



Flex Football Rulebook

Overview

- The game is 9 on 9, controlled and limited contact, skill position, blocking touch-football.
- Players cannot make any contact that is unnecessary or provoked roughness.
- Fields are no less than 50 yards wide and 40 yards long, plus end zone.
- Both teams will drive the ball in the same direction when on offense (See field diagram).
- Possessions will begin on the 40-yard line (unless moved by penalty).
- Teams must gain 15 yards to be awarded a new set of downs with 4 downs to do so (unless the team is awarded an automatic first down by penalty). A first down marker or pylon will be spotted at the line-to-gain.
- There is no kicking in this format (punt, field goals, or kickoffs).
- The “away” team will have first possession in the first half and the “home” team will have first possession in the second half.
- Three (3) and four (4) point stances are prohibited.
- Game officials will mark the ball where the ball was at the time it became dead.
- The ball will be spotted at the closest hash mark after the ball becomes dead.
- Pre snap fouls will stop the action (see penalty chart)

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Clock Operations

- 60 minutes (scheduled block)
- 40 minutes (length of game)
- Two 20-minute halves (periods)
- 5 minutes (halftime)
- 1 per half (time outs)
- Running Clock (until last two minutes of 2nd half)

Offense

- There are nine (9) players on the offense including 3 ineligible (center and two tackles).
- All players are eligible receivers except the center and two linemen that line up on the line of scrimmage.
- A minimum of five (5) players must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap.
- A maximum of four (4) players may be in the offensive backfield at the snap.
- The play clock is 30 seconds
- Passers may take snaps from under the center or from a shotgun formation.\ Snaps must be made between the center's legs.
- Receivers must have one foot inbounds with possession to be a legal catch.\
- Fumbles are dead when they hit the ground.

Defense

- The ball carrier is downed by a two-hand "tag off". Tagging off is NOT a shove. Play appropriately.
- Players cannot make contact another player if that contact is considered unnecessary or provoke roughness.
- "Locking out" at the elbow or "following through" with hands while downing a call carrier by touch indicated excessive roughness.
- Defensive players may not line up pre-snap in the A-gap protected zone.
- Defensive players may be aligned in press coverage.
- Whether or not a ball was tipped in the air has no bearing as it pertains to fouls (example, illegal contact, etc.)



Scoring

- Touchdown- 7 points
- Interceptions- 2 points (during overtime scoring attempts are dead balls and no points will be awarded)
- Forfeits (recorded as 21-0)

Overtime (used during playoffs and tournament play only) (College Football Overtime style)

- If regulation time ends in a tie, teams will conduct a one play overtime series to determine a winner.
- Teams will go for their choice of 1 point from the 5-yard line or 2 points from the 10-yard line unless moved by penalty.
- The away team will begin each overtime period on offense with the home team on defense. If the game goes to a second overtime, the away team will not start on defense and the home team will start on offense first.

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Code of Conduct

- Flex Football (9 on 9) is a limited contact style of play. This is competitive yet developmental finesse game not the brute strength game of tackle football. Play accordingly.
- Our mission is to provide a superior football experience to our players, coaches, and spectators.
- Remind yourself and others that no college scholarships will be awarded at the game so just relax and enjoy.
- Players, coaches, spectators, and officials must avoid profanity.
- Disrespectful language; racist, sexist, homophobic remarks; obscene or threatening gestures/behavior; and bullying are prohibited by anyone attending our events to include coaches, parents, players, and spectators.
- Foul play will not be tolerated
- If a player or non-player fails to comply with our requests, we have the authority to forfeit the game and have that individual(s) removed from the rented complex
- Fighting will lead to an immediate ejection, possible suspension or even a lifetime exclusion.
- Alcohol, intoxicants, tobacco products, vaping, weapons, and drones are prohibited at our rented facilities.
- Our staff, game officials, players and non-players must comply with the rented facility's rules.
- Our staff at each site will determine where spectators can and cannot observe from and will err on the side of safety for our players and game officials.
- After the game, teams are required to clean up and remove their garbage.
- We ask that coaches maintain the spirit and the intent of our rules.
- Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their sideline to include players, spectators, guests, and their team staff.
- For 10U and up, a maximum of one (1) coach per team is allowed on the field on the offensive side of the ball ONLY. 8U and below us allowed to have one (1) coach on the field for offense and one (1)coach on the field for defense.
- Coaches who elect to be on the field cannot interfere with a play or imminent play in any physical or verbal way (Examples may include inadvertent screening or blocking, blocking the lines of sight, impeding a player or official, becoming entangled in the play or distracting from their opponents' cadence). If they do, the team may incur a bench foul.
- Coaches are prohibited from "chasing the play down field" in the way a game official does.
- You must have at least 9 players on the team.
- Only players on an officially approved Gridiron Football roster may participate.
- The opposing team is not required to "adjust down" when a team cannot field the required numbers of players (9) but may do so to show sportsmanship.
- Only the head coach may ask an official about rule clarification and interpretations. There are NO coaches challenges, all calls made are final.

Game Officials

- Please treat our game officials with respect.
- Our officials administer the rules of this league not any other organization past or present.
- Our officials are encouraged to use the “preventative style” of officiating which allows them to talk to, remind and help players avoid violations whenever feasible. Cautious and teaching points are appropriate most times
- It is not the mission of game officials to flag every small nuanced infraction of traditional football rules (for example, breaking the huddle incorrectly) or other insignificant issues that do not produce a significant unfair advantage.
- One referee WILL be responsible for setting the ball (not a player/coach).

Safety

- Soft-shelled helmets designed for minimum contact football must be worn as designed to include strapping the chin strap.
- Soft-shell shoulder pads designed for limited contact football must be worn as designed under the team jersey.
- Players may not wear unyielding or stiff material items that in the judgement of the officials may present a hazard to other players. Casts and braces must be padded with a closed-cell, slow-recovery foam padding no less than ½ inch thick-this material is similar to the type doctor’s use.
- Players must properly wear a protective mouthpiece *in their mouths* while on the field of play. Failure to comply is a safety violation, not a foul or penalty. Coaches, officials, and players share responsibility for safety.
- Players must wear football pants (without padding) or shorts that do not have pockets, belt loops, zippers, or exposed draw strings.
- Players must wear closed-toed shoes. Cleats are recommended. Exposed metal cleats are not allowed.
- Players may wear eye protection to include prescription glasses or flexible sunglasses.
- Jewelry that might endanger players must be removed before play or taped to the body.

Jerseys

- Each team is required to wear a Gridiron approved jersey or matching jersey (own team jersey).

Footballs

- Teams may provide their own game ball (white ball not allowed) but they must meet these specifications and are subject to the game official's inspection and discretion. Footballs must be pebble-grained leather or rubber-covered and meet these sizes.
 - Pee-Wee Sized Ball-10U and below
 - Junior Sized Ball-12U
 - Youth Sized Ball-13U-14U

Clock Mechanics

- Officials may stop the clock as needed.
- Team timeout is 30 seconds. After 30 seconds the official will audibly place the offense on a 30 second play clock.
- The clock will run continuously during the first half and the second half until final 2 minutes unless the following occur:
 - Change of possession
 - Injury
 - Timeout
 - Penalty
- A stopped clock will be in effect during the final two minutes of the second half.
- Officials will give a verbal two minute warning as close as possible to the actual two minute mark but will not interrupt a live play.

When officials go to the stopped clock mechanic, the clock will stop and start as listed:

- Change of possession
- Incomplete pass
- Intentional passes
- Offense achieves a first down
- Out of bounds
- Fumble
- Penalty
- Delay of game
- Referee timeout
- Team timeout
- Injury
- Touchdown
- Clock runoffs do not apply to this league



First Possession

- The team designated as the “away” team will have first possession. The home team will have first possession to start the second half.
- Before the game begins, officials will issue a warning about unsportsmanlike conduct, excessive rough play, etc.
- The game clock and play clock shall be kept by the officials on the field.

Offense

- Possessions will always begin on the 40 yard line.
- Offensive team will have 4 downs to advance past the designated 1st down marker which are located on the 25 and 10 yard line.
- Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped. After all players have “set” one player may go “in motion”
- Direct snaps are legal to any player not on the line of scrimmage.
- The ball will be declared dead if any portion of the ball carrier’s body other than his hands or feet touches the ground.
- The passer is allowed to carry the ball past the line of scrimmage except running in the A Gaps.

Offensive Formations

- The offensive team must have five (5) players on the line of scrimmage at the snap.
- Ineligible linemen must line up no wider than one arm’s distance from the center’s body (approx. 1yd between center/guard feet)
- Ineligible linemen must line up on either side of the center at the snap.
- Having two (2) ineligible linemen on one side or another of the center at the snap is not allowed.

Blocking

- Blocking is allowed anywhere on the field.
- Blockers must “come to balance” and initiate blocks with their hands first.
- No leading with the head, shoulders, elbows, forearms, knees, etc.
- Blockers may not use a driving shove (load up on), punch, attempt to launch, or any unnecessary roughness that exceeds (limited contact).
- Blocking techniques designed to take an opponent to the ground are illegal.
- No block can initiate below the waist.
- No cut blocks, blocking in the back, clipping or blindsides blocks.
- Centers may double team block with another linemen.
- Pulling offensive linemen is allowed with a controlled “come to balance” approach.

Fumbles and Muffs

- The ball becomes dead when it hits the ground.
- Forward fumbles that hit the ground will be marked where the ball carriers feet were when he lost control and not the spot where the ball hit the ground.
- Backward fumbles are marked where they hit the ground. Backward passes that hit the ground are considered fumbles.
- “QB SCOOP RULE”
 - The QB has a chance to scoop the ball after a poor snap (rolled over or hiked) AS LONG AS there is no defensive player in the immediate vicinity as the QB is fielding the ball while staying up. This is a judgement call by the referee to maintain SAFETY and keep players from diving on a DEAD ball.
 - Only the QB can pick up a muffed snap.
 - QB run limitations remain in effect (No A Gap rush).
 - If the play is blown dead in order to maintain safety- the ball will move back to the line of scrimmage with a loss of down.

Passing

- Only one forward pass per play.
- All offensive players except the three ineligible linemen are eligible receivers unless they have stepped out of bounds of their own accord. Offensive players may not re-establish themselves in the field of play or participate in anyway once they have stepped out of bounds of their accord. This would result in illegal touching penalty.
- Any eligible receiver who receives either a forward or backwards handoff behind scrimmage can pass the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- An underhand forward pass (shovel pass) is legal and if dropped, it is ruled an incomplete pass, not a fumble.
- A backwards pass that is dropped is ruled a fumble. The ball will be spotted where it hit the ground unless the fumble occurred behind the 40 yard line. In that case it will be brought back to the 40 yard line and the down will be consumed.
- A backwards pass that is dropped or incomplete is ruled a fumble. The ball will be stopped where it hit the ground unless the fumble occurred behind the 40 yard line. In that case, it will be brought back to the 40 yard line and the down will be consumed.

Intentional Grounding

- A passer may not throw the ball into an area behind the line of scrimmage where there is no offensive player to avoid a loss of yardage or conserve time.
- A passer may legally “throw the ball away” as long as the ball goes beyond the line of scrimmage.

Catches

- A pass is completed when the receiver simultaneously places at least one foot inbounds and maintains possession.
- If the ball comes out of the receiver's grasp due to contact with the ground or while going to the ground the pass is incomplete.
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Defense

- The ball carrier is downed by a two-hand touch by one opponent at or below the shoulder and above the knee. Unnecessary roughness including shoving, locking out the elbows, and/or running through will result in an unnecessary roughness penalty (judgment call by the refs)
- There is NO bull rushing. The rusher must rush the inside or outside part of a blocker's body and is not allowed to rush through the centerline of the blocker.
- Rusher cannot throw or purposefully push blocker into the ground or into the ball carrier.
- Rushers may only use their hands, feet, and speed to move past a blocker.
- Defensive teams may not attempt to simulate the offensive cadence.

Defensive Pre-Snap Alignment

- At least two (2) defensive linemen must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap (IN A TWO POINT STANCE ONLY).
- One defense lineman must be on either of the center. No doubling on one side of the center.
- The required two (2) defensive linemen on the line of scrimmage at the snap must be aligned no further than an arm's length of the offensive guard/tackles' shoulder.
- Defensive linemen may not line up head-to-head. They must line up on the offensive guard/tackle outside shoulder/arm's length from the shoulder.
- Defensive linemen may NOT line up in the A gap protected zone (the space between the snapper/center and the offensive linemen immediately on either side of the snapper/center).
- The A gap protected zone is a notional zone extending laterally from the center to the inside half of the tackles and extending four yards directly in front of the center.
- No defensive player may be in the A gap protected zone pre snap. This includes defensive players attempting to time a blitz (illegal rush).
- Any player attempting to blitz (other than Defensive linemen) must be a minimum of four yards off the line of scrimmage at the snap regardless of the position he initially set up in.

Blitzing

- The defense cannot blitz the A gap from the line of scrimmage.
 - Linebackers and defensive backs can blitz the A gap as long as they are a minimum of four (4) yards behind the ball on the snap.
- All blitzing MUST BE from four (4) yards in depth.
 - Exception: While covering (pressing) an eligible player (WR, TE, RB), the LB/DB is allowed to align on the line of scrimmage and blitz from the line of scrimmage.
 - There is no “timing” up a blitz from four (4) yards and hitting the line of scrimmage on the snap.

Roughing the Passer

- Defensive players can disrupt the play by:
 - Swatting the ball
 - Batting the ball
 - Tipping the ball
- Defenders cannot materially touch any part of the passer’s arm, hand, or shoulder while the passer has the ball in their hand.

Pass Coverage

- Press coverage (jamming, bump and run, etc.) is allowed within 5 yards.
- Defenders may line up inside, outside or heads up with a potential receiver. There must be a 1 yards separation between potential receivers and defenders at the snap.
- Contact must be made below the shoulders of the opponent.

Pass Interference

- Pass interference indicators are:
 - Shoving or pushing off to create separation.
 - Making noteworthy contact before the ball arrives.
 - Playing through the back of an opponent.
 - Hook and turn: grabbing the torso and turning an opponent before the pass arrives.
 - Arm bars, restricting, or grabbing.
 - Blocking downfield before the ball has been touched, commonly seen through “pick play”.

Interceptions

- All intercepted passes are dead upon interception. Intercepting team are awarded two (2) points. Intercepting team will then possess the ball on the 40-yard line.
- Intercepting teams must secure the ball. They must not have committed a foul before or simultaneous to the interception to be awarded points.

Overtime

NOTE: Only used during playoffs and tournament play and during the last week of a season.

- If regulation time ends in a tie, teams will play a one play series until a winner is determined.
- Teams will go for their choice of 1 point from the 5 yard line or 2 points from the 10 yard line unless moved by penalty. The team who possesses the ball second will need to match the score or attempt to score more than the first time to either win or force another overtime period.
- The away team during overtime will begin with the ball followed by the home team on defense first. (College Football overtime rules)
- Possessions will alternate at the start of every new overtime period (AB-BA-AB).
- Interceptions during overtime scoring attempts are dead balls and no points will be awarded.

	Successful Attempt	Successful Attempt	Penalties that carry loss of down
Fouls by the offense	Yardage assed retry the attempt	Attempt no good, No retry	Attempt no good, No retry
Fouls by the defense	Declined, Attempt is good	Yardage assed, Retry the attempt	Not applicable

Forfeits and Ending the Game

- The game may not end with a penalty unless it is declined. All offensive loss of down penalties that occur with time expired in either half will end the game or half.
- Offsetting penalties will not extend the half or game.
- Forfeits that occur before the game begins are recorded as 21-0. Forfeits that occur once the game is underway will be recorded as the actual score when the forfeit occurred.
- If a team plays in a habitually rough manner the game may be forfeited.

Ejections

- Ejections are completely the option of the game official.
- Ejection will last for the remainder of the game in which the player was disqualified.
- An ejected player may be subject to not be eligible for the next scheduled game.
- To eject a player all officials must agree and it must be reported to the game day manager before play resumes.
- Ejections may occur for but are not limited to:
 - A second unsportsmanlike or personal foul on a single player
 - Any act deemed egregious by the head official
 - Disrespectfully addressing or intentionally touching an official
 - Four unsportsmanlike or egregious personal fouls by one team (forfeiture)
 - Fighting

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Disrespect toward an official, coach, spectator, or another player will constitute unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Celebrations are fine but keep them short, conservative, and not directed to an opponent.
- The use of inflammatory words or gestures is prohibited.
- If unsportsmanlike conduct occurs during a live play and the team did not score on that play, the penalty will be assessed from the new line of scrimmage (i.e., it will be added to or subtracted from the end of the play).
- If roughness is habitual for a single player, ejection procedures may apply.
- If roughness is habitual for a team, forfeiture procedures may apply.

Fighting

- Fighting will lead to immediate ejection, possible suspension, or lifetime exclusion.
- Any player who comes off the sideline to participate in a fight will be ejected.
- If either team leaves the bench during a fight the game will be forfeited immediately

Bench Fouls or Warnings

Teams may incur bench fouls for a variety of reasons to include but not limited to:

- Players or non-players interfering with play or an official.
- Disrespect toward officials or other players or non-players.
- Non-players on the field of play
- Coaches on the field or becoming entangled in a live play.

Unfair Acts Rule

- Neither team shall commit an act which, in the judgement of the officials, tends to make a travesty of the game.
- The head official or other staff members may enforce any penalty or remedy any situation with anything he considers equitable.
- If an ineligible player (example: not on the roster, previously disqualified or previously ejected) is discovered by any means (example: observation) participating in a live ball play, that team will forfeit the game and the unfair act is assessed to the head coach.

Penalties

- Any penalty or yardage lost that would result in the ball being backed up past the 40, the ball will then be spotted at the 40 regardless with a loss of down.
- Any penalty that occurs when the ball is AT THE 40-yard line, will result in a loss of down.
- If sacked or stopped behind the 40-yard line- the ball goes back to the 40 with a loss of down.
- Because of the shorter field- all enforceable penalties of 15 yards will be enforced as 10-yard penalties for the purpose of the game (exceptions listed later).
- The team not committing the foul gets to choose between the result of the play or the enforcement of the penalty.
- If both teams commit a foul on the same play, they offset, and the down is replayed.
- An odd number of fouls with more being assessed on the one team will still offset and result in replay of down.
- A live ball foul on the offense is marked off from the spot of the penalty.
- A live ball foul on the defense is marked off from the spot of the penalty, the original line of scrimmage or the end of the play, whichever benefits the offense the most.

Penalties Chart

Intentional Tackling (flagrant foul)

- Defense-15 yards

Unnecessary Roughness (flagrant foul)

- Offense-10 yards, loss of downs
- Defense-10 yards & automatic first down

Charging (on the offense)- Unnecessary Roughness (flagrant foul)

- Offense-10 yards, loss of downs

Bull Rushing (on the defense)- Unnecessary Roughness (flagrant foul)

- Defense-10 yards, automatic first down

Roughing the passer

- Defense-10 yards

Illegal QB run into the A gap

- Offense, ball returns to the original spot, loss of down

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- Offense/Defense-10yards

Pass Interference

- Enforced as 10 yards

Illegal Blocking

- Offense-10 yards, loss of downs

Delay of Game

- 5 yards

Illegal Formation

- Offense/Defense- 5 yards

Offside/False Start

- Offense/Defense- 5 yards

A-Gap Violation

- Offense/Defense- Live ball foul only- 5 yards