

NKYA FLAG RULES 2023-2024

I. PLAYERS AND ROSTERS

A. Divisions

Play is open to boys and girls enrolled in Kindergarten through 5th grade, who are organized into 3 divisions:

- Starter Division - Kindergarteners through first grade (No score until tournament play)
- Junior Division - Second grade through third grade (Score tallied and tournament seeded.)
- Senior Division - Fourth grade and fifth grade (Coach from sideline only, penalties more strictly enforced.)

The League may adjust the division demarcations or the date used for age determination at any time.

B. Team Rosters

A roster of eligible players will be maintained by The League and may only be modified at its discretion. Only players on the official roster may be used in games. Use of non-roster players is prohibited, and at the League's discretion, may result in forfeit of all games in which the player participated. Use of a non-roster player also may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension of the coach.

Team rosters typically consist of between 8 and 9 players (Starter Division), 12 players (Junior Division), and 14 (Senior Division).

II. PLAYING FIELD

The field is:

- All possessions start on the first line of the field, known as the originating scrimmage, furthest away from the end zone going toward the end zone.
- 15 yards wide, 30 yards long end zones of 5 yards for (Starter Division.)
- 30 yards wide, 35 yards long with end zones of 5 yards (Junior Division.)
- 30 yards wide, 50 yards long with end zones of 5 yards (Senior Division.)

III. EQUIPMENT

A. Uniforms

The uniform consists of:

- An official NFL Flag Football Sports jersey
- Shorts or pants *with no pockets if possible*.
- A protective mouth guard is required; player will not be permitted to play without one.
- A flag belt (provided)

This uniform must be worn at all times on the field of play. Uniforms may not be modified without consent from the league. Home team will wear a darker team color and away will wear a lighter team color.

Uniforms are subject to the following restrictions:

- Jerseys must be tucked in at all times.
- Undershirts, sweatshirts, and any other article of clothing that could impede the defender's access to the flags must also be tucked in.
- Footwear may be gym shoes of any type except as noted in Section C.
- Flag belts must be of the type provided by The League.
- Flag belts must remain snug and unimpeded by clothing at all times.
- Flag belts must be in good condition and hang freely.
- Flags must be worn on the sides/hips and must be pointing outward.
- Excess slack from belt must be tucked-in or threaded so as not to hang like the actual flags.

B. Game Ball

- The game ball shall be a conventional football provided by the league. Size's used are as follows
 - K2 for Starter and Junior divisions
 - TDJ for Senior Division

C. Prohibited Equipment

- Either shorts or pants belt loops, belts, or exposed draw strings.
- Shoes with cleats or exposed metal.
- Padding of any kind, including hard surface padding such as shoulder pads, hip pads, or helmets
- Any hard substance on a player's clothing or person
- Hard casts, even if covered by soft material

- Sticky substances such as grease or glue on a player's clothing or person
- Jewelry of any kind.
- Barrettes or other hard objects worn on the head.
- Eye glasses, unless of athletically approved construction and containing plastic lenses.
- Anything that the game managers or field directors feel could endanger or confuse players

IV. RULES OF PLAY

A. Game Timing and Flow

- A game consists of two halves, each of 22 minutes in duration, separated by a two (2) minute halftime period.
 - The game clock runs continually, except after scores during the last 2 min of play or:
 - When an injury occurs
 - During a timeout
 - When a referee deems it appropriate to stop the clock
- Timeouts: Each team is entitled to one timeout per half, each of which lasts for 30 seconds. The offense must put the ball in play within 30 seconds of the "ready for play" whistle. A coin toss determines which team takes first possession of the ball. The winner of the toss has the option to begin on offense or defense. This will determine the offense and defense switch at the half

B. Playing Time

- It is the goal of The League to provide every child the opportunity to fully develop as an athlete. With this in mind, during each game each player will be actively utilized. Coaches are required to abide by the spirit of this rule. Coaches should make all attempts to equally balance playing time among all roster players during regular season games.
- During tournament games, coaches are free to manage playing time as they see fit.

C. Number of Players

- Play shall be five on five (Starter Division). In the event that only four players are present for a given team, they shall be allowed to play with four, although the opposing team shall still be allowed the option to play with five.
- Play shall be seven on seven (Junior Division). In the event that only six players are present for a given team, they shall be allowed to play with six, although the opposing team shall still be allowed the option to play with seven.
- Play shall be seven on seven (Senior Division). In the event that only six players are present for a given team, they shall be allowed to play with six, although the opposing team shall still be allowed the option to play with seven.

D. Player Substitutions

- Players may be freely substituted during any dead ball.

E. Location of Coaches

- Starter Division - Two coaches per team are allowed on the field to instruct players. The coaches must move at least 15 yards away before the ball is snapped. Coaches on the field must remain on his/her team's side of the line of scrimmage.
- Junior Division - One coach is allowed on the field to instruct players. The offensive coach must move at least 10 yards away and near the sideline before the ball is snapped. The defensive coach must move to the sideline before the snap of the ball. Any coach on the field must remain on his/her team's side of the line of scrimmage.
- Senior Division - Coach must instruct from the sideline and may only enter the field during timeouts or player injury.

Coach Interference

In all cases, it is the responsibility of the coach to avoid interfering with play. Game managers may take appropriate action, including issuing a warning, re-playing a down, imposing penalties, or removing a coach from the field, if he/she believes the coaches' presence has interfered with play. Also, coaches are not allowed to make contact with their own players during the course of a play (i.e., giving them a nudge in the right direction). This will be considered coach's interference, and will be penalized.

F. Coach's Conduct

- At all times each coach must have the highest standard of conduct on and off the field. He or She is a role model and we will expect each coach to carry themselves properly. We ask each coach to respect each other as well as each player, other coaches, parents, game managers, directors and fans that are taking part at any time league play.

G. Offense

- **Snapping the Ball**
 - No player may call defensive signals that simulate the sound or cadence of, or otherwise interfere with, offensive starting signals. (Examples: Clapping, or yelling "Go" or "Hike".

- The CENTER must snap the ball between the legs and must release the ball to the QUARTERBACK for a legal play to begin. Shotgun snaps are allowed but not required. Prior to the snap, the ball must be resting on the ground.
- **Handoffs to the CENTER are not allowed.** If the ball hits the ground on a snap, the play is called dead, and the ball is spotted at the point where it hit the ground. This rule does not apply in the Starter Division. Teams will be given a second chance to snap the ball successfully. The re-try must take place immediately -- no huddle or other meeting is allowed. If the second attempt results in a bad snap, then the ball will be marked dead at the spot where it hit the ground.

Number of Downs

- Starter and Junior Divisions - Each team will have three (3) downs to advance the ball across the first down marker (half of the field) or into the opposing end zone. After a team crosses the first down marker, it receives three (3) more downs in which to score.
- Senior Division - Each team will have four downs to advance the ball across the first down marker (Half of the field). After a team crosses the first down marker it receives four more downs to score

Ball Position

- The location of the ball at the end of the play where it is advanced forward determines where the ball is to be spotted and is placed in the center of the field.

Running

- The player who receives the snap (the QUARTERBACK) may not run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage until it has been given to another player. After the ball has been handed off to another player, then this restriction no longer applies; the QUARTERBACK becomes eligible to run, pass, or receive the ball. A hand-off may occur in front of or behind the ball carrier. The player receiving the hand-off is eligible to pass as long as they have not crossed the line of scrimmage. The offensive team may run the ball after performing a **VALID** hand-off, so long as the line of scrimmage is not located within a no-running zone.
- Spin moves are allowed. If the ball carrier's hand touches the ground, play will continue. If the ball carrier's wrist, elbow, or knee touches the ground, the play will be whistled dead at the spot where they touched the ground. EMPHASIS: It is the ball carrier's responsibility to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path. Unintentional contact shall not be penalized, provided the ball carrier makes an effort to avoid it. Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) will be penalized, even if it does not result in a collision. **Intentional contact will not be tolerated**, and may also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, and/or player ejection.

Restrictions

- Ball carriers are prohibited from using hands, arms, or the ball to impede access to the flag belt.
- If the ball carrier impedes access to the flag belt, even if it is in his/her "natural running motion", a flag guarding penalty shall be assessed. (this rule is increasingly enforced through each division)
- The ball carrier shall not lower his/her head to charge or run into a defensive player.
- No intentional contact of any kind is allowed. This includes charging or running directly into a defensive player or stiff-arming.
- The ball carrier is not allowed to dive(or jump). If he/she dives into the end zone, it is not a score; a diving penalty shall be imposed from the goal line.

No-Running Zones

- There is one no-running zone (from the offensive point of view when the ball is spotted) 5 yards from the end zone no running plays are allowed. This means that the offense must attempt a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage. Handoffs are allowed, but must lead to a pass attempt.
- **No running zones do not apply in the Starter Division until tournament play but will encouraged toward the final weeks of the regular season.**

Handoffs

- Handoffs may occur only behind the line of scrimmage.
- There is no limit on the number of handoffs that may occur during a given play.
- Handoffs may be forward or backward and do not limit the offense's option to throw a subsequent forward pass.
- Shovel passes are only considered a pass if it crosses the line of scrimmage.
- Handoffs may not occur after a completed forward pass.
 - *Special Cases: Running Eligibility After Multiple Handoffs* In order for a handoff to be considered legal, the player with original possession of the ball (Player A) must completely relinquish control of the ball to another player (Player B). By *completely relinquishing control of the ball*, it is meant that Player A would not have any contact with the ball whatsoever after handing the ball to Player B. Therefore, in order for Player A to gain the

ability to run the football, he or she would have to hand the ball to Player B, clearly ceasing all contact with the ball, and then Player B could hand the ball back to Player A, giving Player A the ability to run. The act of placing the ball on the center's back and retrieving it is not considered a legal handoff.

- Laterals are allowed at any time.

Seven Second Rule

- After the ball is snapped, the QUARTERBACK has seven seconds to pass or hand-off the ball. If the time expires without a pass or hand-off, pass rushers may rush the passer. If the time expires without a pass or hand-off in no run zone the ball shall be returned to the line of scrimmage and the down shall be lost. As soon as the quarterback no longer has possession, the seven second rule ceases to apply, even if the quarterback gains possession of the ball again.

Passing

- No more than one forward pass in the same play. ALL players are eligible.

Blocking

- Blocking will be done with hands on the waist or hands behind the back. NO Contact. any hand contact, lead or pushing with the body will result in a blocking penalty.

Receiving

A completion results when the receiver has control of the ball with at least one (1) foot in bounds. If a receiver catches a pass while not wearing a flag belt, they must be touched by a defender.

Motion

No more than one player at a time is allowed to be in motion, and a player in motion may not move toward the line of scrimmage while the ball is being snapped

G. Defense

Flag Pulling

- To stop the ball carrier, the defensive player must remove the flag or force (without contact) him/her out of bounds.
- No intentional contact is allowed. This includes tackling, pushing, grasping, and bumping. This also includes touching the face or head in any way or contacting a passer's arm or the ball while he/she is holding the ball.
- Incidental contact to the ball carrier's body while reaching for the flag belt is not a violation.
- If a ball carrier's flag falls off without being touched, he/she must be touched by the defender

Rushing the Quarterback

- Any defensive player is eligible to rush the QUARTERBACK if he/she is **behind the rushing line** when the ball is snapped. The rushing line is marked by the Game manager and is seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage (Junior Division) and ten (10) yards (Senior Division). This rushing line distance applies even if the first down line or goal line is less than the rushing line distance in yards from the line of scrimmage. Any number of players may rush the quarterback, provided they comply with the listed restrictions. After seven seconds eligible rushers are allowed to rush the passer. When the ball leaves the quarterback's hands (for a handoff or pass), then all defensive players immediately become eligible to rush, regardless of whether they lined up behind the rush line.
- Starter Division only, rushing is not allowed. Defensive players may NOT enter the backfield until the ball is handed off. Seven (7) second rule (in the regular season play is dead after seven seconds and in tournament players may rush the quarterback after 7 seconds)

H. Change of Possession

- A team failing to advance beyond the first down marker or into the end zone after three downs loses possession of the ball. The opposing team takes possession on the starting line.
- An intercepted pass results in a change of possession and will take possession on the originating scrimmage.

I. Dead Ball

- The ball shall be declared dead when:
 - The ball touches the ground.
 - Any part of the ball carrier other than hands or feet touches the ground.
 - A run is attempted from a no-running zone.
 - The ball carrier's flag belt is removed by a player.
 - The ball carrier score.
 - The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - The seven second clock expires in the no run zone.

J. Score Values

- Touchdown: 6 points/ Interception 1 point
- Point after touchdown
- From 5 yards: 1 point
- From 12 yards: 2 points

K. Tie Games

- **During the regular season, games ending in a tie will remain a tie game.**

During the playoffs, games ending in a tie will be settled by a *longest-yard tie-breaker*. A coin toss will take place to determine which team will go on offense first. The winner of the coin-toss will have the right to choose offense or defense. Each team will have one play from their own ten-yard line to gain as many yards as possible. The team gaining the most yards will be declared the winner. In the event that a team loses yardage or is assessed a penalty on their play, yardage will be marked as zero. A team cannot have negative yardage on their play. If both teams have negative yardage on their plays, a second overtime tiebreaker will take place.

L. Ejections

At the game manager discretion, a player may be ejected from the field for unsportsmanlike conduct or any flagrant violation of the rules. To eject a player, the game manager shall notify the coach, who is responsible for removing the player within two minutes to avoid a forfeit. Any player ejected may be put on probation with possible suspension, depending upon the severity of the incident. The League shall have full discretion when imposing penalties. Our league is intended to provide a family-oriented environment for the enjoyment of children. All coaches, players, and spectators are expected to show good sportsmanship at all times. The League, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to eject, suspend, or dismiss anyone for any inappropriate behavior.

N. Penalties

All defensive penalties are five yards, and result in an automatic first-down for the offense. All offensive penalties are five yards, and result in a loss-of-down for the offense. Penalties are either imposed from the line of scrimmage or from the point at which the foul occurred. For fouls that occur before or during (prior to the catch) a legal forward pass, the foul shall be marked from the original line of scrimmage. Otherwise, the foul is spotted from the point of the infraction. The offended team always has the option to decline any penalty. When the penalty is greater than the distance to the goal line, it shall be assessed half the distance to the goal line. A period of play cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense chooses to decline it. In the event of a defensive penalty that is not declined at the end of a half, the offense receives another un-timed play (along with an extra point attempt, if they score).

Offensive Penalties - 5 Yards from Line of Scrimmage and Loss of Down

- Delay of Game
- Off-Sides
- False Start
- Illegal Motion
- Illegal Blocking (including tripping)
- Attempting to Run from a No-running Zone
- Offensive Pass Interference (Loss of Down)
- Charging (depending on degree)
- Interference by a Coach on the Field
- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
- Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
- Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
- Intentionally Contacting an Official
- Fighting

Offensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Infraction, consumption of down

- Jumping
- Diving
- Flag Guarding
- Charging (depending on degree)

Defensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Line of Scrimmage, Automatic First Down

- Simulating offensive cadence or signals.
- Defensive Pass Interference (Automatic First Down)
- Roughing the Passer

- Tackling, Hitting, or Shoving the Ball Carrier
- Obstructing or Holding the Ball Carrier
- Illegally Rushing the Quarterback
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Spiking, Kicking, or Inappropriately Throwing the Ball
- Spiking or Throwing Flag
- Using Profanity, Taunting, or Using Insulting or Vulgar Language or Gestures
- Disrespectfully Addressing any Person
- Holding an Unauthorized Conference or Being on the Field Illegally
- Stripping or Attempting to Strip the Ball
- Intentionally Contacting an Official
- Fighting
- Too Many Players on the Field
- Equipment Violation
 - *On extra-points only, pass interference occurring in the end-zone will result in a successful extra point conversion. Pass interference occurring in the end-zone during the regular course of play will result in a five- yard penalty from the original line of scrimmage, and an automatic first-down.*

Defensive Penalties - 5 Yards from the Spot of the Infraction, Automatic First Down

- Holding

Last Man Rule

In the event that the defensive player commits a flagrant holding penalty and there are no other defensive players between the offensive player and the end-zone, the game manager has the discretion to credit the offensive player with a touchdown (or extra point conversion). In the event that the defensive team intercepts an extra-point conversion attempt, and the defensive player is flagrantly held by the (original) offensive player, two points shall be credited to the (original) defensive team.

Possible Warnings (at Game manager's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty

The game manager has the discretion to warn a player for unsportsmanlike conduct, and require the player to sit out a specified number of plays, or for the remainder of the half.

Possible Ejection (at Game manager's Discretion) in Addition to Penalty

- Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct
- Flagrant Personal Fouls (especially Tackling, Pass Interference, and Charging)
- Intentionally Tampering with Equipment