

FLAG FOOTBALL

RULES



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Tuckahoe Family YMCA
(804) 740-9622
www.tuckahoeymca.org

All Divisions

Fall 2016

Game Rules

THIS EVENT IS NON-CONTACT. BLOCKING AND TACKLING ARE NOT ALLOWED. ALL DISPUTES REGARDING INTERPRETATION OF THESE RULES ARE HANDLED BY THE FIELD OFFICIALS AND, WHEN NECESSARY, THE YMCA STAFF.

- A coin toss determines first possession. The team winning the coin toss will have the choice of offense/defense for the start of the first half. The team that loses the coin toss will have choice of end zone to defend. At the beginning of the second half, the teams will switch the end zones to defend and the team that did not start the first half on offense will begin the second half on offense.
- There are no kickoffs.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
- Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) additional 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.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line. After an interception, play shall commence at the spot where the prior play ended (unless a touchdown is scored, in which case the normal extra point rules apply).
- **Blocking** is when an offensive player is impeding the defender in any way, even if it is not intentional or is inadvertent. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. While the ball is still behind the line of scrimmage and either a handoff or 5 second count has occurred, offensive players may still move as long as they do not impede a defender's attempt to get to the ball carrier. There are NO offensive linemen allowed (A center is not an offensive lineman because he is an eligible receiver). No running with the ball carrier. We understand that the players will naturally follow the runner in excitement, but we urge coaches to emphasize to their teams that they must get out of the path of any defenders trying to catch the runner. Following the runner is legal as long as they do not interfere with the defensive team's attempt to catch up to the runner and pull the ball carrier's flag.
- **Tackling** is the act of stopping an opposing player carrying the ball by forcing the opponent to the ground, grabbing hold of and wrestling with an opponent, running through the ball carrier when pulling the flag and no diving for the flag (leaving your feet). *This is done for the safety of all the players on the field. Note that a defender grabbing the ball carrier's arm or legs to slow him or her in order to grab the flag will be penalized as tackling. Note that a defender may jump vertically to attempt an interception or bat a passed ball, but may not dive to do so.
- **Charging** is the act of the ball carrier deliberately running into or over a defender in an effort to gain ground or avoid having his or her flag pulled. This includes, but is not limited to, stiff arms or otherwise shoving or touching a defender to remove the defender from the ball carrier's path. The offensive team will be penalized for charging and the ball will be blown dead immediately. *This is done for the safety of all the players on the field.
- **Flag Guarding** is the act of the ball carrier intentionally waving his or her arms or slapping or swatting at the defender in an effort to prevent the defender from grabbing the ball carrier's flag or shield the flag from the defender. Note that the natural motion of running (arms swinging at a player's side as he or she runs down the field) is not considered guarding. Coaches are advised that the best way to avoid a guarding penalty is for the player to keep both hands on the ball and hold it chest-high or higher so the official can easily see both hands on the ball when defenders are near.

Number of Players

- All age divisions 5/6,7/8, 9/10 will field 6 players per side.
- Each team may have 1 coach on the field during the play. A second coach is permitted on the field prior to the snap with the permission of the referee. All coaches are required to wear the YMCA coaching shirts.
- Game length for 7/8 and 9/10 is 45 minutes (2 – 22.5 minute halves), Halftime will be 1 minute.
- Game length for 5/6 is 40 minutes (2 – 20 minute halves) with a 15-minute practice in the beginning. Halftime will be 1 minute.
- The time is running time. Coaches & players will learn how to manage the game clock.
- Once the ball is spotted, the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- **Each team has 1 – 30 second timeout per half. Game clock does not stop on a time out.**

Running:

- The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap. The center cannot take a direct hand off back from the quarterback (no center sneak play) without the quarterback first performing another offensive maneuver (fake handoff to a player other than center, etc.).
- The quarterback **CANNOT** run with the ball past the line of scrimmage, unless he has handed the ball off, tossed or pitched, and it has been returned to him. Simultaneous touching by two players does not constitute an exchange.
- The offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Only handoffs **behind** the line of scrimmage are permitted.
- Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed and are considered running plays. Only backward pitches are permitted; there are no forward laterals or shovel passes.
- Once the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage the ball cannot be handed off, tossed, pitched or passed in any way. The player who takes the handoff, toss or pitch 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. Spinning is allowed, but the ball carrier cannot dive forward or jump to avoid a defensive player or gain yardage (no diving). The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are placed when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is. Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

Receiving:

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off or tossed behind the line of scrimmage).
- As in the NFL, 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.

Passing:

- Any defensive player may rush from line of scrimmage after a 5 second count. The count is done by the officials.
- Only one forward pass thrown from behind the line of scrimmage is allowed per down.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball.
- Interceptions can be returned by the defense.
- 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 de-flagged or the ball become dead, the result would be a safety for the other team.

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points.
 - Safety: 2 points
- Extra point: 1 point. (played from midpoint of 5-yard line only). **Note: An interception returned to opponent's end zone on any extra point play by the defense will result in the defense scoring 1 point plus possession for next series at its 5-yard line.**

Dead Balls

- Substitutions may be made only when ball is dead.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - An official blows his whistle.
 - Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
 - Points are scored.
 - When any part of the ball carrier's body, other than his hand or foot touches the ground.
 - If a 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 or receive the ball by hand off toss or pitch, if their flag has fallen off.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball left the ball carrier's hand(s). If the ball is fumbled during the snap, the ball will be placed at the line of scrimmage.

Rushing the Quarterback

All players who rush the passer must obey the 5-second count rule. In the event of a hand off, toss, or pitch, the 5-second rule is disregarded. Any defensive player may rush the passer. The game officials will count 5 seconds out loud at the snap.

Sportsmanship/ Roughing

Incidental contact and bumping is a part of flag football. Throughout the game, some will fall or come in contact with other players. However, acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, and un-sportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**

Remember, this is the YMCA. **Caring, honesty, respect,** and **responsibility** are the four core values that govern all YMCA programs. Each player should demonstrate positive behavior. Fighting will not be tolerated. Any person(s) involved in **any** physical confrontation will be suspended pending a meeting with the Youth Sports Director. This includes players, spectators and coaches.

Trash talking is also illegal. (Trash talk is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators.) This includes players on the sidelines talking to one another or their coach or opposing players or coaches. 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. The down will be repeated unless otherwise noted, and will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
- All penalties may be declined, except a false start (dead ball foul) or a personal foul.
- Penalties will not exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line from the line of scrimmage.
- Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties after an interception shall be assessed after the return is over and/or the play is blown dead.

Defensive Penalties

- Offside — 5 yards.
- Substitution fouls — 5 yards. (player enters field after ball is blown ready for play, i.e. to deceive the opponents, or too many players on field).
- Disconcerting signals — 5 yards. (signals to distract / simulate offensive signals prior to snap).
- Interference with opponent or ball at the snap — 5 yards.
- Illegal rushing — 5 yards. (rushing before the 5 count).
- Interference — 5 yards and automatic first down.
- Illegal contact — 5 yards and automatic first down. (holding, blocking, diving into the player).
- Illegal flag pull — 5 yards and automatic first down. (before receiver has ball and diving for and pulling an opponent's flags).
- Diving — 5 yards

Offensive Penalties

- Flag guarding — 5 yards.
- **Charging — 5 yards.**
- **Illegal Contact — 5 yards (blocking or holding).**
- Delay of game — 5 yards.
- Substitution fouls — 5 yards.
- Illegal motion — 5 yards (more than one person moving at the time the ball is snapped).
- Illegal formation - must have 3 players on line of scrimmage
- False start — 5 yards (cannot be declined).
- Illegal snap — 5 yards.
- Illegal shift or failure to pause for 1 second — 5 yards.
- Offensive holding — 5 yards.
- Diving/Jumping - 5 yards.
- Player out of bounds — 5 yards (if player goes out of bounds, player cannot return to the field and catch ball).
- Illegal forward pass — 5 yards and loss of down (a second forward pass or after ball has crossed the line of scrimmage).
- Offensive pass interference— 5 yards and loss of down. (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender)

Field/Site Rules:

- No Dogs/pets allowed on the fields.
- Please clean up all drinks and snack wrappers after each game.
- Spectators are to remain on the sidelines at all times.
- Use of abusive or inappropriate language is prohibited and will result in immediate dismissal out of site/field.
- All spectator children are to be supervised by an adult of at-least 18 years-old.