

# **ESAL Flag Football Rules**

## **Team Setup**

- Teams must have a minimum of 5 players, or a maximum of 7 players on the field
- All players are eligible receivers, including the Center
- NO mixed gender teams
  - Boys and girls are separated

## **Field Dimensions**

- 30-40 yards wide and 60 yards long + (2) 10 yard endzones
  - 80 yards long total

## **Timing**

- Two 20 Minute Halves
  - The clock runs continuously for the first 18 minutes of each half unless it is stopped for:
    - A charged timeout
    - An official's timeout; or
    - The end of a quarter
- 2 Minute Warning/Stoppage Period
  - During the last two minutes of each half, the timing rules change
  - Situations that stop the clock during this period can be divided into major and minor clockstoppers
    - Major Clockstoppers (clock stops after the play and starts on the next snap)
      - Two Minute Warning
      - Incomplete pass
      - Out-of-bounds
      - Safety
      - Touchback
      - Touchdown (after Try)
      - Team timeout
      - Turnover (change of possession)
    - Minor Clockstoppers (clock stops after the play and starts on the ready-for-play whistle)
      - First down
      - Penalty and enforcement
      - ■ EXCEPTION: Accepted Delay of Game Penalty—Snap
      - Referee's timeout
      - Team attempting to conserve time illegally
      - Inadvertent whistle

- 5 Minute Halftime
- 3 (1 minute) Timeouts per half
- ~55-60 Minute Games

## General Equipment

- Team may provide their own ball
- The offense is responsible for the ball
- Ball must be "Youth Size"
- Down box must be used on sideline and line up with the line-of-scrimmage
- Number markers on the sideline
- Pylons for the corner of each endzone

## Player Equipment

- A player must wear the following equipment: Failure to do so will result in not being allowed to play for that individual
  - Pants or shorts with **NO POCKETS**
  - A jersey with a number
  - Shoes
  - A flag belt (belt must have 3 flags, 2 on either side and 1 in the back) using the pop-off version
  - Mouth guard
- Players may wear the following:
  - Use an ace bandage
  - Wear gloves which must consist of a soft, pliable and nonabrasive material
  - Wear a knit or stocking cap with no bill
  - Wear a headband no wider than 2"
  - Wear soft, pliable pads on the leg, knee and/or ankle.
    - Includes soft, padded compression shirts/shorts
  - Carry playbooks on the field
  - Wear a soft, pliable wrist/forearm band that contains plays
  - Wear sunglasses
- Illegal Equipment: A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play
  - No jewelry
  - Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats, or items containing exposed knots.
  - Pads or braces worn above the waist
  - Casts
  - Metal cleats
  - Shirts or jerseys that are not tucked in

- Any hood which does not remain tucked in
- Towels attached at a players waist

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## Offensive Game Play Rules

- Snapping:
  - The ball must be snapped from the ground but does not have to be snapped between the legs.
  - The ball may be snapped to any person whose feet are at least 2 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
  - The person who receives the snap is considered the quarterback for that play.
- Blocking:
  - **NO BLOCKING OR SCREENING IS ALLOWED AT ANY TIME**
  - No excessive contact will be allowed at any time
- Passing:
  - All players are eligible receivers
  - The offensive team may NOT throw more than one forward pass per play.
  - The offensive team may throw an unlimited number of backward passes during any play.
  - No player may throw the ball forward if that player is beyond the line of scrimmage.
  - The QB MAY intentionally ground the ball by throwing the ball into the ground or out of bounds to avoid a sack. If the ball is thrown laterally or backwards it is considered a fumble and the ball will be placed at the spot where the ball crossed the out of bounds or hits the ground. If the pass is thrown forward it is considered an incomplete pass and will be placed at the previous spot.
- Rushing:
  - Quarterback can run the ball ONCE per SERIES OF DOWNS.
  - There is no limit on the number of times players other than the quarterback can run.
  - The PAT shall be treated as a new series (QB can run).
  - No stiff arming.
  - If a defense “blitzes” or rushes multiple defensive players at the quarterback, the quarterback may run without it counting as their one run per series of downs.
- No Run Zone:
  - No-Run Zones are located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards from each line-to-gain. No-run zones are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations to help avoid blocks/screens & excessive

contact. If a penalty or loss of yardage takes a team out of the no run zone (more than 5 yards from end zone or line to gain), that team is then allowed direct hand-offs again.

- QB runs are not allowed in these No Run Zones unless the defense blitzes.
- Direct hand-offs, including a direct hand-off following a forward or backward pass, are not allowed in these No Run Zones.
- Receiving:
  - A reception is deemed made if:
    - The receiver possesses the ball before the ball contacts the ground and
    - The receiver has a body part down in the field of play after possessing the ball.
    - The receiver may NOT use their hands or arms to move a defender to make a reception.
- Jumping:
  - A player may not leave their feet to avoid a flag from being pulled.
  - Officials will blow the whistle and the player will be down at the spot where they left their feet.
- Fumbles:
  - Fumbles are dead as soon as they hit the ground.
  - Forward or backward fumbles will be placed at the spot where the ball crossed the out of bounds line or hit the ground.
  - A fumble caught in the air by either team is a live ball and may be advanced.

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## Defensive Game Play Rules

- No excessive contact will be allowed
- Rushing/Blitzing:
  - Any defensive players can rush from any position on the field if they are **7 yards behind the line of scrimmage**.
  - Teams may only rush up to two (2) players at a time.
  - Rushers must attempt to avoid any offensive players. **NO EXCESSIVE** contact is allowed.
  - Rusher must avoid hitting the QB's arm, even on the follow through motion.
  - **NO** limit on the number of rushing attempts (BLITZS) by a team.
- Pass Defense:
  - Receivers are allowed a free release from the line of scrimmage. **NO** Bump and Run coverage (Press). This is an illegal contact foul - 10-yard

penalty. This would be enforced from the end of the related run (running play) or previous spot (pass play).

- Defenders are not allowed to play through the receiver to make a play on the ball.
- Interceptions occur if:
  - The interceptor possesses the ball before the ball contacts the ground
  - The interceptor has a body part down in the field of play after possessing the ball.
- If the defense intercepts a pass, they can return the ball for a touchdown. Wherever the flag is pulled is where the new offense will start their first series of downs.
- De-Flagging/Tackling:
  - The defender must make a play at the flags. A player may not try to strip, grab or knock free a ball in player possession, including a quarterback prior to passing the ball. If this occurs, it is penalized as an illegal contact foul.
  - When de-flagging the ball carrier:
    - The ball carrier is down at the point when the flag belt comes unclipped, NOT when it falls off.
    - The ball will be spotted using forward progress where the ball is at when the flag comes unclipped, not where the flag may fall.
  - Forward progress is the forward-most point of the ball when de-flagged, if a player is holding the ball out in front of her body, then that's the dead-ball spot where the ball will next be put into play

## Kicking/Punting Game Play Rules

- Kickoffs:
  - There will be NO kick-offs
  - Teams will take possession of the football on their 20-yard line. (10-yard line for 50 yard fields)
- Punting:
  - There will be NO punts.
  - On 4th down the offensive team must declare whether they are “punting” or going for the first down prior to expiration of the play clock.
  - If the offensive team declares a “punt” after committing a delay of game foul, the penalty will be enforced at the subsequent dead ball spot.
  - If the offense declares a “punt” the defense will take possession of the football on their 10-yard line.

- If the offense goes for the first down and does not obtain it, the defense will take possession of the football at that point on the field.

## Scoring

- Touchdown:
  - 6 points
- Flag Check:
  - After all scores the player must go to the nearest official for flag check.
- Removing a Flag:
  - Player removing their own flag prior to a flag check will result in no score, loss of down and a warning.
  - Next infraction results in Unsportsmanlike Conduct foul.
- Tampering with a Flag:
  - If a player is determined to have tampered with their flag it will result in a loss of down and a warning.
  - Next infraction results in disqualification.
- Point After Touchdown:
  - No kick attempts
  - 5 yards = 1 point
  - 10 yards = 2 points
  - During a PAT attempt, the ball is dead if intercepted by the other team.
  - Once a team declares their choice for a 1- or 2-point conversion and the ball is declared ready for play by the officials, the team may change their decision only after calling a time-out.
  - Point After Touchdown plays will be an untimed down at 2:00 or less in each half.
  - Additionally, when a touchdown is scored and the PAT down has not been played when any half reaches 0:00, the period shall be extended for the PAT down on the same end of the field that the touchdown was scored.
- Safety:
  - 2 points

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## Miscellaneous Rules

- Series of Downs:
  - A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance the ball to the first down line.
  - **First down line will always be at mid-field**
  - Officials will be responsible for determining the spot of the ball and the down markings.

- A new series of downs will be awarded when a team moves the ball to the next line to gain.
- On fourth down the offensive team must declare whether they are punting or going for the first down prior to the expiration of the play clock.
- If the offense declares a punt the defense will take possession of the football on their 20-yard line. (10 yard line for 50 yard fields)
- If the offense goes for the first down and does not obtain it, the defense will take possession of the football at that point on the field. (Turnover)
- Play-Clock:
  - The 25 second play clock begins once the ball is placed on the ground and the whistle is blown by the referee.
  - Delay of game: If a team exceeds the 25 seconds.
- Ball Placement:
  - Any request to place the ball on the left or right hash-mark is ignored. The ball should always be placed in the center of the field. This includes Point After Touchdown.
- Coaches are not allowed to call plays on the field
- Overtime:
  - In the event the 2nd half ends in a tie, overtime will commence.
  - A coin toss shall decide who receives the ball first.
  - Winner of the coin toss can choose to be on offense first, defense first or choose the end of the field that overtime will be played on. The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first extra period and shall have the first choice of options for subsequent even-numbered extra periods.
  - Each team will receive one (1) time out per overtime period.
  - Teams will alternate possessions, starting at the 20-yard line. The line to gain is always the goal line regardless of whether a penalty enforcement places the ball more than 20 yards from the goal line to start a new series of downs.
  - Teams may go for 1 or 2 points after a touchdown is scored.
  - Each team will have at least one possession during each over time unless B scores first. If team A scores first, team B will be given a series of down from their 20-yard
- Mercy Rule:
  - If the point deficit is 21 points or more in the second half, a running clock will be utilized for the remainder of the game.
  - No blitzing will be allowed by the defense
- Unfair Acts:

- The Referee has much latitude in handling obviously unfair acts during a game. This would include situations that arise when a team commits a blatant and obvious intentional foul or fouls to gain a clock advantage late in a game. We should treat these intentional fouls as Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls. Each player committing these unsportsmanlike acts will have a counted unsportsmanlike conduct foul, with 2 unsportsmanlike conduct fouls by a single player or coach resulting in disqualification. The following is a list some other potential intentional fouls that could be committed during the game:
  - A player or nonplayer or person(s) not subject to the rules shall not hinder play by an unfair act which has no specific rule coverage.
  - No team shall repeatedly commit fouls which halve the distance to the goal line.
  - No player shall hide the ball under the jersey.
  - Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the Referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.
- Protests:
  - There are no protests.
  - All referee decisions are final.
  - Interceptions during overtime remain live and can be returned for a touchdown by the intercepting team.
  - A winner must be determined (No ties).
  - Fouls During a Point After Touchdown or in Overtime After a Change of Team
  - Possession:
    - A score by a team committing a foul during the down is canceled. Exception: Live- ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls.
    - If both teams foul during the down and the defensive team had not fouled before the change of possession, the fouls cancel, and the down is not repeated.
    - Penalties against either team are declined by rule.
    - Exception: Penalties for flagrant personal fouls, unsportsmanlike conduct fouls, dead- ball personal fouls and live-ball fouls treated as dead-ball fouls are enforced from the succeeding spot (20-yard line).

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## Penalty Description

- Offense:
  - Illegal Contact:

- When an offensive player makes excessive contact with a defensive player.
- No Blocking or Screening
- 10-yard penalty
- False Start:
  - When an offensive player moves in a way that simulates the start of a play.
  - 5-yard penalty
- Offensive Pass Interference:
  - When an offensive player hinders a defensive player's ability to catch a pass by making physical contact with the defensive player.
  - It is forward-pass interference if any player of A, who is beyond the neutral zone, interferes with an opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch, or bat a pass.
  - It is not forward-pass interference if:
    - Unavoidable contact occurs when two or more players are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
    - Contact by A is immediately made on a B lineman and the contact does not continue beyond the neutral zone.
  - 10-yard penalty
- Illegal Forward Pass:
  - When a player is or has been past the line of scrimmage throws the ball forward or when more than one forward pass is thrown during a play.
  - When a forward pass is thrown after a change of team possession.
  - 5-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction (loss of down, if by offense).
- Illegal Quarterback Run:
  - When the quarterback runs the ball more than once per series of downs.
  - 5-yard penalty, loss of down
- Illegal Shift/Illegal Motion:
  - When an offensive player in motion moves towards the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
  - A maximum of one (1) player off the line of scrimmage is allowed to be moving laterally/backward at the snap of the ball.
  - 5-yard penalty
- Flag Guarding:

- When a player, either intentionally or accidentally, inhibits a player from de-flagging them using their hands, arms, etc. (including stiff arming).
  - 5-yard penalty from the spot of the infraction, loss of down.
- Illegal Formation:
  - When the offensive team has more than 3 players lined up behind or off the line of scrimmage at the snap.
  - 5-yard penalty
- Hurdling/Diving:
  - A player may not attempt to jump over an opponent.
  - A player may not leave their feet and dive in any direction to advance the football.
  - 10-yard penalty.
- Defense:
  - Illegal Rush:
    - When a defensive player rushes the QB after being less than 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage at the snap.
    - When more than two (2) players rush at a time.
    - 5-yard penalty
  - Illegal Contact:
    - When a defensive player makes excessive contact with an offensive player.
    - A player may not run through the ball carrier when pulling a flag.
    - 10-yard penalty
  - Illegal Flag Pulling:
    - A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who has not touched the ball.
    - 5-yard penalty, automatic first down.
    - Run Play - enforced from end of run
    - Pass Play - Complete - enforced from end of related run
    - Pass Play - Incomplete - enforced from previous spot
  - Roughing the Passer:
    - When a defensive player contacts the QB while the QB is in the throwing motion or has just completed the throwing motion. This includes hitting the QB's arm after they have released the ball.
    - 10-yard penalty, automatic first down.
  - Defensive Pass Interference:
    - When a defensive player hinders an offensive player's ability to catch a pass by making physical contact with the offensive player.

- It is forward-pass interference if any player of B, who is beyond the neutral zone, interferes with an opponent's opportunity to move toward, catch, or bat a pass.
- It is not forward-pass interference if:
  - Unavoidable contact occurs when two or more players are making a simultaneous, bona fide attempt to move toward, catch or bat the pass.
  - Contact by B is obviously away from the direction of the pass.
  - 10-yard penalty
- Defensive Holding:
  - When a defensive player holds up the offensive player while attempting to de-flag that player.
  - 10-yard penalty
- Encroachment:
  - When a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
  - 5-yard penalty
- Tackling:
  - A player cannot tackle the ball carrier.
  - 10-yard penalty
- Sliding:
  - A player may not slide to get the flag.
  - 10-yard penalty

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## Penalty Summary

- LOSS of 5 YARDS
  - Delay of game
  - Illegal substitution
  - Encroachment
  - Snap Infraction
  - False Start
  - Illegal Formation (more than 3 backs)
  - Illegal Shift or Illegal Motion
  - Illegally handing ball forward (loss of down)
  - Illegal forward pass (by A; loss of down)
  - Helping runner Sideline Interference
  - Nonplayer outside of team box Attendant illegally on field
  - Illegal QB run (also loss of down) Illegal Run in No Run Zone (also loss of down)
  - Illegal Defensive Rush Illegal Flag Pull (also first down)

- LOSS of 10 YARDS
  - Illegal Blocking/Screening/Holding
  - Illegal Block in Back Excessive Contact
  - Offensive/Defensive Pass Interference Flag Guarding (by A; also loss of down)
  - Hurdling/Diving
  - Roughing the Passer (also first down) Tackling
  - Sliding Unsportsmanlike Conduct
  - Unfair Acts
  - Illegal Unintentional Contact with an official in the restricted area while ball is live
- DISQUALIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN PENALTIES
  - Flagrant Excessive Contact Fighting by Player or nonplayer
  - Intentionally Contacting a Game Official Striking, kicking, kneeing
  - A second unsportsmanlike foul by player or nonplayer
  - A substitute leaving team box during a fight Second violation of tampering with a flag