

MCSAO Flag Football Rules

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1/ TERMINOLOGY

Boundary Lines	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
Charging	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
Dead Ball	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
Defense	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
Downs	The offensive team has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
Flag Guarding	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm.
Inadvertent Whistle	Official’s whistle that is performed in error.
Lateral	A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
Line of Scrimmage (LOS)	An imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
Line-To-Gain	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score. This is the midfield point.
Live Ball	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.

Offense	The team with possession of the ball.
Passer	The offensive player who throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
Rush Line	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
Rusher	The defensive player(s) assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
Shovel Pass	A legal forward pitch attempted from behind the line of scrimmage traveling beyond the line of scrimmage.
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.
Whistle	Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.

2/ POSITIONS

Offense

1. The seven players on offense consist of a center, a quarterback and five receivers/running backs. Two of those receivers must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap
 - a. **Center.** This player snaps the ball to begin the play, a critical skill at all levels of football. The snap can be between the legs or at the side of the body, but the ball must be on the ground prior to the snap.
 - b. **Quarterback.** This player receives the snap from the center and initiates the play either through a handoff or pass. The quarterback cannot run the ball, unless they hand off or lateral the ball to another player, and then receive a lateral or handoff in return.
 - c. **Receiver/back.** Any player who does not receive the snap is considered an eligible receiver/back and can either receive a handoff or catch a pass.

Defense

Any number of players on defense are eligible to rush the quarterback or drop back into coverage.

1. **Rusher.** Any player who rushes the quarterback must be a minimum of seven yards behind the line of scrimmage at the snap. 1 designated rusher must check with the ref to make sure they are 7 yards off the line of scrimmage (a simple signal to the referee and a thumbs up by the referee). Any other players rushing the quarterback must be behind that player.
 - a. Following a legal handoff, pitch, or pass, any member of the defense can cross the line of scrimmage.

3/ GENERAL RULES

1. Game will be conducted as 7 vs. 7 contests
2. Teams must start with a minimum of 7 players. However, in the event of injuries/ absences, teams can play with 6 players on the field, but no fewer than 6
3. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.

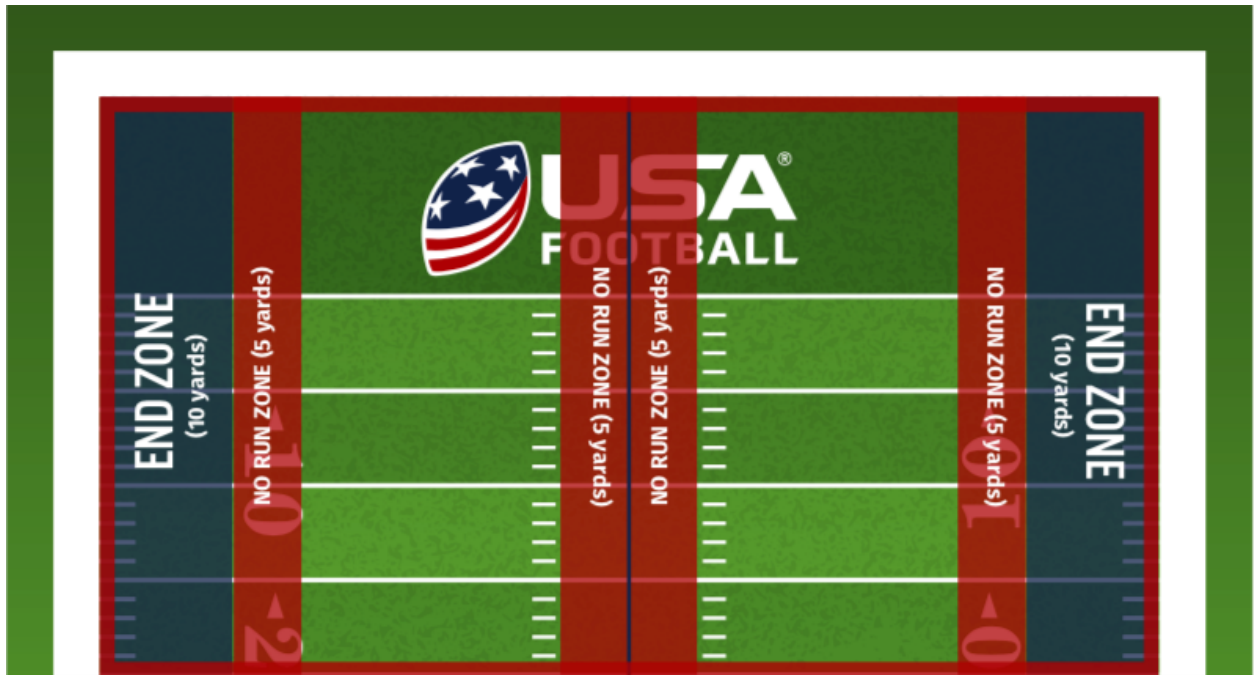
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4. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
 5. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. Crossing midfield is the only opportunity for an offense to gain a first down within a single possession (unless a penalty is called resulting in an automatic first down).
 6. If the offense fails to get the first down or score, they may “punt” the ball to place the ball on the 5 yard line.
 7. If a team is awarded an automatic first down before reaching midfield, they may still earn a first down by crossing the midfield line.
 8. If the defense intercepts the ball, a defensive player can attempt to return it until down, out of bounds or possession of the ball is lost.
 9. All possession changes, except interceptions or a turnover on downs, start on the offense’s 5-yard line.
 10. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

4/ EQUIPMENT

1. Each player must wear uniformed shirts and flag belts with flags attached by either velcro/adhesive or the ball-and-cup model.
 - a. Flag belts may not be the same color as the shorts or pants.
2. Cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed. Players are encouraged to wear mouth pieces during practices and games.
4. Players must remove all jewelry, hats and do-rags. Winter beanies are allowed.

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5. Players jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.

5/ PLAYING FIELD



1. The field is 60 yards long (not including end zones) and 30 yards wide
2. Each field has:
 - a. Two 10 yard deep end zones
 - b. Two 5 yard deep “no run zones” before each end zone
 - c. A 5 yard “no run zone” before midfield, first downs are awarded when teams pass the midfield

6/ TIMING AND OVERTIME

1. Games are played on a 60-minute continuous clock with two 30-minute halves. The clock stops for timeouts or injuries only, though officials can stop the clock at their discretion for injury, to stop a team from delaying or other unsportsmanlike conduct.
 - a. The time stops at the 2 minute warning each half. The time continues to stop after the 2 minute warning when:
 - i. The runner runs out of bounds
 - ii. Incomplete pass
 - iii. Timeout
 - iv. Penalty
 - v. Change of possession
 - vi. PAT Attempts
2. Halftime is five minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has three 30-second timeouts per half.
5. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play and both teams are lined up ready to restart the play.
6. If the score is tied at the end of 60 minutes, an untimed overtime period will be used to determine a winner. The overtime format is as follows:
 - a. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first. Each team starting on offense will begin from their own 5-yard line, unless the defense intercepts the ball. They will take possession of the ball at the end of the interception return. Each team will have an opportunity to possess the ball at least once.
 - i. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.

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- ii. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
- b. If the score tied after 2 rounds of overtime, each team takes turns getting one play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts, the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of its own.
- i. Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the five-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win.
 - ii. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
- c. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
- d. There are no timeouts in overtime.

7/ SCORING

1. **Touchdown:** Six points
2. **PAT** (point after touchdown) one point from the 5-yard line or two points from the 10-yard line.
 - a. Because of the "no-run zone", a one point PAT is pass only; two point PAT can be run or pass.
 - b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare prior to the snap whether it wishes to attempt a one- or two-point conversion. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on PAT can be returned for 2 points.

3. **Safety:** Two points

- a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his or her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, a knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
4. After one team is leading by 28 points or more, in the 1st half, the team who is losing has the option to forfeit. If a team is still leading by 28 points or more in the 2nd half, the score is no longer kept. Once a 28 or more point advantage is gained, no PATs are attempted. The game continues in scrimmage mode for the remainder of the game.
- a. All such situations are scored 28-0 for the winning team.

8/ LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL

1. The ball is live at the snap and remains live until an official's whistle blows the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage by spotting the ball before each play and signaling ready for play with a short whistle.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, an official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification prior to the snap to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. The defense/defensive team may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
4. A player who gains possession of the ball is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.

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7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground
 - b. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground
 - c. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled
 - i. If the flag falls off, then it becomes one hand touch
 - d. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds
 - e. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
 - f. Any part of the body other than feet or hands touches the ground
 - g. An inadvertent whistle
 8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
 9. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team is charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout is not charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
 10. A team with no time out remaining cannot challenge a rule interpretation, though officials can come together independently and reverse a call by unanimous decision.

9/ RUNNING

1. There is no limit to the number of times teams can run the ball, as long as they do not run in the “no run zone.”
 2. The ball is spotted where the position of the ball is, not where the runner’s front foot is when the flag is pulled.
 3. The quarterback cannot run the ball, unless they hand off or lateral the ball to another player, and then receive a lateral or handoff in return.
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4. "No-Run Zones" are located five yards before the end zone and five yards before midfield in the direction the offense is headed. They are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones.
 5. Any player who receives a handoff, or backwards pass, can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
 7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
 8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
 9. 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.
 10. Both offensive and defensive players may make contact with one another, up to 1 yard past the line of scrimmage. Legal contact is with open hands pushing the opposing player between hips and shoulders in a "bench press" motion.
 11. No blocking or "screening" is allowed more than 1 yard past the line of scrimmage at any time. "Screening" is defined as running alongside a ball carrier, or getting in the way of a defender trying to pull a ball carrier's flag (which is illegal even if no contact is made).
 12. Flag obstruction – All jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.
 13. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

10/ PASSING

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage and be in the vicinity of a receiver.
 - b. Quarterbacks cannot spike the ball dead unless the ball travels beyond the line of scrimmage and is in the vicinity of a teammate.
2. Any player who has received a legal handoff or backwards pass behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball forward.

11/ RECEIVING

1. All players including the center are eligible to receive passes.
2. A player must have at least one foot inbounds to make a legal reception.
3. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
4. Interceptions change possession at the point of the catch, and can be returned.
5. Interceptions on PAT can be returned for 2 points or if a 1-point conversion is intercepted and returned for a score it counts as 2 points.

12/ RUSHING THE PASSER

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. No grabbing of the opposing players jersey by the offense or defense and/or pulling the opposing player to the ground. If a player grabs onto the opposing players jersey and/or pulls them to the ground, they will be called for unnecessary roughness.

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3. Once the ball is handed off or after a backwards pass, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
 4. 1 designated rusher must check with the ref to make sure they are 7 yards off the line of scrimmage (a simple signal to the referee and a thumbs up by the referee). Any other players rushing the quarterback must be behind that player.
 5. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
 6. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
 7. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass. However, no contact can be made with the quarterback other than pulling their flag. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer still results in a roughing the passer penalty.
 8. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flag is pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the ball was when the flag was pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone

13/ FLAG PULLING

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
 2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
 3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
 4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, it becomes one hand touch.
 5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
 - a. If a defender makes a good-faith flag pull while a receiver bobbles or juggles what will be a completed catch, the ball is down where possession is made.
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14/ PENALTIES

General

- 1. The officials will call all penalties.
- 2. Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- 3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
- 4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Other players, coaches and fans may not question calls.
- 5. Games and halves may not end on a penalty unless the opposing team declines it.
- 6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- 7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- 8. The ball is place on the 1 yard line when there is a defensive pass interference penalty occurring in the end-zone

Defensive spot fouls

Defensive Pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down

Offensive spot fouls

“Screening,” illegal blocking or QB running with the ball	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-10 yards and loss of down

Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage replay the down
Illegal rush (starting from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside/false start	-5 yards and replay the down
Illegal forward pass (throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards and loss of down
Illegal motion (more than one person moving)	-5 yards and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards, and replay the down

In the event of something not covered in these rules, it is up to the referee's discretion.
