



FLAG  
FOOTBALL



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# Cleveland Family YMCA Flag Football Rules

## Cleveland Family YMCA Youth Flag Football League Rules Revised March 1, 2016

These are the Cleveland Family YMCA Flag Football League Rules. The Cleveland Family YMCA reserves the right to revise, amend, or remove any of the following rules at any time if necessary for harmony of the league. There will be no protest on these rules, on games or scrimmages played within the Cleveland Family YMCA Sports Program.

**Accident and health insurance will not be carried for the football players of the Cleveland Family or Chattanooga Metropolitan YMCA.**

### **YMCA Philosophy:**

The philosophy of the Cleveland Family YMCA Youth Flag Football Program is to provide an opportunity for every player to learn basic skills of the game, have a wholesome educational experience, and build healthy relationships with coaches and fellow players. Participation is a key part of our program and it is our choice to adopt a philosophy that does not include winning at all costs.



## I. Game

1. The winner of the coin toss chooses offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone.
2. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
3. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.
4. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 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.

## II. Terminology

- **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and the rear end zone lines.
- **Line Of Scrimmage** – 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 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the Line of Scrimmage, marked by a rush cone.
- **Offense** – the squad with possession of the ball.
- **Defense** – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Passer** – the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the QB.
- **Rusher** – the defensive player assigned to rush the Quarterback to prevent him/her from passing by pulling his/her flags or blocking the pass.
- **Downs (1-2-3-4)** – the offensive squad has four attempts or “Downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the Line to Gain (mid-field) to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Live Ball** – the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- **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, chest or forearm.
- **Flag Guarding** – 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, the chest or lowering the elbow impeding the defender's attempt at a flag.
- **Shovel Pass** – a legal pass attempted behind the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball to a teammate.
- **Lateral** – a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – see code of conduct.

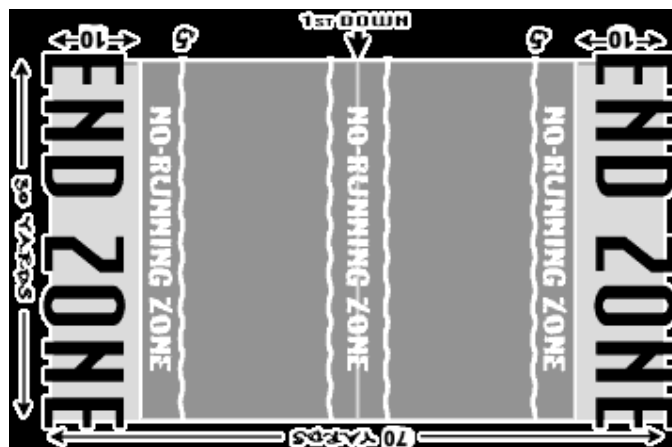
## III. Equipment

1. The League provides each player with flag belts and each team with two footballs. Game balls will be provided by the Cleveland Family YMCA.
2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, 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. **Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants at all times and cannot hang below the belt line.**
6. **Players must wear a protective mouthpiece; THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS, NO MOUTHPIECE = NO PLAYING TIME.**



#### IV. Field

1. The field size is 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Running Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
2. While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must be pass plays.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD). **Once you have passed the designated NO Run Zone on your drive, you do not have to replay it again —this means that if you pass the NO Run Zone but the next play you receive a penalty and are pushed back into the NO Run Zone, the No Run Zone rule is not enforced thus you may pass or run.**
  - a. **If penalized while in the No Run Zone—i.e. on first attempt you get called for a false start—and the penalty pushes you out of the No Run Zone, the next play will still be a No Run play.**



#### V. Rosters

1. Teams must field a minimum of five (5) players at all times.
2. Teams consist of a maximum of 9-10 players. (5 on field, with 4 or 5 substitutes)

#### VI. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40 minute (20 minutes per half) continuous clock. The clock stops only under 2 minutes in the second half for—incomplete pass or out of bounds, all possession changes, and on PAT attempts.
2. The overtime period will consist of 5:00 minutes (game timing rules apply: last 2 minutes stopping on incomplete pass, etc.). First team that scores wins, if time expires game will end in a tie. Teams will be granted one (1) timeout in overtime.



3. Halftime is two minutes long. (Depending on the weather conditions halftime may be extended.)
4. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning per game before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
5. Each team has two (2) 60-second timeouts per half.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

## VII. Scoring

1. Touchdown: **6 points**
2. PAT (Point After Touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (12-yard line). *Note: 1 point PAT is pass only, 2 point PAT can be run or pass.*
3. Safety: **2 points**
4. 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 player, their flag falls off, 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 or a fumble. **A safety will result in 2 points for the opposing team and possession of the football.**
5. 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 (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. **Interceptions on conversion attempts CAN be returned. The resulting score would be the number of points the offense attempted.**

## VIII. 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. If one foot precedes the other, the forward foot marks the spot.
2. **The quarterback cannot run with the ball until the defense rushes past the line of scrimmage.**
3. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
4. Once the ball has been handed off in front or behind the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
5. Runners may leave their feet to advance the ball. If a player leaps or jumps into the end zone, **the spot will be determined by the runner's feet, NOT the ball.**
6. Spinning is allowed.
7. Laterals or pitches can be incorporated in game play but **must be behind the LOS (excluding the No-Run Zone, in which the ball must be passed beyond the LOS—to clarify, the lateral does not count as the pass).**
8. 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.

## IX. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage. Laterals are only allowed behind the LOS
2. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, the loss of down, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.



**X. Receiving**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line).
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 towards 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 are returnable.

**XI. 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 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.
3. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
4. Any official can whistle the play dead.
5. Play is ruled “dead” when:
  - The ball hits the ground.
  - The ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
  - The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
  - The ball carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
  - The ball carrier’s flag falls off.
  - The receiver catches the ball after flag has fallen off
  - The 7 second pass clock expires.
  - *Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.*

**XII. 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; a pass is a hand off—as soon as the ball is released, the defense is able to rush.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
  - **A legal Rush is:**
    - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
    - ii. A rush anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
    - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early, they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
    - iv. 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 ball carrier.
  - **A penalty may be called if:**
    - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass—Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS and first down)
    - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped is Defensive Offside (5 yards from LOS 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—Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS and first down).

- **Special circumstances**

- i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock in effect.

- iii. 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, **as long as he/she does not pass the LOS.**

4. Players rushing the Quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way other than pulling of the flag.

5. Offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher must have a CLEAR PATH to the QB and any interference that would impede his/her path will be considered screening.

6. Blocking the pass and then striking the passer will result in a 10-yard penalty

7. A Sack occurs if the QB's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the QB's feet are when the flag is pulled. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

### XIII. 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 ball carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball or pull 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 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. Such as stiff arming, dropping of head, hand, arm, elbow, shoulder, or intentionally covering flags with the football or jersey.**

### XIV. Formations

1. An offensive team 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 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 one player in motion.
3. 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.
4. 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. QB must have COMPLETE possession of the ball before handing off to the Center around his body.

### XV. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitors or referees witness any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any other intentional 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! 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 player or players will be ejected from the game.
  3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official.
  4. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
  5. 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.
    - d. Coaches are responsible for controlling their team’s parents. (A 15 yard un-sportsman-like penalty will be enforced at the referee’s discretion.)
  6. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
    - a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents away from the sidelines.
  7. Coaches are allowed on the field for k-2<sup>nd</sup>. Only one coach for each team may do so. If any team has more than one coach on the field a warning will be given. The second time will result in the team receiving a 15 yard penalty.

**XVI. 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. Game cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offensive declines it.
5. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.

**ii. 5 yard Penalties**

- Illegal Equipment
- Offside
- Illegal motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.)
- Illegal forward pass (QB throwing after passing line of scrimmage)
- Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)
- Screening, Blocking or Running with the ball carrier
- Delay of game (one warning per game)
- Defense Illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc)
- Defense Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball)
- Defense Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)

**iii. 10 yard Penalties**

- Roughing the passer
- Taunting
- Unsportsmanlike conduct

**v. Defense**

- Offside.....5 yards & first down
- Illegal contact (holding, blocking, etc.).....5 yards & first down



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- Illegal flag pull (before receiver has ball).....5 yards & first down
- Illegal rushing (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)...5 yards & first down
- Roughing the passer.....10 yards & first down
- Taunting.....10 yards & first down
- Unnecessary Roughness.....Spot foul, 10 yards & first down
- Stripping.....Spot foul, 10 yards & first down
- Defensive Pass Interference.....Spot foul & first down

**vi. Offense**

- Illegal Motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc)...5 yards & loss of down
- Illegal forward pass (throwing a pass beyond the line of scrimmage)..5 yards & loss of down
- Illegal Procedure.....5 yards & loss of down
- Offensive pass interference (illegal pick, pushing off).....5 yards & loss of down
- Flag guarding.....Spot foul, 10 yards & loss of down
- Screening, Blocking, or Running with the ball carrier.....Spot foul, 5 yards & loss of down
- Charging.....Spot foul, 10 yards & loss of down
- Delay of game.....5 yards & loss of down
- Offensive Unnecessary Roughness.....Spot foul, 10 yards & loss of down
- Offside.....5 yards & loss of down