pass-only zone**, the **next play is still pass-only.**

- An offensive penalty does **not cancel** the pass-only requirement once it has been reached.
- 

## 3. Penalties That Move the Offense Into a Pass-Only Zone (8U–12U)

If a **defensive penalty** moves the offense **into a pass-only zone**, the offense has two options:

- **Accept the penalty** and run the next play as **pass-only**, or
- **Decline the penalty**, stay out of the pass-only zone, and consume the down

If the penalty is accepted and moves the offense into a pass-only zone, the **next play must be a pass.**

---

## 4. Spot Fouls After a First Down at Midfield

For all age divisions, once an offense **earns a first down at midfield**, any **spot foul that occurs after the first down is gained** will result in:

- Enforcement of the penalty yardage, and
- **First down and goal**, even if the enforcement places the ball back behind midfield

In this specific situation, for **8U–12U divisions**, the **pass-only requirement is turned off**, and the offense will have first down and goal.

---

## 5. Last Man Rule

If a ball carrier is clearly on a breakaway run toward the end zone and:

- There is **no reasonable defender** between the ball carrier and the goal line, and
- The ball carrier is **tripped, dragged, or tackled without a flag pull**

A **Last Man** call will be made and a **touchdown will be awarded**.

- If a flag is pulled and the ball carrier then trips or falls, the referee will determine whether to enforce a **spot penalty** or award a **Last Man touchdown**.
-