



INTRODUCTION TO FLAG FOOTBALL

What is Flag Football?

Flag is a modified version of tackle football and provides participants with the opportunity to develop many of the same skills, tactics and strategies without significant physical contact.

Why play Flag Football?

- Fun!
- Fast!
- Safe!
- Social!
- Co-Educational!
- Enjoyable!
- Inexpensive!
- Exciting!
- Requires skill, agility and finesse!
- Excellent form of physical activity!
- Promotes “sport for life” opportunities!
- Develops life skills through sport; teaches cooperation, self-discipline!
- Sportsmanlike conduct builds self-confidence and improves self-image!

Who plays Flag Football?

Anyone can play Flag Football! Men, women and children of all ages play flag. People can play recreationally in parks, as part of school intramural programs and on a more competitive level within organized leagues. Flag Football is a sport easily adapted for people with disabilities.

How do you play Flag Football?

Objective of the Game

- Two teams of five players each compete against each other.
- To outscore your opponents by scoring touchdowns and converts.
- One team, “the offense”, has possession of the ball and attempts to move the ball across their opponent’s goal line.
- They do so by passing and running the ball towards their opponent’s goal line.
- The opposition, the “defense” attempts to stop them from accomplishing the task.
- Players attempt to stop the ball carrier by grabbing and removing one of the flags worn on each player’s hips; this is referred to as “flagging” or non-contact tackling.

What equipment is required?

Flag Football requires very little equipment other than comfortable clothes and a good pair of sports shoes for participants, and of course, a football. Below is a list of equipment that will assist you in conducting your Flag Football program.



- Pylons or plastic disks, which are used for field boundary and end zone markers.
- Pinnies or jerseys in order to identify team.
- Proper size footballs appropriate to the age of the participants.
- Flags and flag belts.
- Bean bags for the officials, which are used to mark line of scrimmage and 7 yard rush zone.

POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

Quarterback (QB)

- The Quarterback is the captain on offense.
- The QB calls the offensive plays and is the leader.
- The QB always stands behind the Center (C) and receives the football in what is called a “snap”.
- The QB has the option to either hand off the football or pass the football to a teammate on offense.

Center(C)

- The Center snaps the football to the QB. A snap is when the Center tosses the football between his/her legs to the QB.
- After the snap, the Center can run out for a pass.

Wide Receiver (WR)

- The Wide Receiver is responsible for catching passes from the QB and running with the ball.
- The WR also can take a handoff.
- There are up to three WR's on offense.

Running Back (RB)

- The Running Back stands behind the QB or next to the QB and is responsible for receiving handoffs from the QB and running with the ball.
- RB's also catch passes from the QB.

Defensive Backs (DB)

- All defensive positions in Flag Football are called Defensive Backs.
- The DB is responsible for stopping the players on offense and trying to intercept or gain possession of the football.
- The DB tries to pull the flag of the player with the football.

General Guidelines

Complete rules are outlined in the Canadian Flag Football Rule Book for sale at Football Canada in February, 2009.



Attire

- Cleats are allowed, but must be rubber. Inspections must be made prior to the game. It is recommended that all Players wear a protective mouthpiece as well as soft peaked hats. Shorts with no pockets are also recommended.

Field Dimensions and Markings

- Length: 60 (or 80) yards.
- Width: 25 (or 30) yards.
- End Zones: Maximum 10 yards deep, minimum 7 yards deep.
- No-running zones: Must be marked 5 yards from each end zone.

Possession

- A coin toss determines first possession. Loser of the coin toss has choice of end zone to defend.
- The team that loses the coin toss gets possession at the beginning of the second half starting at its own 5-yard line.
- There are no kickoffs. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line. An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the other requirements regarding three plays to make either a first down or score.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- Teams change sides at half time.

Number of Players

- Teams consist of 6 Players (5 on the field at a time).
- Teams may play with a minimum of four (4) Players (due to injuries).
- If less than 4 Players are available, the game is cancelled.

Timing/Overtime

- Game length is 20-50 minutes running time (two halves, 10-25 minutes each).
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation time, teams move directly into overtime. A coin toss determines first possession of overtime. The team that wins the coin toss starts with the ball on its own 5-yard line. Play continues as in regulation until one team scores. There will be no timeouts granted during the overtime period.
- Each time the ball is spotted the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- Each team has 2 x 60-second timeouts per half. These cannot be carried over to the second half or overtime.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- The teams will be warned when there are two minutes left to play in the second half.
- There will be a halftime period of 2 minutes between the first and second half.



Scoring

- **Touchdown:** 6 points
- **Extra point:** 1 point (played from 5-yard line)
- **Extra point:** 2 points (played from 12-yard line)
- **Safety:** 2 points

Note: An interception return to opponent's end zone on any extra-point play by the defense will result in the defense scoring 2 points plus gaining possession for the next series at its own 5-yard line.

Running

- To start the play, the ball must be snapped between the legs of the Center.
- The Center is the Player who gives the ball to the Quarterback via a snap. The Center cannot take a direct handoff back from the Quarterback (no Center sneak play).
- The Quarterback is the Player who receives the ball directly from the Center.
- The Quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage.
- An offence may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward or lateral handoffs are allowed during a down.
- Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed and are considered running plays. Downfield tosses are not permitted. Once a player has possession of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, any loss of possession will be blown dead by the official.
- "No-running zones" are located 5 yards from each end zone. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone, the offense cannot run. The offense cannot use a running play to cross the line of scrimmage.
- The Player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- All Defensive Players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off or tossed, or there is a play-action fake or fake handoff.
- Spinning is allowed, but Players cannot leave their feet to avoid a Defensive Player (no diving).
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is.
- It is up to the ball carrier to avoid contact with the defender. Good defensive positioning should be rewarded by the officials.

Receiving

- All Players are eligible to receive passes (including the Quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- As in the NFL, only one Player may be in motion, but not in motion towards the opponent's end zone at the snap.
- A Player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception. (They cannot return on to the playing field from an out of bounds position.)

Passing

- Only Players starting 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage can rush the passer.



- The Quarterback has seven seconds to throw the ball.
- If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead, results in a loss of down and the ball is spotted at the previous line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off or tossed, or there is a play-action fake or fake handoff, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball.
- The defense can return interceptions.
- On interceptions that occur and remain in the end zone, the ball will become dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team at its 5-yard line. Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leave the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead. However, should the ball carrier return to the end zone and be flagged, or the ball be ruled dead the result would be a safety for the other team.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

Dead Balls

- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - Official blows the whistle.
 - Ball carrier’s flag is pulled or becomes illegal.
 - Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - Touchdown or safety is scored.
 - When any part of the ball carrier’s body, other than a hand or foot, touches the ground.
- If the ball carrier’s flag falls off, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off.
- Players are ineligible to catch a pass if their flag has fallen off.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier’s feet were when the fumble was made. I.e. a bad snap will be blown dead and the ball will be spotted at the Center’s feet. There is no stripping of the ball.

Rushing the Quarterback

- 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. Once the ball is handed off or tossed, or there is a play-action fake or fake handoff, the 7-yard rule no longer is in effect and all Defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. A special marker, or the Referee, will designate 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.

Sportsmanship/Roughing

- If the referee witnesses any acts of flagrant contact, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the Player will be ejected from the tournament. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**



- Trash talking is illegal. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing Players, teams, or spectators.) Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If trash talking occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the Player or Players will be ejected from the game.

Penalties

- All penalties are **5 yards (except for Pass Interference - 15 yards.)** The down will be repeated, and will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, unless otherwise noted.
- All penalties can be declined.
- Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
- Only the team captain may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

Defensive Penalties

- **Offside** — 5 yards and automatic first down.
- **Pass Interference** — 15 yards and automatic first down. (NEW!)
- **Illegal contact** (holding, blocking, etc.) — 5 yards and automatic first down.
- **Illegal flag pull** (before Receiver has ball) — 5 yards and automatic first down.
- **Illegal rushing** (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker) — 5 yards and automatic first down.
- **Substitution fouls** (Player enters field after ball is blown ready for play, i.e. to deceive opponents, or 6 Players on the field).
- **Disconcerting signals** (signals to distract opponent or simulate offensive signals prior to snap).
- Interference with opponent or ball at the snap.

Offensive Penalties

- Delay of Game.
- Substitution Fouls.
- **Illegal motion** (more than one person moving, etc.) — 5 yards and loss of down.
- False Start.
- Illegal Snap.
- Offensive Holding.
- Illegal shift or failure to pause for one second.
- **Player out of bounds** (if Player goes out of bounds, Player cannot return to the field and catch ball).
- **Illegal forward pass** (pass received behind line of scrimmage) — 5 yards and loss of down.
- **Offensive pass interference** (illegal pick play, pushing off/away Defender) — 5 yards and loss of down.
- **Flag guarding** — 5 yards from the point of foul (NEW) and loss of down.