

# GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL

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## Definitions

<b>BOUNDARY LINES</b>	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
<b>LINE OF SCRIMMAGE</b>	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
<b>LINE-TO-GAIN</b>	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
<b>RUSH LINE</b>	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
<b>OFFENSE</b>	The team with possession of the ball.
<b>DEFENSE</b>	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
<b>PASSER</b>	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
<b>BLITZER</b>	The Defensive Player that is at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
<b>RUSHER</b>	Any player who legally crosses the line of scrimmage due to a possible hand-off, who is in front of the rush at the snap of the ball.
<b>DOWN (1-2-3-4)</b>	The offensive team has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. It must cross the first down line to gain another set of downs or to score.
<b>LIVE BALL</b>	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
<b>DEAD BALL</b>	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
<b>WHISTLE</b>	Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for reporting a penalty, a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
<b>INADVERTENT WHISTLE</b>	Official’s whistle that is performed in error.
<b>CHARGING</b>	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
<b>FLAG GUARDING</b>	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm or ball.
<b>UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT</b>	A rude, confrontational, physical or offensive behavior or language.
<b>RIGHT OF PLACE (ROP)</b>	Right of place is given to any stationary player who maintains normal player posture and makes no movements in any horizontal direction to change their position. A purely vertical movement, including a lift from the ground, in order to throw or catch a pass does not mean that a previously established right of place has been lost. Right of place supersedes right of way when determining who is guilty of a foul.
<b>RIGHT OF WAY</b>	Right of way is given to a player according to rule who has established a direction of movement in a regular manner and does not alter that direction. A player with right of way has a higher privilege when determining who is guilty of a foul than all other players except those with right of place.

# MHSGFL FLAG FOOTBALL 5V5 RULEBOOK

## **RULE 1: GAME, FIELD, BALL, AND EQUIPMENT**

### **SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS**

#### **Article 1. Coin Toss**

- A. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls 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. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense. Teams change direction after the first half.

#### **Article 2. Possession and Change of Possession**

- A. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. Crossing midfield, or by penalty, are the only opportunities for an offense to gain a first down within a single possession.
- B. If a team fails to advance past the midfield or score a touchdown between 1st through 3rd down, the offense may either:
  - a. Go for it on 4th down, however, if they fail to gain a first down or score, possession of the ball is given to the defense at the dead ball spot.
  - b. "Punt" the ball: the ball is awarded to the defense and the ball is placed on its 5-yard line at the start of their possession.
- C. If the defense intercepts the ball, a defensive player can attempt to return it until down or out of bounds.
- D. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.

#### **Article 3.**

##### **Coaches**

- A. USA Football recommends 2-3 coaches per team.
- B. At the varsity level in the MHSGFL, coaches will not be allowed on the field during game play. At the junior varsity level, coaches are allowed on the field for the first week of game play, unless otherwise discussed with the head coaches of both teams.

### **SECTION 2: ROSTERS**

#### **Article 1: Team Rosters**

Teams must consist of at least five players with a recommended maximum of 15 players.

**NOTE: FLEXIBILITY IS GRANTED FOR ROSTER SIZED AT THE DISCRETION OF TOURNAMENT OPERATORS.**

## Article 2: Uniform Colors

Uniforms will be provided by the Minnesota Vikings, therefore colors will be determined in this process.

## Article 3: On Field Participants

Teams must start games with a minimum of five 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.

## SECTION 3: POSITIONS

### Article 1. Offense

The five players on offense consist of a center, a quarterback and three other eligible receivers.

- A. **Center.** This player is responsible for snapping the ball and is eligible to go out for passes, once they have snapped the ball.
- B. **Quarterback.** The quarterback is the offensive player who first gets possession of the ball after the snap. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the line of scrimmage without first: 1) handing the ball off to a teammate and then receiving a second handoff back 2) receiving a pass or 3) a blitzing defender crosses the LOS after starting from behind the 7 yard rush line.
- C. **Receiver/back.** Any player who does not initiate the snap nor receive the snap is considered an eligible receiver/back and can either receive a handoff or catch a pass.

### Article 2. Defense

- A. **Blitzer.** A defender who lines up with all parts of their body more than 7 yards away from the scrimmage line at the snap. This grants them **right of way** which supersedes the general right of way for the offense, because they are pursuing the runner. The rush of a blitzer shall be immediately after the snap, quick and straight towards the point where the quarterback receives the snap in order to retain the right of way. If a blitzer is rushing late, slowly, towards a different spot, changing direction during the rush or just does not rush the quarterback, the player loses the right of way but still can participate as any other defender. If a blitzer is forced to change direction due to an offensive foul (shielding), the blitzer will not lose their right of way for a further direct rush to the point where the quarterback received the snap.
- B. **Rusher.** A defender who does not start from behind the 7-yard blitz line at the snap can legally cross the LOS on a hand-off action. If the ball is handed off, the rusher may continue in motion to pull the ball carrier's flag. If the hand-off was a fake, the rusher must retreat back across the LOS and may not rush the QB. Following a legal handoff, any member of the defense can cross the line of scrimmage.

## SECTION 4. EQUIPMENT

### Article 1: Flag Belts

The organization provides each player with an official flag belt and team jersey. Teams will use footballs provided by their league. All efforts possible should be made by teams to ensure flags are contrasting colors from the jersey. Please work with the Vikings to ensure these contrasting flags can be provided. See Flag Specifications section for more details.

### Article 2: Footwear

Players must wear shoes that don't include any exposed metal.

### Article 3: Additional Equipment

Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed. Players must remove any jewelry. (acceptable headwear is determined by league officials). Hijabs are acceptable headwear.

### Article 4: Uniform Standards

Players' jerseys must be tucked under the belt and may not hang outside of the belt covering any part of the flag. The excess portion of a belt must be worn in the front and should be looped or tucked in order to prevent it from being mistaken as a flag. We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets. Flags cannot be the same color as shorts or pants. It is recommended that players wear dark colored shorts or pants to help contrast with the flags. Officials may ask players to adjust their flags to be positioned at the hips and follow these provisions after the completion of a play. If an official deems a player's jersey to be obstructing the ability of the defensive players to successfully identify and pull a flag, the official may ask the athlete to tuck in their jersey. No wearable technology (Ex: Go Routes) is allowed.

### Article 5: Mouthguards

**All players must wear mouth guards while on the playing field. Coaches and officials should enforce this.**

## SECTION 5. THE BALL

The ball shall be made of four panels of pebble-grained leather in natural tan color with eight equally spaced lacings and new or nearly new with no alterations. The ball shall be an ellipsoid spheroid of regulation dimensions and inflated to a pressure of between 12.5 and 13.5 psi (0.85 – 0.95 bar).

### Article 1. Types of Football

Dimensions	Adult	Junior	Youth
Length	11.00 to 11.50 inches (27.9 – 29.2 cm)	10.50 to 11.00 inches (26.7 – 27.9 cm)	10.25 to 10.75 inches (26.0 – 27.3 cm)
Length circumference	27.00 to 28.00 inches (68.6 – 71.1 cm)	26.00 to 27.00 inches (66.0 – 68.6 cm)	25.00 to 26.00 inches (63.5 – 66.0 cm)
Diameter	6.25 to 6.75 inches (15.9 – 17.2 cm)	6.00 to 6.50 inches (15.2 – 16.5 cm)	5.75 to 6.25 inches (14.6 – 15.9 cm)
Cross circumference	20.00 to 21.00 inches (50.8 – 53.3 cm)	19.00 to 20.00 inches (48.3 – 50.8 cm)	18.00 to 19.00 inches (45.7 – 48.3 cm)
Weight	14 to 15 ounces (400 – 425 g)	12 to 13 ounces (340 – 370 g)	11 to 12 ounces (310 – 340 g)

### Article 2. Sizes

- A. For women's games, use Youth Ball dimensions. (example: USA Football Youth or Wilson TDY) **League preference for the game ball is the Wilson TDY.**

## SECTION 6. FLAG SPECIFICATIONS

### Article 1. General Provisions

Players of a team shall wear tightly fixed flag belts with pop-sockets and 2 identical flags. Every effort shall be made to keep one flag on each hip of the player. The sockets shall be placed facing outwards and downwards. The flags shall be clearly visible, hang down freely and must not be covered in any way by the player's uniform and all colors must be contrasting with all colors on the pants. The flags and sockets may not be greased, glued or altered in any way. Any player who deliberately manipulates their flags shall be disqualified. The flags and sockets each shall be made of the same material in the same color without sharp edges.

### Article 2. Sizes

Dimensions	Measurements
The flags shall measure	2 inches (5 cm) x 15 inches (38 cm)
Flag length from socket	15 to 16 inches (38.1 – 0.6 cm).
Flag width:	1.9 to 2.1 inches (4.8 – 5.3 cm).
Brand or logo	On each flag one single color brand or logo in the upper quarter is allowed with a maximum size of 2x3 inches (5 x 7.5 cm).
Flag thickness:	maximum 0.03 inches (0.75 mm).
Flag weight	minimum 3.5 ounces (100 g).

## SECTION 7. THE FIELD

### Article 1: Field Dimensions

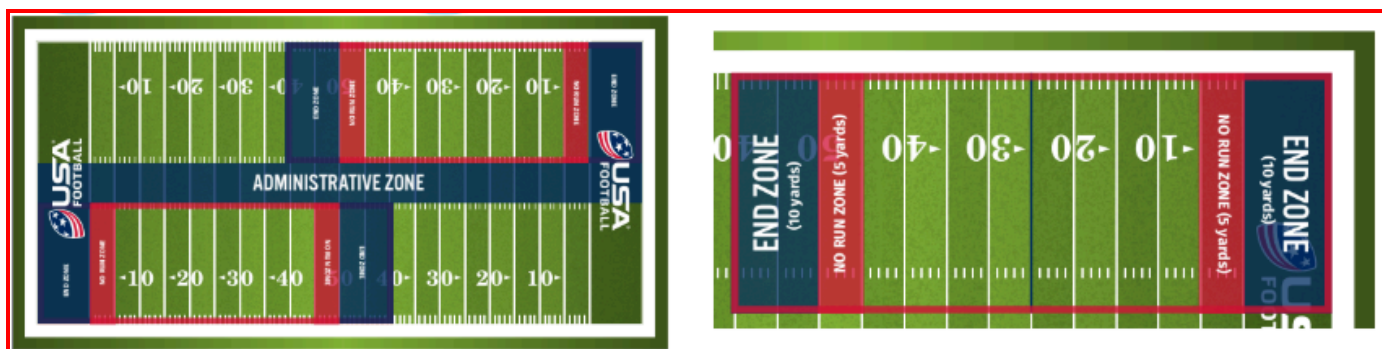
Field dimensions are 25 X 70 yards in total with two 10- yard end zones and a 50 yard field of play. No-run zones are only before the goal line. However, some locations may use smaller fields due to available field space.

### Article 2: No-Run Zone's

A No-run zone is in place to prevent teams from conducting run plays. While in the No-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff. The quarterback may not run the ball, if the offensive snap occurs in the no-rush zone, even if they are blitzed by a defender.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: THE NO-RUN ZONE MAY BE REMOVED FOR PLAYERS WHO ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC PASSING AND CATCHING SKILLS.**

## Article 3: Field Setup Diagrams



\*Administration zones should be 3 yards wide.

## RULE 2: LEAGUE PLAY

### SECTION 1. LEAGUE PLAY

#### Article 1: Game Clock Settings

Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves unless one team gains a 30-point advantage at which point, the score is no longer kept. The clock stops for timeouts or injuries only, though officials can stop the clock at their discretion for injury, to stop a team from delaying or other unsportsmanlike conduct. A pro-clock will be used for the last 2 minutes in both halves.

#### Article 2: Pro-Clock Operation

##### PRO-CLOCK CLOCK STOPS

1. To award a first down, also after a change of team possession.
2. To complete a penalty.
3. When the ball or the runner goes out of bounds.
4. When a pass or fumble (forward or backward) strikes the ground.
5. When a score is made and during and after the following try and onside snap.
6. When a charged timeout is granted.

#### Article 3: Halftime

Halftime is five minutes.

#### Article 4: Delay of Game

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.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: OFFICIALS SHOULD USE DISCRETION WITH TEAMS WHO ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS AND MAY NEED MORE TIME TO LINE UP AND GET A PLAY OFF.**

## **Article 5: Timeouts**

Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.

## **Article 6: Injury Stoppage**

In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play and both teams are lined up ready to restart the play.

## **Article 7. League Play Overtime**

1. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
  - a. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
  - b. The referee will determine on which end of the field the overtime will take place.
  - c. No charged team timeouts shall be granted.
2. In the first extra period, each team will have one series starting at the mid-field (25 yard line). On the first series, if the defense intercepts the ball and scores, then the overtime period is over.
3. In overtime period one, each team gets a possession of up to 4 downs to score from the 25 yard line. If a team scores, they get the chance to score a one or two point conversion. If one team scores more points in their overtime possession they win the game.
4. If after the first period (with 2 series including tries) the score is still tied, the second and following periods consist of each team attempting a 1-point try from the 5-yard line. The overtime ends when the score after a period is no longer a tie or the defense scores during the first series of a period.
5. The team scoring the greater number of points during overtime shall be declared the winner.

## **Article 8. Time Between Games & Warm Up Period**

1. If double headers are played back to back a minimum of a 10 minute break/warm up period is required between games.
2. If available, teams may warm up while games are being played, as long as it is in a separate area and does not interfere with gameplay.
3. By agreement by both head coaches and referee the break between double header games may be shortened.

## **RULE 3: LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL**

### **SECTION 1. LIVE BALL**

#### **Article 1: Live Ball Definition**

The ball is live at the snap and remains live until an official's whistle blows the ball dead.

#### **Article 2: Ball Spot**

The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage by spotting the ball before each play and signaling ready for play with a short whistle.

- A. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, an official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification prior to the snap to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.

#### **Article 3: Pre-Snap Defense**

The defense may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

#### **Article 4: Possession**

A player who gains possession of the ball is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

### **SECTION 2. DEAD BALL**

#### **Article 1: Dead Ball Definition**

Any official can whistle the play dead.

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- A. The ball hits the ground. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, it is considered a dead ball and is returned to the original LOS.
- B. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled.
- C. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
- D. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- E. Any part of the body other than feet or hands touches the ground.
- F. The ball-carrier's flag falls out, if flags are deemed out of piston (not on the hips), or if their jersey covers any part of the flag.
- G. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- H. An inadvertent whistle.

## Article 2: Inadvertent Whistle

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.

## Article 3: Dead Ball Substitution

Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

## Article 4: Ruling Challenges

- A. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team is charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout is not charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
- B. A team with no timeout remaining cannot challenge a rule interpretation, though officials can come together independently and reverse a call by unanimous decision.

# RULE 4: GAME PLAY

## SECTION 1: SCORING

### Article 1: Touchdown

**Touchdown:** Six 6 points

### Article 2: Extra Points

**PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line).

- A. Because of the No-run zone, a one point PAT is pass only; two point PAT can be run or pass.
  - a. Defense touchdown on a try - 2 points.
  - b. Safety - 2 points
- B. A team that scores a touchdown must declare prior to the snap whether it wishes to attempt a one- or two-point conversion. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.

### Article 3: Safety

**2 points**

- A. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his or her own endzone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, a knee or arm touches the ground, or a fumble occurs in the endzone. A penalty in the end zone (i.e. flag guarding) can also be ruled a safety.

## **Article 4: Mercy Rule**

- A. After one team is leading by 30 points or more, the game is over and no PATs are attempted. Once the mercy rule is declared, the game may continue, however, the score is no longer kept. The winning team cannot run interceptions back, only receive 3 downs to gain a first down on offense, and cannot blitz the QB on defense.
- B. Forfeits will be scored 30-0.

## **SECTION 2: RUNNING**

### **Article 1: Spotting the Ball**

The ball is spotted where the runner's front foot is when the flag is pulled, not the position of the ball. Players should be discouraged from diving or stretching out the ball, and educated that these actions are against the rules of flag football and have no benefit.

### **Article 2: Legal Running Plays**

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 take place behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball unless they are evading a legal blitz who has crossed the LOS.

- A. The "center sneak" play is not allowed as centers are ineligible to receive handoffs.
- B. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- C. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

### **Article 3: No Run Zone**

No-run zones are located five yards before the end zone in the direction the offense is headed. They are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in this zone.

### **Article 4: Flag Guarding**

- A. 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.
- B. Flag obstruction – All jerseys inside the belt. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding. The belt strap must be in the front side of the player and be tucked away to prevent accidentally being confused as a flag. Players must adjust belts and flags in between plays as necessary.
- C. The ball carrier may not jump over defenders, use a stiff arm, run into a defender, or spin uncontrollably.

### **Article 5: Blocking / Screening**

No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.

### **Article 6: Running With the Ball-Carrier**

Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. There is no running with the ball-carrier.

## **SECTION 3: PASSING**

### **Article 1: Forward Pass**

A pass is considered a forward pass if the ball first touches anything forward of the spot where the ball is released. All other passes are backward passes and considered illegal, even if it is parallel to the line of scrimmage. (All passes must be forward.)

- A. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go forward and be in the vicinity of a receiver.
- B. Quarterbacks CAN spike the ball dead, as is practiced in other versions of the game of football to stop the clock in the last 2 minutes of a half.
- C. Any player who has received a legal handoff can throw the ball forward as long as they are still behind the line of scrimmage. If the ball is handed off, the five-second clock is only enforced if the player attempts to throw the ball, which must occur within the original five seconds.

### **Article 2: Five Second Clock**

A five-second pass clock begins upon the snap and continues until there is a handoff or pass. If the five-second clock expires while the quarterback still has the ball, the play is blown dead, a down is lost and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage as if an incomplete pass occurred. If the ball is handed off, the five-second clock is only enforced if the player attempts to throw the ball, which must occur within the original five seconds.

## **SECTION 4: RECEIVING**

### **Article 1: Eligible Receivers**

All players are eligible to receive passes.

### **Article 2: Legal Reception**

A player must have at least one foot inbounds to make a legal reception.

### **Article 3: Simultaneous Possession**

In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

### **Article 4: Interceptions**

Interceptions are returnable. If an interception return is short of scoring, the intercepting team will start offense at the spot the defender was ruled down.

## **SECTION 5: BLITZER AND RUSHER**

### **Article 1: Blitz**

All Blitzers must be a minimum of seven yards behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Players not blitzing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. No more than two players may blitz on a given play. If a non-blitzing defender comes across the Line of Scrimmage (LOS) as a result of a fake handoff, they must reestablish themselves on the defensive side of the LOS as soon as possible.

## **Article 2: Rusher**

Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. At this point players crossing the line of scrimmage are Rushers.

## **Article 3: Legal Blitzing**

A marker, or the official, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position before every play.

- A. A legal blitz is:
  - a. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
  - b. If a blitzer leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
  - c. If a blitzer leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the second receiver.
- B. A penalty may be called if:
  - a. The Blitzers leave the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
  - b. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
  - c. Any defensive player not lined up behind the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
  - d. A maximum of 2 players may blitz on any given play. Foul - 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- C. Special circumstances:
  - a. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the five second clock in effect.

## **Article 4: Roughing the Passer**

Players blitzing 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 making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.

## **Article 5: Impeding the Blitzers**

The offense cannot impede Blitzers in any way. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the Blitzers. Any disruption to the Blitzers’ path and/or contact will result in an impeding the blitzer penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the Blitzers’ responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

## **Article 6: Quarterback Sack**

A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s front foot is when the flag is pulled. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

## **SECTION 6. HOLDING, SHIELDING, CONTACT AND AIMING**

### **Article 1: Holding**

Holding is grasping an opponent or their equipment, not releasing immediately and impacting the opponent.

### **Article 2: Shielding**

Shielding is obstructing an opponent without contact by moving into their path. A moving player without right of way who impedes an opponent from running a pass route, getting to the runner or impedes a legal blitzing player is guilty of shielding. A player standing still (with the right of place) is not shielding, even if the player is obstructing an opponent.

### **Article 3: Contact**

Contact is touching an opponent with impact. Touching with no impact is not a foul.

### **Article 4: Aiming**

Aiming is to target and initiate contact with an opponent or to run into an opponent on purpose, even with right of way. Aiming is any deliberate or avoidable contact with excessive force, even in an attempted flag pull or while playing the ball during a pass. Aiming is to attack a ball in possession or take away the ball from the runner.

## **SECTION 7. FLAG PULLING**

### **Article 1: Legal Flag Pull**

A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.

### **Article 2: Diving and Holding**

Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot make contact with the ball carrier in a way that impedes the ball carrier. Defenders can NOT tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. Examples of a “hold” would include grabbing a uniform, belt, or body part to allow them a greater advantage to pull a flag.

### **Article 3: Stripping**

It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier’s possession at any time.

### **Article 4: Inadvertent Loss of Flag**

- A. If the flag inadvertently falls out prior to possession, the player is marked down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- B. If the flag inadvertently falls out after possession of the ball, the player is ruled down at the spot the flag falls out and the play ends.

### **Article 5: Illegal Flag Pull**

A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball. If a defender makes a good-faith flag pull while a receiver bobbles or juggles what will be a completed catch, the ball is down where possession is made.

## **SECTION 8. FORMATIONS**

### **Article 1: Offensive Formations**

Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and any number of players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.

- A. Players must be set for one second before going in motion and only one player can be in motion at a time. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.

### **Article 2: False Start**

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.

### **Article 3: Legal Snap**

The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

## **SECTION 9. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT**

### **Article 1: Intentional Contact**

If the field monitor or official 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. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

- A. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official. b. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. c. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: FOR TEAMS STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS, REMOVE ANY PLAYER WHO COMMITS AN UNSPORTSMANLIKE OR DANGEROUS ACT FROM THE FIELD TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTION FROM A COACH AND A COOLING OFF PERIODS. OFFICIALS CAN EJECT THE PLAYER AT THEIR DISCRETION IF THERE ARE CONTINUED INFRACTIONS THAT ARE DEEMED INTENTIONAL.**

### **Article 2: Offensive Language**

Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. 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.

### **Article 3: Spectator Conduct**

Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

- A. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
- B. Keep comments clean and profanity free.

#### **Article 4: Field Safety**

Coaches and fans are required to keep fields safe and kid-friendly. Therefore, no family members or fans are allowed on the field or sidelines 30 minutes prior to the start of a game until the game(s) for that day have been concluded.

- A. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards away from the field of play.

#### **Article 5: Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty**

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:

- A. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
- B. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

# Minnesota High School Flag Football



## Officiating Mechanics Manual

Updated: February 2025

Adapted from [USA Football 5v5 Rulebook](#)

# Section 1: General Provisions

## Article 1: Jurisdiction of Officials

- a. The officials' jurisdiction begins with the coin toss and ends when the Referee declares the score finals.
- b. Officials are responsible for ensuring each team has at least a 10-minute break/warm up period prior to the start of a contest.

## Article 2: Coin Toss

- a. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet the officials at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls 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.
- c. To begin the second half, the team that started the game on defense begins with possession.
- d. Teams change direction after the first half.

## Article 3: Number of Officials

- a. Number of Officials - The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 (R and FJ) or 3 (R, DJ and FJ) officials.
- b. If officiating crews contain 2 or 3 officials, the other job responsibilities are to be split accordingly.
- c. If only 2 officials are present, one will be positioned at the LOS and the other will be positioned at the 7 yard rush line.

## Article 4: Basic Responsibilities and Expectations

The officials will call all penalties.
Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

## Section 2: Crew of Two Mechanics

### Article 1: Two Officials

- a. In a crew of two there shall be a Referee and Field Judge.

## Referee

### Article 1: Initial Positioning

- a. The initial position of the Referee is on the scrimmage line on the sideline with the down indicator.

### Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

- a. The Referee has general oversight and control of the game, has final authority for the score and their decisions upon rules and other matters pertaining to the game are final.
- b. The Referee shall inspect the field and report any irregularities to game management, coaches and other officials.
- c. The Referee has final jurisdiction over player equipment.
- d. The Referee shall indicate that the ball is ready for play, award new series of downs, and administer penalties.
- e. The Referee shall keep the 30-second play clock. This clock starts once the Referee spots the ball.
- f. The Referee shall notify both head coaches of any disqualifications.

### Article 3: Responsibilities During Play

- a. After the snap, the Referee shall be responsible for ruling on the play behind the scrimmage line around the ball.
- b. The Referee is responsible for coverage of the quarterback.
- c. The Referee is responsible for the 5 second count for passes to be thrown.
  - i. The 5 second count shall be verbally counted: "1-Minnesota, 2-Minnesota, 3-Minnesota, 4-Minnesota, 5-Minnesota." At the end of the count the Referee will look to see if the ball has been released. If not then the play will be ruled a sack.
- d. The Referee has jurisdiction over the scrimmage line and their sideline.
- e. Once the ball has crossed the scrimmage line, the Referee shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field.

## Field Judge

### Article 1: Initial Positioning

- a. The initial position of the Field Judge is 7 yards from the line of scrimmage (rush line) on the sideline opposite the down indicator.

## Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

- a. The Field Judge is responsible for timing the game, halftime, and time between games (if back to back contests are being played) or supervising the game clock operator in these duties.
- b. The Field Judge is responsible for tracking and timing the 30-second timeouts. Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.

## Article 3: Responsibilities During Play

- a. The Field Judge has jurisdiction over their sideline.
- b. The Field Judge determines rush line violations.
- c. As soon as the Field Judge determines there are no rush line infractions, they watch for pass game violations.
- d. The Field Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball, forward progress on their side of the field, and pass interference.

# Section 3: Crew of Three Mechanics

## Article 1: Three Officials

- a. In a crew of three there shall be a Referee, Field Judge, and Down Judge.

## Referee

### Article 1: Initial Positioning

- a. The initial position of the Referee is 7-10 yards deep in the offensive backfield and 5-7 yards towards the sideline on the right side of the offensive formation.

### Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

- a. The Referee has general oversight and control of the game, has final authority for the score and their decisions upon rules and other matters pertaining to the game are final.
- b. The Referee shall inspect the field and report any irregularities to game management, coaches and other officials.
- c. The Referee has final jurisdiction over player equipment.
- d. The Referee shall indicate that the ball is ready for play, award new series of downs, and administer penalties.
- e. The Referee shall keep the 30-second play clock. This clock starts once the Referee spots the ball.
- f. The Referee shall notify both head coaches of any disqualifications.

## Article 3: Responsibilities During Play

- a. After the snap, the Referee shall be responsible for ruling on the play behind the scrimmage line around the ball.
- b. The Referee is responsible for coverage of the quarterback.
- c. The Referee is responsible for the 5 second count for passes to be thrown.
  - i. The 5 second count shall be verbally counted: "1-Minnesota, 2-Minnesota, 3-Minnesota, 4-Minnesota, 5-Minnesota." At the end of the count the Referee will look to see if the ball has been released. If not then the play will be ruled a sack.

## Field Judge

### Article 1: Initial Positioning

- a. The initial position of the Field Judge is 7 yards from the line of scrimmage (rush line) on the sideline opposite the down indicator.

### Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

- a. The Field Judge is responsible for timing the game, halftime, and time between games (if back to back contests are being played) or supervising the game clock operator in these duties.
- b. The Field Judge is responsible for tracking and timing the 30-second timeouts. Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.

## Article 3: Responsibilities During Play

- a. The Field Judge has jurisdiction over their sideline.
- b. The Field Judge determines rush line violations.
- c. As soon as the Field Judge determines there are no rush line infractions, they watch for pass game violations.
- d. The Field Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball, forward progress on their side of the field, and pass interference.

## Down Judge

### Article 1: Initial Positioning

- a. The initial position of the Down Judge is on the scrimmage line on the sideline with the down indicator.

### Article 2: Basic Responsibilities

- a. The Down Judge is responsible for the operation of the down indicator.
- b. The Down Judge shall be responsible for the scrimmage line and their sideline.

## Article 3: Responsibilities During Play

- a. The Down Judge has jurisdiction over their sideline.
- b. The Down Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball, forward progress on their side of the field, and pass interference.

## Section 4: Summary of Penalties

### Article 1: Defensive Spot Fouls

Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 Yards From the Spot
Illegal Equipment	+5 from the spot. *Further infractions may result in unsportsmanlike conduct up to ejection.

### Article 2: Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down
Illegal Equipment	-5 yards from the spot of the foul. *Further infractions may result in unsportsmanlike conduct up to ejection

### Article 3: Defensive Penalties









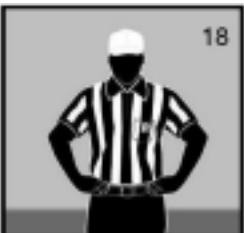









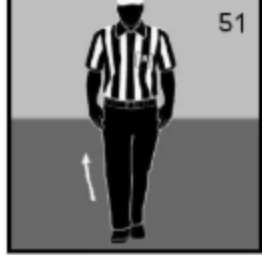

Defensive pass interference	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Offsides	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Signal	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage. Live ball foul
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and

	automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards & automatic first down

## Article 4: Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offsides / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion (More than one person moving)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the Blitz	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Taunting	-5 yards and loss of down
Center Sneak	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Backwards pass	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

## SECTION 5. OFFICIALS SIGNALS

<p><b>S 1</b></p>  <p><b>Ready for play</b></p>	<p><b>S 3</b></p>  <p><b>Stop the clock</b></p>	<p><b>S 5</b></p>  <p><b>Touchdown</b></p>	<p><b>S 6</b></p>  <p><b>Safety</b></p>
<p><b>S 8</b></p>  <p><b>First Down</b></p>	<p><b>S 9</b></p>  <p><b>Loss of down</b></p>	<p><b>S 10</b></p>  <p><b>Incomplete pass</b></p>	<p><b>S 14</b></p>  <p><b>End of period</b></p>
<p><b>S 18</b></p>  <p><b>Offside Illegal Blitz</b></p>	<p><b>S 19</b></p>  <p><b>False start Illegal procedure</b></p>	<p><b>S 21</b></p>  <p><b>Delay of game Delay of pass</b></p>	<p><b>S 22</b></p>  <p><b>Illegal participation Illegal substitution</b></p>
<p><b>S 27</b></p>  <p><b>Unsportsmanlike conduct</b></p>	<p><b>S 33</b></p>  <p><b>Pass Interference</b></p>	<p><b>S 35</b></p>  <p><b>Illegal forward or backward pass</b></p>	<p><b>S 38</b></p>  <p><b>Illegal contact</b></p>
<p><b>S 43</b></p>  <p><b>Shielding</b></p>	<p><b>S 47</b></p>  <p><b>Disqualification</b></p>	<p><b>S 51</b></p>  <p><b>Jumping Diving</b></p>	<p><b>S 52</b></p>  <p><b>Flag guarding Illegal Flag pull</b></p>

**\*\*THIS MANUAL REPRESENTS PRACTICE AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES BASED ON OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE. RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS MORE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.\*\***