



Flag Football Rulebook

September 2025

NEW FOR 2025

All players will have 3 flags hooked to their flag belts. Players will not be allowed on the field without the required number of flags.

Varsity teams will use the Team Issue Y sized ball.

EQUIPMENT

JV teams will use the Team Issue J sized ball. The varsity teams will use the Team Issue Y sized ball. The home team must provide new or like-new game balls that have been designated by the DPL.

Uniforms are to be consistent with school guild lines and should display only School logos or athletic brand name logos (i.e. Nike or Adidas). This is also the case with accessories such as sleeves and socks.

Baseball Caps and Hats are not allowed (for safety reasons).

OVERVIEW

There will be 2 officials on the field. The 10-yard blitz starting yard line will be set by the official who is not the referee.

The play field is defined as 70 yards in length (Goal Line to 50-yard line) using a 10-yard End Zone. The width of the field is from one sideline to the top of the hash toward the other sideline. Midfield is the 25-yard line. Shuttle cones should be used to make the Goal Line, midfield, the 5-yard line, the no passing zones 5 yards of midfield, and the sideline for the hashes.

Teams benches are to be placed on opposite sides of the field.

Recording of any DPL game by a 3rd party (person not associated with the teams playing) is prohibited. Teams are, however, allowed to film their own games for instructional purposes. Film must not be shared between teams, nor be used to scout any other team.

GAME PLAY

A coin toss at midfield determines first possession and direction.

The ball may be snapped between the legs or at the side of the player to start play.

Starting at their own 5-yard line, the offense takes possession and has 3 downs to cross midfield for a 1st down. To the extent you do not secure a first down you have two options:

1. Punt: Possession changes with the other team starting drive on their own 5-yard line; or
2. A team can opt to go for it on 4th down. However, if they do not make a first down (or score), the other team will take possession at the spot where the fourth down play ended.

Once a team crosses midfield, it has 4 downs to score a touchdown.

Interceptions may be returned for touchdowns or receive the distance returned when changing possession. Interceptions may not be returned for points on a PAT/try attempt.

Teams change sides after halftime. Possession changes to the team who did not start with the ball in the first half.

Ball will always be spotted in the center of the field.

Blocking must be from a stationary position or stopping within 2 steps to get stationary. There should be no use of arms/hands/shoulders to block. Think of it has a stationary pick like in basketball.

ROSTERS

Most teams consist of 8-10 players with 6 on the field. Teams must field a minimum of 4 players to play a recorded game. ONLY registered players are allowed to play for their own team. Any coach using a fill-in player not from the team roster will forfeit the game in which they were used. If occurring during the playoffs, the team is immediately disqualified from post-season play. Players are permitted to be listed on 1 roster only.

All rosters must be set by the midway point of the regular season. Players may not be added from rosters following that point.

Rosters must contain photos of all coaches who will be on the sideline.

COACHES

Coaches are not permitted on the field during play.

TIMING

Games are a total of 40 minutes consisting of four 10-minute running quarters. There is a 1-minute break between quarters for water and substitution and a 5-minute break for halftime.

Each team receives 2 timeouts per half which do not carry over to the 2nd half if unused.

Each time the ball is spotted, an offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball.

Teams **MAY** receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.

If the score is within 8 points difference, the clock is stopped in the final 2 minutes of the 4th quarter. During this time the clock will stop for all incomplete passes; when a ball carrier steps out of bounds; after change of possession and penalties (unless declined).

Mercy Rule: With 5 minutes to go in the game, if a team is up by 30 pts, the game will be called.

SUBSTITUTIONS

All players suited up for the game should receive fair playing time.

SCORING

Touchdown	6 Points
Extra Point (5-yard line – pass ONLY)	1 Point
2-Point Conversion (10-yard line)	2 Points

OVERTIME

If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, there will be NO overtime in regular season games. During the playoffs, overtime will be handled as follows:

A coin toss determines possession. First possession will alternate with each subsequent round that is needed.

Both offenses go in same direction throughout OT.

Each offense has 4 downs starting at the opponent's 10-yard line, with each offense going in the same direction during its possession. One complete overtime period is defined as each offense having had one opportunity to convert.

To the extent an offense converts their opportunity into a touchdown, they will then attempt an extra point. They may choose to go for either 1 or 2 points. Exception: If the first team does not score and the second team does, the game ends and there will be no extra point attempt.

Whichever team is leading (including any extra points) after each team's offense has had its opportunity, is the winner.

If both teams are tied after the first OT, each offense is given 3 downs starting at midfield (25 yard-line), with both offenses again going in the same direction. If neither team is able to score, the team that gained the most yardage during their possession is the winner. The first team's yardage will be marked on the field by the referee.

If after two complete OTs the game remains tied, the process from the previous round repeats but with each team's possession starting from its own 10-yard line. This scenario repeats until a winner is determined.

If at any time during OT the ball is intercepted and returned for a touchdown, the game ends and there will be no extra point attempt.

PASSING

Pre-Snap Alignment:

Players on the line of scrimmage must line up 3 yards from the snapper. A minimum of 2 players (including the snapper) must be on the line of scrimmage. The snapper is not a covered-up player, as all players are eligible.

The QB has a seven-second "pass clock". This will be timed by the official using a stopwatch. If the QB does not get rid of the ball within the seven seconds, the play is dead with a loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.

Interceptions may be returned. Exception: During extra point attempts, play is ruled dead and the attempt is unsuccessful.

Pass ONLY zones are set 5 yards out from the goal line and the 5 yards before midfield. This zone is in effect when the offense is trying for a “short yardage” touchdown or first down within five yards of the line. The purpose of these zones is to lower the chance of contact/injury by preventing teams from running the football with potential blockers. In “pass only zones”, only forward passes are allowed (no hand-offs, backward passes, etc...). And the pass MUST cross the line of scrimmage. Penalty for not passing in the passing zone (i.e., running the ball) is loss of down at the previous spot.

RECEIVING

All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB) if the ball has been handed off or pitched backward, i.e. backward pass, behind the line of scrimmage.

Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception. This one foot must be touching the ground in bounds prior to another part of the body touching the ground out of bounds.

OFFENSIVE RUSHING

The quarterback cannot run with the ball.

Hand-offs and backward passes are allowed.

“Center sneaks” are not permitted.

The player who takes the hand-off or backward pass can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage (not allowed in the pass only zone).

Once the ball has been handed off or pitched backwards (i.e. backward pass) all defensive players are eligible to rush.

Spinning and Jumping is allowed.

No DIVING. Diving is an offensive team foul. Diving for forward progress is a foul. Penalty is 5 yards from the spot AND loss of down. Defensive players may dive to intercept the ball or pull flags.

The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.

The ball carrier must make an effort to avoid running through or initiating contact on the defensive player. Depending on the severity of the offense, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty may be assessed.

DEAD BALLS

The play is ruled dead when...

Ball carrier’s flag is pulled.

Ball carrier steps out of bounds.

Ball carrier’s body part (other than a hand, wrist or foot) touches the ground.

Touchdown or safety is scored.

If the ball carrier's flag falls out without a defensive attempt, the play remains live until the point when a when the next defender is close enough to make a flag pull. Play is called dead at official's discretion.

Ball carrier's flags are NOT positioned at the hips (slide to the back making it difficult to pull). The referee shall determine when a defender is close enough to make a flag pull and spot the ball there.

The ball hits the ground as a result of a "fumble." However, if the ball hits the ground during the center/quarterback exchange (or snap), it is not ruled dead unless the quarterback is having difficulty picking up the ball as a defender approaches. On a fumbled snap, only the quarterback is eligible to pick up the ball.

RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

All players who rush the QB must be a minimum of ten yards from the line of scrimmage (as marked by the referee) when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB. Players not rushing the QB cannot cross the line of scrimmage until after the ball has left the quarterback's hands (via pass, handoff, lateral, etc.)

Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hands, the ten-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. Prior to the snap of the ball, the referee will designate ten yards from the line of scrimmage.

PENALTIES

All penalties will be called by the referee. The referees must make difficult judgement calls at times. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. Only the team captain may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES:	
Offsides:	5 yards, repeat down
Pass Interference:	5 yards, repeat down
Illegal Contact: (blocking, running into the QB, etc.)	5 yards, repeat down

Illegal Flag Pull: (pull flag before receiver has ball)	5 yards, repeat down
Illegal Rushing: (leaving early from 10-yard rush mark)	5 yards, repeat down
Unsportsmanlike Conduct: (includes any contact with the quarterback's throwing arm.)	10 yards from spot of foul and automatic 1st down (possible ejection)

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES:	
Illegal Motion: (false start, more than one player in motion)	5 yards from previous spot and loss of down for illegal motion. For False Start - 5 yards from previous spot and loss of down AND a False Start cannot be declined.
Illegal Forward Pass: (pass thrown from beyond line of scrimmage)	Ball will be placed at previous spot and loss of down
Offensive Pass Interference: (illegal pick play, pushing off from/away defender)	5 yards from previous spot and loss of down
Flag Guarding:	5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down
Blocking/Shielding: (offensive player intentionally blocks or shields a defender)	5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down

Charging: (not making an attempt to avoid the defender, thus causing contact)	5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down
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Delay of Game:	Clock stops, 5 yards and repeat down. If it happens two times in a row, it will result in an additional 5 yards and a loss of down
Unsportsmanlike Conduct:	10 yards from line of scrimmage/loss of down/possible ejection
Pass Clock Violation: (QB not getting rid of ball in 7 seconds)	Ball will be placed at previous spot and loss of down

SPORTSMANSHIP

If the official on the field witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or ANY unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player/coach or fan may be ejected from the game.

****FOUL PLAY OR UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT BY ANYONE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!!****

Officials have the right to determine what constitutes offensive language. Offensive language towards officials, opposing players, teams or spectators is not acceptable in this league. If this occurs, the referee may give one warning and if it continues, the player(s), coach(es) and/or fan(s) will be subject to ejection from the field and premises. The game will not continue until the ejected party has left the premises. If they do not leave, the referee will forfeit the game immediately and award the Win to the opposing team.

Anyone receiving an unsportsmanlike penalty or an ejection from a game (player, coach, fan), for any reason will be subject to further consequences as detailed in the DPL Disciplinary Guidelines.

STANDINGS

Official league standings and playoff seedings are determined based on the following:

1. Win/Loss Winning PCT (All games except games labeled as non-conference games)
2. Head-to-Head
3. Pt differential +/-30
4. Coin Toss

UNIFORM CODE

Cleats are allowed, except for metal spikes. Inspections will be made at midfield prior to each game.

For the safety of our players, all players must wear a protective mouthpiece: no exceptions!! Players without mouthpieces are not permitted to participate in either games or practices.

Official school jerseys and league flags must be worn during play. Jerseys worn by the opposing teams must be contrasting in color. Home-dark, visitor-light. All teams should have a supply of pinnies in case there is a conflict with jersey colors.

Shorts must be of a solid color, without stripes or pockets. The referees will determine if there are any uniform violations. Players deemed in violation of the uniform code are not permitted to play.

Flags must be of a different color than the shorts. Flags must be placed on each hip and jerseys tucked in prior to the snap.

FAQ

Q: Is the forward progress the ball or where the flag is pulled.

A: Ball

Q: If a player's flag falls off without a defensive attempt to pull the flag is the play dead?

A: No, per rule on Page 4 - the play remains live until the point when the next defender is close enough to make a flag pull. Play is called dead at the official's judgement.

Q: Is the ball dead from the center to the to the QB of the ball hits the ground.

A: Depends. Yes, if a defender is near the QB or the QB is having trouble picking up the ball. No. If no defender is near the QB or the QB "cleanly" picks up the ball.

Q: Is the ball dead or live if it's dropped on a backward toss (pass) from QB to RB behind the line of scrimmage.

A: DPL rules don't address this, so we default to NCAA football rules. The ball remains alive. Similar rule question above.

Q: We were penalized for a delay of game and assessed a loss of down. This was our first warning.

A: On page 3 of the DPL rules it states: Teams **may** receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is called.

Q: Clock question. We called a timeout with 30 seconds left in the half, and they scored on the next play. The clock ran during the extra point is that correct?

A: 1st half (2nd quarter) - Yes, this would be correct under all circumstances. Except for a Team timeout.

A: 2nd half (4th quarter) in the last 2 minutes. If the score is within 8 points or less, the game clock would stop on a scoring play.

Q: If the offensive team is in the pass only zone and the penalty takes them out of the pass only zone, is the pass only zone still in effect?

A: Yes, the pass only zone remains in effect until the offensive team scores or achieves a 1st down by crossing midfield from play of by defensive penalty.

Q: Is the 7 second pass clock still in effect if a defensive player blitzes?

A: Yes, if the quarterback passes the ball, it must be thrown within the 7 seconds allowed.