

FLAG FOOTBALL RULEBOOK OVERVIEW 25-26



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FIELD DIMENSIONS

Endzone	Goal Line
No Rush Zone When within the 5 yard line (Note: ball on 5 yard line is still allowed to be rushed. Play must be beginning within the 5 yard line and the goal to not allow rushing)	5 yard line
	20 Yard Line
	40 Yard Line
	20 Yard Line
	5 Yard Line
No Rush Zone When within the 5 yard line (Note: ball on 5 yard line is still allowed to be rushed. Play must be beginning within the 5 yard line and the goal to not allow rushing)	Goal Line
Endzone	

TCSAAL Approved Flag Football Field Diagram

Length: 100 Yards

Width: Minimum 35 Yards – Maximum 53.3 Yards

- **Field of play measures 80 yards in length with 10-yard endzones.**
- **Field may be as narrow as 35 yards or as wide as 53.3 yards.**
- **Players and coaches are only permitted to congregate in between the two 20-yard markers.**



TEAM EQUIPMENT - FOOTBALLS

- **Game balls must be of the following sizes:**
 - 4th-6th Grades / 6th-8th Grades:**
TDY / Touchdown Youth / Size 8 / Ages 12-14
 - 9th-10th Grade / JV / Varsity:**
TDS / Official / Size 9 / Ages 14 & Up
- **Game ball is to be provided by home team. However, both teams may use their own game balls for their own offensive plays pending the approval of the officials. Both teams are responsible for providing their own balls for warm-ups.**



GAME DURATION: OVERVIEW

- **40 total clock minutes and a 5-minute halftime**
- **Following the official start time, if the team ever falls below the required number of eligible players to field a team (5), they will forfeit the result.**
- **Games are divided into four quarters, each consisting of 10 minutes. Quarter will end, but teams will not switch sides, except for halftime.**
- **Under the last 2 minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarters, the game clock will be stopped any time the ball comes in contact with the ground, whether it be as a result of a passing play, running play, or a punt.**
- **Each team has two 60 second and one 30 second time out per half. TIMEOUTS DO NOT CARRY OVER FROM ONE HALF TO THE OTHER.**
 - **In the event of overtime, each team will be given one 30 second timeout per overtime period. TIMEOUTS DO NOT CARRY OVER FROM ONE OVERTIME TO THE OTHER.**



GAME DURATION: GAME CLOCK

- **The game clock will be stopped for:**
 - **Team timeouts**
 - **The clock will restart upon the next legal snap or kickoff.**
 - **Touchdowns or safeties**
 - **The clock will restart upon the next legal snap following the conversion attempt.**
 - **Delay of Game penalties**
 - **Referee timeouts**
 - **The clock will restart upon the referee's signal.**
- **In addition to the stoppages listed above, under the last 2 minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarters, the game clock will be stopped any time the ball comes in contact with the ground, whether it be as a result of a passing play, running play, or a punt. As a result, stoppages can include but are not limited to (in addition to stoppages listed above):**
 - **An incomplete pass. Clock restarts on next legal snap.**
 - **The ball carrier steps out-of-bounds. Clock restarts on next legal snap.**
 - **Any first down, including changes of possession, fair catches, and touchbacks. Clock restarts on next legal snap.**
 - **Penalty and administration. Clock restarts on either official's signal or next legal snap, depending on the previous play.**
 - **Upon the ball hitting the ground during play. Clock restarts on next legal snap.**

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GAME DURATION: OVERTIME

- **Overtime begins with a coin toss, identical to the start of the game.**
- **Teams will start each overtime drive from their opponent's 10-yard line.**
- **Overtime occurs if both teams' scores are tied at the end of the fourth quarter.**
- **Overtime is not timed and ends under one of the following conditions:**
 - **The scores are unequal following each team's overtime drive.**
 - **An interception is returned for a touchdown, as upon occurring, team scores cannot be equal following an overtime period**
- **There will be a maximum of three overtime periods per regular season game. If a regular season game is still tied after 3 overtime periods, the game will end in a tie.**
 - **Tie-breaker and playoff (regional and state tournament) games will play overtime periods until a winner is declared (regardless of how many overtime periods are necessary).**
- **Following the first overtime period, teams will alternate the order of ball possession.**
 - **For example, if a team who wins the coin toss at the beginning of the 1st overtime period chooses to receive the ball for the first overtime drive, the first overtime drive in the 2nd overtime period (if necessary) will be given to the team losing the initial coin toss.**

OFFICIALS

- **There will be two officials assigned to each game. One official will act as the head official, while the other will act as the assistant.**
- **In any instance, the head official can overturn the assistant official's ruling.**
- **Officials keep official time and score for all games.**
- **Officials are to inform opposing team's coach of players arriving late if the late player's team was playing with less than 7 players when the late player arrived.**
- **Officials are to examine uniforms and flag belts for eligibility prior to game time.**
- **Officials are to inform teams when there is approximately two minutes remaining in each half (end of 2nd / 4th quarters).**
- **Officials will ask head coach on 4th down whether they will be kicking or running a play from scrimmage. Officials will announce the decision to opposing team. Once the decision is made and announced to the defense, the offense cannot change their decision unless they elect to take a timeout, at which time they can change the play following the timeout.**
- **Officials are to examine flag belts for compliance of scoring player following a score.**
- **Officials are to signal to the defense when the 5 seconds are up, ending the pass protection period. Officials shall count out aloud the 5 seconds, then drop their hand to signify that the pass protection period has ended. Coaches are not allowed to interrupt the 5-second count from the officials by counting aloud by themselves from the sideline. Violation may be subject to an "Unsportsmanlike Conduct" penalty.**

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UNIFORM PROTOCOL: COLORING

TEAMS ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR UNIFORMS THAT MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- **A jersey that is of similar color for every player on the team.**
- **The home team shall wear dark jerseys and pants/shorts, while the visiting team shall wear light jerseys and pants/shorts.**
- **If two teams wear colors too similar as deemed by the officials, the away team will be required to uniform themselves in an alternative color. If they do not have jerseys of an alternative color, the away team will need to provide and wear warm-ups or “pennies” to meet the uniform regulations.**
- **Off-color jerseys are allowed provided they do not cause complications at the sole discretion of officials.**
- **Neither jerseys nor pants/shorts are permitted to bear the same color as the flags themselves, as determined by the officials.**

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UNIFORMS: JERSEYS & NUMBERING

- **Jerseys**
 - **Jerseys require unique and correct numbering on the back of the jersey.**
 - **Teammates may alternate jerseys amongst themselves, however, the numbers always need to reflect the different player in said jersey.**
 - **Numbers and players must match identically with official rosters submitted to TCSAAL and reflected on the RSpartz website.**
 - **Jerseys must be tucked into shorts/pants and must be underneath the flag belt at all times during play.**
 - **Uniform jerseys/shorts/pants with pockets are NOT allowed.**
- **Pants/Shorts**
 - **Pants or shorts must not bear any belt loops, drawstrings, etc.**
 - **Pants or shorts CANNOT have pockets. If they have pockets, they must be taped shut and the pockets must be taped shut PRIOR TO GAME TIME.**
 - **Pants/shorts that camouflage or resemble flag colors will not be permitted, as determined by the officials. The color of your team's flags cannot match your pants/shorts color.**

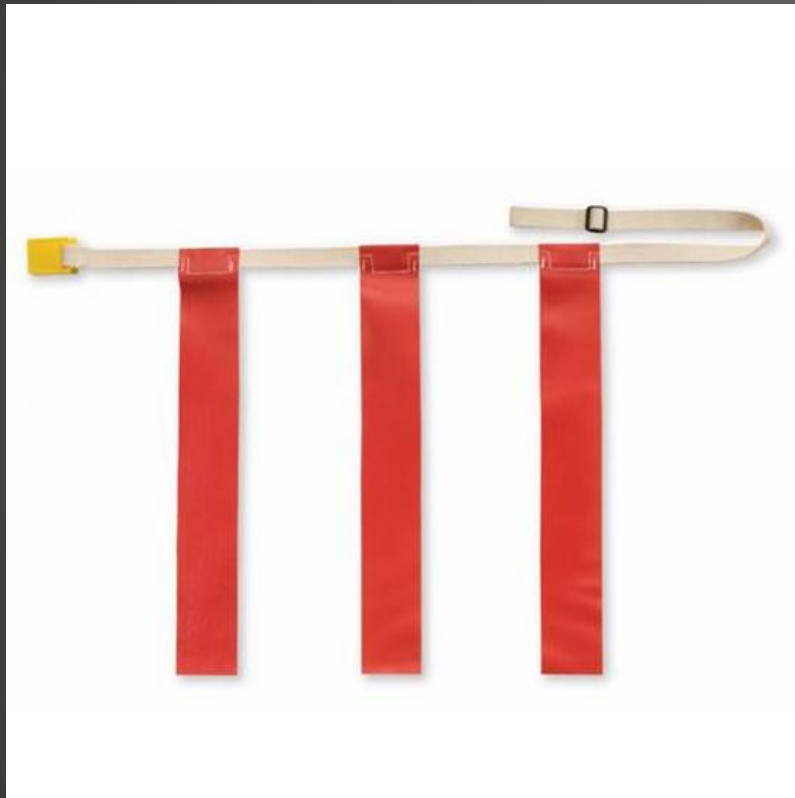
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UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS: FLAGS

- **Teams are required to provide their own flags and flag belts.**
- **Flag belts must have at least two flags, one on each side of the hips.**
- **Flags must be a minimum of 12 inches in length.**
- **Flags must be unaltered from their purchased state.**
 - **The only exception to this rule exists in the instance that a flag belt has flags in addition to the two required, one on the right and one on the left hip of the player.**
- **Some standard flag belts may not fit all players. In the instance that a player is unable to wear a standard flag belt due to size, the player in question is still eligible to play without the flag but they cannot receive a pass. A player without a flag can still catch a tipped pass, but they are marked down at the point of reception.**
- **Point of clarification: If a player begins the play with flags and the flag(s) fall off mid-play, the player is still eligible to catch a pass, but they are down at the spot of the reception.**
- **Flag Tampering = potential penalty / ejection of the violating player / coach.**

UNIFORM REQUIREMENTS: FLAGS



Triple Threat Flag Belt



Sonic Boom Flag Belt

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GENERAL RULES: FORMATION

- **Teams are allowed a maximum of 7 players on the field (minimum of 5 players).**
- **The offense must have 4 players on the line of scrimmage (regardless of the number of players on the field). Defense does not have a minimum requirement on the line of scrimmage, except when they are receiving a punt (4 players).**
- **The defense is allowed to lineup as far forward as the line of scrimmage.**
- **Only one player is allowed to be in motion at one time.**
- **Following each half, the teams will switch goals to defend.**
- **Substitutions can be made IN BETWEEN PLAYS ONLY.**
- **Any late substitutions by the offense or the defense will result in a 5-yard penalty and the down will be replayed. Late substitutions will be defined as any substitutions made after the players are set on the line of scrimmage.**

GENERAL RULES: OFFENSE

- **At the start of each half or following a touchdown, teams taking possession of the ball will be spotted at the 20-yard line. There are no kick-offs, however there are punts.**
- **Teams will have four downs to reach either a first down or a touchdown.**
- **Teams must snap the ball within 30 seconds of the official spotting the ball.**
- **A first down is achieved by advancing the ball beyond either the 20-yard line or midfield, regardless of where the series of downs started.**
- **Plays are whistled dead and a down is lost after the following:**
 - **Ball carrier is deflagged**
 - **Ball carrier steps out of bounds**
 - **A touchdown or safety is awarded**
 - **Ball carrier's knee touches the ground**
 - **Ball carrier's flag falls off**
 - **Ball touches ground. Flag Football does not have fumbles. The ball is marked down at the point of the initial impact with the ground. Please note that if a player drops a ball and another player catches it before the ball hits the ground, then they will have possession of the ball.**
 - **An illegal snap**

GENERAL RULES: DECEPTION & FLAG GUARDING

- **If the official cannot see the ball at any point during the pass protection period, they will end the pass protection period by signaling eligibility to rush the passer.**
 - **In addition, play-action passing plays (see play-action definition) in which the official(s) can no longer see the ball will result in forfeiture of the pass protection period.**
- **Ball carriers are not permitted to use any part of their body to screen or guard their flags from being pulled. This will result in a Flag Guarding penalty.**
- **Players scoring may be required to have their flag belts examined by officials for compliance following the play. Leaving the endzone prior to or impeding an official's examination will be subject to Unsportsmanlike Conduct and will be enforced on the following drive.**

GENERAL RULES: NO RUSH ZONE

- No Rush Zone:** In the event that the offense is within their opponent's no rush zone, (see no rush zone definition) all plays must utilize a forward pass. When within a no rush zone, teams are not allowed to use a rushing play. A Quarterback can still pitch or hand off the ball to another player but that player is not allowed to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except in the form of a forward pass. (Please note that once the quarterback hands off the ball the 5 second pass protection is forfeited). After 5 seconds with the referees signal, the defense can cross the line of scrimmage. The quarterback can continue the play but they are not allowed to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage except in the form of a forward pass.

 - Officials will notify the teams when teams are beginning a play within the No Rush Zone if it is not clear.

Endzone	Goal Line
No Rush Zone When within the 5 yard line (Note: ball on 5 yard line is still allowed to be rushed. Play must be beginning within the 5 yard line and the goal to not allow rushing)	5 yard line
	20 Yard Line
	40 Yard Line
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Endzone	

GENERAL RULES: 4TH DOWN / PUNTING

- **On 4th down, teams must declare whether they will opt to take a protected scrimmage kick or run a play from the line of scrimmage.**
 - **Kicking team must line up no less than four players on the line of scrimmage.**
 - **Receiving team must line up no less than four players on the line of scrimmage.**
 - **Kicker must be no less than five yards behind line of scrimmage.**
 - **Kicker must kick the ball immediately following receipt of snap.**
 - **Neither kicking team nor receiving team can release from position until ball is kicked.**
 - **In any instance, teams can change their decision following a timeout or replayed 4th down in the event of a penalty.**
 - **Uncaught kicks are ruled dead at the initial spot of contact with the ground. Snaps that result in the ball making contact with the ground prior to the punter receiving the snap will be ruled down at the spot of contact with the ground, resulting in a turnover on downs.**

GENERAL RULES: RECEIVING

- **All players are eligible receivers.**
 - **EXCEPTION: Players not wearing flag belts cannot be eligible unless the pass is tipped and they would be marked down at the point of reception in this case.**
- **To make a legal reception, the player must have at least one foot in bounds while possessing the ball.**
- **If a ball carrier loses flag(s) during a play, the ball will be whistled dead and the ball will be placed at the spot of the catch or where the flag(s) fell off (if the ball had already been caught prior to the flags falling off). But the ball carrier must begin the play with flags attached to the flag belt.**
- **Defenders are not eligible to pull flags until receiver has complete possession of the ball.**
- **Ball carriers and defenders are not permitted to jump, leap or leave the ground.**
 - **Exceptions:**
 - **Players can leave the ground to catch or swat a ball.**
 - **The quarterback can leave the ground in the back field during the 5-second pass protection to attempt a pass.**
 - **Potential Receivers (including defenders) cannot leap/jump/dive at any time, except to make a catch.**
- **Defenders cannot leap/jump/dive to grab a flag.**

GENERAL RULES: RUSHING

- **All players are determined to be eligible to rush the ball.**
- **The only players that cannot rush the ball are the ones that do not qualify due to not having proper equipment (proper flags). For example, players that are unable to wear a flag belt. They are eligible to play without the flag but they cannot rush the ball or be a ball carrier. We do encourage teams to order oversized flags in these situations so the players can be an eligible rusher.**
- **In the event that a ball carrier loses their flag(s) during a play, the ball will be whistled dead and the ball will be placed at the spot of reception or where the flag(s) fell off. But the ball carrier must begin the play with flags attached to the flag belt.**
- **Ball carriers and defenders are not permitted to jump, leap, dive, or leave the ground.**
- **360-degree 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. This will be at the sole discretion of the officials. Some examples of spinning out of control are spinning into a defender, spinning continuously, and jump spinning. These are just a few examples again this will be determined at the sole discretion of the officials.**
- **Teams can run a rushing play at any time except when their team is starting a play from within the No Rush Zone. See No Rush Zone Definition, and see field diagram.**

GENERAL RULES: SCREENING

- **There will be no down field screening. Only screeners on or behind the line of scrimmage before the ball passes the line of scrimmage will be allowed. Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage no more screening will be allowed.**
 - **Players already down field must get out of the way of the play. The offensive players can get behind the ball carrier for a potential lateral play but they cannot in any way impede a defender (determined at the sole discretion for the officials).**
 - **Offensive players can run behind the ball carrier but not in front of or parallel with the ball carrier.**
 - **The option and lateral plays are allowed but you cannot impede the defense from getting to the ball carrier. Doing so will result in a flag guarding penalty (determined at the sole discretion for the officials).**
- **Lineman screeners must not initiate contact of any form with defenders in order to complete a legal screen.**
- **Screeners must keep their hands to their side.**
- **Screeners cannot place themselves so close to a defender that they force contact, as determined at the discretion of officials.**
- **Screeners are not permitted to lock arms or connect multiple players in any way.**
- **Screeners on the line are permitted to move in order to screen an opponent, however, they are never to initiate or force contact with a defender.**
- **Offensive players cannot run alongside a ball carrier in an attempt to block or screen.**

GENERAL RULES: DEFENSE

- **Defenders are not permitted to initiate contact with offensive players beyond deflagging.**
- **Defenders are not permitted to leave the ground in order to deflag a ball carrier.**
- **Defenders can only leave the ground to catch or knock away the ball. This is the only reason.**
- **Defenders are not permitted to make contact of any kind with receivers.**
- **Deflagging receivers prior to reception of the ball will be regarded as Pass Interference.**
- **Intentional versus incidental contact is to be determined solely by officials.**
- **Stripping, swatting, or attempting to strip or swat the ball will not be allowed and it will be penalized as an illegal contact penalty. The ball is considered to be an extension of the ball carrier's body.**
 - **Coaches are to instruct their athletes to go for the flags and not the ball.**
- **In the event that both the offense and the defense catch the ball simultaneously, the tie will be given to the offense. This decision will be solely determined by the officials.**

GENERAL RULES: PASS RUSHING

- **The defense cannot rush the quarterback for the first five seconds following the snap. This is referred to as the Pass Protection Period. The referee will signal to players the beginning of the Pass Protection Period with a raised arm as well as the end of the five second period by lowering their arm. At this point, the defense can cross the line of scrimmage.**
 - **EXCEPTION:**
 - **Any exchange from QB to another player ends the pass protection period. If the Quarterback (See QB Definition) laterals/ handoffs or exchanges the ball to another player then the defense can go after the ball carrier at that point and the pass protection period has been forfeited for the remainder of that play.**
 - **If the quarterback crosses the line of scrimmage, the Pass Protection Period ends.**
 - **If the official cannot see the ball at any point during the pass protection period, they will end the pass protection period by signaling eligibility to rush the passer.**
- **Upon crossing the line of scrimmage, any ball carrier can be deflagged.**

PENALTIES: OFFENSE & DEFENSE

- **Offense**
 - **Delay of Game.** 5 yards, replay down, clock stops, stops play.
 - **Downfield Screening.** 10 yards from the spot of the foul, loss of down.
 - **Flag Guarding.** 10 yards from the spot of the foul, loss of down.
 - **Flag Tampering.** 10 yards, loss of down. offender may be ejected.
 - **Illegal Forward Pass.** 5 yards, loss of down.
 - **Illegal Kick.** 10 yards, replay down.
 - **Illegal Motion.** 5 yards, repeat down. Stops Play.
 - **Offensive Pass Interference.** 10 yards, loss of down.
 - **Late Substitution.** 5 yards, replay down.
- **Defense**
 - **Illegal Contact.** 10 yards, automatic 1st down.
 - **Illegal Flag Pull.** 10 yards from the spot of the foul and automatic 1st down.
 - **Offsides.** 5 yards, repeat down.
 - **Pass Interference.** Ball spotted at foul, automatic 1st down.
 - **Late Substitution.** 5 yards, replay down.
 - **Pass Protection Violation.** 5 yards, replay down.

POINTS OF EMPHASIS

- **Points of Emphasis**
 - **360-degree Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet (flag guarding).**
 - **Under the last 2 minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarters, the game clock will be stopped any time the ball comes in contact with the ground, whether it be as a result of a passing play, running play, or a punt.**
 - **In addition to the TCSAAL Flag Football Rules, teams are also expected to adhere to the TCSAAL Handbook.**
 - **Remember that the number one priority is Safety and Sportsmanship.**
 - **No Rush Zone – exists inside the 5-yard line (NOT ON THE 5-YARD LINE)**
 - **Only Quarterbacks receive the benefit of the 5-second Pass Protection Period.**
 - **Coaches are prohibited from entering the field of play, unless instructed to do so.**

NEW RULES / CLARIFICATIONS

- **Coaches and players are not allowed to interrupt the 5-second count by themselves from the sideline. Violation of this issue may be subject to an “Unsportsmanlike Conduct” penalty, at the discretion of the officials.**
- **Under the last 2 minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarters, the game clock will be stopped any time the ball comes in contact with the ground, whether it be as a result of a passing play, running play, or a punt.**
- **If shorts are found to have pockets that have not been taped shut during game play, the offending team may be subject to a “Delay of Game” penalty, at the discretion of the officials.**
- **Noisemakers are allowed for all outdoor activities, per NFHS regulations. However, noisemakers may be removed from the spectator areas if the official deems it necessary to do so.**

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CONCLUDING POINTS OF ORDER

- **Concluding Points of Order**
 - **All rules and definitions not covered here will be treated as per National Football League rules, which can be found at <http://www.nfl.com/rulebook>.**
 - **All coaches, players, and fans attending any TCSAAL flag football game or flag football related event are expected to be familiar and in compliance with the entire contents of this document.**
 - **All coaches, players, and fans attending any TCSAAL flag football game or flag football related event are also expected to be familiar and in compliance with the entire contents of the TCSAAL Handbook and are required and bound by all TCSAAL rules within the Handbook.**
 - **It is each team's responsibility to ensure that all fans, faculty, players, and anyone in attendance with that team are aware of the guidelines and rules of the TCSAAL Handbook and the TCSAAL Flag Football Rules.**
 - **HOLD YOUR TEAM & SPECTATORS ACCOUNTABLE. HOLD YOURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE.**