



2021 REGULAR SEASON RULEBOOK





TABLE OF CONTENTS



I.	Rules	3
II.	Terminology	4
III.	Eligibility	5
IV.	Equipment	5
V.	Field	6
VI.	Rosters	6
VII.	Timing and Overtime	7
VIII.	Scoring	8
IX.	Coaches	8
X.	Live Ball/Dead Ball	9
XI.	Running	10
XII.	Passing	11
XIII.	Receiving	11
XIV.	Rushing the Passer	12
XV.	Flag Pulling	13
XVI.	Formations	14
XVII.	Unsportsmanlike Conduct	14
XVIII.	Penalties	15
	i. General	
	ii. Defensive Spot Fouls	
	iii. Offensive Spot Fouls	
	iv. Defensive Penalties	
	v. Offensive Penalties	



NFL FLAG RULES

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss. Referee will inspect all players to ensure flags are properly secured, players have mouthguards, and any pockets are taped.
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. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5 yard line.
6. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.



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II. Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-to-Gain	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
Whistle	Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	Official's whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, arm or ball.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand or by pushing the ball forward.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

III. Equipment

1. Participants must bring their own official NFL FLAG belts and mouth guards to the game. Extra mouth guards will be available for purchase.
2. All players must wear official NFL FLAG belts and mouth guards at all times while on the playing fields. Prior to game, referees will inspect mouthguards, pockets, and request all players unplug-and-re-plug flags. Referees can assist with unplugging and re-plugging flags. Coaches and parents cannot.
3. Team identified NFL FLAG jerseys will be provided unless otherwise noted.
4. NFL FLAG footballs will be provided to coaches prior to start of the season. Team footballs are allowed for game play after being inspected by referee.
5. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, however, cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
6. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
7. Players must remove all hanging jewelry. Backwards caps, head bands, do-rags, and beanies are allowed.
8. Players' jerseys should be tucked into shorts or pants. If jerseys are untucked, flag belts must be clear and visible on top of jersey near the player's waist. **If a player's flag plugs are not clear and visible prior to the start of a down and the player gains possession of the ball, a flag guarding penalty will result.**
9. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.

a. Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.



VI. Timing and Overtime

1. Games will be played in five 8 minute periods. Half time will occur after the 2nd period. Game clock is continuous throughout the entire period. Clock stops only for timeouts or injuries. Games will not end early while being played under mercy conditions.
2. Teams will strictly follow fair play rotation sheets. Coaches must be prepared to present rotation sheet to opposing coach and referee prior to coin flip. Coaches can substitute players at their discretion with 5 minutes remaining in the 5th period. No other substitutions (besides for injury) are allowed during the game.
3. Halftime is 2 minutes or length of time determined necessary by referee.
4. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
5. Each team has two 30-second timeouts per HALF.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
8. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. **Overtime format** is as follows:

7

9. In regular season or playoff situations, an Overtime (OT) Period will be used to determine a winner.

Overtime format is as follows:

- There will be a 1 minute break between regulation and overtime period.
- The **HOME** TEAM receives first possession in Overtime.
- The offensive team starts with the ball at midfield and has one possession to score.
- There is no Sudden Death in FIRST over time, each team gets a minimum of one possession. Possessions in overtime always start at midfield.
- All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
- There are no time-outs and no challenges in OT.
- If score is even after each team receives 1 possession in OT, the game will go to a 2nd over time which is played under "SUDDEN DEATH" rules. The **HOME** team starts with the ball during the SUDDEN DEATH period.
- If after both teams receive 1 possession in SUDDEN DEATH period, the game score is still even, the result of the game will end in a "TIE" (regular season). In playoffs, the game will continue in subsequent SUDDEN DEATH periods until a team scores.

Conversions in Overtime Period

**1st OT period- Scoring teams can go for 1- or 2-point PAT.

**Sudden Death OT Period -Conversions are not necessary, as game will be over once a TD is score

VII. Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line)
 - a. PATs can be pass or run. If PAT is intercepted; defense can return INT to endzone for 2 pts.
3. **Safety:** 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier's flag is pulled in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone, Or if a Qb spikes the ball in endzone to avoid a safety, spike must be in the endzone to be awarded a safety
4. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
5. After one team is winning by 28 points, the two head coaches and referee will meet at mid-field and a determination will be made that the two highest graded players from the higher scoring team will sit out until the difference in score is at or below 27 points. Ultimate decision on which players will be placed on sideline is referee's discretion. Game will continue as usual until one team is up by 40 points or more, at which point the game will end due by mercy rule. Sideline players can return to the field according to fair play rotation once difference is at or below 27 points.

VIII. Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL FLAG philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct.
2. Only two coaches and one stat keeper per team are allowed on the sidelines. All team photographers, managers, position coaches, team moms, fans, etc. must remain in designated fan sections.
3. Coaches are not allowed on the field in All-Pro and above divisions. In the Rookie division, 1 coach per team is allowed on the field at all times. In the Pro Division, the defensive coach is not allowed on the field. Offensive coach is allowed in the offensive huddle, however, must walk away from the team once the huddle



breaks. If the offensive coach remains on the field during play, he is not allowed to touch the players or speak from the time the huddle breaks to the end of the play. If the offensive coach returns to the sideline between plays, the offensive coach is allowed to provide verbal instruction to his players.

IX. 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. The official will indicate the neutral zone (1 yard in front of the football) and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense lines up in the neutral zone directly in front of the center. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
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 conduct penalty.
5. Off-setting penalties by the offense and defense will result in replay of the down.



6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.

NOTE:

There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession.)

8. If an inadvertent whistle occurs with no time left on the clock at halftime or end of game, the

offense will have one untimed down. The offense has two options:

- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

X. Running

1. The ball is spotted **where the ball is when the flag is pulled.**
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. ***“Center sneak” play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.***
4. Absolutely NO laterals of any kind.
5. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD). No-run zones will not be utilized in Rookie division.
6. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
9. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
10. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
11. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
12. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier. A penalty will be called at referee’s discretion with determining factors being if the offensive players impeded defensive players and the offensive players proximity to ball-carrier.
13. Flag obstruction – Entire flag and flag plug must be visible for all players before the play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

XI. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - a. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes.
 - b. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).

XII. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward 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 on conversions after Touchdowns CAN be returned by the defense for 2 pts.





XIII. 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 quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. There is **no blitzing** in the Rookie Division. In the Pro Division, teams are allowed only **5 blitzes** per game. Referee is responsible for maintaining count of blitzes per team. A 10 yard penalty and a 1st down will be called if a team exceeds 5 blitzes.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. 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.

b. A penalty may be called if:

- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
- ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage 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 off – illegal rush (5-yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

iv. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.

c. Special circumstances:

- i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
 5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback while the QB is in the pocket behind the center, regardless of where the defender lines up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. **If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact. Once a QB leaves the pocket, the blitzers lose his “clear path” privileges.**

A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage
The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is when the flag’s pulled.

- i. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

NEW RULES:

- A SAFETY ALSO OCCURS IF QB INTENTIONALLY SPIKES BALL IN END ZONE TO AVOID SAFETY SACK AND TWO POINTS ARE AWARDED TO THE DEFENSIVE TEAM

-HOME TEAM VOLUNTEER CONTROLS THE CLOCK FOR THE REFEREES

-ROTATION SHEET ON INJURED PLAYERS, REPLACEMENT PLAYER GOES TO THE NEXT AVAILABLE PLAYER THAT IS LISTED CLOSEST ON ROTATION SHEETM EITHER ABOVE OR BELOW THEM, in the even of a tie the lower player must enter game

-HALF TIME AND END OF GAME CAN NOT END ON DEFENSIVE PENALTY

-4TH DOWN OPTION, OFFENSIVE TEAM HAS OPTION TO GO FOR 4TH DOWN TRY APPROACHING MID FIELD FIRST DOWN, DECISION MUST BE MADE IMMEDIATELY AFTER 3RD DOWN DEAD BALL. IF YOU DO NOT GET THE FIRST DOWNT THE DEFENSIVE TEAM GETS THE BALL AT THAT SPOT. IF YOU GET THE FIRST DOWN YOU THEN HAVE 3 DOWNS TO SCORE. UNDER TWO MINUTES THE CLOCK STOPS TO DECIDE 4TH DOWN OPTION AND CLOCK DOES NOT START UNTIL NEXT SNAP BY EITHER TEAM REGARDLESS OF IF ACCPETED OR DECLINED 4TH DOWN TRY,

- CAN NOT CHALLENGE OFFICIAL RULINGS

- 2 IME OUT PER HALF PER TEAM

XIV. 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.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball 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. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
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 the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.
7. A forward motion stoppage of play can be called by the referee in the Rookie Division only in an effort to ensure player safety



XV. Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. 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.
3. 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.

XVI. 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 allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be called and the **player/players/coach/coaches/fan/fans** will be ejected from the game and complex.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship:
 - 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 kids friendly:
 - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
 - b. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields.
 - c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.
8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down + **ejection**
 - b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down + **ejection**

XVII. Penalties

i. General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

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

iv. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down + player ejection
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush <small>(Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull <small>(Before the receiver has the ball)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

v. Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down + player ejection
Offside / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass <small>(Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion <small>(More than one person moving)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

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