

Iowa Developmental Youth Football League
3rd & 4th Grade Flag Football Rules

GENERAL LEAGUE RULES/GUIDELINES

There will be no league standings kept throughout the year. This is a re-emphasis of the fact that this level is about learning skills/fundamentals/the game itself. Scores will be kept at the games but as mentioned – no transfer to league standings.

The season: 6 weekends of play (1 scrimmage/5 games)

August 19: practices may begin.

League Scrimmage Day: September 8

September 15 – Oct 13: game weekends

Practice Times and Guidelines:

- Weeks 1&2: teams can practice no more than 4x a week for 90 minutes each time. It is recommended that no more than 2 in a row before a day off.
- Week 3: teams can practice no more than 3x a week for 90 minutes each time
- Week 4 & rest of year: teams can practice no more than 2x a week for 90 minutes
- No practice can be held prior to the start date as determined by the governing board of the league.
- It is recommended that time each night be spent on USA football blocking and tackling instruction with aligned drills.

Coaches in each community will determine the location of practice as determined by local league guidelines.

Players will be spread throughout each community's number of teams. Competitive balance will be the goal of this league. Any team or community that establishes an "all-star" team will have that team ineligible for participation until the changes have been made.

All players at this level will be of the same grade. There will be no playing "up" or "down" by anyone. You play the grade you are in during that season.

I. The Game

- a. Each game begins with captains from both teams meeting at mid-field for a coin toss. Visitors call the toss.
- b. The winner gets to choose offense or defense.
- c. The ball will be spotted on the 40-yard line at the start of any and all possessions by a team. Regardless of reason (change of possession, touchdown, start of the game) the possession always starts at the 40-yard line.
 - i. There will be two first downs on the playing field: at the 25 and the 10-yard line.

1. Each team will have 4 downs to cover 15 yards to the 25 for a first down. If not, change of possession.
 2. Each team will have 4 downs to cover 15 yards to the 10 for a first down. If not, change of possession.
 3. Each team will have 4 downs to score from the 10-yard line. If not, change of possession.
- ii. Once the ball is spotted, the team will have 30 seconds to run a play. There will be one delay warning given and then they will receive a delay of game penalty.
 - iii. There is no need to punt on 4th down, as the ball would return to the 40-yard line on a change of possession. Therefore, all teams will be encouraged to run at least 4 plays each possession.
- d. The playing field will be 40 yards long and width will be from sideline to the opposite hash. (40x40 field)
 - i. The field should run from the sideline closest to the bleachers to the far hash marks.
 - e. Game will consist of four (4) 10 minute quarters with a continuous clock. The clock will run at all times except during the last 2 minutes of the game and after scoring a touchdown. The 2-point play is a dead clock play, and the clock will begin on the opponent's next possession.
 - i. Huddle will last no longer than 30 seconds. Any longer than this will result in a 2-yard penalty.
 - f. Each team is allowed two (2) 30-second timeouts/half.
 - g. There are no kickoffs or kick returns.
 - h. There will be a one (1) minute break between quarters.
 - i. A maximum of 1 coach per team is allowed on the field during the game. They must not interfere with play. All other coaches are on the sideline during the game.
 - j. Games will have 2 officials. These officials should be licensed football officials.
 - k. Game Ball:
 - i. 3rd/ 4th – Pee Wee size football
 - ii. 5th and 6th – Junior size football

II. Scoring

- a. Each team will keep the game score. They must mutually agree to score throughout the game. There will however, be no league standings kept or scores reported.
- b. Scoring will be as follows:
 - i. Touchdown – 6 points
 - ii. 2-point conversion from the 3-yard line – 2 points
- c. In the event of a tie, the game ends in a tie. There will be NO overtime period played.

- III. Equipment
 - a. Each player will wear a flag belt with three flags.
 - i. The host site will provide uniform flags for the four (4) teams playing on that site each Sunday.
 - ii. It is recommended that the host sites all have the same style of flags for use.
 - b. Each player will wear a protective mouthpiece.
 - c. For 3rd grade: Each player will wear a soft-style helmet.
 - d. For 4th grade: full pads
 - e. Football cleats, if worn, must be molded cleats. No screw in cleats.

- IV. Field
 - a. The field will be 40 yards long and a width from one sideline to the hash on the opposite side. Two (2) games on each regulation field will be held.
 - i. Cones should mark the out of bounds on the side without the marked sideline.
 - b. The first downs will be marked with cones larger than others used to mark the sidelines on the field.

- V. Players
 - a. The game will be played with eight (8) players on offense and eight (8) players on defense.
 - b. Players will play both offense and defense during a game.
 - c. Players must align on offense or defense according to league approved formations on both sides.

- VI. Substitutions
 - a. The emphasis of this game is development and a great experience; therefore each player will play a minimum of 15 plays during a game. (Same process as teams have used in the past with previous leagues)
 - i. At the end of the third quarter, one coach from each team will meet at midfield and exchange play count sheets.
 - b. Exceptions to playing time would be if a player has missed the majority of practice time leading up to the game or is coming off some type of injury.

- VII. Dead Balls
 - a. The ball is considered “down” when any of the following happen:
 - i. Ball carrier has their flag pulled.
 - ii. Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - iii. The ball is fumbled by a ball carrier. (not a QB exchange) When this happens:
 - 1. The ball will be spotted where the fumble hits the ground.
 - iv. The ball carriers knee hits the ground
 - v. The ball carriers flags fall off
 - vi. Should a snap occur deep (+10) over the head of the offensive team while on the 40 yd line – the official should blow the ball

dead and return it to the 40 yard line. If this happens multiple times, the offense should lose the down. Ex: first time, blow dead and repeat the down. 3rd time, counts as a down and comes back to the 40.

- VIII. Dead Clock
 - a. The clock will not run
 - i. After a touchdown is scored and during a 2-point conversion attempt
 - ii. last two (2) minutes of the game
- IX. Flag Pulling
 - a. The ball carrier is considered down when flags are pulled.
 - b. Defenders can dive to pull a flag but cannot tackle, hold, or run through a ball carrier to do so. (PENALTY-TACKLING/UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-RESULTS IN AN AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN AT THE 25/10/2 YARD LINE)
 - i. NOTE: Coaches and parents must realize that kids will fall to the ground during the game. Not every situation where kids go down is tackling. Officials will have final say based upon their view of the play in question.
 - c. The ball carrier cannot run over a potential flag puller; they must make a football move to avoid them. It is up to the game official to determine if the player did his best to avoid direct contact given the situation. (PENALTY-UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-RESULTS IN A 5-YARD PENALTY AGAINST THE OFFENSE)
 - d. A defensive player cannot intentionally pull flags off a player who does not have the ball. (PENALTY 5 YARDS-UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT)
 - e. There is no flag guarding by an offensive player and the offensive player cannot stiff-arm a defender. (PENALTY-5 YARDS-FLAG GUARDING)
- X. Formations
 - a. Offensive formations must have five (5) of the eight (8) players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. (3 lineman and 2 receivers).
 - i. NOTE: teams may only use league approved formations and defensive alignments in grades 3-4-5.
 - b. Only one offensive player can be in motion but cannot run towards the line of scrimmage.
 - i. When in motion-the defensive player will “chase” the offensive player when he goes in motion.
 - c. Defense must have two (2) players on the defensive tackles at the snap of the ball. They must line head up on the offensive guards on the line of scrimmage. They will wait for a 3 count by the official to rush.
- XI. Offense
 - a. The offensive team must follow the formation guidelines provided by the league.
 - b. All motions must be in accordance with the rules of football.
 - i. Linemen can have no more than a 2- foot split between them.

- c. Any player is allowed to block after the snap with their hands up and in an open fashion above the waist. (stalk blocking style/no shoulders) They may run their feet and maintain their block as long as they do not grasp or hold their opponent.
 - i. NOTE: No offensive lineman will be eligible to catch or run the ball.
 - ii. There is no pulling or trapping at this level of the league.
- d. The center must snap the ball between his legs.
- e. Ball carriers:
 - i. Cannot hurdle, leap, or dive anywhere on the field. (PENALTY- 5 YARD PENALTY)
 - ii. There cannot be any stiff-arm by the ball carrier or guarding of their flag. (PENALTY-5 YARDS-FLAG GUARDING) Spinning is allowed but they cannot leave their feet to do so.
 - iii. Ball carriers cannot “lower their head or shoulders” to run through a potential flag puller. They must make a football move to avoid them to continue running. (PENALTY-5 YARDS UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS)
- f. A GAP RULE: there will be no running plays between the center and guard (within 1-yard of center) when QB under center. If a team chooses to run from the shot-gun formation, you are allowed to run plays into the A gaps.

XII. Defense

- a. The defense must follow the formation guidelines provided by the league.
- b. Defensive backs must be 5 yards off the ball, linebackers must be 5 yards off the ball and stacked behind the defensive lineman, and safeties must be 10 yards off the ball at the snap.
 - i. Inside the 5-yard line-alignment may be moved up to 2 (two) yards. (FIRST OFFENSE: ONE WARNING GIVEN, SECOND OFFENSE: 2-YARD PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL FORMATION)
- c. The two defensive line players can be lined up head up on the guards only. They are not allowed to shade outside or inside shoulder-head up!
- d. Tackling is PROHIBITED! (PENALTY-UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS-AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN OFFENSE) If a player is given two (2) tackling penalties, they will be removed from the game for the remainder of that day.
- e. The defensive tackles will line up on the line of scrimmage, but cannot rush the passer until a 3 count.
- f. No blitzing is allowed. The only players that can cross the line of scrimmage are the two players who are lined up on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap. No LB can cross the line of scrimmage on a play, they must track the ball or ball carrier and meet them at the line of scrimmage.

- g. Pass interceptions cannot be advanced and will be blown dead after they occur. Teams will change possession and the intercepting team will take possession at their 40 yard line.

XIII. Penalties

- a. 2-YARD PENALTIES: false start/offsides/holding/delay of game/illegal blocks/illegal rush of DL and LB
- b. 5-YARD PENALTIES: unnecessary roughness/unsportsmanlike conduct: runner over the flag puller, flag guarding, leaping to avoid flag being pulled, taunting, swearing
- c. AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN-BALL MOVED TO THE 25/10/2: pass interference, tackling by a defender

RULE REGARDING UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT OF COACHES:

The League regards poor and/or bad sportsmanship as unacceptable and completely intolerable. Coaches are expected and required to lead by example in constantly demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all players.

The League has adopted a '**Zero-Tolerance Policy**' concerning coaches that display **Unsportsmanlike Conduct**. Coaches that are flagged by an official for the same will be subject to an **immediate, automatic, non-appealable expulsion from the game in which the infraction occurred**. This removal includes physically vacating the premises/venue where the game is being held and will be completed voluntarily by the offending coach. **(If the offending coach refuses to leave the venue, this will result in permanent league expulsion).**

In addition, the offending **coach will be subjected to an automatic one (1) game suspension**, which will be served at the next scheduled league game.

RULE REGARDING SPORTSMANSHIP OF SPECTATORS:

Spectators are required to demonstrate positive sportsmanship in respect to their players, opposing team players, parents, coaches and game officials. Spectators who are unable to demonstrate proper sportsmanship will be removed and/or be subject to **permanent league expulsion**.

Any game official, in an IDYFL league game, has the authority to remove a spectator from the premises of an IDYFL game if the official feels that this individual(s) is exhibiting inappropriate and unsportsmanlike behavior that takes away from the contest.

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