



Rec Flag Football Rules

Game:

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The **VISITING TEAM** calls the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. **There is no option to defer to the second half.** Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at the 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
- If the team fails to score, **after crossing midfield**, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts their drive from their own 5-yard line.
 - If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts from their own 5-yard line. If the offensive team "goes for it" on 4th down and does NOT cross midfield, the opposition will begin their possession from the dead ball spot of the 4th down try.
 - Offensive Teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", when asked by the referee and prior to the 'Ready for Play'.
 - Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "Play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - If the declaration is "Punt" the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing Team's 5-yard line, 1st down, with NO option to change the declaration.
 - If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive Team starts at its 5-yard line.
- Teams change directions after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

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 reach to get a first down.
- **Rush Line:** An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven (7) 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 (may or may not be the quarterback).
- **Rusher:** The defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent them from passing the ball by pulling their flags or by blocking the pass.

- **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:** Officials' whistle that is performed in error.
- **Charging:** An illegal movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has an 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 still arm, lowering the elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand, ball, or arm.
- **Shovel Pass:** A legal forward pass across the LOS underhand, backhand, or by pushing the ball forward.
- **Lateral:** A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

Equipment:

- The league provides each player with an official flag belt and **Silver and Black** team jersey. Teams that choose to get custom jerseys must adhere to the uniform requirements.
- Teams will use footballs provided by the league or equivalent size of their own.
 - Ball size:
 - 6U – PeeWee
 - 8U – PeeWee
 - 10U – PeeWee
 - 12U – Junior
 - **Exception:** If both coaches agree to use the same ball for the entire game. Game ball must be size equivalent for that age division.
- Players must wear shoes. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metal and hard casts are **NOT** allowed at any time.
- Players **MUST** remove all jewelry and hats. Winter beanies are allowed. No headgear may have a hard brim.
- Players' jerseys should be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt **AND** impede the flags from being pulled.
- Players **MUST** wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants are **NOT** allowed to be taped or reversed (if the pockets hang out).
 - **Flag belts/flags CANNOT be the same color as the shorts or pants. Colors must be contrasting.**
- Players are not allowed to wear anything on their flag belts. This includes: wrist bands, play cards, and towels. Wrist coaches, if worn, must be on the wrist or arm.
- Players **MUST** wear a mouthguard when playing. The mouthguard must be in the players' mouth at the snap of the ball. Any player found to be playing without their mouthguard in their mouth during play may be assessed an Illegal Equipment penalty. This is a player safety issue and will result in play being whistled dead and the penalty being assessed. Any player deliberately, or continually, removing their mouthguard will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty and may be ejected from the game.
- Players **MUST** wear a mandated Soft-Shell helmet when playing. The helmet must be on the players' head at the snap of the ball. Players without a helmet will not be permitted to participate. This is a player safety issue.
- The flag belts must be worn with the socket facing down and away from the body (see picture below).



Field:

- The field dimensions are 25 yards by 70 yards with two (2) 7-10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-run zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
- No-run zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zone (5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion that advances the ball. All plays must be pass plays. Teams are allowed to hand the ball off behind the LOS; however, they still cannot run to advance the ball.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- Each offensive team approaches only two (2) no-run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

Rosters:

- Every player must be officially registered with NYS prior to playing each season.
- Any player not on the official roster will be ineligible to play for that day.

Timing:

- Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two (2) 20-minute halves.
- The clock will stop for an uncharged timeout at the 2-minute warning of each half. This is a 30-second timeout.
- The clock only stops for timeouts or injuries.
- Halftime is one (2) minutes long.
- Each team has three (3) 30-second timeouts per game.
 - ***These timeouts are for the entire game and they carry over into the 2nd half.***
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball once the Referee has blown the Ready Whistle.

- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- In the event of an injury, the clock will stop, then restart when the injured player has been removed from the field of play.

Scoring:

- **SCORING IS NOT RECORDED BY OFFICIALS FOR REC DIVISIONS.**
- **Touchdown:** 6 points
- **PAT (Point after Touchdown):** 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - 1-point PAT try is pass only; 2-point PAT try can be run or pass
- **Safety:** 2 points
 - A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in their own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
- Extra points that are returned are worth 2 points (whether the original try was for 1 point or 2 points).
- A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether they wish to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line). **Any change, once a decision is made to try for an extra point, requires a charged timeout.** A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.

Coaches:

- Coaches are expected to adhere to **USA FOOTBALL** philosophes, coaching guidelines, and code of conduct.
- Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball.
 - 12U may not have a coach on the field on offense or defense.
 - 6U, 8U & 10U: may have one offensive coach on the field; however, they must be 10 yards behind the LOS at the snap of the ball.
 - 6U may have on coach on the field on defense. Defensive coach must stay out of the play at the snap of the ball. No defensive coach is allowed on the field for 8U, 10U or 12U.

Live Ball/Dead Ball:

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The Neutral Zone is an imaginary space that runs approximately 1-yard on either side of the LOS. No players (other than the center may be lined up in this space). It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player of offense or defense enters the Neutral Zone. In regard to the Neutral Zone, the official MAY give both teams a "courtesy" Neutral Zone warning to allow their players to move back behind the LOS.
 - Any team intentionally entering the Neutral Zone with the intent to disrupt the flow of the game will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty on the Head Coach (which could lead to ejection from the game).
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play (prior to any action that would place them out of bounds first).
- The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the QB is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball. Substitution **MUST** always be made from the team's side of the field.
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- A play is ruled dead when:
 - The ball hits the ground (if the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is placed where the ball hits the ground).
 - The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
 - The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.

- A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
- The ball-carrier's knee, arm, or ball hits the ground.
- The ball-carrier's flag falls out.
- The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- The 7-second pass clock expires.
- Inadvertent whistle.
- If an inadvertent whistle occurs with no time left on the clock at halftime or the end of the game, the offense will have one untimed down. The offense has two options:
 - Take the ball where it was when the inadvertent whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
- A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling was correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule was 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. Judgement calls can never be challenged.
- **NOTE:** There are no fumbles. The ball becomes a dead ball. If the ball is fumbled forward, it will be spotted where the ball-carrier lost possession.

Running:

- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- The QB cannot directly run with the ball. The QB is the offensive player who receives the snap. The QB may hand the ball off to another player, then receive it back to run or pass.
- Direct handoffs, pitches, and laterals are permitted behind the line of scrimmage only. If this takes place, after the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, the play is to be blown dead by the official. The ball shall be placed at the spot possession was lost for the next play.
 - "Center sneak" play is NOT allowed. The QB may NOT handoff, pitch or lateral the ball first to the center.
 - Any player who receives a handoff, backward pass, pitch or lateral can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, or a backward pass, pitch or lateral has occurred, the 7-second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush. Definition of a "Legal Handoff" – Total loss of possession directly from 1 offensive play to another
- No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield and are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is live. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only **TWO (2)** no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD.)
- Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the LOS (provided they have not crossed the LOS already). Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the current ball-carrier is the only player allowed to have possession of the ball until the play is ruled dead.
- Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind, or to the side of the QB; all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- Spinning/Jump cuts are allowed; however, players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
- Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that they have done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
- Once the ball is advanced beyond the LOS, the remaining offensive players may not impede the defense from attempting to pull the offensive player's flag. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No screening, active blocking, or running with the ball carrier.

- Flag obstruction – All jerseys **MUST** not obscure the flags before play begins. The flags must be on the players' hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructing flags will be considered flag guarding.

Passing:

- Only 1 forward pass, thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, is permitted each offensive play. The ball must be released prior to crossing the line of scrimmage. There can be unlimited backward passes behind the line of scrimmage.
 - Definition of a Pass: For the purposes of advancing the ball, a "pass" is defined as any forward movement of the ball—whether it be an overhand throw, underhand toss, shovel, or pitch—as long as the ball crosses the line of scrimmage in the air. The type of motion used to deliver the ball does not matter, so long as it is a forward pass that breaks the line of scrimmage.
 - Passes may be thrown backwards behind the line of scrimmage.
 - There is no intentional grounding. The quarterback may throw the ball anywhere across the line of scrimmage to avoid a sack.
 - All forward passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender. All forward passes must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed and must be a forward pass, from behind the line of scrimmage, and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a 7 second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, the play is dead, the down counts and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the 7 second rule is no longer in effect.
 - If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7 second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
 - If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

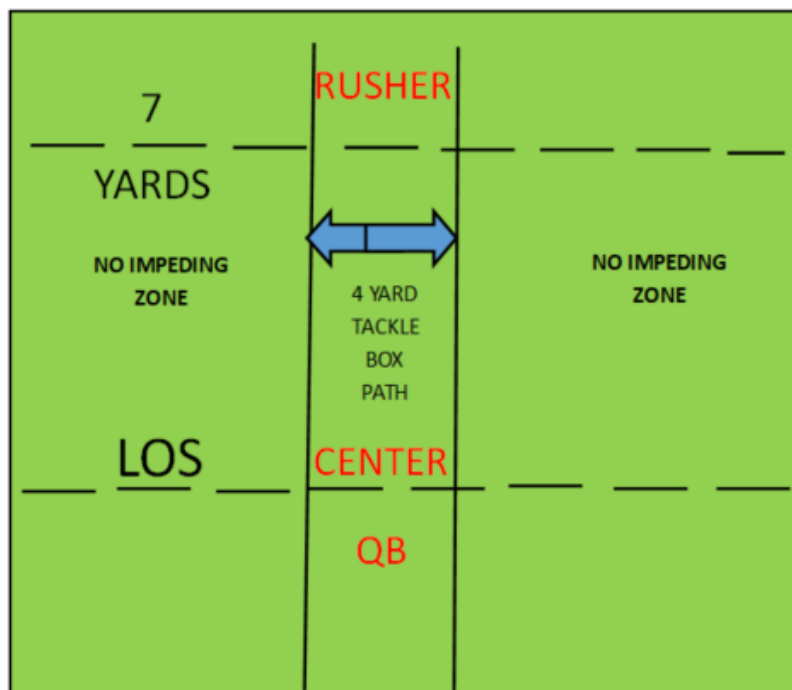
Receiving:

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the LOS).
- Only one (1) player is allowed in motion at the snap of the ball. All motion **MUST** be parallel to the LOS and **NO** motion is permitted toward the LOS.
- A player must have at least one (1) foot inbounds when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions change possession of the ball at the point of the interception.
- The defense may intercept the ball at any point on the field, to include behind the LOS, and it is a live ball.
- Interceptions are returnable on PAT conversions after touchdowns for two (2) points.

Rushing the Passer:

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the LOS when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the QB. Players not rushing the QB can defend the LOS beyond the Neutral Zone.
- Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may cross the LOS.
- The Official will designate a rush line seven (7) yards from the LOS. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
- A legal rush is:
 - Any rush from a point seven (7) yards from the LOS.
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the QB.

- **EXCEPTION: No rushing in 6U or 8U recreational divisions.**
- A penalty may be called if:
 - The rusher leaves the rush line prior to the snap **AND** crosses the LOS before a handoff or pass. [Illegal Rush penalty]
 - Any defensive player crosses the LOS before the ball is snapped. [Offsides penalty]
 - Any defensive player not lined up on/behind the rush line **AND** crosses the LOS before the ball is handed off or passed. [Illegal Rush penalty]
 - If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven (7) yard marker PRIOR to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) **CANNOT** rush during that play (they are not allowed to reset and rush). However, any other defender that is seven (7) yards back may still rush the QB. Jumping the Rush is **NOT** a penalty unless the rusher crosses the LOS prior to a handoff or a pass. [Illegal Rush penalty]
- Special circumstances:
 - Teams are not required to rush the QB.
 - Teams are not required to identify the rusher before the play.
- Players rushing the QB may attempt to block a pass without leaving their feet; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the Referee, would result in a Roughing the Passer penalty.
- A sack occurs if the QB's flag is pulled behind the LOS. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is when the flag is pulled.
 - A safety is awarded if the sack occurs in the offensive team's end zone.
- The offense cannot impede the rusher at all within the 4 yard "tackle box". The rusher has the right to a clear path to the QB when rushing occurs from inside the tackle box. ***If the "path or line" is occupied by a MOVING offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher.*** Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an Impeding the Rusher penalty. Impeding the rusher penalties will only take place within the tackle box. If a player is rushing from outside of the tackle box, impeding the rush rule is not applied.



Flag Pulling:

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags; however, they **CANNOT** tackle, hold, or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. [Holding or Defensive Unnecessary Roughness penalty]

- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time. [Stripping penalty]
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball or where the player's flag came off (ball-carrier), and the play ends.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball. [Illegal Flag Pull penalty]
- Flag guarding is an attempt (not required to be intentional) by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, ball, or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey. Flag Guarding penalty]

Formations:

- Offenses **MUST** have a minimum of one (1) player on the LOS (the Center) and up to four (4) players on the LOS. The QB **MUST** be off the LOS. [Illegal Procedure penalty]
 - The offense may shift any number of players before the snap; however, players **MUST** be set for one (1) sec prior to the snap.
 - One (1) player may be in motion at the snap; however, that motion **MUST** be parallel to the LOS.
 - **NO** motion (at the snap) is allowed toward the LOS.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who moves toward the LOS while in motion is considered a False Start penalty.
- The center **MUST** snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between their legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave their hands.
- The ball may be spotted anywhere within the middle half of the field. The ball may not be placed any closer than 7 ½ yards from either sideline. This distance will be measured based on an approximation by the Officials. If the offensive team has a preference on the ball spot, they **MUST** announce this **PRIOR** to the Ready Whistle being blown. The ball will **NOT** be moved after the Referee blows the Ready Whistle.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct:

- If a League Official or Referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player may 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!**
- Offensive or confrontational language is NOT allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the Referee **MAY** give one (1) warning. If it continues, the player(s), coach(es), or fan(s) will be ejected from the game.
 - Any player, coach, or fan who is ejected from a game is required to vacate the area in a reasonable time set forth by the Referee. This requires them to leave the park area. Failure to leave within the time frame set **WILL** result in that team forfeiting the game, and a final score being set as 28-0.
- Players may not physical or verbally abuse any opponent, coach, or official.
- Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- Fans **MUST** also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - Yell to cheer on your players, NOT to harass officials or the other team/fans.
 - Keep comments clean and profane free.
 - Compliment all players, not just one child or team.
- Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid friendly:
 - Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs, and tents off the field so as to maintain a safe environment.
 - Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.

Penalties:

- The Referee will announce all penalties.
- Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the LOS, except as noted. (Spot Fouls)
- Only the team captain or head coach may question the Officials about rule clarification and interpretations. Players and fans may not question calls.
- Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties are assessed: live ball... then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- **Last Player Rule:** If an unsportsmanlike penalty (tackling, pushing out of bounds, etc) is committed by the last defender within 10 yards of the endzone, the offensive team will be awarded a touchdown.
- **Defensive Spot Fouls:**
 - Defensive pass interference: Automatic 1st down at the spot
 - Holding: +5 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - Stripping: +5 yards / Automatic 1st down
- **Offensive Spot Fouls:**
 - Screening, blocking, or running with the ball carrier: -10 yards / Loss of down
 - Charging: -10 yards / Loss of down
 - Flag Guarding: -10 yards / Loss of down
- **Defensive penalties (from LOS):**
 - Defensive unnecessary roughness: +10 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct: +10 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - Roughing the passer: +10 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - *Offsides: +5 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - Illegal rush (starting rush from inside the 7-yard marker): +5 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - Illegal flag pull (before the receiver has the ball): +5 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - *Illegal equipment: +5 yards / Automatic 1st down
 - Taunting/excessive celebration (dead ball penalty, does not consume a down): +5 yards
- **Offensive penalties (from LOS):**
 - Offensive unnecessary roughness: -10 yards / Loss of down
 - Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct: -10 yards / Loss of down
 - Offensive pass interference: -5 yards / Loss of down
 - *Offsides/false start: -5 yards / Loss of down
 - Impeding the rusher: -5 yards / Loss of down
 - Illegal forward pass: -5 yards / Loss of down
 - *Illegal motion (more than one person moving at the snap): -5 yards / Loss of down
 - *Illegal equipment: -5 yards / Loss of down
 - *Illegal procedure: -5 yards / Loss of down
 - *Delay of game (dead ball penalty, does not consume a down): -5 yards
 - Taunting/excessive celebration (dead ball penalty, does not consume a down): -5 yards

Penalties with a * indicate penalties that constitute a Dead Ball and result in an immediate whistle.

6U & 8U Guidelines:

- 'No Run' zones are eliminated for the 6U division. Teams may run the ball anywhere on the field.
- Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield.
- One Coach for each team is permitted on the field pre-snap to help their players.
- If the ball falls or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled a 'Do Over' with no loss of down, once per down. On a second consecutive occurrence, the down is consumed.
- 6U & 8U Defenders MUST line up at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap. Defenders may pursue the ball on run plays and line of scrimmage on pass plays once

the ball is snapped. Defensive players may not cross the line of scrimmage on all passing plays.

RULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE