



Jr. Loper Flag Football Rules



YMCA GOAL

- The YMCA goal is to give every child between the grades of K-8th the opportunity to play flag football. To learn flag football skills, sportsmanship, working together as a team: promote new friendships, positive family interactions and to have FUN.

SPORTSMANSHIP

- Coaches are directly responsible for team members before, during & after the game.
- If the referee or supervisor witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or unsportsmanlike conduct, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
- Any trash talking or taunting which is intended to embarrass, ridicule, or demean others under any circumstance will not be tolerated. First offense is a warning; the second offense is ejection from the game.

COACH CONDUCT:

- Coaches are expected to adhere to YMCA philosophies, coaching guidelines and codes of conduct.
- Only one coach is allowed to be on the field . All other coaches (assistant coaches) must be on sideline.

PRACTICES

- Practice will be scheduled by the coach. Teams practice once a week for up to 1 hour. 4th Grade + can practice two times per week.
- Reminder:** Outside facilities are open to members; you may have to share with other YMCA teams.
- In case of bad weather, coaches will make the decision whether to cancel practices. Game cancellations/delays will be determined by Y staff.

EQUIPMENT:

- All participants will need a Jr. Loper reversible jersey—jerseys must be tucked in and flags must visible and at the hips.
 *Home Team: White Away Team: Blue
- Each team will be provided team equipment (2 footballs, flag belts) for practice and games—return equipment after final game of the season
- Mouth guards are encouraged to wear mouth guards during practices and games.
- Cleats are optional, metal spikes are not allowed.

TEAM SIZE:

- K-3rd Grade: 5v5—7-10 players per team
 - 4-8th Grade: 7v7—10-14 players per team If team is short players, they may opt to play 5v5.
- The Y emphasizes equal participation, please allow players to play different positions and play at least half of each game.

BALL SIZE:

- K-1st Grade will play with Mini size football
- 2-3rd Grade will play with Pee Wee size ball
- 4-5th Grade will play with Junior ball
- 6-8th Grade will play with Intermediate ball

FIELD OF PLAY:

- K-3rd Grade—Approximately 50 yards long by 20 yards wide. (5-yard end zone) (2 first down markers)
- 4-8th Grade—Approximately 60 yards long by 30 yards wide. (5-yard end zone) (2 first down markers)

However, some locations may use smaller or larger fields due to available field space.

NO-RUN ZONES

4-8th Grade: 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.

START OF GAME

- The game is started with the players/coaches meeting with the official (s) at midfield to review rules and going over the Youth Sports Pledge.
- First possession (including OT) will be determined by **Rocks, Paper, Scissors**. Winner has the choice of offense of defense. The loser has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- The offensive team begins the game and second half by taking possession of the ball on its 5-yard line.

TIMING

- Games are two 20-minute halves (running clock) with a 5 minute half time. Team changes sides after halftime.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Officials should use discretion with teams who are still learning the basic football skills and may need more time to line up and get a play off. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced
- Each team has one 60 second time out per half. Clock will stop for timeouts.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.

SCORING

- Scores are not kept for K-3rd Grade.
- Score will be kept for 4th grade & up but will not show more than a 30 point difference.
 - Overtime: Only during tournament play:** If score is tied at the end of regulation, overtime (OT) period will be used to determine a winner.
 - OT format:** Each team is allowed a minimum of one possession from the defense 15 yard line.
 - Each team gets a minimum of one possession to score until winner is determined.
- **Touchdown:** 6 points
- **Point After Touchdown:** 1 point—play from approx. 5-yard line) 2 points—play from approx. 15 yard line
 - Because of the No-run zone, a one point PAT is pass only; two point PAT can be run or pass.
- **Safety:** No Safety Rule– If safety occurs; offense loses a down, and restarts play at 5 yard line.

GAME:

- **K-1st Grade:** The offense takes possession of the ball on its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross the next first down marker. Once a team crosses the first down marker, it has four (4) plays to move to the next marker. If the team fails to cross marker in four downs or score a touchdown, the other team takes possession on its own 5-yard line. There will be no punts for this division. All 4 downs will be used without the concern of giving up field position.
- **2-8th Grade:** The offense takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross the next first down marker. Once a team crosses the first down marker, it has four (4) plays to next marker or score a touchdown. A team may choose to go for the first down or a touchdown on 4th down but if it does not convert, the other team will take over possession of the ball where the play ends.
- **2-3rd Grade:** If a team may chooses to punt on 4th down, the defense takes over at their own 5 yard line. (No actual punting will take place)
- **4-8th Grade: Punting–**
 - A team may punt on any down but must first notify the official and defending team.
 - No one may rush the punter or jump while the ball is in play. If so, re-kick will take place
 - Any punt that is not caught and hits the ground will be dead at that spot.
 - The kicking team cannot cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.
 - A punt that is downed by the receiving team in the end zone will be spotted at the 5-yard line.
- The only turnover allowed is an interception, which may be advanced by the defense for a gain. Interception TD during PAT attempt will result in 2 points and defense will take over on the 5 yard line.

OFFENSE

- The quarterback is the first player to touch the ball from the snap.
- The Quarterback **CANNOT** run the ball across the line of scrimmage, he/she must hand off or pass. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the back field, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. **Penalty: 5 yards and loss of down**
 - **Exception: 6-8th Grade:** *The QB has the option to run only if blitzed by the defense & player blitzing crosses the line of scrimmage.*
- A player who takes a handoff or pitch can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs, not pitches.
- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play.
- A muff snap to the quarterback will **not** be considered a fumble and may be picked up by the quarterback and play continues. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback and only the QB may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack)
- No Center Sneaks allowed—the center is not eligible to receive handoffs.
- An offensive team must have a minimum of 1 player on the line of scrimmage (Center) .
- Only direct handoffs/pitches behind the line of scrimmage are permitted.
- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled,
- **4-8th Grade:** The No-Run Zone is located 5-yards before the endzone. Teams are not allowed to run in this zone. This is designed to avoid short yard power running situations.
- If ball carrier accidentally loses a flag or falls down, the ball is dead at that spot (receiver is still eligible, but if catches pass, is down at that spot)
- Offensive players must avoid contact with the defensive player. **Penalty: 5 yards and loss of down.**
- Players are allowed to spin only to avoid contact with the defender. No continual spinning is allowed. **Penalty: 5 yards and loss of down.**
- Players can't leave their feet to avoid their flag from being pulled and no diving is allowed. 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.
- A player with the ball is not allowed to guard flags with his hands, swatting defenders hands away. **Penalty: 5 yards from spot and loss of down.**
- Stiff Arming is not allowed. **Penalty: 5 yards from the spot and loss of down.**

PASSING

- Quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, it is treated as an incomplete pass (loss of down). If the QB is standing in the end-zone at the end of 7-second clock, the ball will be returned to the line of scrimmage. Officials will count out loud so players know the clock
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage. **Penalty: 5 yards and loss of down.**
- Interceptions are a change of possession. Interceptions may be returned by the defense for a positive gain. Interception TD during extra-point conversion will result in 2 points and defense will take over on the 5 yard line
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

NO CONTACT/ NO HANDS RULES

Offensive and defensive players may not extend their hands or arms to block, push, or impede an opponent.

Offensive players: May not initiate contact in any way. Screening without contact is allowed.

Defensive players: Must avoid contact when rushing the quarterback and must go around offensive players
May not initiate contact or use their hands at the line of scrimmage

- "Incidental contact may occur, but the player who initiates or creates the contact is responsible.
- Once the ball has been handed off or pitched, all defensive players may rush.

RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive a forward pass.
- **Only 1 player in motion is allowed at a time.** Players may shift positions on offense at any time, all players must still reset for 1 second, prior to the snap.
- A player must have at least one foot in bounds to make a legal reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

DEAD BALLS: Play is ruled dead when:

- ball carrier's flag is pulled
- When the ball is fumble except when the ball is snapped
- Ball carrier steps out of bounds
- Touchdown or extra-point is scored
- Ball Carrier's knee hits the ground
- Ball carrier's flag falls out or the receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- The 7 second pass clock expires.

FUMBLES

- The ball hits the ground as a fumble. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble. One exception to this rule is with the center/quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback and only the QB may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack)

DEFENSE

- A Defensive player is not allowed to strip the football from the offensive player running the ball. **Penalty: 5 yards from the spot & automatic first down.**
- A Defensive player is allowed to strip the football from a receiver trying to catch a pass.

RUSHING THE QB

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of **7-yards** from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Only (I) players can rush the quarterback. Rushers **MUST** identify themselves by raising their hand before the snap. Rushers **MUST** rush the passer immediately after the snap. Delayed rush is **NOT** permitted. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend the line of scrimmage.
—Rushing the QB will not be allowed in the K-3rd division in the first 3 games. Beginning on Game 4, rushing will be allowed from the designated 7 yard line.
- The official will designate a Rush Line **7-yard** from the LOS. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with official on every play.
- Once the ball is handed off, pitched, or lateraled backwards behind the LOS any member of the defense can cross the line of scrimmage to defend. **An illegal rush penalty is 5 yards and automatic 1st down**
- Players rushing the QB can attempt to block the pass. However, no contact can be made with the QB in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer still results in roughing the passer penalty.

PENALTIES

All penalties will be called by the referee.

- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** (swearing, disrespecting official taunting, spiking, etc.)—10 yard penalty and automatic 1st down or loss of down and depending on infraction; it may result in ejection
- **Personal Foul** intentional flagrant actions beyond illegal contact—Player is ejected. 10 yard penalty & loss of down or automatic 1st down if by defense.
- All penalties within 5 yards of the end zone will be half the distance to the goal line.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage
- Only the team coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls

DEFENSE:

- **Offsides**—5 yards and automatic 1st down
- **Defensive Pass Interference**—automatic 1st down (Spot foul)
- **Defensive Unnecessary Roughness** (holding, blocking, tackling, pushing, stripping of ball)—5 yards from the spot and automatic 1st down
- **Roughing the Passer:** 5 yards and automatic 1st down
- **Illegal Flag Pull** (before receiver has ball)—5 yards and automatic 1st down
- **Illegal Rushing** (start rush inside 7-yard marker)—5 yards and automatic 1st down
- All defensive penalties incur automatic 1st down and loss of 5 yards

OFFENSE:

- **Offensive Unnecessary Roughness** (stiff arm, charging, blocking, pushing): loss of 5 yards (from the spot) and loss of down
- **Illegal Motion** (false start, off-sides, multiple players in motion, QB running ball)—loss of 5 yards and repeat down
- **Illegal Forward Pass** (throwing a pass beyond line of scrimmage)—loss of 5 yards and loss of down.
- **Offensive Pass Interference** (illegal pick, pushing off defender)—loss of 5 yards and loss of down
- **Flag Guarding**—loss of 5 yards (from the spot) and loss of down
- **Delay of Game** (more than 30 seconds to begin next play)—loss of 5 yards and loss of down