



CSA FLAG FOOTBALL

Official League Rule Book

Cleveland Sports Association | Grades 3–8

Some rules apply to all divisions; others apply to older grades only. For complete clarification, ask the league commissioner.

1. Game Format

1.1 Games are played on a 60 x 25 yard field — 60 yards long, 25 yards wide, with two 10-yard end zones.

2. Start of Game / Game Play

2.1 A coin flip determines starting possession. The winner chooses offense, defense, direction, or defer; the loser gets the remaining option.

2.2 The offensive team takes possession at its own 10-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield for a first down.

2.3 Offense then has four (4) more downs to score a touchdown.

2.4 Teams change sides after the first half.

2.5 All players must tuck in their tzitzis during gameplay.

2.6 If a player has zippers on their shorts, they must be zipped up and/or turned inside out.

2.7 Mercy rule: if a team is up by more than 35 points with 10 minutes left in the second half, the mercy rule takes effect (does not apply in playoffs).

3. Time & Overtime

3.1 Games consist of two 20-minute halves.

3.2 The game clock is kept by a CSA official or the scorekeeper.

3.3 Halftime is 2 minutes long.

3.4 The clock stops only for injury timeouts and timeouts requested by either team.

3.5 Each team is allowed two 30-second timeouts per half.

3.7 A two-minute warning is given in the second half (clock stops, but gameplay continues as usual).

3.8 During the final 1 minute of the game, the referee stops the clock for: an incomplete pass, a player going out of bounds, either team scoring, a change of possession (including turnover on downs / ball placed at the 10), a penalty that must be marked off, or a team calling a timeout. If a team is up by more than 21 points, the clock runs continuously during the last minute (does not apply in playoffs).

Overtime Scoring

4.1 If tied at the end of regulation, a 3-minute overtime is played to determine the winner.

4.2 Captains meet with the official for a coin toss to determine possession.

4.3 Both teams get one chance to score a TD, played like a regular drive.

4.4 If the first team fails to score, they may choose to punt or go for it.

4.5 The opposing team takes over at their own 10-yard line; if they score, they win.

4.7 If the first team scores, the opposing team gets a drive to tie. If they also score, the game continues as sudden death (next score wins).

4.8 An interception during overtime gives the defense possession at the return spot.

4.9 Regular season games may end in a tie. In the postseason, the OT scenario repeats until a winner is determined.

5. Scoring

5.1 Only the ball needs to break the plane of the goal line to count as a touchdown.

5.2 Diving or jumping over the goal line is not allowed.

Score	Points
Touchdown	7
Safety	2

A safety is called when the ball carrier is declared down in his own end zone — via a flag pull, stepping out of bounds, a fumble, or touching a knee/arm to the ground. A safety is also called on an offensive penalty in the end zone.

6. Starting of Play / Hiking the Ball

6.1 A center snaps the ball to the quarterback.

6.2 The center is not an eligible receiver.

6.3 Whichever player snaps the ball automatically becomes ineligible as a receiver.

6.4 A 5-second “dead...dead” count, spoken slightly faster than normal speaking pace, is used for the 3rd–6th grade divisions.

7. Rushing the QB (7th & 8th Grade)

- 7.1 The defense may not rush the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage until completing a 3-second count (slightly faster than normal cadence), as determined by the referee.
- 7.2 The QB may run at any time, except when the offense is inside the opponent's 10-yard line.
- 7.3 After the 3-second count, any number of defenders may rush behind the line.
- 7.4 A premature rush counts as that possession's blitz. If it happens a second time, the offense may replay the down or decline the penalty.
- 7.5 If the ball changes possession in the backfield (e.g., a lateral), the defense may rush immediately.
- 7.6 If the offense fakes a pass and the defense advances behind the line, no penalty is called if the defense immediately returns in front of the line and continues the count.
- 7.7 A QB cannot throw a forward pass to himself — it must be touched by another player (offense or defense) first.
- 7.8 A QB cannot bounce a pass off a defender and run with it as a completed pass; ruled incomplete at the official's discretion.
- 7.9 A QB becomes an eligible receiver once he crosses the line of scrimmage after handing off or lateraling.

8. Laterals & Rushing

- 8.1 A lateral is an underhand pitch to a teammate beside or behind you.
- 8.2 Laterals are legal only behind the line of scrimmage.
- 8.3 A dropped lateral is a fumble — spotted at the point of the fumble, offense retains possession.
- 8.4 If a lateral is intercepted, the defense may advance the ball.
- 8.5 A handoff or lateral counts as an eligible rush attempt.
- 8.6 Once the ball is handed off or lateraled, any defender may cross the line to pull flags.

9. Pass Receptions

- 9.1 For a legal catch, the receiver must have one foot in bounds at the moment control is achieved.
- 9.2 No part of the body may be touching out of bounds.
- 9.3 One foot in bounds and one foot out while securing the catch is incomplete — one foot must be down in bounds while the other is in the air.

10. Tackling (Flag Pulls)

- 10.1 A player is “tackled” by pulling at least one flag from the ball carrier's belt.
- 10.2 A legal flag pull occurs only once the ball carrier has full possession of the ball.
- 10.3 If a flag is pulled before full possession, no infraction is charged and play continues.
- 10.4 It is illegal to strip or pull the ball itself at any time.
- 10.5 If a flag inadvertently falls off during a play, the player is down where the reception occurred.
- 10.6 A defender may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 10.7 Jerseys must be tucked so the flag belt is easily accessible. If covered, the player is ruled down at the catch spot and the team receives a warning; a second occurrence results in an incomplete pass and loss of down.

11. Flag Guarding

11.1 An offensive player may not avoid a tackle by guarding his flag.

11.2 Flag guarding consists of:

- Pushing an opponent's hand away from the flag
- Pushing an opponent or stiff-arming
- Lowering an arm to shield the flag
- Dipping the shoulder

11.3 If flag guarding is called, the play is dead at the point of infraction.

11.4 Spinning to avoid a tackle is legal, as long as none of the above occur at the same time.

12. First Downs

12.1 Each team may earn only one first down per drive.

12.2 A first down is achieved by advancing the ball to or past the 50-yard line cone.

12.3 A ball spotted on the line counts as a first down.

12.4 A first down may also be awarded due to a defensive foul (e.g., interference).

12.5 A defensive foul is the only way a team may be awarded more than one first down.

13. Change of Possession

13.1 A team has one opportunity to earn a first down.

13.2 If they fail to reach it, the defense takes over at the spot of the final play.

13.3 If the offense chooses to “punt,” the other team takes over at their own 10-yard line (like the start of a normal drive).

13.4 A fumble is blown dead at the spot of the loss; the offense retains possession unless it was 4th down and they would have lost the ball on downs.

13.5 If a player from either team gains possession before the ball hits the ground, that team may advance it toward their own end zone.

13.6 There is no stripping of the ball.

14. Penalties

Offense

Foul	Penalty
14.1 Offsides	5 yards & replay the down
14.2 Delay of game	5 yards & replay the down
14.3 Offensive holding / illegal block	5 yards & replay the down
14.4 QB crosses line before pass	5 yards & loss of down
14.5 Offensive pass interference	5 yards & replay the down
14.6 Flag guarding	5 yards from infraction spot & loss of down (prior 1st-down yardage still counts)
14.7 Unsportsmanlike conduct	10 yards, personal foul, down counts

Loss-of-down penalties on a PAT attempt nullify the try, whether successful or not.

Defense

Foul	Penalty
14.8 Holding ball carrier / illegal flag pull	5 yards added to end of run
14.9 Stripping	5 yards from spot of foul
14.10 Roughing the passer	5 yards & automatic 1st down
14.11 Illegal rush (early)	5 yards & replay the down, or result stands (offense's choice)
14.12 Illegal contact (ball still in QB's hands)	5 yards & replay the down
14.13 Pass interference	Automatic 1st down at spot of foul
14.14 Pass interference in end zone	1st & goal at the 1-yard line
14.15 Unsportsmanlike conduct	10 yards, personal foul, automatic 1st down

15. Code of Conduct

15.1 All players shall respect the calls of the officials.

15.2 Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official.

15.3 Only team captains may discuss calls with an official.

15.4 No intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or unsportsmanlike acts that stop the game — ejection may result.

15.5 The referee's decision is final. No appeals.

15.6 Offensive language is illegal, at the officials' discretion. First offense: warning. If it continues, the player is ejected.

15.7 Any player involved in fighting is immediately ejected and subject to further suspension at the league's discretion.

15.8 Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.

15.9 Please clean up your sideline after the game.