



GRAND VALLEY YOUTH FOOTBALL

In Flag football, the offensive team plays for a first down at midfield and a touchdown in the end zone. The offensive team cannot use a running play when the line of scrimmage is in an effective “no run zone” (see below). The defensive team grabs flags to make “tackles.”

Article 1. Eligibility – Players will be assigned to teams according to their age on the cut-off date established by School District 51 (July 31, 2026). All players must provide a copy of their birth certificate.

Article 2. Team Rosters – Team rosters shall be a minimum of 6 players and a maximum of 12 players until all teams have met the minimum.

- A. If a team fails to meet the minimum required players to safely participate, those players will be assigned to another team that is below the maximum. We will strive to keep players as close to their home boundary as we can.
- B. Once a team reaches the maximum number of players, no new players can be assigned to that team until all teams have met the minimum.

Article 3. Equipment – Players will be provided with a flag belt, mouthpiece, and game shirt by GVMF. Players must wear the GVMF provided game shirt for all contests.

- A. No modifications to the game shirt are permissible except for the ability of the player and/or team to embroider or heat press the player’s last name or appropriate nickname and number on the back of the shirt.
- B. The shirt must be tucked into the shorts at all times during the contest. The shorts must not conceal the flags in any way during play.
- C. GVMF provided flag belts must be worn by all participants, unless players elect to provide their own flag belts of the same type and manufacturer.
- D. All contests will be played with a football of the following size:
 - i. 8U – Wilson K2 or GVMF approved equivalent.
 - ii. 10U – Wilson TDJ or GVMF approved equivalent.
 - iii. 12U – Wilson TDY or GVMF approved equivalent.

Article 4. The Basics

- A. Game start – The team that wins the coinflip at midfield can elect to take possession of the ball first or can choose which side of the field they want to defend. The team that does not start the game with possession of the ball will start the second half with possession of the ball. Teams will switch direction at halftime.
- B. The offense and defense shall each have 5 players on the field at all times.
- C. The offense takes possession of the ball at its own 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. If a team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposing team starts their possession from their own 5-yard line.
- D. If the offense crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession with the opposing team taking possession of the ball at their own 5-yard line.
- E. All possession changes, except interceptions, result in the new possession beginning at the offensive team’s 5-yard line. Interceptions may be run back allowing the intercepting defender a chance to score a touchdown. The ball is spotted at the end of the run-back.
- F. There is NO kicking or punting.

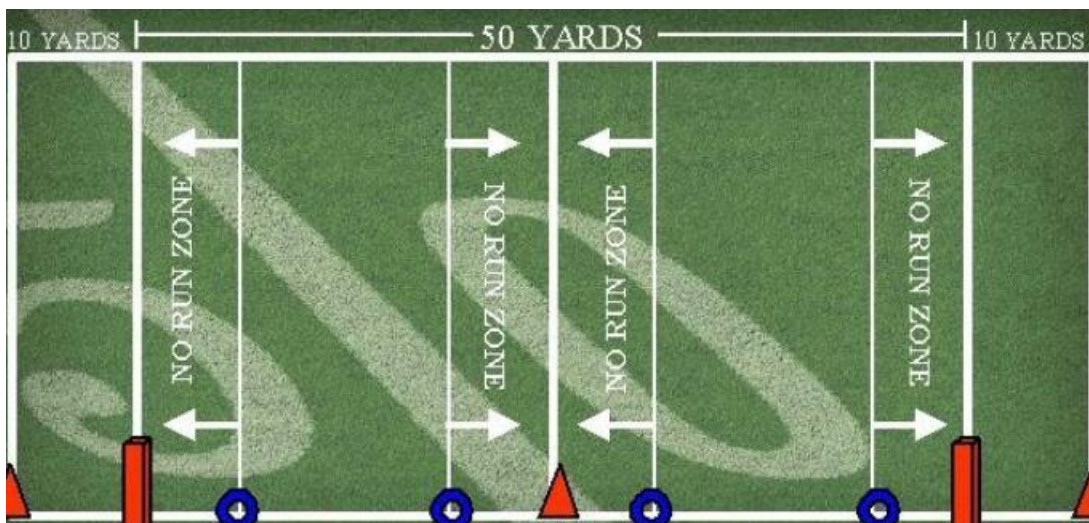
- G. The 8U, 10U, and 12U flag football divisions are competitive and as such, equal playing time is not guaranteed. Players shall receive a minimum of 10 plays per game, however, it is the expectation from GVYF that if a player attends practice and is not subject to discipline, they will receive beneficial playing time. Parents who have questions about their child's playing time should first discuss it with the head coach followed by a GVYF board member if necessary.

Article 5. Game Clock – The game shall consist of two twenty-minute halves with a running clock. Unless described herein, the clock does not stop for incomplete passes or plays that end out of bounds. Once play begins the clock will run continuously except for the circumstances noted below.

- A. The clock stops only at the direction of the official(s), in the following situations:
- An official's time-out is taken, or a charged time-out is taken by either team.
 - A delay of game penalty is called by the official(s).
- B. Once the ball is spotted, the offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- The official(s) will issue one warning per team before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
- C. Each team is awarded two 60-second time-outs per half. Unused time-outs do not carry over.
- D. If a player is injured in the field of play, the game clock may be stopped at the official's discretion or after two minutes have passed.
- E. There is no overtime in regular season play.

Article 6. The Playing Field – The playing field shall be 50 yards long and 26-1/2 yards wide with 10-yard end zones.

- A. The area marked 5 yards from the offense's scoring end zone and 5 yards prior to the offense's line to gain at midfield shall be designated the no-run zone. See figure below.
- B. If the offense commits a penalty while in the no-run zone, then the next play remains a no-run play, even if the line of scrimmage is not within the active no-run zone.
- C. If the defense commits a penalty during a 2-point PAT attempt, and the try is unsuccessful, the offense will get a second attempt after the penalty is enforced. If the resulting penalty results in the line of scrimmage being within the active no-run zone, the no-run zone will not be in effect.
- D. Coaches and players on the sidelines must stay on their side of midfield.



Article 7. Coaching – Per the GVYF bylaws, coaches must be registered with the league, pass a background check, and obtain current USA Football Youth Coach Certification.

- A. Team sidelines are reserved for designated coaches only. A maximum of 3 coaches per team will be allowed on the sidelines.
- B. In the 8U division, one coach from each team is permitted on the field of play. In the 10U and 12U divisions, only an offensive coach is permitted on the field of play.
 - i. The offensive coach must be aligned behind the deepest offensive player by a minimum of 5 yards once the huddle has broken.
 - ii. In 8U, the defensive coach must be aligned behind the deepest safety and remain out of the play. In 10U and 12U, the defensive coach must coach from the sideline.
 - iii. Once the ball is snapped, the offensive coach cannot direct the QB where to throw the ball.
 - i. After one official warning, the official(s) may restrict the coach to the sideline for the remainder of the game.

Article 8. Scoring – Scoring shall be as follows:

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra Point (PAT): 1 point (pass play from 5-yard line) or 2 points (played from 10-yard line)
- PAT returned by defense: 2 points (and possession)
- Safety: 2 points (and possession)
- Forfeits: All forfeits will be scored as 15 - 0

Article 9. Starting Play – A play starts when the center snaps the ball to the quarterback.

- A. The quarterback (QB) is defined as the offensive player who first possesses the ball after the snap. The QB may not necessarily be the player lined up behind the center.
- B. The ball must be snapped from the ground, either between the legs or to the side. There are no live fumbles.
 - i. On a botched snap, the ball is still live and the QB pass clock continues to run. Only an eligible defensive rusher may cross the LOS.
 - ii. For any non-snap fumble, the ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground. In the event of a forward fumble, the ball will be spotted at the player's front foot.
- C. Only one offensive player may be in motion when the ball is snapped.

Article 10. Ending Play – Play ends when an official's whistle is blown, marking the play dead.

- A. A play is ruled dead when:
 - i. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.
 - ii. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - iii. A touchdown or safety is scored.
 - iv. The ball carrier's knee touches the ground.
 - v. The ball carrier's flag falls off
 - vi. A non-snap fumble occurs
- B. Play is not ruled dead when a player that is not the ball carrier has their flags pulled. No penalty or clock stoppage occurs, play just continues as normal.
- C. Player substitutions may be made on any dead ball except an inadvertent whistle.

Article 11. Running

- A. The quarterback cannot run the ball past the line of scrimmage after receiving the snap unless the defense crosses the line of scrimmage.
 - i. Any defensive player who crosses the line of scrimmage while the QB still maintains original possession of the ball triggers the ability for the QB to advance the ball for positive yards.
 - ii. No-run zones do not prevent the QB from running to advance the ball when a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage.
 - iii. If the QB advances the ball past the line of scrimmage without a defensive player having crossed the line of scrimmage, a 5-yard penalty will be enforced with loss of down.
- B. No-run zones located five yards from each end zone and five yards from the line to gain at midfield are designed to prevent short-yardage, power running situations to gain a 1st down or touchdown.
 - i. No-run zones are only activated when approaching the line-to gain.
 - ii. If the offense is penalized in a way that moves them behind the midfield line, they are not considered in the no-run zone as the line to gain is now the endzone.
- C. Any player who receives a handoff or lateral from the QB can still throw a legal forward pass if that player does not cross the line of scrimmage.
- D. Once the ball leaves the QB's possession, all defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage.
- E. Hurdling or diving are not permitted while running the ball.
- F. Laterals are allowed.
- G. If the ball carrier's flag falls off at any time, the play is dead at that spot as if the flag was pulled by a defensive player.
- H. The ball is spotted at the spot where the flag was pulled.
- I. Center Sneak Rule – When the ball is snapped, to hand the ball back to the Center, the QB must reach the ball around the Center's body, or the Center can reach back to get the ball. Handoffs between the Center's legs after the snap are not permitted.

Article 12. Passing – To be considered a pass, the ball must cross the offensive LOS in the air. Otherwise, it is considered a running play.

- A. All players are eligible to receive a pass (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- B. To successfully complete a catch, the receiver must have one foot inbounds before stepping out of bounds.
- C. If the receiver's flag falls off while the player is running a route and then catches a pass, the ball is down at the spot of the catch.
- D. Shovel passes, defined as a legal pass thrown underhand or by pushing the ball to a receiver, are legal so long as the ball crosses the line of scrimmage.
- E. The offense has a 7-second pass clock for the QB to throw a pass. Time is kept by an official. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds of the snap, play is immediately blown down with a loss of down. No yardage is lost.
 - i. The pass clock stops once the ball leaves the QB's hands so there is no pass clock for another player to attempt to complete a pass.
- F. An interception results in a change of possession and the intercepting player can attempt to advance the ball for a touchdown.

Article 13. Blocking/Screening/Contact

- A. Down field blocking is not allowed – officials will be instructed to watch for players deliberately seeking contact.
- B. Blocking as if to mimic an offensive line protecting the QB is not permitted.
- C. All receivers are expected to run routes as if expecting to be targeted by the QB. "Rub routes" or "picking" as in basketball is not permitted.

Article 14. Rushing the Quarterback

- A. Any defensive player that starts play a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage may rush the QB.
 - i. Any number of defensive players may rush the QB as long as they meet the above criteria.
 - ii. Players not rushing the QB may defend at the line of scrimmage, but may not cross the line of scrimmage until the ball leaves the hands of the QB.

Article 15. Mercy Rule

- A. Starting in the 2nd half, a team winning by 28 points or more may not send a defensive rusher. Once the ball leaves the QB's hands, all players may still cross the LOS.

Article 16. Penalties - Enforced penalties that result in an automatic 1st down provide the offense a full set of downs to reach the midfield line if they have not already done so; or a full set of downs to score a touchdown if they have already crossed the midfield line or if the enforcement of the penalty results in the offense crossing the midfield line.

- A. Offensive Penalties – Dead ball penalties are enforced automatically. For live ball penalties, the defense will be given the choice to take the result of the play or to enforce the penalty.
 - i. Delay of Game – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; dead ball; replay down.
 - ii. False Start – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; dead ball; replay down.
 - iii. Flag Guarding – using hands, arms, or the ball to prevent a flag pull / stiff arming) – 5 yards from the spot of the foul; loss of down.
 - iv. Illegal Blocking – any offensive player intentionally seeking contact to prevent a flag pull – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down.
 - v. Illegal Forward Pass – offensive player attempting a forward pass while beyond the line of scrimmage – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; loss of down.
 - vi. Illegal Motion – more than one player in motion or motion towards the line of scrimmage at snap – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; dead ball; replay down.
 - vii. Illegal QB Run – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; loss of down.
 - viii. Illegal Substitution – more than 5 players in formation or a player enters the field of play after the snap – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; dead ball; replay down.
 - ix. Offensive Pass Interference – illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; loss of down.
 - x. Personal Foul – Unnecessary or excessive physical contact initiated by an offensive player – 10 yards from spot of the foul; penalty applied to end of play.
 - xi. Running While in the No-Run Zone – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; loss of down.
 - xii. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – At Official's discretion including but not limited to taunting, trash talking, cursing, or harassing the official(s) – 10 yards from line of scrimmage; penalty applied to end of play.
 - a. The Official may at their discretion issue a warning before enforcing a penalty.
 - b. The Official may at their discretion enforce an ejection on a coach, fan, or player for repeated offenses.
- B. Defensive Penalties – Dead ball penalties are enforced automatically. For live ball penalties, the defense will be given the choice to take the result of the play or to enforce the penalty.
 - i. Defensive Holding – Restricting the receiver's ability to run their route before the ball is in the air or physically restraining the ball carrier to allow for a flag pull – 5 yards added to the end of the play; penalty applied at end of play.
 - ii. Defensive Pass Interference – intentional contact with the receiver while the ball is in the air – 10 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down.
 - a. If Defensive Pass Interference occurs in the endzone, the offense is granted an automatic first down and the ball is placed at the defense's 1 yard line.
 - iii. Illegal Batting – it is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball away from the ball carrier's possession at any time – 5 yards from the spot of the foul; replay down.
 - iv. Illegal Flag Pull

- a. Before the receiver has the ball and the pass intended for the flag pulled receiver is dropped – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay down.
 - b. Before the receiver has the ball and the pass intended for the flag pulled receiver is caught – 5 yards from spot of catch; penalty applied at end of play.
- v. Illegal Rushing – A defensive player who began play less than 7 yards from the line of scrimmage crosses the line of scrimmage while the QB still has the ball – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; replay the down.
- vi. Illegal Substitution – more than 5 players in formation or a player enters the field of play after the snap – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; dead ball unless the play is already in progress; replay down.
- vii. Incidental Contact – 5 yards from spot of foul; penalty applied at end of play.
- viii. Offsides – 5 yards from line of scrimmage; dead ball; replay down.
- ix. Personal Foul – Unnecessary or excessive physical contact initiated by a defensive player – 10 yards from spot of the foul; penalty applied to end of play and an automatic 1st down.
- x. Unsportsmanlike Conduct – At Official’s discretion including but not limited to taunting, trash talking, cursing, or harassing the official(s) – 10 yards from end of play; penalty applied to end of play and an automatic 1st down.
 - a. The Official may at their discretion issue a warning before enforcing a penalty.
 - b. The Official may at their discretion enforce an ejection on a coach, fan, or player for repeated offenses.

Article 17. Playoff Seeding – Teams shall be seeded for the playoffs based on their overall win percentage. Bracket format will be dependent on the number of teams registered. All GVPF teams qualify for the postseason tournament.

- A. In the event that 2 or more teams are tied at the end of the regular season, the following procedure will be used to break the tie:
 - iii. Head-to-head outcomes will be the first tiebreaker.
 - iv. If head-to-head outcomes cannot break the tie, then the team with the greatest point differential between the tied teams will be awarded the tiebreaker. The point differential shall be determined based only on the head-to-head contests between the tied teams.
 - v. If head-to-head point differential is equal, a coin flip will determine playoff seeding. The choice of heads or tails will be given to the team that won the most recent head-to-head contest.

Article 18. Postseason Play – The rules for postseason play will be the same as the regular season except games that are tied at the end of regulation will move directly into overtime.

- A. Possession will be determined by coin flip.
- B. Each team will get one possession starting at midfield with 4 downs to score. Both teams will possess the ball going in the same direction.
- C. If the score remains tied after each team has one possession, a second overtime will be played.
- D. Play continues with consecutive overtimes until a winner is determined.
 - i. Beginning in the 3rd overtime, teams must attempt a 2-point PAT after scoring a touchdown.