

**Holmen Park and Recreation Department**  
**Youth Flag Football**  
**Program Rules and Format**  
**2013**

I. Fields, Players, and Equipment

A. The Field

1. Size: 60 yards (goal to goal) x 40 yards wide, 10-yard end zones.

B. The Players:

1. Players: **8 players on the field at a time**. If the opposing team has fewer players, members must rotate players to sit out plays to make the sides equal.
  - a. Players will be divided into two groups prior to the start of the game.
  - b. "1's" will play 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> quarters at skill positions & "2's" will play 2<sup>nd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> quarters at skill positions.
  - c. Game play will consist of 3 stationary linemen (not eligible to receive the football), 1 QB, 4 RB/WR/ TE
  - d. Opportunities to touch the football should be spread out to all players each game.
2. Fair playing time, substitutions, and touches of the ball are the responsibility of the coach and should be fair to all.
3. Any number of substitutes may enter the game for either team when the ball is dead.
  - a. Subs must stay within their same position group for the entire game NO EXCEPTIONS.
4. Players must be registered in the program and may not participate if they are older than the specified age/grade group.

C. The Equipment:

1. The ball shall be a pee wee size ball.
2. All participants must wear 2 flags. Wear belts provided. Flags must be worn on the sides. Shirts must be tucked in in order for other players to grab them. **Officials may whistle a ball carrier down immediately for deliberately placing flags in a non-legal position.**
3. All players must: Wear tennis shoes, soccer or solid rubber molded cleats (plastic cleats). Jerseys or pinnies must be all the same color. Remove all types of jewelry during play. The official or supervisor shall not allow dangerous or confusing equipment. This will include: 1) projecting metal or other hard substances, 2) finger rings, or 3) pads normally associated with tackle football. Officials and supervisors have the final decisions concerning the allow-ability of questionable protective equipment.

II. The Game:

A. Timing

1. The game consists of four quarters, **each 12 minutes in length**. Half time shall be no more than 5 minutes in length. Each team is allowed **two time outs per half**. Each time out will be one minute in length.
2. **Time runs continuous for each half except for legal time outs during the last one minute of both halves when the clock will stop on all dead ball situations**. The clock will continue to run in the first 23 minutes of each half, unless a timeout has been called or if the official stops the clock (injury, etc.). Approximately one minute before the end of each half, the official shall call time and notify the coaches of the time remaining.
3. **Dead Ball Situations:** Dead ball will occur only with less than 1 minute of each half. The clock will restart as soon as the ball is hiked.
  - a) Ball travels or is carried out of bounds
  - b) After an incomplete pass
  - c) After a score
  - d) Change of possession
  - e) After a penalty has been called
  - f) During a time out
4. If time for any period expires during a down, play shall continue until the end of the down.
5. The attempt for extra point shall be allowed should time expire. During the last one minute of the halves the clock will not run during the attempt for extra point.
6. **Delay of Game: 30 seconds is allowed between plays. Any more time will result in a five-yard penalty and same down. (Officials should use their best judgment on this call and call only when it affects the outcome of the game and is deemed "intentional stalling".)**

B. Scoring

1. **A touchdown shall count as six points** (a touchdown will be scored if the ball breaks the plane of the goal line); a try for a point(s) after is awarded after a touchdown is scored. **Defensive team cannot score on an extra point.** A team is given one scrimmage play from: (2 options)
  - a) **Five-yard line for 1-point conversion (run or pass).**
  - b) **Ten-yard line for a 2-point conversion (run or pass).**
2. **A safety shall count as two points.**
  - a) A safety is scored when the ball is legally in possession of a player becomes dead behind their own goal line, provided the impetus which sent the ball across was given by a member of their own team. Points are awarded to the opposing team and the team scored upon puts the ball in play with a place kick or punt from their 10-yard line.
  - b) If a team commits a foul in the end zone where the spot of enforcement is designated as the spot of the foul, it will be declared a safety. **Exception - When a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage kick between their five-yard line and their goal line and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.** (WIAA Rule).

C. Tie Game

1. **Tie Games: There will be no overtime period, games will end in a TIE.**

### III. Rule 3: Team Play

#### A. The Kick Off

1. **KICK-OFF: A coin toss will determine which team will have their choice of kicking or receiving to begin the game. A kicking team will then receive in the second half and vise-versa.**
2. The kick off shall be a place kick and shall be taken at the beginning of each half and after a touchdown. After a safety, the offended team has choice of place kick or punt.
3. The **kick off** shall be taken at the kicker's **25-yard line for grades 1/2**. All players on the receiving team must be at least 10 yards from the line the ball is kicked from. All players on the kicking team must be behind the ball.
4. If a member of the receiving team controls the kicked ball, they may run, hand off, or lateral (backwards) the ball until the ball carrier's flag is pulled or the ball is fumbled.
5. If the ball goes out of bounds before the ball is touched, the receiving team **may take the ball at the spot it goes out of bounds or at the 30-yard line/mid field (whatever is most advantageous to the receiving team).**
6. **On-side kicks are ILLEGAL.** On the kick-off the ball will not be played "live". Once the ball has been put into play, the receiving team can only advance it.
7. **On a touch or muff (First touch), the ball will not be called dead, the receiving team will be allowed to pick it up and run with the ball. A fumble after possession has been established will be whistled dead at that spot.**
8. If the kickoff enters the end zone, a player may run the ball out of the end zone or down it and have the ball put in play at receiving teams own 20-yard line (touchback).
9. Kickoff or punt: If the kicking team touches the ball after kickoff or punt, it's down. The receiving team has the opportunity to field the ball if it is rolling or stopped but hasn't been touched.
10. A kick off dropped / touched in the end zone by the receiving team, will be called dead and brought out to the 20 yard line.

#### B. Touchback

1. A touchback occurs when the ball goes out of bounds behind a goal line or when the ball becomes dead in possession of a player behind his own goal line if the attacking team is responsible for the ball being behind that goal line. Ball is put in play at the 20-yard line.
2. Interceptions: A downed interception in the end zone comes out to the 20-yard line or interception may be advanced out of the end zone.

#### C. Regular Play

1. **FIRST DOWNS:** There will be two fixed points for where teams can get a "First Down", each placed at the 20 yard line splitting the fields into thirds. Regardless of where the ball is spotted for your first play, you will have 4 downs to reach the next first down marker or end zone.
2. "Bean Bag" markers will be utilized to mark the line of scrimmage and 1 yard encroachment zone. (Marked by an official).

#### D. The Line of Scrimmage & Offense

1. Advancing the Ball: To advance the ball after the snap, the team may run with it or pass it.
2. The offense must hike the ball into play within 30 seconds of the time the official places the ball on the line of scrimmage.
3. **All players of the offensive team must remain stationary for one second** before the ball is snapped.
4. The person hiking the ball must:
  - a) **Hike under the legs** to a teammate behind the line of scrimmage. (Teaches better skills than sideways snaps)
5. **The offense and defense cannot enter or break the plane of the neutral zone (the area 3-ft in front of the ball) until the ball is hiked. An infraction of this rule is offsides. Any player breaking or lining-up in the neutral zone will be flagged with an immediate whistle (play is called dead for ANY offsides infraction). This penalty cannot be declined. \*Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot "encroachment"– down remains the same.**
6. At least five offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage.
7. Defense Must line up person-to-person, including lineman for all snaps of the ball.
8. The ball carrier must return the ball to the closest official after the play is blown dead. Repeated failure to do so may result in a delay of game penalty.

#### E. Fumbles

1. **Fumbles: If a ball carrier drops the ball, it is dead at that spot (providing the ball hits the ground) and his team keeps possession and the team advances to the next down.**
2. **Fumble Play – Over Rule: All fumbles (when ball comes in contact with field) are considered dead ...WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SITUATIONS WHICH OCCUR BETWEEN CENTER / QUARTER-BACK EXCHANGES – ball will be dead and the DOWN will be played over. "Just line-up and re-snap the ball"**
3. **Exception: On a punt.** If on the hike, the ball touches the ground, **the punter drops the ball he can pick it up and punt it.**

#### F. Running Plays

1. **The quarterback cannot run with the ball. He must pass the ball forward or hand it off behind the line of scrimmage. He has "three Mississippi's" to determine what to do with the ball. The quarterback may take two steps away from the line of scrimmage before saying HUT loudly. No rolling out. Play is over when the Quarterback advances past the line of scrimmage.**
2. The ball carrier may run in any direction, hand off, or lateral anywhere on the field. All handoffs or laterals must be to the rear of the passer beyond the line of scrimmage. If dropped, **the ball is dead at that spot (fumble).**
3. **Stiff-arms or covering the flags in any manner: are illegal (considered guarding the flag). Down at the spot of the infraction.**
4. **No jumping, leaping, or hurdling to gain forward progress,** especially at goal line and first down situations. **Officials will not call jumping over a player lying on the ground, quarterbacks jumping to get the ball over defenders and related situations.**
5. **Spinning: ONE SPIN WILL BE ALLOWED** – it must be 360 degrees or less and only one spin per play will be allowed. Ball carrier will be whistled down at the start of a second spin.
6. **In running, the ball carrier must attempt to avoid "tacklers". Deliberate charging into a defensive player, with or without head down, will result in a penalty of CHARGING (10 YARDS). "Brushing" or other unavoidable contact is not willful charging.**

RULE  
CHANGE  
REFS  
COUNT

#### G. Passing Plays

1. **Eligible Positions: Only Skill Position Players are eligible to receive the ball.** All offensive linemen must remain at the line of scrimmage on passing plays. Defensive linemen are not allowed to drop into pass coverage. **NO double passes will be allowed.** A player must have one-foot in-bounds for a catch to count.
2. **Defensive Rushing Rule:** Defensive players are required to wait 3 seconds before crossing the line of scrimmage (into backfield area) or until the ball has been handed-off.
  - a) The **LINE JUDGE REF** must say “1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, 3 Mississippi” GO!
  - b) **Fake hand-offs:** refs will not penalize the defensive team when the offensive team fakes a hand-off and the defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before “3 Mississippi”.
  - c) **Penalty: 5 yards encroachment on the defense – down remains the same.)**
3. **One foot down** inside the field of play constitutes a legal pass catch.
4. If a pass goes out of bounds or is not caught, the ball is dead and returns to the previous line of scrimmage.
5. If a **simultaneous catch takes place, the ball is dead and belongs to the offensive team.**
6. Lateral (backward) passes (overhand or underhand) may be made anywhere on the field and there is no limit to the number that may be attempted in a play or down.
7. No player may hand the ball off forward of their position on the field to another teammate unless both players are behind the line of scrimmage and before the ball goes forward of the line of scrimmage. **5 yards and loss of down (spot call)**
8. A ball which falls from the passer's hand shall be judged accordingly to the following:
  - a) If there is any forward motion by the arm, the ball is ruled an incomplete forward pass and returned to the line of scrimmage.
  - b) If there is not forward motion, the ball is ruled a fumble and dead at the spot the ball touches the ground.
9. Intentional grounding will not be called in 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade games.
10. A “double pass” is **illegal** (loss of down). (A double pass means two **forward** passes.)
11. Incomplete forward passes behind the goal line will not be considered touchbacks.
12. **Illegal Forward Pass: A pass is illegal if the passer is beyond his scrimmage line, if it is the second forward pass in the same play or if it is an intentionally grounded pass. Penalty is loss of 5 yards from spot of foul and loss of a down.**

#### H. Pass Interference

1. **No contact with the receiver is allowed beyond the first five yards from the line of scrimmage,** unless it is a simultaneous effort by both players to get the ball. **Only one bump within the first 5 yards** is allowed. **PENALTY: Point of Infraction / Automatic first down. OFFICIALS note:** "defensive holding" if ball is not in the air.
2. **Defensive Pass Interference:** Defensive players may not block or push the receiver in any way to prevent him from catching a pass. If personal contact is made, it must be made in an honest effort to intercept the pass. **Penalty for defensive pass interference is placing the ball where the violation occurred and automatic first down.** Defensive interference in the end zone will result in the ball being placed at the 1-yard line, automatic first down. **Penalty for offensive interference results in a ten-yard penalty and a loss of down.**
3. Intentionally pulling of an opponent's flag before they have possession of the ball will be deemed **Defensive pass interference.**

#### I. The Punt

1. **An announcement of punts on fourth down is necessary.** No rushing is permitted on punts (no motion until after punt). In cases of announced punts, **both teams must have at least five players on the line of scrimmage** (no maximum). **No movement is allowed by the offensive team until the ball is punted,** neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted.
2. A blocked quick kick belongs to the team blocking the kick at the spot where the ball first touches the ground following the blocked kick.
3. Punts that go out of bounds shall be brought in bounds and centered on the field at the point it crosses the sideline.
4. The punted ball can be caught on the fly or off the bounce and advanced by running, hand off, or lateral.
5. If the punt enters the end zone, a player may run the ball out of the end zone or put the ball in play at the 20-yard line. If a punt on the fly hits in the end zone and goes through the end zone, the ball is dead and is placed on the 20-yard line. If the ball goes out of bounds it is put in play in the middle of the field adjacent to the spot it goes out.
6. If the kicking team touches the ball after kickoff or punt, it's down. The receiving team has the opportunity to field the ball if it's rolling or stopped **but hasn't been touched.**
7. A punted ball that is merely touched or muffed **WILL BE ALLOWED TO BE PLAYED "LIVE"**. A fumble after possession has been established will be blown dead at the spot.
8. If on the hike, the ball touches the ground, **(the punter drops the ball) he can pick it up and punt it. Ball must be punted IMMEDIATELY (5 second count by officials).**
9. Fair Catch
  - a) A player on the receiving team within the boundary and in a position to touch any punt that is beyond the neutral zone shall be given an unmolested opportunity to catch the ball. Any unnecessary contact by a member of the punting team will result in a 10-yard penalty.
  - b) Dead where caught – When a player makes a fair catch, the ball becomes dead where caught and belongs to the receiving team at the spot where the player first touched it.
  - c) No advance – After a valid signal, no receiver may advance the ball.
  - d) A fair catch is signaled by fully extending one arm over the head and wave.
  - e) If a punted ball hits punt returner & bounces into hands off opponents, it will be ruled a muff & marked dead where muffed.

#### J. "Tackling" (legally pulled flags should be held high in the air.)

1. A ball carrier is considered tackled when an opponent pulls a flag from their belt. A tackler may not put his arm around or in front of the runner or hold the runner in any manner. Only the flags may be grabbed. Stopping the ball carrier in any other manner is to be considered holding, tackling or unnecessary roughness and **WILL BE ENFORCED! The penalty is 10 yards from the point of infraction and automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down if it is a tackle,** unless the officials judge the ball carrier would have scored if there had been no tackle.
2. Stiff-arming or covering the flags in any manner is illegal (considered guarding the flag). Down at the spot of the infraction.

3. "Pushing" along the sideline is NOT a legal tackle (at any time). **PENALTY: Illegal Tackle**
4. **If a player makes contact with the ground (knee), he will be considered down at point of contact.** This is not a dead ball situation. In goal line situations, the officials will determine if part of the ball had crossed the goal line before a legal stop was made. Play will be called dead at the point of a slip or fall of a ball carrier (no pushing).
5. **Play will be called dead when a ball carrier's flag falls; whether anyone has pulled the flag or not. The ball will be placed where the flag drops.**
6. If a receiver's flag unintentionally falls off before he catches a pass, it will be dead at the point where he makes the reception.
7. Intentionally pulling of an opponent's flag before they have possession of the ball will be deemed **Defensive pass interference**.
8. Intentionally throwing flag is delay of game.
9. **A participant may not punch, strike, strip or attempt to steal the ball while a player is in possession.**

#### K. Blocking & Stance

1. Blocking: Any player blocking must **keep their hands/arms in the frame of their body**, not hold, trip, or block players in the back. **Holding WILL BE PENALIZED 5 YARDS.** Officials may increase the penalty to unnecessary roughness (15 yards, and possibly ejection).
2. **No player shall leave his feet while blocking. Blocking below the waist, cross body, and crab blocking are illegal and will result in a 15-yard penalty!**
3. Unnecessary Roughness – The official shall call unnecessary roughness when any player, whether offense or defense, uses rough tactics considered by the official unnecessary in the accomplishment of their legitimate purpose. **15-yard penalty**
4. **Illegal Use of Hands on Offense: Offensive players may not use their hands to hold, grasp, hit, or slap defensive players. Penalty: 5 yards and same down, can be increased to unnecessary roughness (severity).**
5. **Clipping is: Penalty: 10 yards and same down.**
  - a) **Charging or falling into the back of the legs of an opponent who is not the ball carrier.**
  - b) **Pushing by use of the hands or arms on an opponent's back.**
  - c) **Such cases shall not be ruled clipping unless the official sees the initial contact. When in doubt or the opponent turns his back, or the block is from the side, it is not clipping if the opponent was able to see the blocker.**

#### L. Defense (Use of the hands)

1. While on defense, **holding an opponent will be penalized 5 yards.** EXCEPTION: Use of the hands or arms to ward off an opponent is an actual attempt to get at the runner or the ball.
2. **Illegal Use of Hands By Defense: Defensive players may not use their hands on the heads of the opponents. They are permitted to push the offensive man out of the way by placing the hands (must use their open palms only) of his shoulders or trunk. They may not hold the offensive man. Penalty: 5 yards and same down.**
3. There will be **NO striking with the fist, locked hands or elbows; kicking, kneeling or meeting with knee; or striking with the heel, backside of the hand on the head, face or neck of an opponent.** PENALTY 15 yards. Disqualified if flagrant.
4. **No defensive player may touch the offensive center in any manner until he has passed the ball and moved both feet from his original position and becomes a blocker.** PENALTY: 5 yards and disqualified if flagrant.

#### M. Conduct & Roughness

1. **Unsportsmanlike Conduct:** Poor behavior and/or Language. \*Penalty: Offense – 15 yards/same down Defense – 15 yards/Automatic 1st down 2nd offense: Kicked out of the game!
2. **Unnecessary Roughness:** Any player's tactics that are unnecessarily rough and any tactics that are endangering the safety of the participants should be penalized. This includes holding or tackling the ball carrier before tagging, stiff-arming by the runner, putting head down for butting purposes and unnecessary roughness in forcing a runner out of bounds. Clipping and roughing the passer would be included also. **Penalty is 15 yards and same down for offense. Defense: 15 yards and automatic first down.** 2nd Offense: Kicked out of the game!

#### IV. Penalties

##### A. Penalty enforcement:

1. A penalty may be accepted or rejected by the coach of the team against whom the foul was committed. If the coach refuses penalty, the ball remains at the succeeding spot and play just completed counts as a down.
2. When enforcing penalty, the referee starts from the spot where the foul was committed, the previous spot or the succeeding spot, depending on the type of foul committed. He then marks off a specified distance, which is determined by the type of foul, toward the offending teams goal line. The referee's natural walking step is equal to 1 yard.
3. Violations of regulations are penalized by moving the ball a specified distance toward the goal of the team committing the foul. The distance, which the ball is moved, varies according to the violations.

##### B. Rules Not Specified

1. Neither a player, nor a non-player may interfere with the play by any act, which is not specifically provided for in these rules. PENALTY: The referee enforces any penalty he considers justified.
2. Any other violations and penalties will be made at the discretion of the officials.
3. All official's decisions are final and there will be no protests.

**In a situation that an official might have a bad judgment call, you as a coach may ask him/her a question about what he/she saw. That is it! If you as a coach keeping (riding the official) then the official has the right to penalize your team for 15 yards for unsportsmanlike conduct. If you still keep up this inappropriate behavior, the official will stop the game, and you will be asked to leave the field. Both coaches from opposing team may confront the official if agree that the call is incorrect. Please handle this appropriately.**

**Sportsmanship and the ability to accept the official's decisions are important to the success of the program.**

**\*\* Remember coaches; this program is here for the kids. You are expected to act as role models. These officials are teenagers and they will learn from their mistakes. \*\*\*REMEMBER SPORTSMANSHIP AND GOOD CONDUCT IS REQUIRED AT ALL TIMES!!\*\*\*(ESPECIALLY FOR COACHES!!)**

# Youth Flag Football Penalties

## Offense or Defense:

Flag Guarding (by any means)	Down at point of infraction
Knee touch the ground	Down at point of infraction
Jumping, Diving to Gain forward Progress	Down at point of infraction (spot where feet left the ground, not position of the ball)
Spinning (more than one)	Down at point of infraction
Offsides (Blow whistle immediately)	5 yards and same down
Illegal Procedure (offense)	5 yards and same down
Delay of game	5 yards and same down
Illegal Pass (2 forward, over line)	5 yards and loss of down
Illegal use of hands	5 yards and loss of down
Holding	5 yards and same down
Offensive Pass Interference	10 yards and loss of down
Offensive Charging with the ball	10 yards, from point of infraction
Tackling	10 yards from point of infraction and automatic 1st down (possible ejection)
Clipping	10 yards Same Down
Defensive Pass Interference	Point of infraction and automatic 1st down
Major Blocking Foul, (Below waist, leaving feet, cross –body, crab block, dropping shoulder, winging, tripping)	15 yards Same Down (possible ejection)
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	15 yards and same down (possible ejection)
Unnecessary Roughness	15 yards and same down (possible ejection)

## Inadvertent Referee Whistle

Play is down at the spot where the whistle was blown; offensive team has the option of taking the result of the play or replaying the down from the original line of scrimmage.