

SYCOFLAG



FOOTBALL

Official Rule Book

Updated January 2026
All changes are highlighted in gray.

Section 1: Player Eligibility and League Policy

1. Players must be age eligible as of the first scheduled game of the season.
2. Only rostered players assigned by SycoFlag Football may participate in team activities.
3. Teams with fewer than 4 rostered and eligible players at the time of the opening kickoff will forfeit the game but may use the scheduled field time to scrimmage.
4. Teams must arrive to their scheduled field on time to avoid forfeiture.
5. An ineligible player is a legal team member barred from specific games due to rule infractions or disciplinary action. Head coaches must track ineligible players.
6. Playing an illegal (non-rostered) player will result in game forfeiture.
7. Players may be rostered to only one team per age division.
8. Players can play up in higher divisions but cannot play down.
 - a. Players may not play up to the 17U level.
9. Head coaches may dispute rule interpretations but cannot dispute judgement calls.
10. Non-coach adults require approval from a game official or league representative to enter the field of play.
11. Unsportsmanlike behavior by players, coaches or spectators may result in penalty, ejection, game forfeiture or league expulsion.
12. Use of tobacco, alcohol, or banned substances may lead to ejection, team forfeiture or league expulsion.
13. Deliberate actions to maim or injure will result in ejection and possible league expulsion.
14. Players showing concussion symptoms must be removed from play until cleared by a medical professional.
 - a. Players who sustain any contact to the head with no immediate signs of concussion will be removed from play for a minimum of one play to be evaluated by a coach or league representative.
15. Instant replay is not used. Photos or videos cannot be used to overturn rulings.
16. Videotaping an opponent's games or practices is prohibited and penalized by game forfeiture.

Section 2: Conduct

1. Only the head coach may address game officials.
2. Coaching staff are responsible for their sidelines, including spectators, and must remain on their side of the field.
3. Contact is limited to incidental flag football contact.
4. Players must behave civilly. Flag slamming, throwing or similar acts will result in a warning and, upon repeat, will result in unsportsmanlike conduct penalties.
5. Use of the F-word is grounds for immediate ejection.
6. Acts that are deemed potentially dangerous and not a normal part of football will result in penalties and possible ejection.
7. Acts that are intended to harm another player, coach or spectator may result in penalty, ejection and possible league sanctions.
8. Intentional cheating will lead to game forfeiture and suspension pending review by league representatives.

9. Ejected individuals must leave the premises immediately following ejection. Failure to comply with an ejection may result in further penalty or league sanctions.
 - a. Unaccompanied minors must report to the main tent following an ejection.
10. Coaches and players must participate in post-game handshakes.
11. Officials and League Representatives can suspend play or declare forfeiture for threatening or dangerous behavior.
12. Any conduct violation may incur the following repercussions:
 - a. Unsportsmanlike conduct/ejection: 8-Day suspension.
 - b. Threatening or hitting an official, public intoxication, or fighting: Season suspension or league expulsion.
13. All sportsmanship and safety violations are subject to penalties at the discretion of League Representatives.

Section 3: Pre-Game, Field, and Equipment

Field Specifications

1. The field is 30 yards by 70 yards including two 10-yard endzones and a midfield line-to-gain.
2. No-run zones will be positioned 5-yards prior to the midfield line-to-gain and prior to both endzones, creating 4 total no-run zones on each field.
 - a. Only the no-run zones that are prior to the offense's current line-to-gain will be in effect during an offensive series.
3. The offense has 4 downs to cross midfield and another 4 downs to score. Failure to advance the ball in 4 downs will result in a turnover at the dead ball spot.

Pre-Game and Equipment

1. A coin toss will determine the opening kickoff. The winner of the coin toss will elect to kick or receive, while the opponent selects which goal to defend.
2. Teams will switch ends for the second half of the game.
3. Player Equipment regulations are as follows:
 - a. Jerseys must always remain tucked in. Players who do not possess a game jersey must wear a solid color shirt that matches the color of their team's jerseys.
 - b. Shorts or pants cannot have pockets. Pockets may be zipped up or taped where possible.
 - c. Mouthguards are required to be worn properly by all players while in the field of play.
 - d. Cleats are not required; however, players must wear close-toed athletic shoes.
 - i. Cleats may be plastic or rubber. Metal cleats are not permitted.
 - e. Players must wear the league provided NFL Flag branded flags.
 - i. Flags must be positioned correctly, with one flag worn outward on each hip.
 - ii. Flags must be a contrasting color to the players' shorts or pants.
 - iii. If flags are out of the correct position at the time of possession, the player will be ruled down.
 - iv. If a defender is responsible for repositioning the ball carriers' flags, it will be the judgement of the game official to determine whether the play is dead or can continue.
 - f. Sunglasses may be worn but must be secured with a tight-fitting retainer cord or strap.

- g. Hats are not permitted to be worn on the field. Players may wear beanies provided they are tight to the head and do not have any hanging strings.
 - h. Soft shell helmets or other protective devices are permitted provided they are worn correctly and are properly fastened if applicable.
 - i. Jackets may be worn under a player's jersey, but hood and drawstrings must always remain tucked into the jersey.
 - j. Jewelry is not permitted to be worn by any player. This excludes medical devices that must be either tucked into the jersey or covered if worn on the wrist.
 - k. Hard casts and metal braces are not permitted.
 - l. Game officials and league representatives will have final judgement and will rule in favor of safety on any player equipment item not specified in this list.
4. Official NFL Flag branded game balls are provided by the league and must be used during games.
 - a. 6U and 8U will use a Pee-Wee size ball.
 - b. 10U, 12U and 15U will use a Junior size ball.
 - c. 17U Co-ed will use a High School Regulation size ball.
 - i. The 17U Co-ed division may provide their own game ball provided it is approved by the game officials.
 - d. 17U Girls division will use a Junior size ball.

Section 5: Regulation Timing and Game Clock

1. A game will consist of two 20-minute halves with a 2-minute halftime after the conclusion of the first half.
2. The game clock will run through the entire first half and the first 18 minutes of the second half, stopping only for timeouts and injuries.
3. In the last 2 minutes of the second half, if the point differential is 17 points or less, the game clock will follow normal football timing (Stoppages for incomplete pass, out of bounds, change of possession, scores, and penalties. Extra points are untimed).
 - a. If the point differential is 18 points or more at the 2-minute mark, the clock will run through the last two minutes.
4. Each team will have one 60-second timeout per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over.
5. The offense is given a 30-second play clock that will start when the ball is spotted.
6. Neither half can end on a defensive penalty unless declined.

Section 6: Coaches

1. One coach per team is permitted on the field at the 6U and 8U levels. On field coaches must be a minimum of 5-yards behind their deepest player at the snap.
2. For all other divisions, coaches are not allowed on the field while the ball is in play.
3. It is the responsibility of the head coach to ensure that their sideline is off the field to avoid interference with players and officials.

Section 7: Kicking and Punting

Kicking

1. Each half will begin with a kickoff as determined by the coin toss.
2. Kickoff position will vary by age group.
 - a. 6U will kick off from midfield.
 - b. 8U will kick off from their own 20-yard line.
 - c. 10U and 12U will kick off from their own 10-yard line.
 - d. 15U will kick off from their own 5-yard line.
 - e. 17U does not kick off and will start with an offensive series from their own 5-yard line.
3. The kicking team must be completely set until the ball has been kicked. Players may not get a running start. Violation of this rule will result in a 5-yard procedural penalty enforced from the dead ball spot following the kick.
4. If a kick does not travel at least 5 yards, the coach of the kicking team may elect to re-kick.
5. A kick that travels out of bounds will be spotted where the ball left the playing field.
 - a. Intentional kicks out of bounds to avoid a return may be penalized by game officials.
6. A kickoff that breaks the plane of the goal line is ruled a touchback and spotted at the receiving team's 5-yard line.
7. A kicked ball may be recovered by the receiving team until it is touched by the kicking team, goes out of bounds or travels into their end zone.
 - a. The kicking team can never recover any kick.
8. Officials may rule a kick dead to prevent collisions while players are running towards a ball on the ground.
9. Coaches are encouraged to develop kicking and receiving skills to maintain the spirit of the game.

Punting

1. If an offense wishes to punt on 4th down, it must be declared to game officials. This decision cannot be reversed once made.
2. After the offense notifies the game officials of their intent to punt, the defense must position themselves anywhere behind their designated rush line.
3. Defensive players may not rush the punter.
4. The punter has 7 seconds to punt the ball after the snap.
5. Players on the kicking team must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.
6. A punt that travels out of bounds will be spotted where the ball leaves the playing field.
7. Punting without declaring and fake punts are not allowed. Attempting a fake punt may result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
8. A punt can never be recovered by the kicking team. A muffed punt can still be recovered and advanced by the receiving team only.
9. In a punt formation, the center must snap the ball between the legs. The center may move out of the way to avoid being hit by the punt, provided the center does not cross the line of scrimmage.
10. At the 6U and 8U levels only, a throw may be substituted for a kick on a punt. All other rules pertaining to punts must be followed.
11. At the 17U level only, an offense that declares to punt will automatically turn the ball over to the defense. The defense will gain possession at their own 5-yard line.

Section 8: Spotting and Snapping the Ball

Spotting the Ball

1. The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's forward-most grounded foot is when the ball is ruled dead.
2. If a player's flags fall off unintentionally, the ball will be ruled dead at that spot.

Snapping the Ball

1. The ball must be snapped between the legs of the center.
2. Canter sneaks are prohibited. The center must move from their original spot to receive a pass or hand-off.
3. Any number of offensive players may motion before the ball is snapped, however, at the snap, only one offensive player may be in motion. This player may not be moving towards the line of scrimmage at the snap.
4. All offensive players must come fully set for 1 full second before the ball is snapped. This can happen before or after a player goes in motion.
5. Any legal snap that hits the ground without being possessed by an offensive player will result in a loss of down and the ball will be returned to the original line of scrimmage. This includes plays where the ball lands in or out the back of the offense's own end zone.

Section 9: Running the Ball

1. Players receiving handoffs or pitches may run unless in a No-Run Zone.
2. Defensive players may not attempt to strip the ball from a runner.
3. The ball carrier must attempt to avoid defenders in established positions and may not run through defensive players.
4. The ball carrier may not jump forward to advance the ball.
5. The ball carrier may not cover their flags with any part of their body, the ball, or their uniform in a way that restricts the defenses' ability to pull the flag. It is the ball carrier's responsibility to maneuver around defenders.

Section 10: Passing and Receiving the Ball

Passing the Ball

1. Only one forward pass is allowed per play.
2. The quarterback has a 7-second pass clock beginning as soon as they receive the snap.
 - a. The quarterback has 7 seconds to pass, hand off, or run the ball (if rushed outside the No-Run Zone). If the quarterback still has possession of the ball when the clock expires, the play is ruled dead, and the ball is placed back at the original line of scrimmage (7-second violation penalty).
 - b. The 7 second clock remains in effect if the quarterback is rushed by the defense.
3. Interceptions can be advanced by the defense, including during extra point tries.

Receiving the Ball

1. All offensive players are eligible receivers.
2. A player must have one foot down in bounds for a catch to be ruled.
3. Receivers forced out of bounds must establish themselves in bounds before playing the ball.
4. A defender may not hold, grab, or push an offensive player while they are running their route. Minimal “football” contact will be permitted and will be judged at the discretion of the game officials.
5. Face guarding is legal if no contact is made before the ball reaches the receiver.
6. A pass that is tipped or touched by a defender may be caught by any player in any position.

Section 11: The No-Run Zone

1. Offenses may not run the ball when the ball is spotted in the No-Run Zone.
2. The No-Run Zone does not apply to the 6U level.
3. The No-Run Zone requires a forward pass that must be caught beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - a. A pass that is tipped or touched by a defender may be caught behind the line of scrimmage.
4. The Quarterback may not hand the ball off in the No-Run Zone. No “pitch passes” or similar plays.
5. A quarterback who is rushed when the ball was snapped in the No-Run Zone may not run. The 7 second pass clock still applies.
6. In situations where a penalty enforcement would move the offense into or out of the No-Run Zone, the offense will follow the rule pertaining to where the ball is next snapped. This rule also applies to extra point tries following a score.

Section 12: Rushing the Quarterback

1. There is no rushing of the quarterback at the 6U level.
2. At the 8U, 10U and 12U levels, defensive players must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage to rush legally.
3. At the 15U and 17U levels, defensive players must be a minimum of 10 yards from the line of scrimmage to rush legally.
4. A rush marker will be placed at the correct distance by a game official prior to every snap. Players who intend to rush the quarterback do not need to identify themselves.
5. If a defensive player leaves the rush line early, they must return and reset before legally rushing.
6. If the ball is passed or handed off, all defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage.
7. Defensive players who are rushing may jump to block a pass but may not make contact with the quarterback during their throwing motion. Any contact with the throwing arm of the quarterback will be ruled Roughing the Passer.
8. Offensive players may not intentionally interfere with a defensive player who is rushing. Any act by an offensive player deemed by the game officials to be intended or designed to interfere with the rusher will be penalized.
9. Any number of defensive players may rush the quarterback once the ball is snapped.
 - a. Defensive players may rush from any position on the field provided the player is behind the established rush line at the snap.

Section 13: Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points.
2. Extra point try: 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - a. Rules related to the No-Run Zones apply to extra points.
 - b. An interception returned for a touchdown on any extra point will award the defense 2 points.
3. Safety: 2 points, with possession awarded to the defense at their own 5-yard line.

Section 14: Overtime Procedure

1. If the score is tied at the end of regulation, the game will enter overtime. No game will end in a tie unless agreed upon by both Head Coaches and League Representatives.
2. Each team will have one play to attempt either a 1-point or 2-point try.
 - a. See Section 13.2 for rules relating to extra points.
3. A coin toss will be conducted before the first overtime period. The winner of the coin toss will elect whether their team will start on offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss will elect which end zone to play in.
 - a. The end zone will not change if multiple overtime periods are played.
4. If team A starts on offense for the first overtime period, Team B will start on offense for the second overtime period.
5. An interception returned for a touchdown will end the game.
6. There are no timeouts during overtime, and the 30-second play clock remains in effect.

Section 15: League Standings

1. Age level standings are based on wins and losses.
2. Tie-breakers are determined solely by League Representatives.

Section 16: Penalty Enforcement

Offensive Penalties

Penalty	Yardage	Result
Snap Infraction, Illegal Motion, Offsides, False Start	5 Yards from LOS	Replay Down
Flag Guarding, Blocking, Illegal Contact	5 Yards from Spot	Loss of Down
7-Second Violation	Return to LOS	Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass	5 Yards from LOS	Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	5 Yards from LOS	Loss of Down
Illegal Run	5 Yards from LOS	Loss of Down
Illegal Participation, Illegal Touching	5 Yards from LOS	Loss of Down
Personal Foul, Unsportsmanlike Conduct	10 Yards from Spot or LOS	Loss of Down

Defensive Penalties

Penalty	Yardage	Result
Offsides, Illegal Rush	5 Yards from LOS	Replay Down
Illegal Participation, Illegal Touching	5 Yards from LOS	Replay Down
Illegal Flag Pull	5 Yards from Spot	Replay Down
Holding, Illegal Contact	5 Yards from Spot	Replay Down
Roughing the Passer	10 Yards from LOS	1 st Down
Defensive Pass Interference	Spot Foul (1-yard line if in endzone)	1 st Down
Personal Foul, Unsportsmanlike Conduct	10 Yards from LOS or Spot	Loss of Down

1. If an accepted penalty would be enforced more than half the distance to the goal line, the penalty will instead be enforced half the distance to the goal line.