



CNY Family Sports Centre Indoor Flag Football Rules



7v7 League / 6v6 Pass Only League / Girls League / Recreation League

By participating in CNYFSC Indoor Flag Football, the participants (players, coaches, & parents) agree to abide by all rules and policies.

1. Sportsmanship

- 1.1.1 The primary purpose of this league is to have fun and to allow players and coaches to develop in the game of football. Fighting and profanity will NEVER be tolerated at CNYFSC.
- 1.1.2 Fighting by both teams will result in a loss for both teams.
- 1.1.3 Any player who comes off the bench while a fight or pushing contest is in progress, even if the intentions are to help break up the melee, will be ejected from the game and assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- 1.2 Always be respectful to CNYFSC Staff, the officials, and the opposing team's players, coaches, and parents. Please keep in mind our referees are human. Only the head coach can question a call. Advise your teams that any player, coach, and parent can and will be ejected at the referees' discretion.
- 1.3 No Taunting or excessive celebrations. Penalty – Unsportsmanlike Conduct 10 yards
- 1.4 No player shall commit any of the following non-contact acts during a game:
 - 1.4.1 Abusive, insulting, or profane language
 - 1.4.2 Any acts of unfair play
 - 1.4.3 Using disconcerting acts or words before the snap to interfere with the offensive teams' signals or movements.
 - 1.4.4 Intentionally kick at an opposing player
 - 1.4.5 Intentionally kick at the ball
 - 1.4.6 Intentionally swing an arm, hand, or fist at any opposing player
 - 1.4.7 Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with the referee's permission.
- 1.5 When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, they shall not:
 - 1.5.1 Intentionally kick the ball
 - 1.5.2 Spike the ball into the ground.
 - 1.5.3 Throw the ball high into the air.
 - 1.5.4 Fail to return the ball to the referee.
- 1.6 No unsportsmanlike conduct by substitutes, coaches, or others shall be subject to the rules. This includes:
 - 1.6.1 Attempting to influence a decision by an official
 - 1.6.2 Disrespectfully addressing an official
 - 1.6.3 Indicating objections to an official's decision
 - 1.6.4 Holding an unauthorized conference or being on the field illegally
- 1.7 Using profanity, insulting, or vulgar language or gestures. These rules give a warning for profanity. The referees can and will eject any player or coach using profanity; no warning is necessary.
- 1.8 There shall be no unfair acts:
 - 1.8.1 Play is interfered with by an unfair or unsportsmanlike act not explicitly covered by the rules.
 - 1.8.2 A team repeatedly commits fouls, which can be penalized only by halving the distance to the goal line.

- 1.9 No player shall commit a personal foul during a time-out or an intermission. Any act prohibited there, or any other act of unnecessary roughness, is a personal foul.
- 1.10 No player shall:
 - 1.10.1 Trip an opponent
 - 1.10.2 Contact an opponent who is on the ground
 - 1.10.3 Make any contact with an opponent deemed unnecessary, including, but not limited to, using fists, locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or head except according to the rules.
 - 1.10.4 Clip an opponent
 - 1.10.5 Position themselves on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 To be eligible to participate in the season, each player's parent/guardian MUST sign the waiver form to acknowledge our waiver policy. Available online as well.
- 2.2 Participants can only be rostered on one team per age division per season. Substituting for another team in the same division is prohibited unless cleared by the directors.

3. Equipment

- 3.1 All Players MUST always wear a mouthpiece while on the field. Players that don't have one will not be able to play. If a player is caught playing without one, it will be a 10-yard Unsportsmanlike penalty, and the player will be removed until they have a mouthpiece. The 2nd time by any player will result in a 10-yard Unsportsmanlike penalty on the Head Coach. Ejections will happen if it continues.
- 3.2 All teams will use the flags that the CNYFSC provides. These flags are triple threat flags. All players must have a flag on each hip and in the rear to start the play. If they do not, the player will be ineligible for the play.
- 3.3 All players must wear the same-colored jerseys. If a player does not have an appropriate uniform for play, a roster check must be done to ensure the player is on the roster. If a deemed player is not rostered, it will be an unsportsmanlike penalty on the Head Coach, and that player is ineligible to play. Any player that does not have a jersey for the game and is on the roster MUST wear the same-colored shirt or pinny.
- 3.4 Jewelry is prohibited, including but not limited to piercings, necklaces, rings, wrist fitness trackers, watches, and bracelets. Medical necessity is ok.
- 3.5 Billed hats are prohibited unless worn backward.
- 3.6 Athletic clothing is highly recommended, and athletic footwear (cleats, turf shoes, or sneakers) is required. Prohibited items include, but are not limited to, jeans, cargo pants/shorts, open-toed shoes, boots, and detachable or metal cleats.
- 3.7 Any casts, braces, or other protective equipment must be padded, secure, and inspected by the referee before the game. Check-in with directors about this before being on the field.
- 3.8 Additional Considerations
 - 3.8.1 Towels attached to a player's waist are illegal.
- 3.9 Football Size
 - 3.9.1 8U – Pee Wee
 - 3.9.2 10U – Pee Wee or Junior
 - 3.9.3 12U – Junior or Youth
 - 3.9.4 14U – Youth or Official
 - 3.9.5 16U - Official

4. Teams, Players, and Rosters

- 4.1.1 A team will have seven (7) players on the field at once and may begin play with a minimum of six (6) players. Anything less than (6) players will result in a forfeit. There shall be a grace period of 5 minutes from the scheduled game time. If a team cannot field six (6) or more players at the end of the grace period, forfeiture results.
- 4.1.2 A forfeit will be entered as a score of the mercy rule (36-0 12U and below, 42-0 14U and above)
- 4.1.3 Additional players may play if they are late until the start of the second half.
- 4.2 If injuries or ejections cause a team to drop below six (6) players, the team may continue if they start with the minimum number of players.
- 4.3 A 7-on-7 flag football team may have up to twenty (20) players on its roster.
- 4.4 Rosters must be turned in by Week one (1) and can be adjusted up to Week three (3).
- 4.5 Teams must remain in their respective team boxes. Players on the sidelines are considered part of the field of play; therefore, all rules apply to bench players, as do the field players (i.e., fighting, swearing, etc.) are grounds for ejection from the game.
- 4.6 No Coaches are allowed on the field during game play except for 8U and 10U. All coaches must remain in their respective team box.
 - 4.6.1 8U and 10U can have one (1) coach on the field at a time.
 - 4.6.1.1 The coach must stay at least 10 yards behind the play and off to the side after the huddle is broken.
 - 4.6.1.2 The coach must not say anything once the huddle has been broken and players are set to play.
Unsportsmanlike Penalty – 10 yards.
 - 4.6.1.3 For 10U, coaches are allowed on the field through week 3. After that, they must be in the box.

5. Substitutions

- 5.1 Players may substitute freely between downs.

6. Game Timing and Timeouts

- 6.1 Referees will keep the time on the field.
- 6.2 A game consists of two (2) 20-minute halves and a two-minute halftime.
- 6.3 The referees will keep a play clock once the ball is spotted and blown in, ready for play.
 - 6.3.1 40 seconds for 8U
 - 6.3.2 30 seconds for 10U
 - 6.3.3 25 seconds for 12U and above
- 6.4 The ball will be placed on the offense's 20-yard line (blue line) to start a half.
- 6.5 A half will not end with a defensive penalty.
- 6.6 In the first 38 minutes of the game, the clock will only stop for team or official timeouts.
- 6.7 The clock will stop on a score in the game's last two (2) minutes if it becomes a one (1) possession game, timeouts, or official timeouts.
- 6.8 Each team is allowed one (1) 30-second timeout per half. Timeout will carry over to the second half if one is not used in the first half.
- 6.9 Coin Toss
 - 6.9.1 The captain winning the initial coin toss can start on offense/defense, defend a goal, or defer.
 - 6.9.2 The next choice will belong to the loser of the toss, and choices will alternate after that. Possession to start the second half depends on the decisions made in the initial coin toss.

7. Overtime

- 7.1 There will be no overtime if regulation ends in a tie during the regular season.
- 7.2 If regulation ends in a tie during playoffs, the following will occur:
 - 7.2.1 A coin toss and captain's meeting will occur to determine the options for the start of overtime. The winner of the toss will choose to start on offense or defense.
 - 7.2.2 Team A will start on the 20-yard line (unless moved by penalty), facing the scoreboard, with a 1st and goal. They will have four (4) downs to score a touchdown or kick a field goal. Should they score a touchdown, they will decide whether to go for a one or two-point conversion. Afterward, Team B will begin a similar series going in the same direction.
 - 7.2.2.1 Should team B intercept a pass for a touchdown, they win the game. If the interception is not returned for a touchdown, they will begin their series on the 20-yard line.
 - 7.2.3 If the score is tied at the end of the first overtime, a second overtime period will begin with Team B beginning on offense. During the second overtime, teams may only attempt a two-point conversion after a touchdown.
 - 7.2.4 If the score is tied at the end of the second overtime, a third overtime period will begin with Team A beginning on offense. Starting with the third overtime, teams may only attempt a kick for a two-point conversion after a touchdown.
 - 7.2.5 If the score is tied at the end of the third overtime, a fourth and final overtime period will begin with Team B beginning on offense. The closest distance to the goal line in one play will decide this winner.
 - 7.2.6 Each team will receive one (1) 30-second timeout for overtime. Timeouts do not carry over from the first 40 minutes of play.
 - 7.2.7 All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line (facing scoreboard).

8. Scoring

- 8.1 All touchdowns are worth six (6) points.
- 8.2 All safeties are worth two (2) points.
- 8.3 All Field Goals are three (3) points. No defense will be on the field for a kick, and the ball must be held by a player. A kicking block may be used. The kick is good if the ball hits the back net between the ropes. The ball is allowed to hit the top of the net or the boards as long as it then hits the back of the net. If the ball hits either rope, the kick will be considered good.
- 8.4 Extra Point Conversions Following Touchdowns:
 - 8.4.1 May run a play or kick a Field Goal
 - 8.4.2 Successful attempt starting from the 5-yard line (top of the circle by goal line) = one (1) point
 - 8.4.3 Successful attempt starting from the 8-yard line (blue dash on the field) = two (2) points
- 8.5 Mercy Rule – If either team leads by 36 points or more in the second half, the results will be considered final. The game will continue with a running clock, with no stoppage of time unless for an official time-out. The winning team will make every effort for the other team to learn and develop.

9. Series and Number of Downs

- 9.1 The field consists of two (2) end zones, and markers will indicate each goal line, each 20-yard line, and the 40-yard line (midfield).
- 9.2 The lines on both sides of the field are out of bounds. THE END ZONE IS ALL FIELD OF PLAY WITH NO OUT-OF-BOUNDS!!

9.3 Downs

9.3.1 The team possessing the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance to midfield for a 1st down.

9.3.2 A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball across midfield.

9.4 Zone Line-to-gain

9.4.1 The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball unless such distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such cases, the zone line-to-gain is the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs.

9.4.2 The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

9.4.3 After a change of possession, all penalties shall be enforced before determining the zone line-to-gain.

9.5 A team can choose to “punt” (no actual punts) on 4th down; the ball will be placed at the other team’s 20-yard line. If a team decides to go for it on 4th down anywhere on the field and doesn’t make a first down, it will be turnover on downs at the dead-ball spot.

10. Snapping, Handling, and Passing the Ball

10.1 Before the Snap

10.1.1 Each team will be permitted 25 seconds to put the ball in play after the official gives the “ready for play” whistle.

10.1.1.1 8U will have 40 seconds.

10.1.1.2 10U will have 30 seconds.

10.1.2 The snap must be a continuous motion between the snapper’s legs. Penalty – Illegal Procedure, 3 yards.

10.1.3 During the snap, the offense must have at least three (3) players on the line of scrimmage. Penalty – Illegal Procedure, 3 yards.

10.1.4 Three- and four-point stances are legal but not required.

10.1.5 No offensive team player shall make a false start (any movement simulating the start of play). Penalty – False Start, 3 yards.

10.1.6 After the snapper has made their final adjustment of the ball, no defensive team player shall break the plane of their scrimmage line. Penalty – Encroachment/Offsides, 3 yards.

10.1.7 All offensive players must be motionless for one (1) second preceding the snap, except for one (1) player moving parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage.

10.1.8 Only one (1) player is allowed to be in motion when the ball is snapped.

10.1.9 If a player starts in motion, they must not go forward when the ball is snapped. Penalty – Illegal motion, 3 yards.

10.1.10 An offensive player that moves/shifts (other than going legally in motion) must stop for one (1) full second before the snap. Penalty – Illegal Shift, 3 yards.

10.2 Hand Offs

10.2.1 Any player may hand off the ball forward or backward behind the line of scrimmage.

10.3 Passing and Receiving

10.3.1 All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass.

10.3.2 Only one forward pass may be thrown per down. An unlimited number of laterals is allowed for 12U and below.

10.3.3 A forward pass is illegal (Penalty – Illegal Forward Pass, 3 yards, loss of down if before change of possession):

10.3.3.1 If any part of the passer’s body is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves their hand.

10.3.3.2 If the ball is thrown after the team’s possession changes during the down,

10.3.3.3 If a passer catches their untouched forward pass (can’t throw ball to themselves).

- 10.3.4 The pass begins when the ball is released from the passer's hand. The ball is dead if the passer is deflagged before the release.
 - 10.3.5 The initial direction of a pass determines whether a pass is forward or backward.
 - 10.3.6 After the ball is snapped and until it has been touched, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage when the legal forward pass crosses the line of scrimmage. Penalty – 10 yards.
 - 10.3.7 The defense may "Chuck/Press/Jam" the receiver ONCE within 5 yards of the line of scrimmage. After that one time, if there is contact, it will be Illegal Contact.
 - 10.3.8 After the passer releases a legal forward pass until it has been touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the line of scrimmage while the ball is in flight. Penalty – 10 yards.
 - 10.3.9 If a pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players, the ball becomes dead, is considered a completed pass, and belongs to the offense.
 - 10.3.10 The offense is responsible for retrieving the football after each play. If the ball is not retrieved and handed to the referee, it will be a Delay of Game Penalty – 3 yards.
- 10.4 The runner may not:
- 10.4.1 Be aided by a teammate (grasped, pushed, or pulled). Penalty – Helping the runner, 5 yards.
 - 10.4.2 Straight arm or lower a shoulder into the opponent. Penalty – Personal foul, 10 yards.
 - 10.4.3 Guard their flags by blocking with arms, hands, ball, or jumping to deny an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag. Penalty – Flag guarding, 7 yards, and loss of down.
 - 10.4.4 Diving, Jumping, or leaving feet on their own is NOT permitted.
 - 10.4.4.1 Lateral Jump-Cut is permitted.
- 10.5 Flag Removal
- 10.5.1 Players must have possession of the ball before they can be legally deflagged.
 - 10.5.1.1 In circumstances where a flag is removed illegally, play will continue, with the non-offending team having the option of accepting the penalty or result of the play. Penalty – Personal foul, 10 yards.
 - 10.5.2 Play continues when a runner loses their flag accidentally or inadvertently (i.e., flags fall off without someone attempting to deflag). The deflagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner between the shoulder and waist.
 - 10.5.3 If the ball carrier falls to the ground and is not touched or deflagged by the defense, they can get up and continue running.
 - 10.5.4 Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage, including tying or using foreign materials, will result in a player ejection, a 10-yard penalty, and loss of down (offense)/automatic first down (defense).
 - 10.5.5 A player may never leave feet and be horizontal to the ground to de-flag an opponent.
- 10.6 Ball In Play:
- 10.6.1 If a team delays under two (2) minutes left in the game, the first infraction shall be a loss of down. A second delay of game infraction will carry a loss of possession.
- 10.7 Dead Ball:
- 10.7.1 A live ball becomes a dead ball, as provided in the rules, when an official sounds the whistle (even inadvertently) or when an official declares the ball dead.
 - 10.7.2 The ball is declared dead:
 - 10.7.2.1 When it goes out of bounds.
 - 10.7.2.2 When a touchdown, safety, or successful extra point conversion is made.
 - 10.7.2.3 When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.

- 10.7.2.4 When a snap, backward pass, or fumble by a player strikes the ground. It is dead at the spot where it hits the ground.
- 10.7.2.5 When a runner has a flag legally removed by a defensive player. When a runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, in cases where the flags come off without any apparent contact.
- 10.7.2.6 When the passer is deflagged before releasing the ball.

10.8 Fumbles

- 10.8.1 A fumble or backward pass is dead when it hits the ground. In each case, possession goes to the team that last had possession. Just touching the ball is not sufficient for legal possession. If the ball is fumbled by an offensive player into the endzone, the ball will be placed at the spot of the fumble as there is not a chance to recover. If the ball is fumbled into their own endzone, it will be considered a Safety. Any player can catch a fumble before it hits the ground but may not dive to do so.

10.9 Out of Bounds

- 10.9.1 A ball in player possession is out of bounds when any part of the runner touches the ground, or a player/official is on/outside a boundary line.
- 10.9.2 A player catching a forward pass is considered out of bounds when any part of their body contacts an area declared out of bounds. One foot inbounds is needed for a legal reception.

11. Blocking and Pass Rushing

11.1 Blocking is allowed at the line of scrimmage ONLY.

- 11.1.1 NO BLOCKING DOWNFIELD AT ALL!! (1-yard cushion at the line of scrimmage) Penalty – 3 yards from previous spot.
- 11.1.2 A player attempting to block must be on their feet before, during, and after the block, and **the block must be between the defender's waist and shoulders and to the front side.**
- 11.1.3 Offensive blockers may extend their hands to block but may not grasp or extend their arms past their shoulders to block a defender. Open hand, thumbs up only!
- 11.1.4 Using the elbows or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's block is illegal.

11.2 Defensive players may use hand movements to get around the offensive blocker only between the waist and shoulders and MUST make every attempt to go around the defender, not through them.

11.3 Bull Rushing is not allowed. Penalty – Personal foul, 10 yards.

12. Scoring Plays, Safeties and Touchbacks

12.1 To be ruled a touchdown, the ball must break the plane of the goal line (i.e., If a runner's body is in the end zone but is deflagged while the ball has not broken the plane of the goal line, it is not a touchdown).

- 12.1.1 Any player touching the back wall or using the back wall of the end zone as a springboard will be deemed an ineligible receiver! If a player is pushed out of bounds, they must return immediately in bounds or forfeit the right to return in bounds and be deemed as going out of bounds and returning into play. If a player jumps in the air and is pushed into the back wall and the referee judges that the receiver would have stayed in the field of play if not forced, they shall be given the reception and the touchdown.

12.2 After each touchdown, the player who scored must immediately allow the game official to pull off their flag belt if the official deems it necessary. This is done to ensure the belt is not secured illegally. Penalty – Illegally Secured Flag Belt, Player ejection, loss of down, loss of score.

12.3 Once the coach decides to go for one or two points on the conversion by run or kick, they may only change the decision if the team takes a time-out.

- 12.4 If the offensive team commits a foul that carries a loss of down penalty on the extra point conversion, the ball is considered dead, and the conversion is failed.
- 12.5 After a successful or failed conversion, the ball is placed on the scored upon the team's 20-yard line unless moved by penalty (no kick-offs).
- 12.6 If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down that results in a successful touchdown, the scoring team may have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot (extra point conversion) or the opponent's 20-yard line (after the conversion attempt).
- 12.7 Safeties
- 12.7.1 If the ball is ruled dead after a runner carries it from the field of play to or across their goal line, it is a safety.
- 12.7.1.1 Exception: A player from the defensive team who intercepts a pass between the 5-yard line and goal line and whose original momentum carries them into their end zone is not subject to a safety if the ball is ruled dead in their possession. Either way, the ball belongs to the defensive team at the spot where the pass was intercepted.
- 12.7.2 Flag guarding or any offensive penalty committed in the end zone will result in a safety for the defensive team.
- 12.7.3 A safety will cause a change of possession, and the ball will be moved to the other team's Start Line.
- 12.7.4 A safety is a fumble or backward pass by the offense that first hits the ground in its own end zone.
- 12.8 Touchbacks
- 12.8.1 A team that intercepts a pass in its' own end zone may advance the ball out of the end zone. It is a touchback if the interceptor is deflagged before leaving their end zone.

13. 14U and 16U (Pass Only) Rules

- 13.1 The pass only league will follow all above rules except for those noted below that are for pass only leagues.
- 13.2 A team will have six (6) players on the field at once and may begin play with a minimum of five (5) players. Anything less than five (5) players will result in a forfeit. There shall be a grace period of 5 minutes from the scheduled game time. If a team cannot field five (5) or more players at the end of the grace period, forfeiture results.
- 13.3 A forfeit will be entered as a score of 42-0.
- 13.4 If injuries or ejections cause a team to drop below five (5) players, they may continue if they start with the minimum number of players.
- 13.5 A 6-on-6 flag football team may have up to twenty (20) players on its roster.
- 13.6 Mercy Rule – If either team leads by 42 points or more in the second half, the results will be considered final. The game will continue with a running clock, with no stoppage of time unless for an official time-out. The winning team will make every effort for the other team to learn and develop.
- 13.7 The quarterback will have 4 seconds to throw the ball. If the pass is not thrown in 4 seconds, the play will be ruled dead and will be a “sack”. The ball will be placed where the play was ruled dead (where the QB is as time expired). The referee in the backfield will count and will blow the whistle after the 4 count.
- 13.8 The ball must be thrown forward across the line of scrimmage. No laterals are allowed at any point.
- 13.9 No Handoffs are allowed.
- 13.10 No Blocking allowed.

14. Girls League Rules

- 14.1 The Girls League will follow all 7v7 rules except for those noted below, which are for girls leagues.
- 14.2 Offense Blocking – The offensive blocking shall take place without contact. The blocker shall have her hands and arms at her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive block is illegal.
- 14.3 Screen Blocking - Screen Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without initiating contact with him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body. There shall be no moving screens beyond the line of scrimmage. Offensive players beyond the line scrimmage may set a standing pick (similar to basketball) or may follow the play in event of a backward pass (pitch play).
- 14.4 All players are eligible to run the ball or receive the ball.
- 14.5 Defensive Rush and Use of Hands – Defensive players must attempt to go around the offensive blocker. Defensive players must not use any part of his/her arms, hands, elbows, or any part of the body to contact the offensive player.

15. Recreation League Rules

- 15.1 The Recreation League will follow all 7v7 rules except for those noted below, which are for recreation leagues.
- 15.2 The purpose of the recreation league is to develop and learn the game while having fun!
- 15.3 A team will have seven (7) players on the field at once and may begin play with a minimum of four (4) players. Anything less than four (4) players will result in a forfeit. There shall be a grace period of 5 minutes from the scheduled game time. If a team cannot field four (4) or more players at the end of the grace period, forfeiture results. Both teams must play with the same amount of players on the field.
- 15.4 There is no blocking at all.
- 15.5 All players are eligible.
- 15.6 The defense may rush only one (1) player each play.
- 15.7 The QB may not run unless rushed by the defense.
- 15.8 Any number of hand-offs are allowed behind the line of scrimmage and any amount of laterals are allowed past the line of scrimmage.

16. Penalties

- 16.1 All penalties shall be the distances stated throughout these rules or half the distance to the goal line, whichever is applicable.
- 16.2 All decisions made by the referee will be final. There will be no protests allowed on judgment calls. The official has the authority to eject any player, coach, or spectator from the game and will stop the game if, in their opinion, it becomes too rough. In the case of a terminated game, both teams will be given a forfeit loss.
- 16.3 The opposing team will have an option on all penalties, whether to accept the penalty or the down.
- 16.4 **3 Yard Penalties (Dead Ball) Dead Ball Penalties: A “dead ball” is a ball not in play. When a player in possession of the ball gets one of his flags pulled (or down by touch if they are missing a flag), the ball immediately becomes DEAD. Any penalty called or assessed after the whistle has been blown to declare the play dead or before a ball becomes “live” from a legal snap or free kick is a dead ball.**
- 16.4.1 **Delay of Game** - The play clock shall begin when the ball is spotted and placed for a down. The referee will warn the offensive team when there are “10 to snap” (10 seconds left on the play clock). Failure to snap within the allotted time will result in a delay of game penalty. 3-yard dead-ball penalty.
- 16.4.2 **False Start** - Any offensive player shall not move forward after the ball is spotted and before the snap begins. Any act intended to cause the defense to encroach will also be considered a false start. (Note- if a false start causes the defense to encroach, only the false start is penalized.) 3-yard dead-ball penalty.
- 16.4.3 **Snap Infraction** - After touching the ball, the snapper shall not make any movement that simulates a snap, fail to pause before the snap, or lift or move the ball other than in a legal snap—3-yard dead-ball penalty.
- 16.4.4 **Contact Encroachment (Defense) / Offsides (Offense)** - The snapper may be over the ball, but their feet must be behind the neutral zone, and no part of their body (other than hands(s) on the ball) may be beyond the foremost point of the ball. No player other than the snapper shall encroach on the neutral zone after the ball has been placed down and ready to play. Offsides occur when an offensive player is lined up in the neutral zone when the ball is snapped (FYI- this penalty is seldom called because players should communicate with referees to see if they are lined up in the neutral zone). Following the spot of the ball and after the snapper has placed hand(s) on the ball, contact encroachment (defensive penalty) occurs if any defensive player crosses the neutral zone and contacts an offensive player before the ball is snapped—3-yard dead-ball penalty.
- 16.4.5 **Illegal Defensive Alignment (Head over Center)** – The defense is not allowed to line up head up over the center and must allow the center to lift their head to protect themselves prior to any contact to the center.—3-yard dead-ball penalty.
- 16.5 **3 Yard Loss of Down Penalties (Live Ball) LOSS OF DOWN means the down will NOT be replayed (the team loses an opportunity to re-try the down)**
- 16.5.1 **Illegal Hand-Off** - No player may hand the ball forward to a teammate unless both players are behind the line of scrimmage (no center sneak)—3-yard live ball penalty & loss of down.
- 16.5.2 **Illegal Forward Pass** - A forward pass from beyond the neutral zone or a second and subsequent forward pass(es) thrown during a down. 3-yard live ball penalty & loss of down.
- 16.6 **3 Yard Penalties (Live Ball)**
- 16.6.1 **No Contact Encroachment (Defense)** - Defensive player is lined up in the neutral zone when the ball is snapped—3-yard live ball penalty.
- 16.6.2 **Illegal Substitution/Participation** - Anytime there are more than seven players on the field for a team during a live play, illegal substitution will be called. If a player intentionally goes out of bounds during the down, returns to the field, intentionally touches the ball, influences the play, or otherwise participates, Illegal participation will be called. (Note- if an opponent blocks a player out of bounds and returns to the field during the down, they shall return at the first

opportunity. This is not considered illegal participation.) 3-yard live ball penalty.

- 16.6.3 **Illegal Formation** - At the snap, at least three offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage. 3-yard live ball penalty
- 16.6.4 **Illegal Shift/Motion** - Multiple players in motion at one time (Once offensive players are set, only one player is allowed to go into motion legally). Forward motion (Player running towards the line of scrimmage before the snap of the ball). 3-yard live ball penalty
- 16.6.5 **Intentional Stripping of Ball Carrier** - This will be called once possession of the ball has been retained by a player. A penalty will be assessed if a defender intentionally attempts to strip the ball. (If a ball is being received and has yet to be retained as a possession, offensive and defensive players have an equal right to the ball and contest the catch.) 3-yard live ball penalty.
- 16.6.6 **Incidental Holding (Defense)** - When a defender holds the ball carrier in any way to impede the ball carrier's progress and pull their flag. Incidental holding can occur when a defender attempts to pull a flag, and the flag is NOT pulled. Incidental holding will be called if the defender prevents the runner from advancing or uses his grip for leverage to get the flag. You cannot hold someone's jersey, shorts, or body part to help you get to the flag. Incidental holding will not be called when an "instance release" from a defender attempting to pull a flag and no advantage is gained. (Note- The offensive player's shirt must be tucked in, and nothing can be hanging over or in the way of the flag belt). 3-yard live ball penalty.
- 16.6.7 **Illegal Hurdle/Dive (Ball Carrier)** - Ball carrier CANNOT dive/leap/hurdle to advance the ball. "Hurdling" is the runner jumping so both feet leave the ground simultaneously. The runner may not hurdle to avoid being de-flagged. The runner may step over an opponent who is lying prone. "Diving" is the runner jumping so both feet leave the ground simultaneously and the runner does not land on his feet. The runner may not dive to avoid being de-flagged. (Note- diving to catch or de-flag is legal, provided standard contact rules apply, i.e., diving into a player to de-flag the player is a personal foul). 3-yard live ball penalty.
- 16.6.8 **Illegal Contact** - When any player beyond the neutral zone intentionally obstructs an opponent's opportunity to move freely about the field on a pass play. For the offense, the restriction begins when the ball is snapped. For the defense, the restriction starts after 5 yards and before the ball is in the air. Examples of illegal contact for the offense pushing off to create space picks made through crossing routes. Defensive examples: contact made before the ball is in the air and after the ball has been snapped. (Note- defense is allowed one (1) "Chuck" within the first 5 yards from the line of scrimmage; if the defender goes beyond the 1 chuck, a penalty will be called; the receiver is allowed to contact the defense and "fight off" the contact initiated by the defender). 3-yard live ball penalty, Automatic 1st down
- 16.6.9 **Early Flag Pull (Defense)** - The defense can only pull the ball carrier's flag after possessing the ball. 3-yard live ball penalty
- 16.6.10 **Illegal Rush Move (Defensive line)** - Defensive linemen are prohibited from using any rush move involving their arms or hands above their shoulders, like hands to face. (Note- this rule is to help prevent any contact made to the opponent's head). 3-yard live ball penalty
- 16.6.11 **Illegal Alignment (Defensive line)** - Defensive linemen are prohibited from lining their heads up on the center. The D-line must be on either side of the center before the snap—3-yard live ball penalty.
- 16.6.12 **Illegal Blocking Downfield** – No downfield blocking will be allowed. The offensive will have a 1-yard cushion at the line of scrimmage for blocking. - 3-yard live ball penalty from the previous spot.
- 16.6.13 **Holding** - Use of hand or arms to hook, lock, clamp, grasp, encircle, or hold to restrain an opponent. 7-yard live ball penalty

16.7 7 Yard Penalties (Live Ball)

- 16.7.1 **Flag Guarding/Stiff Arm** - The ball carrier shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove a flag. All flags must be accessible. Stiff arm and flag guards can be incidental and are up to the referee's judgment. There is a 7-yard live ball penalty & loss of down.
- 16.7.2 **Illegal Blocking Technique/Illegal use of hands or arms** - Any technique where the blocker is not using open hands. Any block made outside the safe blocking area (between the shoulders, above the waist, and in front of the opponent). Grasping or encircling any teammate to form interlocked blocking. 7-yard live ball penalty
- 16.7.3 **Illegal Block in the Back** - Use of hands, arms, or body to contact an opponent in the back. 7-yard live ball penalty
- 16.7.4 **Charging** - When the ball carrier or defender initiates contact by lowering their shoulder(s) or intentionally creating contact to be used as an advantage to gain yards (offense) or impede the runner (defense). Ball carriers cannot go through defenders to gain yards, and defenders cannot intentionally engage the ball carrier to slow down their forward progress. 7-yard live ball penalty
- 16.7.5 **Roughing the Passer** - Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer who has or is attempting to throw the ball from in or behind the neutral zone. (Note- If a defensive player blocks a pass and initiates contact with the passer, roughing may not be called depending on the severity of the contact). 7-yard live ball penalty and automatic 1st down
- 16.7.6 **Pass Interference (Defense), Spot Foul penalty, and an automatic 1st down.**
- 16.7.7 **Pass Interference (Offensive)** - Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched (commonly seen through "pick plays"). Shoving or pushing off and creating separation (the most common type of OPI). Driving through a defender who had established a position. 7-yard live ball penalty.
- 16.7.8 There are three categories of Offensive Pass Interference:
- 16.7.8.1 Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched (commonly seen through "pick plays").
 - 16.7.8.2 Shoving or pushing off and creating separation (the most common type of OPI)
 - 16.7.8.3 Driving through a defender who had established a position.
- 16.7.9 Other notes on pass interference:
- 16.7.9.1 Defensive pass interference is a spot foul AND an automatic 1st down.
 - 16.7.9.2 Offensive pass interference is a 7-yard penalty.
 - 16.7.9.3 Face-guarding is allowed by the defender as long as no contact is made.
 - 16.7.9.4 Pass interference will not be called if a pass is considered uncatchable.

16.8 Unsportsmanlike Conduct 10-yard penalty (can be both live & dead ball fouls) automatic 1st down.

- 16.8.1 **Unsportsmanlike Conduct (By Players)** - No player shall act unsportsmanlike. Examples are, but not limited to:
- 16.8.1.1 Baiting or taunting acts or words. Any taunting intended or designed to embarrass, ridicule, or demean another player will be considered unsportsmanlike.
 - 16.8.1.2 Using profanity towards an opponent, insulting or vulgar language, or gestures.
 - 16.8.1.3 Using disconcerting acts or words before the snap to interfere with the offense's signals or movements.
 - 16.8.1.4 Kicking at the ball, other than during a legal free kick.
 - 16.8.1.5 Refusing to comply with a game official's request.
- 16.8.2 **Unsportsmanlike Conduct (By Non-players)** - No coach, substitute, or fan shall act unsportsmanlike. Examples are, but not limited to:
- 16.8.2.1 Using profanity, insulting, or vulgar language or gestures.
 - 16.8.2.2 Attempting to influence a decision by a game official.
 - 16.8.2.3 Disrespectfully addressing a game official.

- 16.8.2.4 Indicating objections to a game official's decision
- 16.8.2.5 Being on the field except as a substitute or replaced player.
- 16.8.2.6 Not ready to start at the scheduled game time.

16.9 **Personal Foul / Unnecessary Roughness 10-yard penalty (can be both live & dead ball fouls) automatic 1st down**

- 16.9.1 Any contact that is excessive or flagrant.
- 16.9.2 Any contact made to the opponent's neck/face/head.
- 16.9.3 Any block below the waist (i.e., clipping, chop block, tripping)
- 16.9.4 Charging into an opponent that is obviously out of the play.

16.10 **Unfair Acts - The referee enforces any penalty they consider equitable, including the score award, automatic 1st down, or loss of down.**

- 16.10.1 A player, non-player, or person(s) not subject to the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair act with no specific rule coverage.
- 16.10.2 No team shall repeatedly commit fouls that halve the distance to the goal line.
- 16.10.3 No player shall hide the ball under a jersey.
- 16.10.4 Neither team shall commit any act which, in the referee's opinion, tends to make a travesty of the game.
- 16.10.5 Clear Path to End Zone: If a defensive player holds up/ tackles/ intentionally obstructs the ball carrier from a clear path to the end zone or downfield without attempting to pull the flag, the offensive team will be awarded 7 yards and an automatic 1st down from the spot. This assessment can also result in a TD. (Clear path to end zone assessment made by game official's professional judgment)

16.11 **Disqualification 10-yard penalty, and player or non-player must leave the facility.**

- 16.11.1 Fighting by player or non-player
- 16.11.2 Intentionally contacting a game official.
- 16.11.3 Striking, kicking, kneeling
- 16.11.4 Any act if unduly rough or flagrant
- 16.11.5 A second unsportsmanlike foul by a player or non-player

16.12 **FOULS BY BOTH TEAMS**

- 16.12.1 If offsetting fouls occur during a down, that down will be repeated. Exception: If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided its foul was not before the final change of possession and it declined the penalty of its opponent's foul. When a live ball foul is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence.

16.13 **FOUL BETWEEN DOWNS**

- 16.13.1 The penalty for a foul between downs is enforced from the succeeding spot. Any foul following a penalty incurred after a series ends and before the next series begins will be first down, but the zone line-to-gain will be established after the penalty is enforced.

17. Penalty Table

| Loss of Down Penalties | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
|---|---------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Illegal Handoff | 3 | Spot of Foul | Loss of Down |
| Illegal Forward Pass | 3 | Spot of Foul | Loss of Down |
| Flag Guarding/Stiff Arm | 7 | Spot of Foul | Loss of Down |
| Automatic 1 st Down Penalties | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Roughing the Passer | 7 | Previous Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Bull Rush | 10 | Previous Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Pass Interference (Defense) | Spot | Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Clear Path (Defense Impede Runner from TD) | 7 | Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Incidental Holding (Defense) | 3 | End of Run | Automatic 1 st |
| Illegal Contact | 3 | Previous Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Dead Ball Penalties 3 Yards | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Delay of Game | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| False Start | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Snap Infraction | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| (Offense/Defense) / Offsides / Encroachment | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Illegal alignment (defensive lineman head up against center) | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Dead Ball Penalties 10 Yards | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Personal Foul (after the play is dead) | 10 | End of Play / Previous Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Unsportsmanlike Conduct by player or non-player (after the play is dead) | 10 | End of Play / Succeeding Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Live Ball Penalties 3 Yards | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Illegal substitution/participation | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Illegal formation (less than 3 players on the line of scrimmage- Offensive penalty) | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Illegal Shift or Illegal Motion | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Intentional Stripping of Ball Carrier | 3 | End of the run or spot of the foul. | Play Counts |
| Illegal hurdle/dive by ball carrier | 3 | Spot of foul | Play Counts |
| Early flag pull | 3 | End of Run | Play Counts |
| Illegal Defensive Rush Move/Hands to Face | 3 | End of the run or spot of the foul. | Play Counts |
| Holding (Offense) | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Blocking Downfield | 3 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Live Ball Penalties 7 Yards | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Illegal blocking technique / Illegal use of hands or arms | 7 | Spot of foul | Replay Down |
| Illegal block in the back | 7 | Spot of foul | Replay Down |
| Charging | 7 | Spot of foul | Loss of Down |
| Pass Interference (Offense) | 7 | Previous Spot | Replay Down |
| Live Ball Penalties 10 Yards | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Unsportsmanlike Conduct by player or non-player | 10 | Succeeding Spot | Automatic 1 st /Loss of Down |
| Personal Foul / Unnecessary roughness | 10 | End of Run | Automatic 1 st /Loss of Down |
| Blocks below the waist, Clipping, Chop Blocks | 10 | Spot of foul | Loss of Down |
| Unfair Acts | 10 | End of Run | Automatic 1 st /Loss of Down |
| Ejection Penalties 10 Yards | Yardage | Where is the Penalty Assessed? | Result |
| Fighting | 10 | End of Run / Succeeding Spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Intentionally Contacting a Game Official | 10 | End of run or succeeding spot | Automatic 1 st |
| Any act if unduly Rough or Flagrant | 10 | End of Run | Automatic 1 st |
| A Second Unsportsmanlike Foul | 10 | End of Run / Succeeding Spot | Automatic 1 st |