

Youth Football Rules as of July 29, 2026

Levels:

Athletes will be placed on a team based on their grade for the upcoming football season. Athletes may NOT play in a lower grade for any reason. If an athlete is ABOVE the Max Age as of May 31 PRIOR to the season, they must play in the higher grade level.

Grade	Max Age as of 5/31 End of PRIOR School Year
3 rd	8
4 th	9
5 th	10
6 th	11
7 th	12
8 th	14

Athletes born on or before 5/31/2011 are ineligible for the 2026 season.

Start Time

10 AM 4th Graders. Subsequent age group follows immediately. Exception is for games in Chatham-Glenwood or if teams have made alternative arrangements.

Game Length and Overtime

Games are 9 minutes with a stopped clock according to IHSA Rules.

Grade	Quarter Length	Clock Stoppage
3 rd – 8 th Grade	9 min	IHSA Clock Rules

In the event of a tie at the end of regulation, teams will each get one possession from the opposing team's 10-yard line beginning with a 1st down. The last team to be on defense at the end of regulation will start on offense in overtime. If the team scores they can attempt a PAT according to the rules for that age group. In the event the game is tied after each team's possession the game will end in a tie. If the defense returns an interception or fumble for a touchdown on the first possession, then the game ends immediately.

Ball Sizes

Grade	Ball Size
3 rd – 5 th	K2 / 5
6 th - 7 th	TDJ / 7
8 th	TDY / 8

Special Teams

- 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade:
 - No kickoffs or punts
 - In place of kickoffs, receiving team will begin with the ball on their 30-yard line (40-yard line in the event of a Safety).
 - In place of punts there will be a 30-yard walk off or half-the distance to the goal line.
 - Kicking a point-after-touchdown (PAT) will be worth 2 points. There is no rush allowed by the defense on kicked PATs. The snap must be handled cleanly in that it does not bounce to the holder, is caught in the air, and not dropped before placing it for the kick on the ground/tee. There are no fakes allowed if a team declares they are kicking.
 - Run or pass PAT conversions are worth 2 points.
- 6th Grade
 - Punts are **not** live and there is **no rush**. The ball must be long-snapped and fielded cleanly or it is down where touched. A cleanly fielded ball must be caught in the air and not touch the ground prior to being kicked by the punter. Once kicked the receiving team will have the chance to catch it in the air or off a bounce. If caught by the receiving team the ball is down where caught. If the catch is fumbled the ball is dead where touched by the receiving team and the receiving team retains possession. If no catch is made the ball is dead where the kicking team touches it.
 - Kickoffs are live from the kicking teams 40 yard line (or 50 in the event of a Safety).
 - Kicking a point-after-touchdown (PAT) will be worth 1 point. There is no rush allowed by the defense. The snap must be handled cleanly in that it does not bounce to the holder, is caught in the air, and not dropped before placing it for the kick on the ground/tee. There are no fakes allowed if a team declares they are kicking.
 - Run or pass conversions are worth 2 points.
- 7th and 8th Grade
 - Special teams follow IHSA rules unless otherwise noted
 - Kicked PATs are 1 point. Defense can rush and fakes are allowed. No lining head up the long snapper.
 - Run/Pass conversions are worth 2 points.
 - Punts and punt return are live. Fakes are allowed. No lining head up the long snapper.

The following is a summary of the rules above by grade level and specialty.

Grade	PAT	Punt	Kickoff
3rd - 5th	Kick – 2 points. No Rush. Must field cleanly. No fakes. Run/Pass - 2points	N/A - 30 yard walkoff or half-the-distance to goal.	N/A - start at own 30 yard line. If a safety, start at own 40-yard line.
6 th	Kick – 1 point. No Rush. Must field cleanly. No fakes. Run/Pass - 2points	Punts are "dead" with no rush or return. No fakes. Ball is dead where is caught by receiving team or touched by kicking team. Fumbled catch is down where touched and return team retains possession.	IHSA Rules - live kickoff from 40 yard line and live return.
7th - 8 th	IHSA Rules: Kick - 1 point. Fakes allowed. Rush allowed. Run/Pass - 2 points. Can rush.	IHSA Rules: Live punt / return. No lining head-up long snapper.	IHSA Rules - live kickoff from 40 yard line and live return.

Other Rules

- Except where separately noted, IHSA game rules will be applied.
- Teams receive 3 timeouts per half.
- 3rd and 4th grade teams may have one (1) coach on the field for offense and defense. The purpose of the field coach is to get plays in quicker and help players get in position prior to the play, not to provide any advantage during the play. The field coach can call the play in the huddle and provide verbal instruction between plays to line players up in the correct position. The offensive coach must retreat to 10+ yards behind the line of scrimmage and the defensive coach must retreat to 20 yards back or behind the furthest back defensive player, whichever is further, at the time of the snap. The field coaches must stay away from the direction of the play and refrain from providing instruction until after the play is dead.
- 3rd and 4th grade level may only have 5 defenders in the box at the time the ball is snapped. This is defined as the area extending from two (2) yards outside the last **consecutive** offensive lineman to three (3) yards behind the line of scrimmage (e.g. a tight-end is a consecutive lineman but a slot receiver is not). Blitzing is still allowed but the defender must start behind the three (3) yards mark when the ball is snapped.
 - Exception when inside defending team's 20-yard line (red zone)
- 3rd and 4th grade level may not line a defensive line player head up over the center. The defensive lineman may line up in the "A" gaps.
- No defender may be head-up the long-snapper on punts or PATs.
- There are no ball carrier weight limits.
- Athlete ejection in the second half of a game will result in carry-over of the ejection for the first half of the subsequent game.
- Coach ejection will result in an additional suspension from the following game.
- Parent or fan ejection will result in additional suspension from the following game and a \$200 fine to be paid by the parent in order for the athlete to participate in the following game, though the athlete is not ejected from the current game.

Slaughter Rule(s):

- Running clock with 35-point lead first half and 25-point lead second half.
- The leading team will not have point-after-touchdown attempts when this is in effect.

League Administrative Rules

- Current league members include:
 - Bloomington Cardinals
 - Bloomington Knockers
 - Chatham and Glenwood Middle School
 - Morton Hogs
 - Rochester Rockets
 - Twin City Tigers
 - Washington Panthers
- The league may entertain applications by new programs in addition to those listed above. Key criteria for evaluating new teams will be:
 - The ability to field all the same levels as other member programs for scheduling efficiency
 - Background checks of leadership and all board members
 - Proven track record of safe and quality program operations
 - Maintaining an even number of member programs for scheduling efficiency
 - For a new member to be added it requires 75% or greater existing member programs to approve.
- Teams must first wait for the league schedule to be finalized and then may schedule out-of-league games.
- Rule changes will be made when a majority of member teams vote in favor of the change. A tie vote will not result in a rule change.