

Flag Football Rule Changes (Updates, Clarifications and Interpretations) Updated 8/11/2025

Rule 1 The Game, Field, Players and Equipment

Section 1 THE GAME

Art 1....The field shall be a rectangular area with dimensions, lines, zones, goals and markers as shown on the accompanying Flag Football Field Diagrams (#1-3)

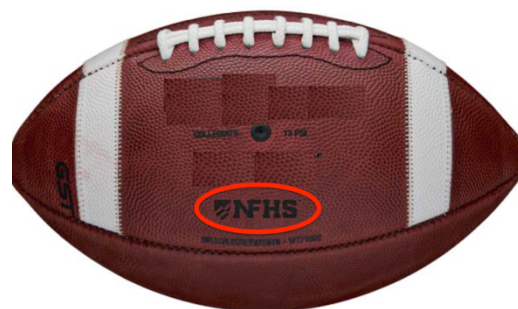
By ASAA adoption, the game will be played on a standard sized football field, diagram #3.

Section 3 GAME EQUIPMENT

Art 1....The ball shall meet the following specifications for girls and boys flag football competitions.

Summarized

- a. A tan-colored cover consisting of either pebble-grained, cowhide or approved composition (leather or rubber)
- b. One set of eight or 12 evenly spaced laces
- c. Continuous 1-inch white or yellow stripe located only on the two panels adjacent to and perpendicular to the seam upon which the laces are stitched.
- d. Weighs between 12 – 14 ounces
- e. Inflated to 10 to 13 psi
- i. Effective 2028, the ball for girls and boys flag football competitions for 9th grade and above shall include the NFHS authenticating mark.



Rule 3 Periods, Time Factors and Substitutions

Section 4 STARTING AND STOPPING THE GAME CLOCK

Summarized

Art 4....The game clock shall be stopped when:

- a. The down ends following a foul.
- b. An official's time-out is taken.
- c. TV/Radio time-out.
- d. Period ends.
- e. The two-minute time-out occurs.
- f. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete with less than two minutes remaining in either half.

- g. A runner goes out of bounds with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- h. A score or touchback occurs.
- i. A new series is awarded to B.
- j. An inadvertent whistle is sounded.

Art 2....The game clock shall start with the ready-for-play on a down beginning with a snap if the game clock was stopped for the following reasons:

- a. For an officials time out (Except when B is awarded a new series or either team is awarded a new series after a legal kick)
- b. Because the ball has become dead following any foul.
 - 1. As long as no charged team time out was granted during the dead ball.
 - 2. The down is not an extension of a period or during a try.
 - 3. The action which caused the down to end did not also cause the game clock to be stopped.
- c. Because of an inadvertent whistle, unless B or R is in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle during a running play and chooses to accept the result of the play.
- d. Team A forward fumble out of bounds.

Art 3....The game clock shall start with the snap if the game clock was stopped because:

- a. The ball goes out of bounds, unless 4-3-1 EXCEPTION for forward fumbling applies.
- b. B or R is awarded a new series.
- c. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
- d. The ball becomes dead behind the goal line.
- e. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- f. A runner goes out of bounds with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
- g. A request for a charged or TV/Radio time-out is granted.
- h. A period ends.
- i. A team attempts to consume time illegally.
- j. The penalty for a delay-of-game is accepted.
- k. The two-minute time-out has occurred.

Section 5 CHARGED AND OFFICIAL'S TIME-OUTS --INTERMISSIONS

Art 1....Each team is entitled to two charged team time-outs during each half. Unused first half time-outs cannot be used in the second half. Unused second half time-outs cannot be used in overtime.

Interpretation

Art. 1 is a change from the prior rule set that allowed three charged team time-outs during each half.

Section 6 PLAY CLOCK, BALL READY FOR PLAY AND DELAY

Art 2....The ball is ready for play:

1. When the ball has been placed for a down and the referee marks the ball ready for play after giving the ready-for-play signal as in 3-6-1a(1) with the game officials in position.

Interpretation

The officials will set the discs/ball spotters marking the 1-yard expanded neutral zone. When the discs are set, the referee will then signal the ready-for-play. The offense is responsible for their ball and will often bring the ball into their huddle before placing it at the discs/ball spotters.



Rule 4 Ball in Play, Dead Ball and Out of Bounds

Section 1 PUTTING THE BALL IN PLAY

Art 2....A snap shall be made from the center of the field. State associations may authorize the use of hash marks.

Interpretation

The inbounds spot is the intersection of the hash marks and the yard line.

- a. Through the foremost point of the ball when the ball becomes dead in a side zone.
- b. Through the foremost point of the ball on the sideline between the goal lines when a loose ball goes out of bounds.
- c. Through the spot under the foremost point of the ball in possession of a runner when she crosses the plane of the sideline and goes out of bounds.

Rule 6 Kicking the Ball

Section 1 SCRIMMAGE KICKS

Art 1....K may punt or place kick from **at least 2 yards behind the neutral zone** if declared prior to the ball being made ready for play.

Art 1....Addition: A punt is made by K under restrictions that prohibit either team from advancing beyond their scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked.

Rule 7 Snapping, Handling and Passing the Ball

Section 1 BEFORE THE SNAP

Art 1....The snapper may be over the ball, but the snapper's feet must be behind the neutral zone and no part of the snapper's person, other than a hand(s) on the ball, may be beyond the foremost point of the ball.



Interpretation

Many teams will use a pendulum snap (side snap) with the snapper's shoulders perpendicular to the line of scrimmage. When using this method, both feet must be behind the neutral zone to be legal.



Art 2....The snapper may lift the ball for lateral rotation but may not rotate end-for-end, or change the location or fail to keep the long axis of the ball at right angles to the line of scrimmage.

Art 3....Following the ready-for-play and after touching the ball, the snapper shall not:

- a. Remove both hands from the ball.
- b. Make any movement that simulates the snap.
- c. Fail to clearly pause before the snap.
- d. Following adjustment, lift or move the ball other than in a legal snap.

Interpretation

The officials will set the discs/ball spotters marking the 1-yard expanded neutral zone. The offense is responsible for their ball and will often bring the ball into their huddle before placing it at the discs/ball spotters. Articles 2 & 3 will apply when the snapper places the ball on the ground with a hand(s) in position to proceed with the snap.

Section 3 HANDING THE BALL

Art 1....Any player may hand the ball backward at any time.

Art 2....No player may hand the ball forward except during a scrimmage down before a change of possession, provided both players are behind the neutral zone.

Interpretation

Art. 2 is a change from the prior rule set that allowed a player to hand the ball forward anywhere on the field.

Rule 8 Scoring Plays and Touchbacks



Section 1 POINT VALUES

TABLE 8-1 (Point Values)

Touchdown		6 points
Field Goal	NOT approved by ASAA	3 points
Safety	Points awarded to the opponent	2 points
Successful Try		
a. Touchdown 10 yard line		2 points
b. Touchdown 3 yard line		1 point
c. Field Goal 3 yard line	NOT approved by ASAA	1 point

Interpretation

*The ability to choose a 3 point Try from the 20 yard line is no longer an option.
The field goal is NOT an approved option to award points by ASAA adoption.*

Rule 9 Conduct of Players and Others

Section 2 ILLEGAL USE OF HANDS

Art 3....A defensive player shall not:

- e. Use hands or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle or hold in an effort to restrain an opponent ***other than the runner.***

Section 4 ILLEGAL PERSONAL CONTACT

Art 1-5

PENALTY 10 yards and first down if by the defense.

Section 5 NONCONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY PLAYERS

Art 1-2

PENALTY 10 yards and first down if by the defense.

Section 8 NONCONTACT UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY NONPLAYERS

Art 1-3

PENALTY 10 yards and first down if by the defense.

Interpretation

*Fouls for Illegal Personal Contact and Unsportsmanlike Conduct by the Defense result in a 10 yard penalty and an automatic first down. *Also see Rule 10-1-7(a,b,c,d)*

STATE ADOPTIONS (2025)

Mercy Rule

If there is a 19 or more point differential when the Referee announces the 2 Minute Warning for the 4th period, the game shall be over.

If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the 4th period and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more points, the game shall end at that point.

Resolving Tied Games



At the end of regulation when the score is tied:

The officials will conduct one coin toss with the team captains.

The winner of the toss will have the following options:

- *Offense
- *Defense
- *Designating which end of the field the ball will be put in play

The loser of the coin toss will choose from the remaining options.

To start the overtime, the offensive team shall put the ball in play, first and goal, on the defensive team's 10-yard line or succeeding spot if carry-over penalty has been administered anywhere between the hash marks.

Each team shall be permitted one time-out during each overtime period.

The line to gain is always the goal line regardless of whether or not a penalty enforcement places the ball more than 10 yards from the goal line to start a new series.

The first offensive team shall have a series of four downs. That series shall be terminated by any score by the offense. If the defensive team gains possession, the ball becomes dead immediately and the offensive team's series of downs is ended.

If the team on offense scores a touchdown, it is entitled to the opportunity for a try (1 pt or 2 pts) unless the points would not affect the outcome of the game.

After the first team on offense has completed its series of downs, the first team on defense will become the offensive team with the ball in its possession at the same 10-yard line, anywhere between the hash marks. The same end of the field will be used for possessions by both teams during the two sets of downs to ensure equal game conditions and conserve time.

If the score remains tied after each team has been given one series of downs in an overtime period, the procedure shall be repeated with the following overtime periods until a game winner is determined. First options will be alternated with no coin toss.

The loser of the original overtime coin toss will be given first choice of the options.

*Offense

*Defense

No try will be attempted if the winner of the game has been determined.