



# Redwood City Youth Sports League Flag Football Rules and Guidelines

Revised 07/2008

## Player Participation

There will be 9 players on the field for each team. The minimum number of players to start a game will be 8. A team will be given five minutes from the official start time to field a team. If, after ten minutes, a team still does not have enough players, they will forfeit. If a forfeit is declared, game officials are not permitted to officiate "pick-up" or scrimmage games.

Both teams must line up 5 minutes prior to game time for uniform and flag check. Flags must be worn on the hip.

All new players must be cleared through the PAL office at least 24 hours prior to playing in the next team game. Use of a player not on the official roster will result in a forfeit for that game as well as the team's expulsion from the league. No roster changes after the first two games of the season.

## Responsibilities

### Coaches

Only players and coaches are allowed on the immediate sideline, and must stay within the 20-yard lines of each side of the field.

**The Head Coach has overall responsibility for the conduct of his team. He/She is expected to instill fun and the spirit of good sportsmanship.** Each Head Coach should attend a positive coaching alliance coach's clinic. She/he will be supplied with copies of these rules to foreword to the players on his team. Ignorance shall not be accepted as an excuse for any violation of these rules. The Head Coach is responsible for familiarizing the players with the PAL General Rules and the Flag Football Rules.

**Unsportsmanlike conduct, profanity, or any other abusive language or actions toward, coaches, players, fans, or referees will not be tolerated.** The player, coach, or fan may be ejected from the game.

Any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, chop blocking or any unsportsmanlike acts may result in the player being ejected from the game. **Foul play will not be tolerated.**

**Coaches are not allowed on the playing field except for injury, timeout, or invitation by the referees. Any coach who goes on the playing field to protest is subject to a charged time out, unsportsmanlike conduct, or ejection. Any coach ejected from the game is automatically suspended for a minimum of one game.**

## Players

- 1) Players, on or off the field, may not harass other players.
- 3) All players not active in the game must remain on the sideline.
- 4) Players fighting, before, during, or after the game are suspended for the balance of the game in which the fight occurred.
- 5) Any player or coach who has any inappropriate comments toward the referee, other players, or coaches may be ejected and suspended for the following game.
- 6) All suspensions will be reviewed by the PAL Executive Director and a designee before any future games.

**Trash talk is illegal. (Trash talk is language that is offensive to officials, players, teams or spectators). The referee shall assess an unsportsmanlike penalty and any infractions thereafter may result in ejection from the game.**

## The Game Rules

### Playing Time

**Each player must play a minimum of 3 plays per game.**

### Field

The playing field is 80 yards in length and 40 yards in width. There are two ten yard end zones. First downs will be determined when a team reaches or passes the First-to-Gain line (15, 30, and 15 yard lines.)

### Coin Toss

The coin toss determines first possession and the direction in which the teams will be defending. The visiting team calls the toss. The team that wins the coin toss can choose one of the following choices: kick, receive, defend goal, or to defer to the second half.

## Kickoff

The kicking team will kick off from their own 15-yard line. The ball must be kicked from the Tee provided.

If the ball is downed in the end zone, it is a touchback. If the ball goes out of bounds without being touched, the kicking team will be penalized 5 yards from the spot the ball went out of bounds, no re-kick

On kickoffs, the ball is live until touched by a player on the kicking team or the kick returner's flag is pulled. If the kickoff is trapped, dropped, or bobbled on the first touch, ANY player can still return the kick. If the ball touches the ground subsequently, the play is dead.

On Punts if a player on the kicking team touches the ball, it is dead.

In the event of an on-side kick, the ball must travel 15 yards on the ground before it is considered live for the kicking team to recover.

The receiving team must have five (5) players in front of their own 15-yard line.

Kickoffs will take place at the beginning of the game and at the start of the second half only. On all other kickoff situations the ball will be placed on the receiving teams 15-yard line.

## Length of Game

The game consists of 60 plays, 30 plays per half, not counting kickoff and extra point attempts. Teams will change directions at the half only.

One person will be assigned to keep track of the number of plays and be solely responsible for the correct total.

## Scoring

Touchdown - 6 points

Extra Point, pass - 1 point

Extra Point, run - 2 points

The ball will be placed on the 3-yard line for extra point attempts.

(Interception of an extra point cannot be returned.)

Safety - 2 points

(The ball will be placed on the receiving team's 15-yard line after a safety.)

## Line of Scrimmage

On Offense, you must have five players on the line of scrimmage, foot to foot.

All players must be 5 yards away from the sideline prior to the snap of the ball (no sleeper receivers.)

Huddles are not required. One player is allowed to be in motion, either backward or lateral, to the line of scrimmage.

All defensive players must be at least one yard off the line of scrimmage.

## 18 point Mercy Rule

If a team is ahead by 18 points or more with eight plays left in the second half, the game will end.

## The Offense

### Passing and Receivers

The center and two guards are not eligible receivers. All other players are eligible receivers. The Tight Ends are eligible, but they cannot go into motion.

The catch is considered legal if the receiver has control of the ball and the receiver has at least one foot or one knee in bounds at the point of reception. A player cannot go out of bounds and re-enter the playing field to catch a pass. This is an **illegal forward pass\***.

No more than two forward passes behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Any player that is beyond the line of scrimmage is no longer eligible to throw a pass.

A player who catches a pass without one or both flags may not advance the ball. The ball will be called dead at the spot of the catch.

## Punting

All punts must be announced. A team can punt on any down. Quick punts are illegal. The team must announce that they are punting and give the defensive team time to get into position. Both teams remain on their side of the line of scrimmage until the punt is made. No member of the offense is allowed to cross the line of scrimmage until after the ball is punted. The punter must kick the ball from behind the line of scrimmage in line with the spot of the ball (no lateral movement is allowed.) Blocking the punt is not allowed. The only way the Offense can change their decision to punt is to call a time out, or if a penalty is called prior to or during the down and the down is to be replayed.

No snap may be taken. The punter may pick up the ball, move back and punt the ball. A dropped snap is not dead. The punter may pick up the ball and punt.

## Centering

On all offensive plays (except punts), the ball must be centered directly through the center's legs in one continuous motion to any player standing behind him. No center sneaks are allowed. The center cannot double pump the snap – this will result in a **false start\*** penalty. The center must direct snap to a back for the snap to be considered legal. Once the offensive line is set, the center may not move the ball except to put the ball into play.

## Motion

Only one player is allowed to be in motion. While in motion the player must be at least one yard behind the line of scrimmage and can only run parallel or backwards from the line of scrimmage.

## Fumbles and Laterals

The ball is dead at the spot the where the ball carrier last had possession and not where the ball hits the ground. There is no limit on the number of laterals. If the lateral is intercepted by the defense, it is treated as an interception. Attempt to slap or strip the ball from a ball carrier is not permitted and will result in an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty.

## Safety

If the ball carrier fumbles the ball, has his flag pulled, or an offensive penalty occurs in the offensive end zone, a safety is scored. A safety results in the defensive team receiving two points. This is followed by the offensive team starting play at their own 20-yard line. An interception in the end zone, and downed in the end zone, or flag pulled in the end zone, is a touchback.

## Charging/Spinning

The ball carrier may not initiate contact with a defender. Running into or over a player will result in a **charging penalty\***. All players must make a **definite** effort to avoid collisions. Any player, while in the act of catching the ball, shall be allowed reasonable movement without a charging penalty. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to spin or **spin into a defender, or make contact with a defender after coming out of a spin**. If, in the referee's opinion, the charging was purposely done and/or is flagrant, the player can be assessed an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty and/or ejected from the game.

## Illegal Use of Hands, Hurdling, Diving

A ball carrier may not stiff arm, place hands on a defender, dive or hurdle to avoid having a flag pulled. A runner is allowed to jump over downed players but the runner cannot make contact. Contact while jumping over downed players will result in a **charging penalty\***.

## Flag Guarding

Ball carriers shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag.

A player may not shield his flag in any way. If the defender cannot pull the ball carrier's flag with ordinary effort, **flag guarding\*** or an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty may be called. Flag guarding can be called in the following instances:  
A) The runner slaps the defender's hand when trying to

pull his flag.

B) The runner holds the ball on or over his belt or flags.

C) The runner ties his flag or makes it so it doesn't come off in a normal manner.

D) The ball carrier runs with his hands below his waist.

E) The ball carrier pushes a defender away when trying to pull his flag.

F) Lowering the shoulders in such a manner, which places the arm over the flag to prevent an opponent from pulling his flag.

In any of the preceding instances, if a defender is not within 3 yards of the runner, flag guarding will not be called.

After a player scores a touchdown the referee may request to pull his flag. If the flag does not come off with ordinary effort, **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** will be called and the play will be nullified. The penalty will be assessed from the original line of scrimmage.

## The Defense

### Defensive Line of Scrimmage

Defensive players must line up one yard from the offensive line of scrimmage.

### Encroachment

It is **encroachment\*** for any defensive player to go beyond his/her line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped. Defensive players may jump back on sides before the snap and not be penalized.

### Dead Ball

A dead ball is declared when the following happens:

A) The ball carrier's flag is pulled.

B) The ball carrier steps out of bounds.

C) A touchdown, extra point, or safety is scored.

D) Ball carrier's knee hits the ground.

E) The ball touches the ground after being touched or handled by any player (exception: kickoffs.)

### Flag Pulling

Once the flag of the ball carrier is pulled off, the ball carrier is considered down and play is stopped. The location of the ball (if carried in normal manner) at the time the flag is pulled, determines where the ball is marked for the next play. In the event that the ball carrier's flag falls without being pulled by the defensive player, the defense must touch the player for him to be considered down. If the referee thinks the flag was purposely removed before the defender could pull it, the referee will call a **flag guarding\*** penalty. Deliberate flag pulling by the defense of a potential ball carrier's flag will result in an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty.

Once a defender pulls a flag he/she should hold the opponent flag above his/her head for easy view by the referee. Holding up a flag not belonging to the ball carrier will result in an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty.

### **Pass Interference**

An offensive player is not allowed to run a pattern that interferes with a defensive player who is rushing or in a set position. A defensive player cannot physically interfere with a potential receiver. An offensive player may not interfere with a defensive player in position to intercept a pass. A defender must play the ball.

### **Tackling**

Tackling, whether incidental or flagrant, is illegal in flag football. If a player is tackled and the referee, in his opinion, thinks the player would have scored, the referee may award a touchdown to that team. If a team consistently tackles opposing players, the referee has the right to eject those players.

### **Tripping**

Tripping, whether incidental or flagrant, is not allowed in flag football. If, in the referee's opinion, the tripping was purposely done and/or is flagrant, the player can be assessed an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty and/or ejected from the game. If a player is tripped to avoid him getting a touchdown, the referee, at his discretion, may award a touchdown to that team if he thinks the trip was the only thing that prevented the touchdown.

### **Holding**

Grabbing shorts, shirt, belt, or any other part of the player is illegal. Putting two hands on the player in an attempt to get his flag is also illegal. A defender may not hold an offensive player to slow him up so he/she can catch up to the offensive player.

### **Roughing the Passer**

Roughing the passer is defined as:

- A) The rusher makes contact with the passer in the act of throwing the football.
- B) Hitting the passer's arm.
- C) Running into the passer.
- D) Knocking the passer down.
- E) Hitting the football while in the hand of the passer.

**Slapping or batting** a thrown pass intentionally into the passer (blocking a thrown pass is permitted) will result in a flagrant penalty.

### **Spiking**

Spiking the ball by the QB immediately after the snap is allowed. Spiking the ball any other time is illegal.

Penalty: **delay of game\*** or **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** if spiked in anger at or to taunt an opponent.

**Spiking a pulled flag is also not allowed and it carries an unsportsmanlike conduct\* penalty.**

### **Time Outs**

Each team has two 60-second time outs per half. Only coaches may go out on the field during a time-out. Unused time-outs will not be carried over to the second half.

### **Delay of Game**

After the referee has whistled play to begin, if the play has not been started within 30 seconds, a delay of game will be called. Delay of game can be called on the defense for slowing down the tempo purposely or delaying the referee's spotting of the ball.

### **Overtime**

In the event of a tie ending any regular season, playoff, or championship game, the overtime period will be played as follows:

- A) There will be a coin toss to determine possession.
- B) The offensive team shall put the ball in play at the 15-yard line and shall have four downs to score. The series can be terminated by a score, interception, or if the team fails to score. If a touchdown is scored, the extra point will be attempted.
- C) After the team with the first possession completes its series, the other team becomes the offensive team and will similarly put the ball in play at the same 15-yard line.
- D) One timeout will be given. No carryover of time outs remaining after regular play or any overtime period shall be permitted.
- E) A-D is repeated until a winner is declared.

### **Quick Whistle**

Sometimes a referee will inadvertently blow the whistle thinking a ball carrier's flag was pulled, but it was not. The ruling is that the team in possession has the option of returning the ball to the line of scrimmage and replaying the down or taking the play and the yardage gained up to the time of the whistle. The referee may award a touchdown if he judges that the ball carrier would have scored if the quick whistle had not occurred. If the whistle is blown, the play is dead at that point.

### **Equipment**

All games will be played with an intermediate size football.

### **Flags**

All players must wear the flags provided by PAL. The flags must be properly worn at all times (one flag on each side). If improperly worn equipment is found prior to the snap, there will be a warning by the referee. If the infraction continues, a penalty may occur. If the flag falls off during play, the player is considered down when touched by an opposing player.

**Belts must be worn with the flag connectors facing**

**outward.** Any improper securing of the flag belt will result in an **unsportsmanlike conduct\*** penalty. If the tips of a player's flags are cut illegally, the player may be disqualified and ejected from the game. **Coaches are responsible for securing the excess portion of the belt so that it does not dangle from the waist and interfere with the flags.**

### Uniforms

The uniform jerseys provided by PAL must be worn at all games. If a player does not have a jersey they must wear a like colored shirt, and be notify the referee before the game. Shorts with pockets and/or belt loops are not recommended.

**Jerseys must be tucked in.**

No jewelry, watches, earrings, posts, bandanas, or hats may be worn. In the event an earring cannot be moved the ear lobe will be covered with a band-aid or medical tape to prevent injury.

### Shoes

Shoes with all-purpose molded rubber cleats or round plastic screw-on cleats are acceptable. Metal spikes or cleats are not allowed. Shoes must be worn for the entire game. The player must supply the shoes.

### Other Equipment

Soft elbow and/or kneepads are permitted. Mouthpieces are recommended, but not mandatory. No hard surface padding such as hip pads, shin guards, shoulder pads, helmets, etc., is allowed. Players are not allowed to play with a any casts

**All players must report for an equipment check prior to the game by the referee.**

## PENALTIES

### Offense

#### Dead Ball Fouls

- *Delay of Game* - 5 yds, repeat down
- *False Start* - 5 yds, repeat down
- *Illegal Motion* - 5 yds, repeat down

#### Result of Play (Play Continues) / Spot of Foul

- *Flag Guarding* - 5 yds, LOD
- *Screening, Chop Blocking, Charging, Diving, Holding, Illegal Use of Hands* - 10 yds or LOD
- *Unnecessary Roughness* - 15 yds, LOD, ejection if warranted
- *Unsportsmanlike Conduct* - 15 yds, ejection if warranted

#### Assessed from Line of Scrimmage

- *Illegal Forward Pass* - 5 yds, LOD
- *Illegal Flag* - 10 yds, LOD
- *Illegal Participation* - 10 yds, LOD
- *Pass Interference* - 10 yds
- *Too Many Players* - 5 yds

### Defense

#### Dead Ball Fouls

- *Encroachment* - 5 yards
- *Delay of Game* - 5 yards

#### Result of Play (Play Continues) / Spot of Foul

- *Holding* - 10 yds
- *Illegal Use of Hands* (elbowing, stiff-arm, forearm, etc.) - 10 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>
- *Illegal Contact* - 5 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>
- *Illegal Participation* - 10 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>
- *Pass Interference* - Auto 1<sup>st</sup>, ball is placed at 1 yard line if foul is in the end zone except for any extra point try or two point conversion. Then the penalty enforcement is from the line of scrimmage, half the distance to the goal and replay of down.
- *Roughing the Passer* - 5 yds, if flagrant: 10 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>, can warrant ejection
- *Stripping of the Ball* - 10 yds
- *Tackling* - 10 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>, ejection if flagrant, ref. can award TD
- *Too Many Players* - 5 yds (**from line of scrimmage**), Repeat down
- *Tripping (Incidental)* - 10 yds, repeat down
- *Tripping (Intentional)* - 15 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>
- *Unnecessary Roughness* - 15 yards, auto 1<sup>st</sup>, can warrant ejection
- *Unsportsmanlike Conduct* - 15 yds, auto 1<sup>st</sup>, can warrant ejection