



## **INDOOR / OUTDOOR FLAG FOOTBALL GAME RULES (Updated Fall 2019)**

### **League Objective**

The WISC flag football league is intended to provide a fun and safe place for kids to enjoy flagfootball. Positive sportsmanship is expected from all players, coaches, parents, and officials at all times.

### **Player Safety & Equipment**

Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the referee and other game officials deem hazardous. The referee and coaches may confer to determine whether any such jewelry is hazardous.

Players are strongly encouraged to wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.

Players are not allowed to wear cleats, spikes, etc., or any open toed shoes on the indoor field.

All players must wear sneakers, turf shoes, or similar apparel. Cleats are allowed on the outdoor grass fields.

Players are allowed to wear gloves so long as they do not provide an undo advantage.

Flags and belts will be inspected by the referee prior to the game. No flag is permitted to be tucked into a shirt, shorts, belt, etc. to prevent it from being pulled by an opponent.

All players from the same team will wear the same colored shirt.

A player's shirt must be tucked into her/his pants.

Any type of pant is acceptable, though all pockets and belt loops must be taped for the safety of all players.

### **The Start of the Game**

1) Before the start of each game, coaches and the referee will agree on the number of players on the field. Teams will be allowed 5 or 6 players on the field during the game.

a. If one team loses a player during the game for any reason (except as a result of a penalty) and can no longer field 6 players, the opposing team will also play with 5 players.

b. If one team loses a player for any reason and can no longer field 5 players, the opposing team will still be allowed to play with 5 players.

c. If one team is unable to field 5 players at the start of the game for any reason, that team forfeits the game.

2) A coin toss by the referee will determine first possession. Three captains from each team will meet at the center of the field. The “visiting” team will call heads or tails. The team that wins the toss must choose to start on offense or defense (no deferring).

a. The team that starts the first half on offense will start the second half on defense.

b. The team that starts the first half on defense will start the second half on offense.

c. The team that starts the first half on defense will decide which end zone they will defend.

### **Offense**

1) All offensive possessions will start on the Offense’s 5 yard line. There will be no kicking off.

a. Exception. For interceptions, the possession will start where the runner’s flag was pulled.

2) The offensive team will have 4 offensive plays (downs) to make a first down, which is determined by both of the ball carrier’s flags crossing the midway point of the field (midfield).

If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. Once making a first down, the offensive team will then have 4 offensive plays to score a touchdown which is determined by both of the ball carrier’s flags crossing the goal line.

- a. The judgment of whether the ball carrier's flags have crossed midfield or the goal line will be at the sole discretion of the referee. The position of the ball in the ball carrier's possession will not affect this decision.
- b. The offense will be allowed additional plays as stipulated in the penalties section.

3) A play is dead when:

- a. The ball carrier's flag is pulled from her/his belt or falls off.
- b. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- c. A touchdown or safety is scored.
- d. The ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- e. The ball hits the ground.

4) The ball must be snapped between the center's legs or to her/his side. The center and the quarterback do not need to have simultaneous possession for a snap to be legal (i.e. shotgun snaps are permitted).

5) After the ball is snapped, the referee will initiate an audible five second rush count, loud enough for all offensive and defensive players to hear. (See defensive section for how this affects the defense.)

6) The quarterback has no time limit to throw the ball. S/he may elude defenders behind the line of scrimmage (the imaginary line across the field where the ball is snapped) for as long as s/he chooses.

- a. The quarterback is the player who receives the direct snap from the center, irrespective of where s/he originally lined up or whether s/he is in motion when the ball is snapped.

7) The quarterback may run past the line of scrimmage with the ball when:

- a. The 5 second count has expired and the defense crosses the line of scrimmage.
- b. The ball is handed off to another offensive player and then back to her/him.
- c. The defense "blitzes".

8) Offensive players must be 'set' for at least one second and not moving prior to the snap of the ball.

- a. Exception. One player is allowed to be in motion prior to the snap of the ball.

b. Motion can be towards the line of scrimmage.

9) During each offensive play, the ball carrier is eligible to run with the ball until one or both of her/his flags is pulled off of her/his belt or falls off on its own, or if the ball carrier's knee hits the ground, or if the ball carrier steps out of bounds. At this point, the play is dead and the next snap of the ball will be at the spot on the field where the flag came off or where the flags were when the player's knee hit the ground or where the flags were when the player went out of bounds.

10) There are no fumbles. If the ball falls to the ground during a play, the play is dead and the next snap of the ball will be from the spot where the ball hit the ground.

a. Exception: A forward pass that is not caught and falls to the ground is not considered a fumble.

b. Exception: A fumble on 4<sup>th</sup> down will result in a first down for the defending team which will start its offensive possession on its own 5 yard line.

11) Laterals are permitted at all points on the field and there are no limitations on the number of laterals a team may use while in possession of the ball.

a. A lateral is considered to be a sideways or backward pass from one player to her/his teammate.

12) Direct handoffs are only permitted behind the line of scrimmage and there are no limits on the number of handoffs an offense uses on any play.

13) All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage and must cross the line of scrimmage. Any forward pass that does not cross the line of scrimmage will result in the play being whistled dead by the referee and the offense will lose a down. (e.g. A forward pass behind the line of scrimmage on 2<sup>nd</sup> down will mean the next snap of the ball will be 3<sup>rd</sup> down.) Any offensive player may throw a forward pass.

14) A receiver (any offensive or defensive player making an attempt to catch a forward pass) must have at least one foot in bounds in order for the catch to be considered legal.

a. A receiver who is pushed by an opponent while catching a forward pass will be considered in bounds irrespective of where her/his feet land.

15) A ball carrier or receiver who has possession of the ball (as determined by the referee) may not have the ball hit out of her/his possession by an opponent. (See penalties section).

16) Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds and the play will be blown dead by the referee.

17) The ball is out of play when it touches any net or wall.

18) Any ball carrier who uses the wall to maintain balance is considered out of bounds and the play is dead.

19) No ball carrier is permitted to dive forward, leap over their opponent, or leave their feet in an attempt to avoid their flag(s) being pulled. The play will be called dead and the next snap of the ball will be from where the infraction occurred. If a player leaves her/his feet while in their own end zone, a safety will be awarded. A ball carrier may spin to avoid her/his flag being pulled but at least one foot must remain in contact with the field.

20) No ball carrier or anyone from her/his team is permitted to initiate contact with an opponent to gain an advantage. This is considered illegal contact / blocking. (see penalties section)

21) A player from the ball carrier's team is permitted to set a screen, which is defined as a player standing in such a position as to prevent an opponent from reaching the ball carrier. The player setting the screen may not move her/his feet once set.

22) The offensive team does not need to wait for the defensive team to be "ready" to start a play. An offensive play may begin as soon as the referee signals the next play is eligible to begin.

## **Defense**

- 1) No defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage until:
  - a. The quarterback hands the ball off or laterals the ball to a teammate.
  - b. The referee has finished her/his 5 second count.

\*Exception. The defense may blitz (immediately cross the line of scrimmage) once in every 4 offensive plays.

- 2) Defensive players are permitted to pull a ball carrier's flag. If for any reason a defensive player has a hold of a ball carrier's flag and the flag does not come off of the belt, the referee may determine that the play is dead from that spot.

3) The defense will not be granted possession of the ball if, on a play where there is an interception, the defense commits a penalty.

4) The defense may not hit a ball carrier's hands or arms, or a receiver's hands or arms, in an attempt to dislodge the ball from her/his possession. This will be deemed illegal contact (see penalties section). The defense also cannot grab the ball from the ball carrier's hands. In this event, the play will be blown dead and the offense will retain possession at that spot on the field.

5) Defensive players cannot shove offensive players out of bounds. The penalty will be illegal contact. Players shoved out of bounds will still be considered legitimate receivers. If there is excessive force a personal foul penalty is assessed.

## **Scoring**

1) Each touchdown will be worth 7 points. Teams can choose to go for an additional 1 point at the 3 yard mark. However, if the conversion fails the team will only receive 6 points.

2) A safety is worth two points and the scoring team gets the ball at its own 5 yard line to start the next series of plays. A safety is awarded when:

- a. The ball carrier's flag is pulled in her/his own end zone. Exception. On an interception, the ball is considered down and the defending team will be awarded the ball at its own 5 yard line.
- b. The ball carrier leaves her/his feet while in their own end zone.
- c. The ball carrier fumbles while in their own end zone.
- d. The snap of the ball falls into the end zone.
- e. The ball carrier's knee touches the ground in their own end zone.
  - i. Exception. On an interception, the ball is considered down and the defending team will be awarded the ball at its own 5 yard line.

3) Kicking - There will be a kick off at the beginning of the game. There is no blocking but the kids can stand in the way as the kick off return team runs down the field to try to pull the flag. There will also be a kick off at the start of the second half.

Extra points are worth two if you run it in or pass it in. It's worth one if you kick it. There will be a place on the field that will be marked where you can kick the extra point. The defense and offense have to take a knee so the kids do not get kicked. They cannot rush the kick but they can scream and yell and try to distract the

kicker. There will not be a snap. There will be a holder and a kicker. If the kids are scared to hold the ball the coach can hold for the kicker. Also, if it's fourth down you do have the choice of kicking a field goal. A touchdown is worth six points.

†Note. No team can score as a result of a penalty.

\*The score will be kept on the scoreboard but the official score will be kept by the referee. Coaches should check with the referee to confirm the official score during the game.

\*\*Ties are allowed in regular season games.

\*\*\*For playoff games, should two teams be tied at the end of the game, each team gets four plays to make a touchdown from the defense's 10 yard line. Interceptions can be run back for touchdowns.

## **Penalties**

- 1) Flag guarding. No ball carrier is permitted to use their hands or arms to prevent an opponent from pulling their flag. The penalty will be 5 yards from the spot of the infraction and loss of down.
  - a. Exception: On an interception, the penalty will be 5 yards from the spot of the foul and the ensuing possession will start on first down.
  
- 2) Delay of game. Failure to snap the ball within the 35 seconds from the placement of the ball by the referee will result in a 5 yard penalty. (The referee will give audible announcements for the play clock such as "10 seconds to snap the ball".)
  
- 3) Pass interference. Physically impeding an opponent from catching a forward pass.
  - a. Offensive: 10 yard penalty from the previous spot and loss of down.
  - b. Defensive: 10 yard penalty from the previous spot and a first down for the offense.
  
- 4) Holding. Grabbing an opponent's shirt or pants in an effort to slow her/him or to prevent her/ him from running.
  - a. Offensive: 5 yards from previous spot and loss of down.
  - b. Defensive: 5 yards from previous spot and a first down for the offense.

5) Offside. No defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage before the ball is handed off to an offensive player or before the referee completes the five second count, except on a blitz. The penalty will be 5 yards from the previous spot and a first down for the offense.

6) False start. No offensive player may cross the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped. The referee will blow his whistle to indicate the play is dead. The penalty will be 5 yards from the previous spot and the down will be repeated.

7) Blocking / moving screen. No player may physically make contact with an opponent to prevent her/him from getting to a ball carrier. No player is permitted to move while screening (as defined above). The penalty for each will be 5 yards from the place of the infraction or the line of scrimmage (whichever is closer to the defense's goal line) and a loss of down.

8) Illegal contact. While flag football is a "non-contact" sport, contact between players will naturally occur. Contact will be determined to be illegal when a player initiates contact to gain advantage. Examples include: An offensive player runs into a defender; A defender runs into a player who is setting a screen. In each case, contact needs to be avoided.

a. Offense: 5 yards from the location of the contact or the line of scrimmage, (whichever is closer to the defending team's goal line) and a loss of down.

b. Defense: 5 yards from the end of the play or the line of scrimmage (whichever is closer to the defending team's goal line) and a first down for the offense.

\*Any of the above penalties may be declined by the offended team on a given play.

## **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**

9) Unsportsmanlike conduct. Any conduct determined by the referee or other game official to be detrimental to the game. Examples include taunting, excessive celebration, swearing, physical contact deemed intentionally intended to injure an opponent. The penalized player must leave the field for at least one play. *Warnings may be given by the referee or other game officials, but no warning is required prior to a player being disqualified from the game if the offending action is deemed worthy of ejection.*

a. Offense: 15 yards from the where the ball is on the field at the end of the play and loss of down.

b. Defense: 15 yards from the where the ball is on the field at the end of the play and a first down for the offense.

10) Personal foul. Excessive contact that may cause injury to an opponent. Examples include pushing an opponent into a wall, a defensive player knocking an offensive player down when attempting to grab her/his flag, a ball carrier running through or over a defender, cut blocking, chop blocking, blocking from behind, shoving. The referee will determine whether a penalty is considered a personal foul. If a personal foul penalty is assessed, the penalized player must sit out for one play. A second infraction by the same player will result in that player sitting out one series. A third infraction by that same player will result in them sitting out a half.

a. Offense: 10 yards from the where the ball is on the field at the end of the play and loss of down.

b. Defense: 10 yards from the where the ball is on the field at the end of the play and a first down for the offense.

✦ *Note. No team will be allowed to score as a result of a penalty. A penalty's yardage that would move the placement of the ball into the end zone will be amended to half the distance to the goal.*

## **Coaches / Parents**

One coach from each team may stand on the field but must remain away from the action on the field during a play. Coaches may huddle with their players.

Parents must view the game behind the glass area on the opposite side of the players' benches.

Parents are not permitted to stand behind the bench area.

## **Timing**

Games will consist of two twenty minute halves. The clock will start at game time and will run continuously with the only stops being for time outs.

Each team will be allowed two timeouts per half. Timeouts will last for 45 seconds.

The scoreboard will display the game time but the official time will be kept by the referee.

Coaches should check with the referee to confirm the correct game time.  
Halftime will be for 3 minutes.

### **Standings**

Teams will be awarded a win for scoring more points than their opponent in a game. A tie will be awarded for regular season games when each team scores an equal number of points.

If two teams are tied with the same number of wins and losses, the team that allows fewer defensive points over the course of the season will be the higher team in the standings.

If two teams are tied with the same number of wins, but not losses, the team with fewer losses will be the higher team in the standings.