



Outdoor Flag Football Rules

Idaho Falls Family YMCA

Rev. 2017

Goal

Our goal is to teach every child the game of football through maximum participation and to have fun during the season. Each child shall play at least 50% of each game.

Philosophy

Our philosophy is to put winning and competition into perspective. We support kids first, winning second, while teaching sportsmanship, teaching values – caring, honest, respect and responsibility, and to have fun.

Roster

- A team will consist of a minimum of 11 players and a maximum of 16 players.
- Games are 8 v 8.

Field Set-up

- AN 80 x 40 yard field will be used.
- 6 ten yard zones, plus 2 end zones of 10 yards.
- The YMCA reserves the right to make field changes and will notify all coaches of any such changes.

Time Management

- Two halves
- Each half will be 20-22 minutes as the schedule permits
- 3-5 minute half time break as the schedule permits
- Two 1-minute timeouts per half for each team. They do not accumulate
- The game clock will run continually, except: when an injury occurs, while a timeout is called, when an official deems it appropriate to stop the clock
- The offense must put the ball in play within 35 seconds of the referee marking the line of scrimmage, so 30-35 seconds for huddles
- A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The winner of the toss chooses whether or not to receive the ball first in the first half. The team does not receive the ball first in the first half receives if first in the second half. The loser of the coin toss chooses which end zone to defend at the start of the game, and the teams switch directions at the beginning of the second half.
- No kickoffs; the ball will start on the 5 yard line or half the distance between the end zone and the first cone

Scoring System

- Touchdown – 6 points
- Extra point – 1 point for a run play. 2 points for a pass play
- If an extra point attempt is intercepted, it may be run back and if the player scores it will be worth 2 points
- Safety – 2 points and the offense will punt/free kick to the defense

Equipment

- 1st/2nd grade will use PeeWee size football; 3rd/4th will use the junior size football and 5th/6th will use a youth size football
- YMCA will provide the footballs and flags. Players must wear the flag belts provided by the league. The best must remain snug and unimpeded by clothing. If a flag becomes unstitched and flag belt must be replaced. Flag must be worn correctly and will be checked by the referees.
- Every player must have their shirt tucked in. jerseys must be tucked in at all times. Altering of YMCA flag belts or wearing flag belts not provided by the YMCA will not be tolerated and subject to penalty.
- Tennis shoes or rubber cleats are permitted. No metal cleats. Bare feet or stocking feet will not be allowed.
- Mouth Guards are required.
- Soft shell helmets must be worn at all times.
- Prohibited Equipment
 - Exposed draw string or hanging belts.
 - Cleats
 - Earrings, bracelets or any other type of jewelry
 - Non-prescription sunglasses
 - Any object that will endanger or confuse players
 - Barrettes, bandanas or hats with brims or bills (sweatbands are allowed)
 - Any player with a cast of any kind will not be allowed to play in the game. This is for the safety of the player with the cast and the other players.

Rules

- All penalties are called by the referee
- This is an 8 on 8 playing system. 8 on offense and 8 on defense on the field at one time
- No more than one forward pass is allowed on the same play and must be made behind the line of scrimmage.
- The “center-sneak” handoff is not allowed. i.e. the center naps the ball to the QB and the QB hands it back to the center between his legs.
- Receiving: A completion results when the receiver has control of the ball with at least one foot in bounds. An offensive player cannot go out of bounds then return in bounds and be the first person to touch a pass. If a receiver’s flag belt has fallen off and a catch is made, the receiver is down at the spot where the catch was made.
- Motion: No more than 1 player at a time is allowed to be in motion. Motion must be lateral or backwards

- 2 coaches per team are allowed on the field to instruct players. Coaches may stay on the field during play but must stay out of the way of the play. Coaches are not allowed to touch players during play. A maximum of three coaches may be on the sideline.
- Flag Pulling: To stop the ball carrier, the defensive player must remove the flag belt or force him/her out of bounds. No intentional contact is allowed. This includes tackling, pushing, grasping, and bumping. This also includes touching the face or head in any way. Incidental contact to the ball carrier's body while reaching for the flag belt is not a violation. When attempting to pull a flag and the ball carriers shirt and/or shorts are grabbed and held on to will result in a penalty.
- NO trick players will be allowed. (Double reverse, any pass besides from the QB, Statue of Liberty, tackle eligible, flea flicker, etc. are all deemed as trick players). Bootleg runs are allowed. Once the ball is handed off, no passing. To clarify a reverse: As long as the QB hands off the ball within the tackle box to the first ball carrier a single reverse is still possible and eligible with another exchange. In short a single reverse can have two exchanges as long as the first one between the QB and the ball carrier is within the tackle box.
- The team with possession of the ball will have four down to move the ball into the next zone or to score a touchdown. On turnover on down situations, the ball will remain at the line of scrimmage, regardless of where it is located, and will have four downs to reach the next zone or score a touchdown. A team can punt the ball.
- Blocking and stiff-arming cannot be directed towards the head region.
- When the flag is lost off the ball carrier, the ball is down at the spot of the flag.
- If a player catches a pass without a flag, the ball is down at the spot of the catch.
- All fumbles are dead balls. A ball cannot be fumbled forward to the advantage of the offense.
- Interceptions are live. If the team in possession passes, laterals or loses control of the ball without contact by a defender, and an opponent intercepts the ball before it hits the ground, it constitutes a change of possession and the ball can be advanced – i.e., its basically an interception at that point.
- Defenders cannot strip a ball away from a ball carrier. If a defender has penetrated an offensive line and takes the ball away during an offensive exchange, this is not a penalty. Example: a QB, running back or receiver accidentally gives a hand off to a defender, or an offensive player and defensive player are going for the same hand off.
- No player may leave his or her feet. This includes blocking. Ball carrying, pulling the flag, leaping over players, and diving into the end zone.
- A player flagging the ball carrier shall immediately stop and place the flag down on the spot of the flagging. Failure to do so may result in assessment of an illegal procedure penalty. After pulling a flag, a player may not place the flag on the ground with a display of excess emotion or temper (such as grinding the shoe on the flag).
- Simultaneous flag pulling with hand off or pass – when a ball carrier's flag is pulled simultaneously with his releasing the ball during a pass or hand off, the action is considered to have been concluded prior to the flag pull and the ball remains live provided his hand was clearly in the motion of releasing the ball at the time of the pull.
- NO tackling. If it becomes a problem, the player will be ejected from the game.

- Deliberate flagging of a potential ball carrier when it is clear he does not have the ball constitutes unsportsmanlike conduct. Example: A defender flags an eligible ball carrier where it is clear he/she does not have the ball; or the defender repeatedly flags all back coming through the line when it is clear they are not carrying the ball.
- A defensive player may not hold an opponent that is attempting to go downfield as an eligible receiver.
- No player shall drive his head into an opponent or head butt in any manner on any play.
- While it is legal to push a defender out of the way; it is not legal to aggressively grab another player and throw them to the ground.
- A defender may not run into the passer before or after he has released the ball. A defender may hit the arm of a passer in the process of releasing the ball if he is trying to block the ball.
- Encroachment and Offside: A defensive player may enter the neutral zone and will not be penalized providing they have returning to their side of the line of scrimmage before the center snaps the ball. If the defensive player is in the neutral zone when the ball is snapped, the ref shall throw a flag but not blow the whistle. This is a live ball foul. Penalty: the offense shall have the choice, after completion of the play, to either accept the penalty (5 yards and repeat the down) or decline the penalty and have the result of the play (it's a free play). If the defensive player jumps into the neutral zone and cause an offensive player to jump, the penalty is against the defense. Side judges have to be watching carefully. If the defensive player crosses into the offensive set and/or makes contact with an offensive player, the ref will throw a flag and blow the whistle.
- Games can end in ties.
- Except for the man in motion, all players on the offensive team must come to a full second stop without movement of hands, head, feet or body prior to the snap.
- Offensive substitutions are not allowed without a huddle. A player on offense entering the game without being part of the huddle constitutes a penalty. Only 7 players are allowed to break from the huddle at any given time.
- Officials must be notified by the coach or captain prior to the employment of an exotic formation when it may not be immediately clear whom the eligible pass receivers are and who the QB is.
- After adjusting the ball, the center may make no further motion of the ball or of his hands on the ball prior to the snap.
- Offense has 35 seconds to put the ball in play after it is spotted.
- At the end of every game, each team shall be responsible for picking up trash .
- Ball carrier avoidance of contact: The ball carrier has a responsibility to avoid collisions where the defender has established position – similar to “charging” in basketball, a ball carrier cannot run over a defender in an attempt to gain yards. A runner may not dive or purposely jump in a effort to gain additional yardage. Diving or hurdling over or at an opponent with both feet off the ground is illegal. A player may spin or twirl in avoid contact. These moves are allowed when part of shaking off individual defenders. But not as an uncontrolled or unsafe running style. A player shall make every effort to avoid a player who has been knocked to the ground and may jump over him if no other means of avoidance is available. He shall not under any

circumstance hurdle over the head or neck of an opponent. A ball carrier goes into the line and runs into a defender, or a ball carrier makes a late cut and gets tangled up with a defender – this is a judgment call and unless the runner is reckless and unsafe, there is no penalty.

- When a ball carrier goes to the ground, the ball is dead at the point his knee touches the ground, even though he may fall farther forward. If the ball carrier goes down without his knee first touching, the ball is dead at the point the player's flags are, not where the ball touches the ground.
- No flag guarding; flag guarding is only called when a defender is in a position to make an attempt for a runner's flag and the ball carrier swats the defenders hand away or hold onto his/her flag to prevent it from being pulled.
- Blocking below the waist and on the neck or above is prohibited. It is also illegal to leave your feet to make a block. In all cases, it is illegal to block an opponent in the back. Judgment may be applied regarding a player who "pulls up" to avoid the foul or defensive player who is turning his back to try and draw the foul.
- An offensive player may not use his hands or arms in a any way to pull, tackle, or hold an opponent; he may not swing his arms at or make chopping motion with his arms toward an opponent; he may not lock his hands together; he may not clench his fist with the intention of striking an opponent. An offensive player may extend his arms to block.
- A ball simultaneously in possession of an offensive player and a defender at the time it is whistled dead shall be awarded to the offense.
- Once a ball is touched/tipped by a defender all seven men on the offensive team are eligible receivers.
- Both offensive and defensive players have a equal right to a pass and incidental contact when both players are playing the ball does not constitute a pass interference. Pass interference occurs when one players uses his hands, arms, legs, or body in such a way as to impede another player's way to or attempt to catch a pass. Tripping, tackling, or waving ones hands before an opponent's face always constitutes pass interference. Once a pass has been tipped into the air, there can be no pass interference so long as both players are playing the ball. There can be no interference on a ball that does not pass the ling of scrimmage.
- It is required that all players receive approximately equal playing time during each game and that each player be actively utilized.
- The ball shall be declared dead when: It touches the ground. If a shotgun snap, a fumbled snap, or a fumbled hand off lands on the ground in the end zone, it will result in a safety.
- No hurry up offenses. The offense and defense must be set before the snap. This is a league of instruction, learning, and growth. During the last two minutes of the second half a hurry up offense is permitted.
- Snapping the ball: The center must snap the ball between the legs. Shotgun snaps are allowed, although fumbled naps will be ruled dead immediately and placed at the spot where the ball touched the ground.
- Intentional confusion of the offense: No member of the defensive team or their sideline contingent shall interfere verbally with the offense's calling of its signals. This does not bar the use of defensive signals, provided they are not simply for the purpose

of disruption. Any attempt to confuse or mislead the offense or the referees by trick flagging (pulling flags from the non-ball carriers to disrupt play and get a whistle) is unsportsmanlike conduct.

- An extra player on the field at the time of the snap of the ball, a player who enters or exits the game from any other point except his team sideline, or a players who fails to remain in the game for at least one play constitutes illegal substitution.
- Forfeits: If a team cannot field at least 5 players at official start time, the game will be a forfeit. The forfeited score will be 7-0. Teams must have at least 5 players to start a game. There must be equal players on both sides. If a shorthanded situation is created because a player was removed from a game for unsportsmanlike conduct, there will be no impact on the opposing team. They will continue to play with a full squad. If a team goes down to 4 players, the game is forfeited. Once the referees are on the field, there is a fifteen-minute grace period for a coach to field a team. After fifteen minutes a team must field the minimum players or forfeit the game.
- **Ejections:** A player may be ejected from the field for using indecent language, unsportsmanlike conduct, or an egregious violation of the rules. To eject a player, the official shall notify the coach, who is responsible for removing the player with two minutes to avoid a forfeit. The official must then submit a written ejection report to the league. Any coach may be ejected following a verbal warning from an official to referee for any violation of the above stated rules. Abusive parents can be flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct. One warning will be given to the coach of the team with e abusive parent. If the parent continues, a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty should be assessed to the team. Our league is intended to provide a family-oriented environment for the enjoyment of children. No smoking or tobacco use is allowed at game sites. All coaches, parents, fan, and players are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times. The league, at is sole discretion, reserves the right to eject, suspend, or dismiss anyone for any inappropriate behavior.
- **Disrupted play due to sideline interference:** Coaches, players, and spectator are permitted along the sidelines as long as they retain decorum and do not yell at players to disrupt play. The coach is responsible for the action of himself, players, and families/friends of the players on his sidelines. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be assessed by the referee on any member of the team's contingent along the sidelines. Any coach, player, spectator who enters the field of play and is not part of the offense or defense in the play in progress and disrupts the play on the clear break away toward a touchdown – a touchdown will be automatically awarded and the individual who created the disruption will be ejected and removed from the field area.

Penalties

5 Yard Penalties and replay of down

- Offside
- False Start
- Neutral Zone Infraction
- Holding
- Illegal Motion
- Delay of game
- Coaches improperly on the field and/or in the restricted sideline zone
- Calling a timeout when you have none left. (Delay of game)
- Four players not on the line
- Illegal substitution; more the 7 players on the field
- Flag guarding
- Illegal forward pass
- Intentional grounding
- Illegal formation
- Kick team headed down field before ball is kicked

10 Yard Penalties

- Pass interference
- Wrapping
- Clipping
- Ball carrier infractions; leaving feet, lowering should, etc.
- Altered flags
- Illegal blocking
- Aggressive display of emotion after flag pulling
- Illegal use of hands by defense
- Deliberate verbal interference with offensive play calling

15 Yard Penalties and an automatic first down

- Tackling
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Fighting (ejection)

Any offensive penalty called in the end zone is a safety

Free kick/Punt

- The ball will start on the 10 yard line for all free kick situations
- The ball can be punted
- All punts are announced – meaning the offense must inform the referees and the defense of the intention to kick the ball. This rule exists because the defense is not allowed to rush the punter. The exchange from center to kick and punt itself are done in a controlled manner
- There will be 10 yards between the kicking team and the front line of the receiving team
- The defense may not rush to block the punt
- Only two defensive players may return the punt
- If the ball hits the ground first, the ball is live and may be returned

- If the ball hits a player then hits the ground, the ball is considered a fumble and is a dead ball
- A pass may be substituted for a kick if necessary

Offense

- Formation: Any basic formation of 8 players is permitted
- There must be 3 down linemen (consisting of a center and two guards), and they must be in a three-point stance.
- There must be a designated quarterback every play
- The remaining 5 players are eligible to play as a running back, wide receiver, or a tight-end.
- 5 players must be on the line of scrimmage

Quarterback

- The quarterback must take a direct snap, either underneath or from the shotgun. No direct snap to any other player is allowed.
- Only the quarterback is allowed to pass the football

Lineman

- The linemen may not split more than one foot from each other.
- They must be in the three point stance
- They are ineligible for a pass
- They may extend their arms to block

RBs/WRs/TE

- They are all eligible to receive a pass
- They are all eligible to go in motion

Plays/Motion

- Counters, screens, draws, and single reverses are allowed
- Only one receiver or running back may go in motion for one play

Defense

- Successfully playing defense in flag football is a matter of stopping the offense from advancing the ball. Instead of tackling a ball carrier, however, the defender must pull the flag to stop a runner's progress. The offense can run or pass, so the defense must be aligned to react to both possibilities. There is physical play in flag football, to be sure, so there are several specific rules in place to insure safety and minimize the high speed of collisions that are more common in tackle football. Coaches and referees will be vigilant in this regard.
- When the quarterback hands the ball off to another player, or when any pass is attempted, including later passes, and defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of where they were lined up before the snap

Formation

- There must be 2 down linemen. For each additional offensive linemen or tight-end on the line to the required 3, and additional defensive linemen in a 3 or 4 point stance is eligible.
- Only 1 player may blitz per play. The one blitzer sets up two yards off the line of scrimmage from anywhere on the field. Repeat offense of not lining up properly may result in an encroachment penalty.

Linemen

- They cannot line up head on with the center. They can lineup head on with any other linemen including the tight-end.
- The linemen may not line up in the gaps; contact must be made with the offensive lineman before any move to the gap can be done. They must be head on with the offensive line. They can use any move such as a swim or uppercut to penetrate once contact has been made.
- They cannot be out further than the last offensive lineman.

Inadvertent Whistle

This is a referee's error and it can happen by accident. Since there is no absolute equitable way to redress the error, a delayed whistle is to be much preferred to a quick whistle, since there is no danger of injury. A quick whistle occurs usually as a result of: a) an official carrying the whistle in his mouth and blowing it inadvertently while running, b) an official things he hears rather than sees a flag pulled, c) an official gets over anxious or make a judgment call too quickly. Inadvertent whistles can be eliminated completely by total concentration of the part of the officials and a moment's reflection before blowing the whistle. No official shall place the whistle in his mouth until his ready to blow it. If a whistle is sounded prior to the pulling of a ball carrier's flag, the ball is dead at the point it had reached when the whistle sounded, if it is at or in advance of the line of scrimmage. If there is an erroneous whistle when the ball is behind the line of scrimmage, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct (player, coach, spectator)

- **The YMCA has a zero tolerance attitude as it relates to unsportsmanlike conduct. Violations which compromises the safety of participants or which result in a threatening environment for participants or spectators are not allowed. This is recreation, youth flag football and that perspective needs to be firmly in the minds of all.**
- No player shall kick, knee or spear an opponent; fight or challenge to fight; use insulting language to a member of an opposing team, parent, coach or official. No coach, player, parent or fan of a team shall use insulting or baiting language to an official, any player, coach or adherent of either team, shall fight or challenge to fight, or engage in works or action detrimental to the sportsmanlike conduct of the game. The coach is responsible for the action of himself, players and families/friends of players on his sidelines. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be assessed by the referee on any member of a team's contingent along the sidelines. No member of the defensive team or their sidelines shall interfere verbally with the offense's calling of

its signals. This does not bar the use of defensive signals, provided they are not simply for the purpose of disruption.

- Players and coaches shall make a reasonable effort not to run up the score or to rub in the defeat on an opponent when a game is clearly won. An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be assessed at the time in addition to another penalty and unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be consecutive. As an interim step and in an effort to defuse escalating emotions, the referee may issue an unsportsmanlike warning (similar to a yellow card in other sports), which will result in a five-yard penalty. There will be one one warning. The full measure unsportsmanlike conduct penalty that will follow is 10 yards. Individual unsportsmanlike penalty – any player, coach or parent subject to two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties during the game shall be suspended form the game and removed from the field.
- Sideline Unsportsmanlike Penalty – referee may assess a sideline penalty if he is unable to identify the individual in question. The penalty will count as a team penalty towards the head coach, not an individual penalty. Team/Coach unsportsmanlike Penalty – the head coach, or the assistant coach, if the head coach is not present, will be suspended if (1) he receives two individual unsportsmanlike penalties; (2) there are a total of four unsportsmanlike penalties assessed against individuals or the sideline of the respective team. (Example: one against a player, one for a parent, one for a sideline, and the 4th against the assistant coach. Head coach is suspended). Suspensions will be for the remainder of the game in progress. If the suspension occurs after the game has ended, the person will be suspended for the next complete game. Offenders are not allowed anywhere within the fences/walls of the playing fields. The head referee will notify the “head” coach on the field of the suspension.
- The YMCA reserves the right to remove any person from all YMCA activities for the remainder of the season for a flagrant act. Example of such acts include, but are not limited to: hitting another player, coach, referee, parent or fan, and excessive profanity. The board will review the act at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Until then, the person or persons involved may not attend any YMCA activity. The YMCA strives to maintain an environment of safety, fun, instruction, and fair play. Rules and guidelines detailed in this document cannot possibly cover every possible situation that may arise on the field, so it is requested that all participants stay grounded in the fact that this is 7 on 7 flag football – no scholarship on the line, no signing bonuses at risk, no reason to be “over the top” with emotion or gamesmanship.
- Flag football is not tackle football; it is not power football. It is a different concept in that the defense and offense strive for speed, quickness, deception, and agility to defeat the opponent. As such, there are rules in place to help minimize the high speed collisions that are integral to tackle football. There is a contact in YMCA football, to be sure, but rules are in place to confine that contact and reduce the chance for injury. The overriding factor in referee or coaching decisions shall be the safety of the participants.

High scoring, one-sided game

- Teams are strongly urged to teach their players sportsmanship on games that are “run aways.” Players should be taught to run out of bounds or take a knee instead of scoring a touchdown. This will help prevent running up the score. If one team leads by twenty or more points anytime during the game, coaches shall use their best efforts to: Remove the more experienced players from the field or reassign the best players to non-scoring offensive position (guards or center). Players may continue to play defense. Failure to do so may result in the stoppage of play as determined by the head referee and or any YMCA supervisor. If the point difference reduces to less than 21 points, then normal rules shall apply and all players become eligible at all positions.

Cancellations:

- From time to time, the league may cancel games due to inclement weather or other circumstances that preclude play. Games shall not be played in inclement weather or unusual weather condition. Games shall not be played in situation that may endanger player’s health and safety. A game may be continued during a drizzle if the temperature remains moderate, but only if the field continues in a condition of adequate footing. The decision to continue, temporarily suspend or postpone a game rests with the YMCA.
- An effort will be made to reschedule those games that are cancelled due to weather.

Any penalty yardage not mentioned is assumed the same as the NCAA rules. All play interpretations are at the discretion of the referees. The YMCA supervisor will usually be on site; if a disagreement occurs please seek him or her out for a conference on the rules. The YMCA reserves the right to add to or update the rules as necessary, and any changes will be made available to the coaches ASAP. The schedule is also open to change as deemed necessary by the YMCA, and any changes will be made available to the coaches immediately.