



2023 NFL Flag Football Rules

Age Divisions

<u>Division</u>	<u>League Age by September 30th</u>
6 & 7	6 Years Old
	7 Years Old
8 & 9	8 Years Old
	9 Years Old
10 - 12	10 Years Old
	11 Years Old
	12 Years Old

Equipment Regulations

- A. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged but not required. No cleats/shoes with metal spikes are allowed.
- B. Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not permitted.
- C. Cast and hard braces will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.
- D. Players must remove watches, earrings, and all jewelry that officials deem unsafe.
- E. Official NFL Flag jerseys must be worn at all times during game.
- F. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line.
- G. A readily visible colored mouthpiece must be worn and cannot be chewed off around the ends.
- H. Nothing may be worn that, in the opinion of the officials, restricts the ability to see a player's eyes. The league provides each player with a flag belt.
- I. Ages **6-9** Blue Pee Wee Ball | Ages **10+** Brown Junior Ball

Inclement Weather

- A. Inclement Weather Prior to Game or Practice - When possible, cancellations will be made on Botetourt County's Cancellation Line (540-992-0012) for events hosted at Botetourt County facilities.
- B. In the event adverse weather conditions develop while an activity is in progress and a representative from Botetourt County Parks & Recreation is not present, it is the responsibility of the club representative, coach, teacher, or the scheduled official to determine whether or not conditions that exist will endanger the safety of the participants and whether or not the activity will have a serious adverse effect on field conditions. If a team fails to cancel field use during inclement weather and such use causes extensive field damage, the team will be responsible for any repair costs.
- C. Lightning Policy - If thunder is heard, be aware and keep a look out for lightning. If thunder lightning is seen, all players and spectators shall be moved to a sheltered area or to their cars. Wait at least **30** minutes from the last streak of lightning to resume play or practice.
- D. Extreme Heat Policy
 - i. Actual Temperature 100* or above - All games and practices cancelled.
 - Heat Index of 100* or above - All games cancelled

The Basic Game

- A. At the start of each game, coaches from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- B. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
- C. The game is played 5 v 5
- D. Teams must start a game with a minimum of four players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.
 - a. A team with less than 4 players available after a 10 minute grace period from the scheduled start time will forfeit the game**
 - b. Teams may not borrow players from other teams**
 - i. After a forfeit occurs, teams may exchange players and play an exhibition game where the score will not be recorded.**
- E. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
- F. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- G. If the offense team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.

- H. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- I. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

Field

- A. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones and a midfield line to gain line. No-Run Zones precede each line to gain by 5 yards. Field sizes may vary based on field availability for each league.
- B. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones, teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays.
 - a. Handoffs are still permitted in the No-Run Zone provided that the player receiving the handoff proceeds to attempt a legal forward pass.
- C. Stepping on a boundary line is considered stepping out of bounds.
- D. Each offensive squad approaches **only TWO No-Run zones** in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to the gain the first down, and on zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a touchdown).

Game Regulations

- A. Pregame Information
 - 1. No game is to start prior to the scheduled game time unless everyone is in agreement.
 - 2. Only three (3) coaches are allowed on the sidelines during a game.
 - 3. The home team is responsible for providing a game ball.
- B. Coaches
 - 1. Coaches are expected to adhere to the philosophy, guidelines, and codes of conduct of Botetourt County Parks and Recreation. Failure to abide by these policies will result in the removal of coaching responsibilities.
 - 2. One offensive coach is allowed on the field for all age groups during the game to give verbal instruction and assist with lining up of players prior to the snap.
 - 3. One defensive coach is allowed on the field for the 6-7 age group during the game to give verbal instruction and assist with lining up of players prior to the snap.
 - a. In the 8-9 and 10-12 leagues, a defensive coach may step onto the field between snaps to provide instruction but should leave the field during live play.
 - 4. All coaches must retreat out of the area of play prior to the snap of the ball.
- C. Timing and Game Clock
 - 1. Total game length is 48 minutes, divided into two (2) 24-minute halves.
 - 2. The on-field official shall keep the clock.
 - 3. Halftime is five (5) minutes long.

4. 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.
5. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half.
6. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
7. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field.
8. If a game completed one full half of play, the game will be considered final and not rescheduled if conditions warrant the second half to be suspended for weather or other factors.
9. If score is tied at the end of game, the game is considered final. **NO**

OVERTIME

D. Scoring

1. No score will be kept for 6-7 age group
2. In scored leagues, the home team should provide a volunteer to update the scoreboard throughout the game.
3. In scored leagues, the home team coach should report the score by email to recreation@botetourtva.gov by 10am the following day.
4. Touchdown: 6 points
5. Extra Point: 1 point (played from 5-yard line) or 2 points (played from the 12 yard line)
 - i. Extra point attempts from the 5-yard line are not considered to be inside of the No-Run Zone – run plays are allowed.
 - ii. 8-9, 10-12 leagues: Extra point attempts are returnable if intercepted. A successfully returned extra point scores only 1 or 2 points, it is a not a touchdown for the defense.
 - iii. 6-7 league: Extra point attempts are not returnable. If intercepted, the play is dead.
6. Safety: 2 points

E. All Play and Sit Rule

1. Coaches must play each player equal amounts of playing time.
2. All players present must play at least ½ of the game

F. Live Ball/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.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long 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.
5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. A play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - b. The ball carriers' flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball carriers' knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball carriers flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flags.
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle occurs.

NOTE: There are no fumble recoveries. The ball is spotted where the ball carriers' feet were at the time of the fumble.

7. 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.
8. 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. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of the doubt.

G. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the **runner's feet are when the flag is pulled**, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the **player's front foot**.
2. The quarterback can run the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
 - a. The quarterback is still subject to the 7 second clock when running the ball. The quarterback must cross the line of scrimmage with the ball prior to the 7 second clock expiring during a rushing attempt to avoid the play being blown dead.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to 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 hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
4. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind.

- a. Laterals and pitches include any pass overhand or underhand which travels sideways or backward.
 5. "No-Run Zones" are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of the midfield to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams must use a pass play when the ball is spotted inside the No-Run Zone.
 - a. Extra point attempts spotted at the 5 yard line (when a team elects to go for 1 point) are not considered to be inside the No-Run Zone. Teams may run the ball on a 5 yard extra point attempt.
 6. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
 - a. This applies even when the player who received the handoff intends to attempt a pass.
 8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
 9. 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.
 10. 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.
 11. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
 12. Offensive player must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
 - a. Penalties for Screening, Blocking, or Running with the ball carrier should only be called where the official determines the offensive player reasonably interfered with a defender's attempt to down the ball carrier
 13. Flag Obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
- H. Passing
1. **All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.**
 2. Shovel passes are allowed, but must meet the requirements of a legal forward pass (released from behind the line of scrimmage, travel forward, be received beyond the line of scrimmage)
 - a. Shovel passes are defined as an underhanded forward pass. Shovel passes are differentiated from pitches or laterals which are thrown backward or laterally and are not allowed.

3. The quarterback has a seven second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect
 - a. 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.

I. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in pre-snap 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.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.

6. **Interceptions are returnable.**

J. Rushing the Passer

1. Players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
 - a. There is no limit on the number of players who are allowed to rush the passer on the same play, provided each rusher abides by the 7 yard rule
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, of the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven 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 defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the QB.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, rest and then legally rush the QB.
 - 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 the quarterback
 - b. A penalty may be called if:

- i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
 - iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off.
 - c. Special Circumstances
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock is in 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 rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a 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 contacting 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 clear a 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, it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rushers 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 flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback's feet are when flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.
- K. Flag Pulling
- 1. A legal flag pull take 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.
 - 3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the carrier's possession at any time.
 - 4. If a player's flag falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
 - 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 the football jersey.

L. Formations

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

M. 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.
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 any 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 teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and positive.
 - c. Compliment all players, not just one child or team

N. Penalties

1. The referee will call 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
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 of 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 of the distance to the goal.

Defensive Penalties

Offside	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Illegal Rush	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	Spot Foul, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Holding	Spot Foul, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	Spot Foul, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	Spot Foul, +15 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+ 10 yards and automatic first down

Offensive Penalties

Offsides/False Start	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Delay of Game	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Screening, Blocking or Running w/ ball carrier	Spot Foul, -5 yards & Loss of Down

Charging (ball carrier running over a defender)	Spot Foul, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	Spot Foul, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	Spot Foul, -15 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and automatic first down