

Official AAU Youth Flag Football 5v5

Rules and Regulations



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For more information about AAU Youth Flag Football or event regulations, visit:

www.aausports.org | Amateur Athletic Union of the U.S., Inc.

SECTION 1 – FIELD

1.1 FIELD DIMENSIONS:

The playing field shall be 64 yards long (50 yards goal-to-goal with 7-yard end zones) and 25 yards wide.

1.2 MARKINGS AND PYLONS:

Pylons shall be placed at each corner of both goal lines. Cones mark 5-yard intervals (5, 10, 15, and midfield).

1.3 BOUNDARIES:

Fields may be lined or marked with cones clearly indicating boundaries.

1.4 SAFETY CLEARANCE:

All benches and fixed objects must be at least 10 yards beyond the out-of-bounds line. If space permits, they may be placed further back.

1.5 PLAYING SURFACE:

Games may be played on grass or artificial turf.

1.6 FIELD MARKINGS:

No markings or decorations may interfere with player safety or game play.

SECTION 2 – BALL

2.1 SUPPLIED BALLS:

Footballs will be provided at each sanctioned AAU Junior Olympic Games Regional Qualifier.

2.2 USE OF OFFICIAL BALL:

Teams must use only the balls provided; no other balls may be used in play.

2.3 AGE DIVISION BALLS:

Teams may elect to play with a ball from an older age division but not a younger one.

SECTION 3 – ROSTERS & UNIFORMS

3.1 TEAM SIZE:

Each team fields five (5) players. If a player is injured and no substitute is available, a team may continue with four (4) players; the opponent may still play with five.

3.2 MINIMUM TO START:

A minimum of four (4) players is required to begin a game.

3.2(a) SEASON FORFEIT:

If a game does not start within 15 minutes of its scheduled time because of insufficient players, it is an automatic forfeit.

3.2(b) TOURNAMENT FORFEIT:

If a tournament game fails to start within 10 minutes of its scheduled time due to insufficient players, it is an automatic forfeit.

3.3 ROSTER LIMIT:

Each team may carry a maximum of 12 players.

3.4 SHORTS AND POCKETS:

Players must wear shorts with no pockets. If pockets are present, they must be taped closed or the player must change immediately.

3.5 SHIRTS:

All shirts must be tucked into shorts or pants.

3.6 JEWELRY:

Jewelry of any kind is not permitted.

3.7 MOUTH GUARDS:

Players must wear a mouth guard to participate.

3.8 FACE COVERINGS AND EYEWEAR:

Face coverings are allowed. Eyewear must fit securely with a strap; hats with brims must be worn backwards on the field.

3.9 FLAG PLACEMENT:

Flags must be worn on the player's hips and extend outward.

3.10 FLAG BELT CLEARANCE:

Flag belts must be free of obstructions; if any object is attached, the player is considered "down" when it is pulled. Flags must contrast with pant colors.

3.11 AAU FLAGS:

Official AAU Junior Olympic brand flags will be provided at each regional qualifier.

3.12 LEGAL FLAGS:

Flags must be easily pulled with one hand to be considered legal.

3.13 ALTERATION OF FLAGS:

Flags may not be greased, glued, or modified in any way. Players found tampering will be disqualified.

3.14 SIDELINE ACCESS:

Only players, coaches, and approved media personnel with a wristband are allowed on the sideline.

SECTION 4 – DEFINITIONS

4.1 BACKWARD LATERAL:

A backward pitch by any offensive player; allowed twice behind the line of scrimmage and once beyond it.

4.2 FORWARD PITCH:

A forward pitch behind the line of scrimmage; only one is permitted per play.

4.3 JUMP:

A player may leave their feet to advance but cannot hurdle a defender, must land on their feet, and may not dive.

4.4 PRO CLOCK:

Used in the last minute of the second half when the score margin is within 18 points; the clock stops for out-of-bounds, incomplete passes, touchdowns, turnovers on downs, or penalties.

4.5 NO-RUN ZONE:

The offense may not run the ball within five yards of the goal line.

4.6 ONSIDE PLAY:

Allowed only in the final minute when the losing team is down 18 points or less; one play from its own 5-yard line to cross midfield for possession.

4.7 THROW-OFFS:

The defensive team throws the ball to start a possession. It must travel past midfield. If out of bounds before the goal line, offense starts at the 15; if beyond the goal line, at the 5.

4.8 TOUCHBACK:

When the ball travels beyond the goal line and goes out of bounds.

4.9 PUNT:

On fourth down, offense may forfeit the play to spot the ball at the opponent's 5-yard line.

4.10 BLOCKING:

Any movement by a player to impede a defender's path to the flag.

4.11 CHARGING:

A ball carrier lowering their head or shoulder into a defender.

4.12 DIVE:

Leaving the feet with legs behind the body; not permitted to gain yardage.

4.13 FALSE START:

Any offensive player moving forward before the snap.

4.14 FLAG GUARDING:

Using hands, arms, or the ball to block access to the flag.

4.15 CONVERSION:

A scoring attempt after a touchdown.

4.16 FORCE OUT:

When a receiver is pushed out of bounds while attempting a catch; the catch is ruled complete at the point of departure if contact caused it.

4.17 FREE PLAY:

A play where the offense may choose to accept the result or replay the down.

4.18 HANDOFF:

A direct hand-to-hand transfer of the ball.

4.19 LOSS OF DOWN:

A penalty resulting in the offense losing one down in the current series.

4.20 BLITZ:

When defenders cross the line of scrimmage immediately after the snap. If they cross before the referee's 3-count or before a handoff, it is a blitz.

4.21 STATIONARY PICK:

Legal only after a receiver has possession and must be stationary without arm contact.

4.22 RUNNING TIME:

Clock stops only for timeouts or referee stoppages.

4.23 OVERTIME:

An extra period played if the score is tied after regulation.

4.24 OFFSIDE:

A defender crossing the line before the snap.

4.25 CATCH:

A player must clearly possess the ball and land with at least one foot inbounds.

4.26 DELAY OF GAME (OFFENSE):

Offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball; failure results in loss of down. Consecutive violations add an unsportsmanlike penalty.

4.26 (DELAY OF GAME – THROW-OFF):

Teams have 30 seconds to set up; failure results in offense taking possession at the opponent's 15 (1st and Goal).

4.27 CHALLENGE:

One video challenge per game by a coach or media person with a wristband; judgment calls and penalty non-calls cannot be challenged.

SECTION 5 – TIME

5.1 GAME DURATION

- (a) Season Play: Games last 40 minutes, consisting of two 20-minute halves.
- (b) Tournament Play: Games last 20 minutes, consisting of two 10-minute halves unless tournament rules specify otherwise.

5.2 RUNNING TIME

The game clock runs continuously except for injuries, referee timeouts, or team timeouts. Running time stops during the final minute of the second half.

5.3 PRO CLOCK (FINAL MINUTE)

Activated only if the game is within 18 points.

Clock stops for:

- A. Out-of-bounds plays
- B. Incomplete passes
- C. Touchdowns
- D. Turnovers on downs
- E. Penalties (resumes when the ball is spotted)
- F. Timeouts (team or referee)
- G. On-field injuries

The clock restarts:

- A. On the next snap after a scoring play or declined penalty
- B. When the receiving team touches the ball following a throw-off

5.4 TIMEOUTS

- (a) Referee Timeout: 30 seconds to 1 minute.

- (b) Team Timeout: 1 minute unless extended by referee.
- (c) Halftime: 1-minute intermission.
- (d) Injury Timeout: 1 minute unless medical assistance is required.

5.5 TEAM TIMEOUT RULES

Each team receives two (2) timeouts per half. Unused first-half timeouts do not carry over.

- Timeouts may be called by an on-field player or a sideline coach.
- Teams cannot call two consecutive timeouts before the same play.
- Calling a timeout after a touchdown pauses the clock until the next throw-off.
- Calling a timeout when none remain results in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

5.6 PLAY CLOCK

The offense has 30 seconds to begin the next play after the referee's whistle for "ready-for-play."

SECTION 6 – OVERTIME

6.1 GENERAL RULES

If the score is tied at the end of regulation, overtime is played.

- Each team gets one (1) timeout for the entirety of overtime.
- Each team gets one (1) blitz for the entirety of overtime.
- The clock is turned off.

Each team receives one possession to score from the opponent's 5-, 10-, or 15-yard line (spot determined by tournament or coin toss). If still tied, repeat the process; teams alternate possession order.

6.1(d) TOURNAMENT POOL PLAY:

No overtime during pool play — only during playoffs.

6.2 CONCLUSION:

If tied after the first overtime, each additional overtime period consists of one conversion attempt per team until a winner is determined.

SECTION 7 – SCORING

7.1 TOUCHDOWN (6 POINTS)

The front of the ball must cross the goal line before the flag is pulled.

7.2 POSSESSION IN END ZONE

A receiver landing in the end zone must have at least one foot or body part (forearm, knee, shoulder) touching inbounds.

7.3 CONVERSIONS (1–3 POINTS)

After a touchdown, the offense may attempt a conversion from:

- 5-yard line = 1 point
- 10-yard line = 2 points
- 15-yard line = 3 points

7.4 DEFENSIVE CONVERSIONS

If the defense intercepts a conversion attempt and returns it to the opposing end zone, it scores 2 points.

7.5 SAFETY (2 POINTS)

Awarded to the defense when a ball carrier's flag is pulled in their own end zone or commits flag guarding there.

After a safety, the team must throw-off from its own 5-yard line.

7.6 DEFENSIVE TOUCHDOWNS

Interceptions may be returned for touchdowns. The return begins where the interception occurs.

7.7 SAFETY ON CONVERSION

If a safety occurs during a conversion attempt, 1 point is awarded to the appropriate team.

7.8 CONVERSION PENALTIES

- (a) Defensive penalties on a failed conversion result in a replay at the next closest spot (maintaining point value).
- (b) If the defense commits a penalty on a 5-yard (1-point) conversion before a turnover, the attempt is automatically successful.
- (c) Tackling or holding a free runner during a conversion results in an automatic successful conversion for the offense or 2 points for the defense (if on a return).
- (d) Any offensive penalty prior to a turnover results in a failed conversion.

SECTION 8 – PRE-GAME

8.1 EQUIPMENT CHECK:

Before each game, referees inspect players for:

- Mouthguards
- Properly tucked shirts
- Correct flag placement

- Shorts without pockets

Players missing required gear may obtain it by halftime; otherwise, they are ineligible. Only players joining at the start or halftime may enter.

8.1(a) TOURNAMENT CHECKS:

Tournament checks also include wristband verification for all players and coaches.

8.2 COIN TOSS:

Team captains meet midfield for a coin toss. The away team calls heads or tails.

- The winner chooses to receive or throw-off first.
- The loser selects which goal to defend.
- Teams switch directions and roles for the second half.

SECTION 9 – THROW-OFF

9.1 FORMATION:

The receiving team may line up in any formation provided no player is across midfield before the throw.

The throwing team must keep one foot on its throw-off line until release and may not run up to throw.

9.1 (a) LEGAL FORMATION:

The throw-off team lines up with two players on each side of the thrower, centered on the field.

9.2 WHEN THROW-OFFS OCCUR:

At the start of the 1st and 2nd halves and after any touchdown or safety (unless an onside play is elected).

9.3 PROCEDURE:

A player throws from behind the designated yard line.

The game clock starts when the receiving team touches the ball or, if untouched, on the first snap.

9.4 THROW-OFF YARD LINES:

- 6U Boys / 6U & 8U Girls – Start at 5 yd (no throw-off)
- 7U–8U Coed / 10U Girls – Midfield
- 9U–10U Coed / 12U Girls – 15 yd
- 11U–12U Coed / 14U Girls – 10 yd
- 13U–14U Coed / 17U Girls – 5 yd
- 15U–16U Coed – Own goal line

9.5 RECEIVING TEAM:

May catch in the air or pick up any bounce; the defense may down a resting ball.

9.6 END ZONE RESULTS:

If caught and kneeled in-end-zone → start at own 5.

If untouched out-of-bounds beyond goal → own 5.

9.7 DISTANCE REQUIREMENT:

Throw must cross midfield.

If not → re-throw; second infraction → 5-yard penalty.

9.8 GROUND CONTACT:

If it hits before the goal line, the receiving team may return it or the throw-off team may down it.

9.9 DEAD BALL:

Once downed, play is dead; ball spotted where first touched.

9.10 MUFFED BALL:

If the receiving team muffs the catch, spot at first contact point.

9.11 END ZONE DROP:

If dropped in the end zone → touchback.

9.12 FIRST-HALF CLOCK:

After a timeout post-touchdown, the clock starts when the receiving team touches the ball or on the first snap.

9.13 PRO CLOCK SCENARIO:

During pro-clock, the throw-off is untimed; the game clock begins at the next scrimmage snap.

9.14 AFTER SAFETY:

The team that surrendered the safety throws from its own 5-yard line.

SECTION 10 – SET OF DOWNS

10.1 FOUR-DOWN SERIES:

The offense has four downs to cross midfield. Crossing midfield earns a new set of downs.

10.2 AFTER THROW-OFF:

The offense must cross midfield for new downs unless the return passes midfield, in which case it has four downs to score.

10.3 SPOTTING THE BALL:

Ball is spotted on the nearest hash or centered; offense may move up to 5 yards laterally before the snap.

SECTION 11 – GAME PLAY AND FORMATIONS

11.1 FORMATIONS

- (a) Players on Field: Five players per team; max 12 on roster.
- (b) LINE SETUP: Up to three players may line up within 1 yard of the center on either side.
- (c) BUNCH RULE: Receivers on the line must be at least 1 yard apart (arms-length).
- (d) DEFENSE: No required formation.

11.2 OFFENSIVE POSSESSION

- (a) 6-SECOND QB CLOCK: QB must release, handoff, or pitch within 6 seconds or the play is dead (treated as sack).

If the defense crosses the line, the QB may run but still has 6 seconds total.

- (b) QB ADVANCE: QB cannot pass the line of scrimmage until another player has possession, unless the defense crosses first.
- (c) MOTION: Only one player may be in motion and not toward the line at snap.

11.3 ELIGIBLE RECEIVERS:

All offensive players are eligible. QB cannot catch own forward pass unless beyond the line.

11.4 DEFENSIVE PLAY:

- (a) Defense may cross line only on a blitz, after 3 seconds, or when QB clock is off.
- (b) QB clock continues until the ball is released.
- (c) Two blitzes allowed per half.

11.5 LATERALS:

- (a) Beyond Line: One lateral allowed.
- (b) Behind Line: Two laterals allowed.
- (c) On Throw-Offs: One lateral allowed during returns.

11.6 AFTER SNAP:

- (a) Unlimited handoffs behind the line.
- (b) Forward passes allowed after handoffs/laterals only if ball and passer remain behind the line.
- (c) Laterals may be intercepted and returned.

SECTION 12 – PUNTS

12.1 DECLARING A PUNT:

Teams may punt on any 4th down regardless of field position or time.

12.2 RESULT OF PUNT:

By electing to punt, the offense forfeits the play; the opponent takes possession at its own 5-yard line.

SECTION 13 – POSSESSIONS

13.1 CATCH OR INTERCEPTION:

A catch or interception is complete when a player has control of the ball and at least one-foot (or other body part) touches inbounds. If another body part touches first, that contact must be entirely inbounds.

13.2 LOSING POSSESSION:

If a player loses control of the ball and it touches the ground, the play is dead at the point of loss.

- If fumbled forward → ball spotted at point of loss.
- If fumbled backward → ball spotted where it hit the ground.

13.3 SIMULTANEOUS POSSESSION:

When both teams possess the ball simultaneously on a forward pass, the catch is awarded to the offense provided both are inbounds.

SECTION 14 – MISCELLANEOUS RULES

14.1 SIDELINE PERSONNEL:

Coaches and players must remain within their designated sideline area between the 10-yard lines.

14.2 PLAYERS ON THE GROUND:

Any ball carrier who falls to the ground (with or without contact) is considered down at that spot.

14.3 LOSS OF DOWN PENALTIES:

A penalty accepted against the offense on 1st down results in 2nd down; on 4th down, it results in a turnover on downs.

14.4 OFFSETTING FOULS:

If both teams commit penalties before a change of possession, the down is replayed. If the defense intercepts and no foul occurs until after the interception, the turnover stands and penalties are assessed afterward.

14.5 INADVERTENT WHISTLE:

The offense may replay the down or take the ball at the spot where the whistle occurred.

14.6 FORWARD PROGRESS:

Measured by the front of the ball when the flag is pulled.

14.7 PENALTY WHILE CROSSING MIDFIELD:

If a penalty negates a crossing of midfield, the offense does not earn a new set of downs.

14.8 DEFENSIVE PENALTY ON FINAL PLAY:

Games cannot end on a defensive penalty; the offense receives one untimed down.

14.9 TOURNAMENT VARIATIONS:

Tournament directors may modify game lengths as necessary.

SECTION 15 – PENALTIES AND REMEDIES

Unless otherwise stated, all penalties may be declined by the non-offending team. If both teams commit penalties on a play, they offset, and the down is replayed.

15.1 BLOCKING:

Illegally impeding a defender's progress through contact or positioning.

- Remedy: Loss of down and yardage from the spot of infraction.

15.2 CHARGING:

Offensive player lowers head or shoulder into defender.

- Remedy: Loss of down and yardage.

15.3 DEFENSIVE HOLDING:

Defender grabs a ball carrier or receiver, impeding progress.

- Remedy: Automatic first down at the spot of foul; +5 yards if play is successful.

15.4 DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE (DPI):

Contact preventing a receiver from catching a catchable pass.

- Remedy (field): Automatic first down at spot of foul.
- Remedy (end zone): Ball on 2-yard line or previous line, whichever is closer.
- Note: No penalty if pass is uncatchable.

15.5 DELAY OF GAME:

Failure to snap within play clock limit.

- Remedy (scrimmage): Loss of down.
- Remedy (throw-off): Receiving team starts at opponent's 15-yard line.
- Remedy (punt): Replay from previous spot.

15.6 THROW-OFF OUT OF BOUNDS:

- Remedy: Offense starts at opposing 15-yard line. If out in end zone, start at 5-yard line.

15.7 DIVING (OFFENSE):

Offensive player dives to advance.

- Remedy: Spot where dive began.

15.8 EARLY PULL:

Defender pulls flag before ball possession.

- Remedy: Unsportsmanlike conduct.

15.9 OFFSIDE:

- Throwing team: 1st infraction → rethrow; 2nd → 5-yard penalty; 3rd → unsportsmanlike.
- Defense: Offense may accept play result or replay down.

15.10 FALSE START:

Offensive movement before snap.

- Remedy: 5-yard penalty, repeat down.

15.11 FLAG DELAY:

Defender must drop or return pulled flag immediately.

- Remedy: Unsportsmanlike conduct possible.

15.12 FLAG GUARDING:

Offensive player blocks flag with arm, ball, or body.

- Remedy: 5-yard penalty and loss of down.

15.13 FLAG TAMPERING:

Altering flags to prevent pulling.

- Remedy: Automatic suspension or disqualification.

15.14 ILLEGAL CONTACT (OFFENSE):

Pushing or using hands to create space.

- Remedy: Loss of down and yardage if caught.

15.15 ILLEGAL LATERAL:

A forward or excess lateral beyond the limit.

- Remedy: Ball spotted where released or where it hit ground.

15.16 ILLEGAL FORWARD PASS:

Passer completely crosses line of scrimmage before throwing.

- Remedy: Loss of down.

15.17 ILLEGAL MOTION:

More than one player in motion or player moving toward the line at snap.

- Remedy: Dead ball; loss of down.

15.18 ILLEGAL QUARTERBACK RUN:

QB runs across line before a defensive cross.

- Remedy: Loss of down and yardage.

15.19 INELIGIBLE RECEIVER DOWNFIELD:

Receiver steps out of bounds then re-enters and touches ball first.

- Remedy: Incomplete pass; play dead at contact.

15.20 INTERFERENCE ON THROW-OFF:

Throwing team fails to give half-yard space to receiver.

- Remedy: Offense takes ball at foul spot or return end, whichever is farther.

15.21 MISSING FLAG:

Player starts play missing a flag.

- Remedy: Player ruled down upon possession.

15.22 MOVING PICK:

Offensive player moves to impede defender.

- Remedy: Loss of down and yardage.

15.23 ROUGHING THE PASSER:

Contact with passer's throwing arm or shoulder.

- Remedy: 10-yard penalty and automatic first down.

15.24 TACKLING:

Intentional contact that brings player down or halts progress.

- Remedy: 15-yard penalty and automatic first down. Second infraction → ejection.

15.25 TOO MANY PLAYERS:

More than five players on field.

- Offense: Dead ball, loss of down.
- Defense: Free play; offense may accept result or replay.

15.26 UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT:

Includes disrespect to officials, taunting, fighting, illegal contact above shoulders, or simulating penalties.

- Remedy: 15-yard penalty.
- Second offense: Player ejected and suspended for next game.

15.27 UNTUCKED SHIRT / MISALIGNED FLAGS:

Referees may warn players.

- Remedy: If unresolved, player ruled down upon catching the ball.

SECTION 16 – REFEREES AND STAFF

16.1 OFFICIAL TRAINING:

All referees must be AAU-trained and credentialed.

16.2 OFFICIAL COUNT:

One official required for league games; two for tournament play.

16.3 AUTHORITY:

The senior referee may overrule other officials but should defer to the best field view.

16.4 FIELD JUDGE POSITION:

The field judge positions on the defensive side, aligned with the furthest defender.

16.5 UNIFORMS:

All officials must wear proper AAU referee attire during play.