

Downers Grove Park District

Youth Flag Football League Rules



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I. Game Rules

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield with the coaches and referee for a coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls 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. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. 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.
4. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield after three (3) plays, they may elect to “punt” on 4th down. There is no actual punt, instead the possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to score after three (3) plays (after crossing midfield), they may elect to “punt” on 4th down. There is no actual punt, instead the possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
6. If the offensive team elects to use their fourth (4th) play and fails to cross midfield or score, the ball changes possession and the opposition starts its drive **from the current spot of the ball.**
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.



II. Terminology

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
Line of Scrimmage	(LOS) 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 seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Passer	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
Rusher	The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
Downs (1-2-3)	The offensive team has three attempts or "downs" to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
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.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
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, halftime or the end of the game.
Inadvertent Whistle	Official's whistle that is performed in error.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Flag Guarding	An illegal 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.
Shovel Pass	A legal pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

III. Eligibility

1. All players' parents and/or legal guardians must register their child and have signed a waiver from the Downers Grove Park District in order for them to participate in the league.
2. All players must wear the official NFL Flag team jersey and NFL Flag belt (distributed by the Park District) in order to participate in the Downers Grove Park District's Youth Flag Football League. If they do not have their teams official NFL Flag jersey, they cannot participate.

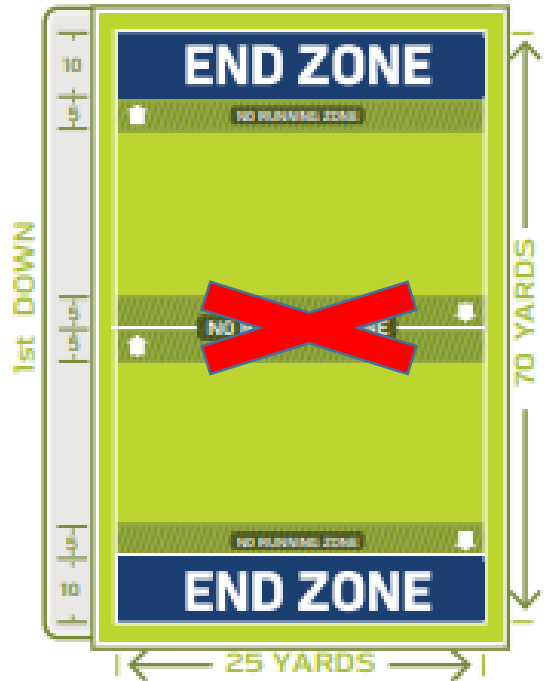
IV. Equipment

1. The Park District provides each player with an official flag belt and NFL Flag team jersey. Teams will use footballs provided by the Park District for games.
2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, but any cleats with exposed metal are prohibited and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.
5. **Mouth guards are required for all players to wear.**
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
7. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped before games.



V. Field

1. The field dimensions are 25 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, no run zones precede each end zone by 5 yards.
2. No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive team approaches only ONE no-run zones in each drive.



VI. Rosters

1. The Downers Grove Park District forms its youth athletic league teams each season. The teams are created and formed according to the following criteria:
 1. School attended
 2. Grade
 3. **Mutual** Friend Request*
 4. Balance of Gender
 5. Roster Size

**A non-mutual friend request or coach request will not be guaranteed.*

In general, our goal is to keep players from the same school on the same team. Should enrollment numbers and roster maximums not accommodate this, schools may be split or combined to form a team. Team maximums are based on enrollment numbers at the time of the registration deadline. Returning players are not guaranteed the same team from season to season or year to year.

2. Home teams wear the dark color jerseys. Visiting teams wear the light colored jerseys.
3. Games are played 6v6 for all grade levels.
4. Teams will be between 6 and 12 players per team.



VII. Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 48-minute continuous clock with two 24-minute halves. Clock stops only for timeouts, injuries, and the official's discretion.
2. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 40 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
3. Halftime is two minutes.
4. Each team has one (1) 60-second timeout per half. They do NOT carry over.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 48 minutes, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. Overtime format is as follows:
 - a. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
 - I. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
 - II. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
 - b. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts, the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.
 - c. Both teams must "go for two" from the 10-yard line starting with the third round of overtime.
 - d. The final points earned by the winning team in the final overtime will be added onto the winning team's total score. The losing team will not receive any additional points.
 - e. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - f. There are no timeouts in overtime.

VIII. Scoring

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - a. Note: 1-point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass
 - b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point or 2-point conversion. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
3. **Safety:** 2 points
4. **Slaughter Rule:** After one team is winning by 28 points or more, the losing team has the ability to add an additional player onto offense/defense. Once the point differential falls below 21 points, the extra player must be removed and can only be added again when the score differential goes back to 28+ points. *If one team is winning by 35 points or more, the game is over.*
5. **Forfeits:** Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.
6. **Playoffs:**
 - a. All teams make the playoffs for their respective grade levels, regardless of their record.
 - b. Regular season standing and playoff seeding is based on a team's overall Win-Loss record. Teams with the same Win-Loss record use the following tiebreakers
 1. Head-to-Head record against teams who are tied
 2. Head-to-Head points allowed of teams who are tied
 3. Head-to-Head points scored of teams who are tied
 4. Total points allowed
 5. Coin Flip

IX. Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to the NFL Flag philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct – available at nflflag.com.
2. Coaches are also expected to adhere to the Downers Grove Park District's philosophies and code of conduct – available at www.dgparks.org.
3. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players during the games. Only players, referees, and coaches are allowed on the field – **parents are not allowed on the field and are not allowed to help officiate games.**



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 snap from the center does not need to be between and through the legs. The snap can be to the side of the body.
 3. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regards to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
 4. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
 5. 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 conduct penalty.
 6. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
 7. Any official can whistle the play dead.
 8. Play rules “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. The 7-second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.
- NOTE:** There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier’s feet at the time of the fumble.
9. 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.
 10. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout 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 ball is when the flag is pulled (not the player's feet).
2. The quarterback (the player who receives the snap) cannot directly run with the ball.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in 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. **The “center sneak” play is not allowed.** The quarterback is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
 - b. **Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.**
 - c. Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
 - d. Absolutely **NO laterals** of any kind.
4. No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations.
5. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
 - a. 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
6. Spinning/Jump cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
7. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
8. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
9. 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.



XII. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - a. There is no intentional grounding.
 - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage are illegal forward passes.
 - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock”. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the quarterback is standing in the end zone at the end of the seven-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.

XIII. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
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 toward 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 change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.



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 can 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. 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 referee on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere after the ball has been handed off
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the seven yard area), 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 he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – off sides
 - iii. 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
 - iv. All penalties are 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down for offensive team.
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the passer with the 7-second clock in effect.
 - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Making contact will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
5. 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. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty.
6. 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. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
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 by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.



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XVI. Formations

1. Offenses 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 toward the line of scrimmage.
2. 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.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion either between his/her legs or to the side of his/her body to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

XVII. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field attendant 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 not allowed. Referees have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player(s) or coach will be ejected from the game.
3. Players and coaches may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or referee.
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 – no harassing players or referees, no profanity, and always compliment players on both teams.
7. Fans are required to keep the fields safe and kid friendly – please keep tents, coolers and other equipment a minimum of 10 yards off the field and dispose of all trash after your games.
8. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

XVIII. 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. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards and loss of down

iv. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush <small>(Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull <small>(Before the receiver has the ball)</small>	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

v. Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass <small>(Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion <small>(More than one person moving)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down