

MAGIC VALLEY YMCA

Youth Flag Football Rules

NOTE: The Magic Valley YMCA Flag Football League was designed for the benefit of the player. The "intent of the rule" shall carry stronger weight than the "letter of the law" in all decisions rendered by the referees and the Sports Director.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this league is to be instructional. All decisions will be made from the standpoint of asking if one team gained an advantage because of breaking a rule or fouling. If no advantage is gained and if safety is not an issue, then play will continue without a whistle. In hopes of correcting any issues, referees and coaches are encouraged to talk with any rule violators about their fouls.

Examples:

1. Not calling offsides if a player is confused and or unaware that they are over the line. There will be no loss of yardage and the down will be repeated.

When an issue arises that is not covered by the below rules they will be governed in accordance with the National Federation of High Schools rules.

OVERVIEW OF THE GAME

1. Players on the field: Seven
2. Ball Size
 - 1st-2nd Grade Pee Wee
 - 3rd-4th Grade Junior
 - 5th-6th Grade Junior
3. Coed Yes
4. Field/End Zone Size 50 yds X 25 yds/10 yds long
5. First Down 10 yds
6. Officials Two per game
7. Game Time
 - Quarters 12:00 running clock
 - Breaks 1:00 between quarters and half time
8. No Rush Zones
9. No Run Zones 5-yard line in to goal line
10. Pitches (backwards passes) Allowed
11. Minimum on Offensive Line 3 players
12. Interception Return Yes
13. Fumbles/Backward Passes The ball is dead when it hits the ground and will remain in possession of the offense at the spot of the fumble.

UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

1. A YMCA issued T-shirt or jersey, always tucked in so other players have a fair chance to pull the flags and don't injure their hands when attempting to do so.
2. Athletic shorts, football pants or other athletic pants. No Jeans.
3. The only type of pads that can be worn are elbow or knee pads.
4. Tennis shoes or rubber/plastic cleats. Metal cleats are not allowed.
5. A fitted mouthguard is required.
6. A belt with two flags.

SAFETY FIRST

1. Shirts are to remain tucked in at all times to reduce the chance of injury to wrists, hands and fingers while attempting to pull flags.
2. Every player is required to wear a fitted mouth guard to prevent injury to the teeth and mouth.
3. Metal cleats are prohibited.
4. Players cannot wear watches, rings, necklaces, bracelets or other jewelry. These items present the danger of entangling, cutting or scratching.
5. If a player has a cast, it must be a soft cast or wrapped with suitable material to make it soft and safe.

TEAMS AND PARTICIPATION

1. Team Size
7 players on the field and no more than 12 players on a team roster.
2. The YMCA emphasizes equal and reasonable participation:
 - A. Each player must play at least half of each game.
 - B. Players should be allowed to play and rotate through all positions (offense and defense) throughout the season.
3. Teams should limit practices to two practices of up to one hour per week. Each team will play one game for up to one hour each week.

STARTING THE GAME

1. Before the game, coaches will inspect the uniform and equipment of each player. See *Uniform and Equipment* above.
2. Each team designates a captain for the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss chooses to start the game on offense or defense. The other team chooses which goal to defend to start the game.
3. The team starting the game on offense starts the second half on defense.

OFFENSE

Starting a Play

1. The ball is placed on the line of scrimmage at which time the referee will blow the whistle indicating that play may begin.
2. The ball must be snapped between the center's legs and to the quarterback.
3. Long snaps and shotgun formations are permitted.

Offensive Formations

1. Number of players on the field: 7
2. 1 player must play quarterback.
3. 1 player must play center.
4. Minimum number of players on the offensive line: 3
5. Minimum number of players in the backfield: 1
6. Players in the backfield must be at least 3 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
7. 2 players are allowed to be in motion prior to the snap. Motion must be parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage.

Offensive Play

1. Handoffs made behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
2. A player who takes a handoff may rush with the ball, pass the ball or hand the ball off to another player behind the line of scrimmage.
3. Direct snaps to players other than the quarterback are prohibited.
4. Center plunges and rushes are prohibited.
5. Players cannot throw other players to the ground.
6. Contact that resembles a strong/purposeful hit or a tackle is prohibited. Only light contact/blocking is permitted.
7. A forward pass is illegal if:
 - A. The passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - B. Intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds.
 - C. Shovel or underhanded pass
8. Backwards passes (tosses or throws that go parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage are permitted. If the ball hits the ground before or after player possession the ball will be ruled dead and the offense will retain possession at the spot where the ball hits the ground.
9. All offensive players are eligible to receive forward passes.
10. If the quarterback is passing the ball they have 5 seconds to do so without defensive pressure. After 5 seconds the defense can rush.
11. Quarterback sneaks are prohibited.
12. Fake handoffs and passes are allowed. However, if the ball is faked than the defense can rush.
13. To make a reception, the receiver must have both feet in bounds while possessing the ball.
14. On a completed pass, the receive may run to advance the ball.
15. Trick plays are prohibited.

No Running Zones

1. "No Running Zones" are located 5 yards from each end zone. These are designed to avoid short yardage, power running situations (runs up the middle). In this situation a team may only run to outside (outside the offensive ends) such as a sweep or pass the ball. No running up the middle (through the offensive line).

Running with the Ball

1. Spinning is allowed, but players may not dive to avoid a defensive player or to score a touchdown.
2. Stiff-arming is not permitted and results in a Stiff-Arming penalty of 5 yards.
3. Ball carriers are not permitted to guard their flags by making contact with players attempting to remove their flags. Doing so will result in a Guarding the Flag penalty of 5 yards.

Downs and Maintaining Possession

1. Upon taking possession of the ball, the offense is awarded a set of four downs (plays) within which it must gain 10 yards or more to receive a new set of downs or score a touchdown.
2. If within its four downs the team gains 10 yards or more it receives a new set of four downs.
3. The team maintains possession of the ball until one of the following situations occur:
 - A. The team scores a touchdown.
 - B. The team fails to make a first down by gaining 10 yards or more.
 - C. The defense intercepts a pass or recovers a fumble.
 - D. Time expires in the first or second half.

DEFENSE

Defensive Formations

1. The official will indicate a *rushing line* on the defensive side of the ball three yards from the line of scrimmage. All defensive players must be behind this line.
2. The defense must line up behind the rushing line.
3. Players cannot throw other player to the ground.
4. Contact that resembles a strong/purposeful hit or a tackle is prohibited. Only light contact is permitted.

Defensive Play

1. The defense must wait five seconds before rushing the quarterback unless the offense hands the ball off or the quarterback fakes a hand off or throw. At that point the defense can rush the ball carrier.
 - A. After five seconds the referee that is counting down will put their arm in the air to signify that the defense can rush.
2. Defensive players must attempt to go around the offensive blockers. Only light contact is permitted.
3. Forward passes that have not touched the ground may be intercepted and ran back.
4. Fumbles and backwards passes (including snaps from center) will be ruled dead as soon as the ball hits the ground. The offense will retain possession of the ball at the spot of the fumble.

Pulling the Flag

1. To down a ball carrier, a defensive player must pull a flag from that player's waist.
2. The defensive player must immediately raise the flag up above his or her head to help the official spot the ball.
3. Players may leave their feet in the attempt to pull a flag.
4. While downing a ball carrier, the defensive player must not:
 - A. Hold the ball carrier. Doing so results in an Illegal Downing foul of 5 yds.
 - B. Push, slap, trip or tackle the ball carrier. Doing so results in an Unnecessary Roughness foul of 5 yds.
 - C. Remove the flag from an offensive player who does not have possession of the ball. Doing so results in an Illegal Removal of Flag foul of 5 yds.

DEAD BALL AND SPOTTING

1. The ball is dead and all play stops when an official blows the whistle.
2. All spots are made at the lateral center of the field on the correct yard line.
3. An incomplete forward pass results in a dead ball.
4. A fumble, backwards pass that hits the ground or a center snap that hits the ground results in a dead ball as soon as the ball hits the ground.
4. When a ball carrier's flag is pulled (see Defensive Play above) the ball is dead and spotted where the most forward part of the ball was when the flag was pulled.
5. A player in possession of the ball moving out of bounds results in a dead ball.
6. The knee of a player in possession of the ball hitting the ground results in a dead ball.
7. Upon any score, the ball is dead.
8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle during play, the ball is dead the offense is given the choice of:
 - A. Taking the ball where it was when the whistle was blown.
 - B. Replaying the down from the original line of scrimmage.
9. If there is a potentially dangerous situation, the play will be whistled dead.
10. Player substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

GAME TIME, GAME CLOCK AND PLAY CLOCK

1. Teams will play four 12:00 minute running clock quarters with one minute between quarters and half time. The game clock will only stop during the following situations:
 - A. A team timeout.
 - B. An official timeout.
 - C. The expiration of the time in a quarter.
2. Each team is allowed two 60-second time outs per half. The game clock will stop during time outs. First half timeouts do not carry over into the second half.
3. For the first two games there is no play clock. For the last four games there will be a 20 second play clock. The play clock will begin when the referee blows the whistle signifying the ball is ready for play. The play clock's goal is to speed up play and to allow for more play and less inaction.