

2019 OFFICIAL RULE BOOK



I. START OF GAME

Start of the game, the visiting team begins on **OFFENSE** on the **VISTORS** side of the field.

- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has **(3)** plays to cross midfield. They have (3) plays to score a touchdown.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- 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.
- All possession changes (except interceptions) start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

II. 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: (LTG) The line the offense must pass to get a 1st down or score.

Rush Line: An imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage

Offense: the squad with possession of the ball.

Defense: the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.

Passer: The offensive player that throws the ball & may or may not be the quarterback.

Rusher: the defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. Legally from seven yards beyond the L.O.S.

Downs (1-2-3): the offensive squad has three attempts or "downs" to advance the ball. They must cross the **LTG** to get another set of downs or to score.

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, half time, or the end of the game.

Inadvertent Whistle: official's whistle that is performed in error.

Charging: The movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.

Flag Guarding: An act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier's flag by stiff arm. Lowering elbow/head, or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.

Controlled Ball: When a player uses the ball in their possession as an extension of their hand.

Stripping: Player who has the ball or bobbling the ball has it knocked away.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

III. ELIGIBILITY

1. All players' legal guardians must agree to the online waiver form at NFLFLAG.com for their specific league before participating.

IV. REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

1. The Reno Sportsdome will provide flag belts at all games.
2. **NO CLEATS** are allowed at the Reno Sportsdome. Tennis shoes or turf shoes are permitted. Flags must be worn parallel to the player's side and on the player's hip.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands, or fingers. Players may wear gloves. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed. Casts must be wrapped in padding and approved by referee.
 - a. All youth players must wear a mouthpiece. They cannot play without one.

4. Players must remove all watches, hats, earrings, and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Official NFL FLAG powered by USA Football NFL jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Teams must have matching jerseys. If a team does not have matching jerseys, teams will be required to wear pennies provided by the Reno Sportsdome. Players jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line. If needed a jersey can be knotted or taped to not interfere with the flags.
7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets are **NOT PERMITTED**.
8. An intermediate size ball is okay to use in Adult Flag Football leagues with the exception of division 1. In the event of a disagreement regarding the ball, the head official decides if a particular ball is okay to use.

v. **FIELD**



1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards. However, field size may vary based on field availability for each league.
2. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones (a 5yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

4. There are TWO No-Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone yards from the goal line to score a TD).

VI. ROSTERS

1. Home team wear dark color jerseys: away team wears light color jerseys. Youth games only.
2. Teams must consist of at least five players.
3. Teams must start a game with a minimum of three players. In the event of an injury, a team may play with two players, but no fewer than two.

VII. TIMING AND OVERTIME

1. Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two- 20-minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts or at the referee's discretion.
2. Halftime is one minute long.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has one 60-second timeout per game.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game should be determined a tie, unless it is a playoff game.
8. In the event of a tie at the end of regulation play during a playoff or championship game, a non-sudden death overtime will occur.
 - a. The away team will run one play from the 5-yard line. (same as 1 point after try) if the try is good, the away team is awarded 1 point.
 - b. The home team will then run one play from the 5-yard line. (1 point after try) if the try is good, the home teams is awarded 1 point.
 - c. In the event that only one team scored, the game is over.
 - d. If both teams or neither of the teams scored, the overtime will continue in the same fashion with the home team going first and the away team going second. Scoring is the same.
 - e. If the game remains tied, it will be the away teams' ball on the 12-yard line. (2 points after try) If the try is good, 2 points will be awarded.
 - f. The home team will then run one play from the 12-yard line. (2 points after try) If the try is good, the home team will be awarded 2 points.
 - g. In the event that only one team scored, the game is over.

- h. If both teams or neither of the teams scored, the overtime will continue in the same fashion with the home team going first and the away team going second. Scoring is the same.
- i. If the game remains tied, e-h will be repeated until there is a winner.

VIII. SCORING

1. **Touchdown:** 6 points
 - a. When running, the ball then must break the goal line.
 - b. When receiving, Section XIII rule 3 is in effect.
2. **Point After Touchdown (PAT):**
 - a. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-pt. conversion (from the 12-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decisions cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.
 - i. 1 point 5- yard line (pass only)
 - ii. 2 points 12-yard line (can be run or pass)
3. **Safety:** 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in their own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out and are touched by a defensive player, they step out of bounds, or they touch the ground with anything other than their hand, foot, or controlled ball.

A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone. A safety is determined by where the ball is when the ball carrier is declared down within the end zone.

4. **Mercy Rule:** after one team is winning by twenty-eight points or more, the losing team gets one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game goes into scrimmage mode playing up to the fifteen-minute mark in the second half if time allows it. After the fifteen-minute mark, the game is over.
5. **Scrimmage mode:** the losing team gets the ball for up to three possessions. Each possession lasts until the team scores or fails to achieve the Line-To-Gain. Points do not count in final score. After three possessions the game is over.

IX. COACHES

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
2. Coaches are allowed according to need and division. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball in the 9/10, 11/12, and 13/14-year-old divisions. One coach is allowed to stay on the field during the play in the 5/6 and 7/8-year-old division.
 - a. Coaches may not control players once the play starts this is illegal participation, and unsportsmanlike conduct.
3. A maximum of 3 coaches are allowed on each team's bench (i.e. one coach on the field, two coaches on the bench). All coaches that are not the designated coach on the field must always remain inside the bench area.

Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL flag powered by USA Football philosophies, coaching, guidelines, codes of conduct, and Reno Sportsdome rules.

Any referee's decision is final and will be upheld by the Reno Sportsdome. Protests regarding referee's decisions are not permitted.

X. LIVE/DEAD BALL

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This is in an unsportsmanlike penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled "dead"
 - a. The ball hits the ground
 - b. The ball carrier's flag is pulled
 - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
 - e. Anything other than the ball carrier's hand, foot, or controlled ball touches the ground.
 - f. The receiver or runner is touched while in possession of one or no flags
 - g. The 7 seconds pass clock expires
 - h. Inadvertent whistle

- i. A dropped/muffed/poor snap is placed where it hits the ground. If it is in the end zone, then a safety will be awarded to the defense.
8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
 - c. In the spirit of play a breakaway or continuation of, a touchdown, extra point/s, or first down can be awarded.
9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged, and the proper ruling will be enforced.

Note: there are no live fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball is determined to hit the ground after possession was lost. The ball cannot be fumbled forward, only from the spot or backward.

XI. RUNNING

1. The ball is spotted where the ball was when the flag was pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the back field but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
3. Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. the offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. "Center Sneak" play – the ball must completely leave the center's hand on the snap, in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
 - b. lateral/backward passes are permitted behind the line of scrimmage (parallel to or away from the opponents' goal line).
 - c. A player may not beyond the line of scrimmage, and then come back behind the line of scrimmage to receive a handoff or pitch.
4. "No-Run-Zones," located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield 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 squad approaches only TWO 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).
5. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pulled is considered flag guarding.

8. Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
9. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed that line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
12. Flag Obstruction- All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on player's hips and free of obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
13. A ten-yard penalty and a loss of down will be issued for a flag guarding penalty.

XII. PASSING

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage. Unless there has been a pitch, handoff, or backwards pass, now making it possible to receive a forward pass behind the line of scrimmage.
2. There can be only one forward pass during a play.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the seven minutes, play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second click, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
 - b. When the quarterback transfers possession of the ball the 7 second rule is no longer in effect.

XIII. RECEIVING

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception. If the ball is out of bounds when possession happens, the foot/feet inbounds determines the yardage.
 - a. If a strip happens in the end zone, a touchdown or extra point/s is awarded.
 - b. If a player jumps to catch a pass, and after having the ball in their hands, has the ball stripped before their feet touch the ground, possession is awarded where the player would have landed. If this happens in the endzone a touchdown or extra point/s is awarded.
 - c. If a player jumps for a pass, and after having the ball in their hands is pushed out of bounds, possession is awarded where the player would have landed. If this happens in the endzone a touchdown or extra point/s is awarded.
 - d. If a player is bobbling the ball, has it knocked

4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
 - a. If an interception takes place in the endzone, and the player is downed in the end zone, the ball will be placed on the 5-yard line.
 - b. If an interception happens in the field of play and the player is the downed in the end zone, it is a safety.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not have to start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.

XIV. RUSHING THE PASSER

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7-yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a Rush Line 7-yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7-yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass - Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – Offside (5 yards LOS and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – Illegal Rush (5 yards LOS and first down).
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, 7 second clock effect.

- ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before they play, however, if they do send a rusher, the rusher must verify with the official that they are in the correct position.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as defender with no offside penalty enforced.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass: however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. 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. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
 - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

XV. FLAG PULLING

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but **CANNOT** tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags. Defenders may not run through other offensive players, either moving or stopped, in an attempt to get a flag.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier’s possession at any time.
4. If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down when an opposing player delivers a one hand touch below the chin
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender’s access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with a jersey.

XVI. FORMATIONS

1. Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to 4 players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage.

2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
3. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/ her hands.
 - a. 5/6-year-old division can snap the ball sideways.

XVII. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will 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!**
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse an opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship, as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
 - c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.

XVIII. PENALTIES

i. General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgment calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. Spot Fouls

Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic First Down
Holding	+ 5 yards and Automatic First Down
Stripping	+ 10 yards and Automatic First Down

Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+ 10 yards and Automatic First Down
Screening, Blocking, or Running w/ the Ball Carrier	- 5 yards & loss of down
Charging	- 10 yards & loss of down
Flag Guarding	- 10 yards & loss of down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	- 10 yards & loss of down

iii. Defensive Penalties

Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Illegal Rush	+5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+10 yards from line of scrimmage & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	SPOT FOUL, Automatic First Down
Holding	SPOT FOUL, + 5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	SPOT FOUL, + 10 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, + 10 yards & Automatic First Down

iv. Offensive Penalties

Offside/ False Start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion (more than 1 person moving)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of Game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage & Loss of Down
Screening, Blocking, or Running w/ Ball Carrier	SPOT FOUL, - 5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	SPOT FOUL, - 10 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL, - 10 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL, - 10 yards & Loss of Down

Any rules that are not covered in this rule book shall revert to the discretion of the official in charge of the game.