

Buffalo Flag Football League

Rule Book

ARTICLE 01 INTRODUCTION

Section 01.01

FIELD

- 80 x 50 yard fields
- 10 yard end zones first downs at 20-40-20

Section 01.02

TIME

- 25 minute halves
- 3 minute halftime
- Each team can call 2 timeouts per half (1-minute) to stop the clock
- There will be a 2-minute warning, with clock stoppage, in both the 1st and 2nd halves. During the last 2 minutes of the game (2nd half only), the clock will stop for out-of-bounds and incomplete passes
- The play clock is 25 seconds and will begin when the ball is returned to the huddle

Section 01.03

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

- All players must be 17 years of age and a "junior" in high school at the time of their first game
- Full team roster must be turned in before the first game of the season. Roster additions cannot be made after the second game of the season
 - Players may play only on the team they are listed on the roster for. If a team is short players during a given week, the team captain must check with the opposing team and inquire whether that team will allow a non-rostered player to play in that game. The team that is short players is subject to the opposing team's choice, whether the game will be played and/or count as a valid game in the standings
- No players are allowed to play in the BFFL that concurrently play in a flag league that is "body-up" style of play
 - PENALTY: All games will be forfeited from the beginning of the season through the date of the violation

Section 01.04

PLAYOFF ELIGIBILITY

- Player must participate in at least half of the regular season games to play in playoffs
 - "Participate" constitutes a player being on the team sideline for at least a full half per game

Section 01.05

JERSEYS & EQUIPMENT

- Home team has choice of jersey color. Visiting team must wear contrasting color
- Pockets are not allowed on shorts or pants
 - Pockets must be sewn shut (taped pockets are not acceptable)
- Flags must be pop-style and cannot be the same color as the shorts
- No jewelry is allowed
 - Wedding bands/rings are allowed
 - If a piercing cannot be removed, then it must be completely covered with medical/athletic tape.

PENALTY: If a player is on the field during play and does not meet the above jersey/equipment requirements, a 10-yard penalty will be assessed to the offending team and the player may not return to the field of play until they meet the above jersey/equipment requirement

Section 01.06

GAME START

- If a team does not have at least 7 eligible players at the start of the game, 7 points will be awarded to the opposing team and the time clock will begin
- If a team does not have at least 7 eligible players at the start of 5 minutes into the game (5 minutes expired from the game clock), then another 7 point will be awarded to the opposing team
- If a team does not have at least 7 eligible players at the start of 10 minutes into the game (10 minutes expired from the game clock), then the game will end in a forfeit and the opposing team will be awarded a 14-0 victory
- **Note:** Teams must be ready at the start. If a team is not ready due to fixing equipment (e.g. duct taping pockets), the above penalty(ies) shall apply
- The HOME team will call the coin toss
 - The team winning the coin toss have their choice of (make call ONE of the following):
 - Ball – receive or kick
 - Field – which side they want to defend
 - Defer – allow the opposing team to choose ball OR field
 - The team NOT making the first choice will then have their choice of whichever was not picked (ball or field); they will have their first choice for the second half

Section 01.07

RULES

- USFTL with modifications for Safety and Sportsmanship
- Common sense football rules default to NFL rules

Section 01.08

FINAL STANDINGS

- Final standings will be determined in this order:
 - Record
 - Win/loss against opposing team (meaning if there are two teams with the same record, the tie-breaker will go to the team that won when the two teams played each other)
 - Average points scored against excluding forfeits (meaning if the two teams did not play each other, then the tie-breaker will go to the team that had the least average points scored against them in the regular season, excluding forfeits)

Section 01.09

CLEAN UP

- Each team is responsible to make sure their sideline is CLEAN at the end of the game
- Teams with the last game are 100% RESPONSIBLE for the cleanliness of the sidelines
- **PENALTY:** If complaints are received, BOTH TEAMS WILL BE PENALIZED 7PTS THE FOLLOWING WEEK
- Second offense: Loss of 14 points
- Third offense: NO PLAYOFFS

ARTICLE 02 GAME PLAY

Section 02.01

LOOSE BALL

- Fumbles are dead on the ground
- Fumbles that do not touch the ground are LIVE (ball can not be stripped)

- Kickoffs can only be received by the receiving team ONLY. The kicking team can not recover a kickoff. REFS MUST BLOW WHISTLE WHEN DEFENDERS ARE WITHIN 10 YARDS OF RECEIVING TEAM RECOVERING A GROUNDED BALL
- All bad snaps are DEAD (except on declared punts)

Section 02.02

KICKOFFS

- Kickoff will be from the 20 yard line; at least one player from the receiving team shall be within the 10 yard restraining line (10 Yards)
- Teams have 45 seconds from the extra point to kick the ball. If the time limit is exceeded, A 5 yard penalty DELAY OF GAME will be assessed and the kicking team has 20 seconds to kick the ball
- If ball is kicked out of bounds on kickoffs the receiving team takes the ball at the 30 yard line or where it went out of bounds. There is no RE-KICK. Each additional kickoff out of bounds will result in an additional 5 yards. (e.g. 2nd penalty: 35 yard line, 3rd penalty: 40 yard line)

PUNTING

- Fake punts are legal (not if declared punt by offense)
- Rushing is legal (not if declared punt by offense)
- Declared Punts:
 - A team may choose to declare a punt. It is the obligation OF THE OFFENSE TO DECLARE THE PUNT. They will not be asked if they are punting; they will only be advised it is 4th down. A team may not choose to declare a punt. A declared punt is for the protection of the punting team
 - On a declared punt, no player can leave the line of scrimmage until the ball is punted
 - The defense must have 4 men on the line
 - If a penalty occurs on a declared punt, you are not required to kick the ball after the penalty is assessed but for it to be a declared punt you must declare it again
 - On declared punts the ball must be kicked immediately or a delay of game will be assessed
 - If the ball is dropped after the snap, the punter may pick up the ball and punt it (only on declared punts)
 - Fake punts are not allowed on declared punts

MUFFS

- Dropped or deflected punts or kicks can be picked up and returned (by any receiving team member). If a ball is loose and a defender is within 10 yards, the official will blow the whistle and the play is dead. A loose ball can NEVER be recovered by the kicking team

Section 02.03

GAME CONTINUATION RULE

- If a team is winning the game by 19 points or more and there are 2 minutes left to play in the game, the refs may end the game at their discretion

Section 02.04

OVERTIME

- Overtime rules apply to both the regular season and playoffs
- Each team will have 4 downs from the extra point line
 - If the team crosses the goal line on one of their downs, they are awarded one point
 - If the team does not cross the goal line on one of their downs, then the spot of the ball re-sets on the extra point line
 - An interception by the defense will end the down – no points are awarded to the defense
 - The score is tied after each team has had four offensive tries from the extra point line, then the game will enter “sudden death”:
 - Each team gets one try from the extra point line until the tie is broken
 - Each team must have an equal number of tries from the extra point line

Section 02.05

ON-SIDES KICK

- This method of on-side kick can only take place in the last 2 minutes of the game. The kicking team regains possession if the returning team fails to advance the ball past the 20 yard line
 - Penalties resulting in a mark off of yardage that result inside the 20 yard line is also a successful attempt
 - Penalties such as flag guarding outside of the 20 yard line will NOT result in a successful attempt because yardage was gained before penalty occurred
- This is ONLY if the kicking team is the losing team
- Touchbacks are considered a successful on-side kick and the ball will be awarded to the kicking team
- Possession will be the 40 yard line

Section 02.06

DOWNES, DISTANCE SCORING AND EXTRA POINTS

- Spot of the ball is determined where the flags are when the player was downed (not where the ball was)
- The offense has 4 downs to reach the next 20-yard marker for a first down, or to score in the final 20 yards of the field before the goal line
- When an official sounds his whistle while the ball is still in play (“inadvertent whistle”), the ball becomes dead immediately:
 - The team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or replay the down
 - If the ball was a loose ball when the inadvertent whistle was sounded, then the down is replayed from the previous spot
- Touchdowns = 6 points
- Extra points = 3 yards – 1 point, 8 yards – 2 points
- PAT attempts are returnable to the opposing endzone upon interception by the defense. Successful return of an intercepted PAT will result in those points being awarded to the defense

Section 02.07

LINE PLAY

- Offense – at least 4 men on the line of scrimmage
 - At least 1 player must be lined up on either side of the center (can be a wide-out)
- Defense – at least 1 man on the line of scrimmage
- No 3 or 4 point stances
- If the QB lines up under center, they cannot run the ball between the guards. The QB must be lined up behind the line of scrimmage at least 3 yards in order to be eligible to run the ball between the guards
 - PENALTY: 5 yards and replay the down
- Offensive players (i.e. wide-outs) must line up at least 5 yards from the sideline
 - PENALTY: 5 yards and replay the down
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier’s flag was pulled to end the play

Section 02.08

CONTACT BLOCKING

- Contact blocking is legally hindering the progress of an opponent in a fair and safe manner. Blockers must be on their feet before, during and after contact is made with their opponents. You may not dive to block. Two on one blocking is permitted at the line of scrimmage and elsewhere. Under no conditions shall a high-low block, cross body block or rolling block be permitted. The blocker is allowed to contact only that portion of the opponent’s body between the waist and shoulders. An open hand, straight arm block, within the lacework of the blocker’s body, is the ideal block to avoid unnecessary rough play. You may not grab the jersey of an opponent while attempting to block. The blocker’s hands may not be locked together. The blocker may not swing, throw or flip the elbow or forearm. There shall be no contact of any kind to the head and/or shoulders in the attempt to block an opponent. The main concept to keep contact blocking under control is to stress safe, clean, sportsmanlike contact between opponents. In general, players:

- The blocker must use open hands when engaging a defender
- In all instances, blockers must be on their feet when blocking; accidentally falling when attempting to block is not illegal
- The blocker's hands may not be locked
- The blocker may not swing, throw, or flip the elbow or forearm
- Blocking below the waist is illegal
- Neither the offensive or defensive team may make contact with an opponent's head
- When a defender engages a blocker, the defender must engage the blocker with open hands. This includes kick-offs and punts

ARTICLE 03 PENALTIES

Section 03.01

SUMMARY OF PENALTIES

- Offensive:
 - False start: 5 yards
 - Illegal motion: 5 yards
 - Illegal substitution: at snap – 5 yards; participating in play - 10 yards
 - Holding: 10 yards
 - Tripping: 10 yards
 - Flag guarding (section 03.03): 10 yards from spot of foul and the play counts
 - Diving to advance the ball (section 03.05): 10 yards from spot of foul and the play counts
 - Pass interference (section 03.10): 10 yards from the previous spot and loss of down
 - Illegal block downfield: 10 yards
 - Illegal forward pass: 5 yards from spot of pass and loss of down
 - Leaving line of scrimmage on declared punt: 5 yards and replay down
 - Helping the runner: 5 yards and replay down
 - Blocking in the back: 10 yards from spot of foul and the play counts
 - Concealing the ball under clothing: 10 yards
 - Delay of game: 5 yards and replay down
 - Player (e.g. WR) less than 5 yards from sideline: 5 yards and replay down
- Defensive:
 - Offsides: 5 yards
 - Defensive players cannot get back onside – once they cross the line of scrimmage, the play is blown dead
 - Holding/obstruction of runner (section 03.07): 10 yards added to end of run
 - Holding also constitutes the grabbing on of any jersey
 - Pass interference (section 03.10): spot of foul and automatic first down
 - Holding the receiver downfield: 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - Tripping: 10 yards
 - Pushing ball carrier out of bounds: 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Illegal rush (rushing beyond 5 yards of the line of scrimmage/rushing on declared punts.): 5 yards and replay the down
 - Roughing the passer (section 03.11): 10 yards and automatic first down
 - Roughing the center (section 03.12): 10 yards
 - Drawing a false start by intentional movement, yelling, etc: 10 yards
 - Crossing line of scrimmage on declared punt: 5 yards and replay down
 - De-flagging a player before they have possession of the ball (section 03.08): 10 yards added to end of run
 - Attempting to strip the ball carrier: 10 yards added to end of run
- Other
 - Calling timeout when none are left: 5 yards
 - Lowering the shoulder (blocking or rushing): 10 yards

- Player entering the field to participate in a fight: ejection from the game and 10 yard penalty and a 1 game suspension

Section 03.02

ILLEGAL BLOCKING

- See **section 02.08** for information on contact blocking
- Blocking with the forearm or shoulder (offense or defense)
- Blocking with hands locked
- Swinging, throwing, or flipping the elbow or forearm while blocking (offense or defense)
- Blocking below the waist
- Making contact with an opponent's head (offense or defense)
- Downfield blocking
- Block in the back

PENALTY: 10 yards

Section 03.03

FLAG GUARDING

- Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or fail to deny the opportunity for an opponent to remove the flag. Flag guarding includes:
 - Swinging the hand or arm over the flag to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.
 - Place the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging
 - Lower the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging
 - There shall be no hurdling to advance the ball forward; jumping straight up (e.g. jump pass), laterally, backwards or hurdling to avoid injury is acceptable
 - The ball carrier shall not deliberately drive or run into a defensive player

PENALTY: 10 yards from the spot of the foul and the play stands

Section 03.04

STIFF ARM

- The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This includes the use of a "stiff arm" extended to ward off an opponent attempting to de-flag/tag

PENALTY: Personal Foul 10 yards at spot of the foul, play stands

Section 03.05

DIVING TO ADVANCE THE BALL

- Diving to advance the ball is an illegal advancement

PENALTY: Personal Foul 10 yards from spot of the foul, play stands

Section 03.06

HELPING THE RUNNER

- The runner shall not steer or push a teammate (i.e. blocker) or be grasped, pushed or pulled by a teammate

PENALTY: Helping the runner 5 yards and replay the down

Section 03.07

OBSTRUCTION OF RUNNER

- The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag or making a legal tag
- If defender is the last line of defense and the referees feel the runner would have scored, officials can award a touchdown

PENALTY: Personal Foul 10 yards from end of the run

Section 03.08

LEGAL AND ILLEGAL FLAG REMOVAL

- Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be de-flagged
- Each player should make sure his flags are in place before the start of each play
- If before the play starts, player intentionally neglects to install flag or purposely starts the play without it

PENALTY: Equipment penalty, 10 yards, repeat the down

- When a runner loses his flag inadvertently at the beginning or during a play, de-flagging simply reverts to one-hand touch of the ball carrier
- A defender who intentionally pulls a flag from an offensive player without the ball is deemed illegal

PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards added to the end of the play

Section 03.09

TAMPERING WITH THE FLAG

- Tampering with the flag in any way to gain an advantage including tying or using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down and player disqualification

Section 03.10

PASS INTERFERENCE

- Spot of foul, automatic first down (in the end zone, on the one yard line)
- Only one bump within the first 5 yards, not a heavy chuck or an attempt to knock down a receiver. No contact before a catch other than players going for the ball. On tipped passes all players must play the ball. You cannot knock down, go through, punch or strike a player attempting to recover a tipped pass
- Offense – 10 yard penalty from line of scrimmage and replay of down
- Defense – spot of foul and first down
 - Pass interference cannot happen at or behind the line of scrimmage, but defensive actions such as impeding the receiver's ability to catch the ball results in a defensive holding penalty – 5 yards from the spot and automatic first down
- Defense holding receiver downfield: 10 yard penalty from line of scrimmage and first down

Section 03.11

ROUGHING THE PASSER

- Defensive players **MUST** make a definitive effort to avoid charging into the passer (or anyone acting as the passer) before, during and after the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he is considered out of the play after the pass

PENALTY: Roughing the passer: Incomplete pass > 10 yards and first down. Completed Pass > first down and yardage gained plus 10 yards

Section 03.12

CENTER PROTECTION: ROUGHING THE CENTER

- You cannot line up directly over the center. Minimum 1 yard buffer
- If you line up in the center guard gap, you cannot cross over the center's path and rush the other gap
- The center cannot go forward with his head down
- No stunting across the centers path
- If you line up in the center guard gap, you must set, and remain set
- You cannot bump the center going out for a pass until he is 1 yard off the line of scrimmage. Incidental contact with the center while rushing the center guard gap is legal. Impeding the centers forward movement within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage is not legal
- You cannot bull rush the center

PENALTY: 10 yards and if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified

Section 03.13

DEAD BALL PLAYER FOULS

- When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he shall not:
 - Intentionally kick the ball
 - Spike the ball into the ground
 - Throw the ball high into the air
 - Fail to return ball into the huddle

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct 10 yards, and if flagrant, offender shall be disqualified

Section 03.14

PROHIBITED ACTS

- There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, coaches, substitutes or others subject to the rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Any acts of unfair play
 - Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with permission of the referee
 - Spiking the ball, taunting opponents or other similar theatrics before or after a touchdown
 - Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally
 - Intentionally kick the ball
 - Coaches or others on the field of play at any time
 - Players leaving the field of play other than during the intermission at half
 - A substitute or any other person interfering with a player or any play when the ball is live
 - The punter delaying the kick, after requesting protection
 - Attempting to substitute a suspended player
 - Pulling or removing a flag from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player intentionally

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified

Section 03.15

UNFAIR ACTS

- No player shall block in a manner that would cause his or her feet, knees, or legs to strike an opponent
All blocking shall be done with the feet in contact with the ground
- There shall be no high-low blocking
- There shall be no contact with a player on the ground
- The runner shall not be thrown to the ground
- There shall be no tripping
- There shall be no clipping

- No player shall contact an opponent obviously out of the play either before or after the ball is declared dead
- There shall be no unnecessary roughness of any nature
- Tackling
- Using fists
- Knocking out of bounds
- Punch strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession (penalty added to end of run)
- Position himself on the shoulders or body of a teammate to gain an advantage
- Making any contact with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary of any nature including the fists, locked hands, elbows or any part of the forearm or hand

PENALTY: 10 yards and if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified

Section 03.16

DELIBERATE FLAGRANT FOULS (SUSPENSION FROM GAME)

- Whenever, in the judgment of any game official, the following acts are deliberate or flagrant the players involved shall be disqualified from the game. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Intentionally contacting a game official physically during the game by persons subject to the rules
 - Roughing the kicker or center
 - Tackling the ball carrier as in regulation football
 - Using fists, kicking and fighting
 - Using locked hands, elbows or any part of the forearm or hand
 - Any other deliberate or flagrant act

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards and if FLAGRANT, the offender shall be disqualified

ARTICLE 04 PLAYER CONDUCT

Section 04.01

ARGUING WITH OFFICIALS

- Arguing with officials will NOT be tolerated. If a team would like clarification on a ruling made on the field, the team must adhere to the following process:
 - Only a team captain reports to the official(s)
 - The team captain may receive clarification on a ruling in a respectful manner
 - Therefore, any non-captain with an issue must direct his captain to see the official(s)

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards

Section 04.02

COMMUNITY SPORTSMANSHIP

- Any official reserves the right to penalize a team or player for conduct that is judged to be unsportsmanlike with regard to the community setting, including but not limited to:
 - Conduct that is disrespectful towards other players, officials, bystanders, the fields and surrounding housing/school community. (e.g. inappropriate language that fans and community bystanders would be able to hear from the sideline)

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards

Section 04.03

PLAYER CONDUCT

- Trash-talking and taunting directed at any player, team or an official
- Swearing, abusive or derogatory language directed at any player, team or an official

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if player continues, the official reserves the right to eject the player

- Any fighting, physical altercations or actions with the intent to injure

PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and ejection of player(s) from the game

Final League Note: Any issue regarding player conduct, eligibility, etc. that arises, may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and resulting consequences shall be at the discretion of league administration.