



RULE BOOK

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I. Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
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. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield (25 yard line). Once a team crosses midfield, they have four plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.



II. Terminology

1. **Boundary Lines:** the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
2. **Line of Scrimmage: (LOS)** an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
3. **Line to Gain:** the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
4. **Rush Line:** an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
5. **Offense:** the squad with possession of the ball.
6. **Defense:** the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
7. **Passer:** the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
8. **Rusher:** the defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass.
9. **Downs (1-2-3-4):** the offensive squad has four attempts or "downs" to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
10. **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.
11. **Dead Ball:** refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
12. **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, half time, or the end of the game.
13. **Inadvertent Whistle:** official's whistle that is performed in error.
14. **Charging:** the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.
15. **Flag Guarding:** an 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 or arm.
16. **Shovel Pass:** a legal pass attempted beyond the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner.
17. **Lateral:** a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier
18. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language

III. Eligibility

1. All players' legal guardians must agree to the online waiver form at <https://nflflag.com/parents> for their specific league before participating.

IV. Equipment

1. The league provides each player with a flag belt and NFL Flag jersey. Teams will use the football provided by their league.
2. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however, cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all watches, earrings, and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Official NFL Flag jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Player's jerseys must be tucked into their pants if they hang below the belt line.
7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
8. Soft-shell helmets are to be worn during game play.



V. Field

1. All division's games are played 7 vs 7 on a field 35 yards wide by 50 yards long with two 10 yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. However, field size may vary based on field availability for each league.
2. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
3. NO-RUN ZONES are in effect 5 yards before gaining a first down, and 5 yards before entering the end zone. No runs are allowed within the restricted areas.

VI. Rosters

1. Home teams wear dark color jerseys; visiting teams wear light color jerseys.
2. Teams must consist of at least 5 players.
3. Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.



VII. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock divided up by two 20-minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts and an incomplete pass within the last two (2) minutes of the second half.
2. Halftime is five minutes long.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has two 60-second time outs per half.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will move into overtime (OT). For Regular Season OT games, OT rules will be in effect and if there is no winning team at the end of the third (3rd) OT period, the regular season game will end in a tie.
8. In tournament or playoff situations, an overtime (**OT**) period will be used to determine a winner if the game is tied after 40 minutes. **OT** format is as follows:
 - a. Each team is allowed a minimum of one possession.
 - i. First possession choice goes to the winner of regulation coin toss.
 - ii. Each team gets a minimum of one possession.
 - b. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - c. There are no time-outs.
 - d. Change of Possession:
 - i. Each team will receive one play from the 5-yard line per OT period. Interceptions are not returnable in OT play.
 - e. Multiple OT Periods
 - i. Second OT Period:
 1. First possession goes to loser of regulation coin toss.
 - f. All scores are worth two (2) points.

VIII. Scoring

1. Touchdowns: 6 points
2. PAT (Point After Touchdown): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line).
 - a. Note: 2 pt. PAT's can be run or pass.
 - b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt conversion
3. Safety: 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive players, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds, or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

VIII. Scoring

IX. Coaches

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
2. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. Coaches are not allowed on the field during play for the Pro and Legend Divisions.
3. Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL Flag powered by USA Football philosophies, coaching guidelines, and the NFL Flag Chico Coach's Code of Conduct.



X. 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 and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notifications to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds 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 penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits 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. Inadvertent whistle.
 1. Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet were at at the time of the fumble.
8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, 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.
9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.

XI. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the back field, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
3. Direct handoffs and pitches are permitted behind the line of scrimmage. Handoffs may be in the 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- the ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the **QB** before advancing the ball.
4. Absolutely **NO** laterals or pitches of any kind past the line of scrimmage.
5. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
9. 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.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
12. Flag Obstruction- All jerseys **MUST** be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
13. "No Rush Zones" will be in effect. There will be no running plays in the 5-yard zone leading up to a first down or the 5-yard zone leading up to a touchdown.

XII. Passing

1. Passes can be thrown forward or backward. Any pass with a forward trajectory cannot be thrown forward a second time. Passes with a backwards trajectory can be thrown again by the receiving player (double pass, trick play). Only one backwards pass per play is allowed.
2. Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. A 10-second pass clock will be in effect from the moment the quarterback receives the snap until he/she either passes the ball or hands the ball off to another player. The referee will call out the seconds on the pass clock. In the event that the pass clock runs out before the quarterback passes the ball, it will be considered an incomplete pass and the ball will be placed back at the previous plays line of scrimmage. The pass clock is in effect for all divisions.

XII. Receiving

4. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
5. 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 towards the line of scrimmage.
6. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
7. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
8. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only change of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
9. Interceptions are returnable, but not on conversions after touchdowns or in overtime.

XIV. 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 may defend on the line of scrimmage.
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:
 1. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 11. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - m. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area) they may return to the rush line, reset, and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - 1v. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 1. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap, crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass-Illegal Rush (5 yard penalty).
 11. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped- Offside (5 yard penalty).
 - m. 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 yard penalty).
 - c. Special Circumstances:
 1. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback
 11. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play, however, if they do send a rusher, the rusher must verify with the official that they are in the correct position.
 - m. If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.

XIV. Rushing the Passer

1. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, **NO** contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
2. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line 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.
3. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when the flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.



XV. 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.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags 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.



XVI. Formations

1. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to six 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 parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
3. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs towards the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

XVII. 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 illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the players will be ejected from the game.
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 as well:
 - a. Any coach or fan that uses verbally abusive or confrontational behavior will be given one warning. If it happens again it will be an automatic ejection from the venue and a 15-yard penalty will be enforced against their team.
 - b. If any coach or fan physically abuses any one, at any time, they will automatically be ejected from the venue and banned from the league. A 15-yard penalty will be enforced against their team.
 - c. All fans are to sit in the designated area set aside by the league to watch the games.

XVII. Penalties

1. General

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

2. Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yards & Automatic First Down
Screening, Blocking, Running with ball carrier	+5 yards
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag Guarding	-10 yards
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards & Loss of Down

XVII. Penalties

Defensive Penalties

Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Rush	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Roughing the Passer	+10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Pass Interference	SPOT FOUL, Automatic First Down
Holding	SPOT FOUL, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards & Automatic First Down
Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, +10 yards & Automatic First Down

Offensive Penalties

Offside/ False Start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Motion	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of Game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Screening, Blocking, Running with the ball carrier	SPOT FOUL, -5 yards
Charging	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, -10 yards & Loss of Down