



STEEL CITY NFL FLAG

INTERLOCK FLAG FOOTBALL RULES 2018

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I. Game

1. At the start of the game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. (Head coach to accompany team captains.) The visiting team shall call the toss.
2. The winner of the toss has the choice of defer, offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of the remaining options.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense does not reach the line to gain (midfield or goal line), the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on the offense's 5 yard line unless the ball was intercepted by the defense in which case the ball would be put in to play at the point the defensive now offensive player is downed.
5. K-1st grade level will have 4 plays for a first down or a touchdown.
6. Teams shall change sides after the first half.

II. Terminology

Boundary Lines- the outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines, and back of the end zone lines.

Line Of Scrimmage – (LOS) and 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.

Rush Line – an imaginary line running across the width of the field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.(10 yards for 2/3 grade level)

Offense - the squad with the possession of the ball

Defense – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.

Passer – the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.

Rusher – the defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from

passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. **NOT ALLOWED IN K/1 GRADE LEVEL.**

Downs (1,2,3) – the offensive squad has three attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.(K1 has 4 downs)

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.

Dead Ball – refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.

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.

Inadvertent Whistle – official’s whistle that is sounded in error.

Charging – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.

Flag Guarding – an 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.

Shovel Pass– a legal pass attempted beyond the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner.

Lateral – a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier

Unsportsmanlike Conduct – a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior.

III. Eligibility

1. All players’ legal guardians must agree to the online waiver form at NFLFLAG.com for their specific league before participating.

IV. Equipment

1. Football size: Kindergarten thru 3rd grade will use the pee wee ball (ex. Wilson k2) , grades 4/5 will use the junior ball and the 6/7/8 grades will use a youth ball.
2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, however 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 kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.

4. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Official NFL FLAG powered by USA Football NFL jerseys or equivalent must be worn during play.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants at all times.
7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets are not allowed and may not be taped.
8. Players MUST have a mouth piece in their mouth while participating on the field.

V. Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards. No run zones are removed for the k-1 grade level. K1 field will be 25 yards wide other dimensions will remain the same.
2. No-Run-Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run-Zone (a 5 yard zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff. Exception...k-1.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive squad approaches only Two No-Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

VI Rosters

1. Home team wears dark color jersey; visiting teams wear light color jerseys.
2. Teams must consist of at least six (6) players, with a maximum of ten (10) players
3. Teams must start a game with a minimum of six (6) players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with five (5) players on the field but NO fewer than five (5).

VII **Timing and Overtime**

1. Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two twenty minute halves. The clock stops only for timeouts except for the last 2 minutes of each half (high school timing rules apply).
2. Halftime is five minutes long, but may be shortened if games are behind schedule.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive a warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team will get 1 (60) sixty second timeout and 1 (30) second timeout per halftime. Timeouts do not carry over from one half to another nor from regulation to overtime.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. During regular season an overtime (OT) period will be used to determine a winner. OT format is as follows:
 - a. Each team gets one (1) possession from midfield to score a touchdown. If they score normal PAT rules apply.
 - b. 2 OT periods max if still tied game ends a tie.
 - c. Each team gets one (1) time out per (OT) period which consists of each team having the ball on offense.

VIII **Scoring**

1. **Touchdowns:** 6 points
2. **PAT (Point after touchdown)** 1 point (5 yard line) or 2 points (12 yard line)
 - a. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion (from the 5 yard line) or a 2 pt. conversion (from the 12 yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
3. **Safety:** 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled off by a defensive player, their flag fall or flags fall off and they are touched by a defensive player while in their own end zone. They step out of bounds or they hit the ground with any part of their body other than their hands or feet. A safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

4. **Mercy Rule:** After one team is winning by 17 points or more with three (3) minutes or less to go in regulation time the game is over.

IX **Coaches**

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players to learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all times.
2. A coach is allowed on the field to direct players. A coach may remain on the field, but may not give direction (either verbally or non-verbally) once the quarterback is in position to receive the snap. First offense will be a warning. Second offense will result in a 5 yard penalty from LOS. Subsequent infractions will result in a 5 yard penalty from LOS and the offending coach being removed from the field and another coach taking his place
3. Coaches are expected to adhere with the parks coaching guidelines and code of conduct at all times.

X **Live Ball/Dead ball**

1. The ball is live at the snap and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The officials will indicate the line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Players positioned on the line of scrimmage as receivers should ask the attending official if they are ok prior to snap and official will verbalize ok or to move back. The same holds for a defensive player. There is NO remedy once the ball is snapped for a player offside. Penalty is 5 yards.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty of 10 yards.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground, not in player possession. NOTE: There are no fumbles. Once a ball not in player possession hits the ground, it is dead. The ball is spotted where the ball lands.
 - b. The ball carrier's flag is pulled.

- c. The ball carrier's steps out of bounds
- d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- e. Any part of the ball carrier's body other than his hands or feet hits the ground.

NOTE: The football is considered extension of the hand when in player possession.

- f. The ball carrier's flag falls out and he is touched with one hand by a defender between the shoulders and knees.
 - g. Inadvertent whistle.
8. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the team in possession has two options:
- a. Take the ball, if in player possession, where it was when the whistle blew and the down is consumed.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage. This option will be the only option if the ball is loose at the time of the inadvertent whistle.
9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced.

XI. Running

- 1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- 2. The quarterback may run once on each side of midfield per possession in the K-1,2-3, 4-5, 6-7-8 grade levels. The QB is the player that receives the snap from the center/snapper and remains the QB for the remainder of that play.

NOTE: NO player may run when the play begins in the no run zone.

NOTE: The QB may pitch or hand the ball off behind the line of scrimmage to another player. The offense may use multiple handoffs or pitches behind the line of scrimmage prior to throwing a pass. A player receiving a forward handoff or pitch MAY NOT throw a forward pass.

- 3. "Center Sneak" play-The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must turn and face their goal line in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.

4. "No-Run Zones," located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the ball was snapped from a spot on or inside this 5 yd area. (Remember: Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zone in each drive- one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one 5 yard from the goal line to score a TD.
5. The player who receives a handoff or backward pass (pitch) can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage. A player receiving a forward handoff may not throw a forward pass. Penalty is Illegal Pass 5 yards from previous spot and replay the down if accepted by the defense.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or 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. Flag Guarding is 10 yard spot foul and loss of down.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
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. Blocking or "screening" is allowed at or behind the line of scrimmage only, NEVER downfield. The blocker must establish a fixed position and remain still. He is not allowed to move or mirror the rusher and must avoid contact at all times. Penalty is 5 yards for Illegal Block from LOS.
11. 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. Flag Guarding is 10 yards from spot of foul and loss of down.

XII Passing

1. All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage and received beyond the line of scrimmage in order to be a legal forward pass. This includes a shuttle or shuffle pass.
2. There will be a 10 second "Pass" clock for the k-1 and 2-3 grade levels and 7 seconds for 4-5, 6-7 -8 grade levels. If after the snap a pass is not attempted in the appropriate time the whistle will sound and the play will end and the ball will be placed at the previous line of scrimmage. If the ball is handed off or pitched to another player the Pass clock is No longer in effect. If the QB is in his own end zone when the Pass clock expires the ball will be returned to the original line of scrimmage and NO safety is awarded.
3. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage in order to be a legal forward pass, if caught behind the line of scrimmage it will be flagged and

penalized as an illegal forward pass.

XIII Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off or passed backward behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage. No motion is permitted towards or on the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the end of the run following the interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5 yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable.

XIV Rushing the Passer

1. Rushing the passer is NOT allowed in k-1 grade level. A rusher cannot leave early and cross the rush line until the snap has completely left the hands of center/snapper. He may however reset (retreat behind the Rush line) then rush the QB. Failure to reset will result in a Penalty of 5 yards from LOS for Illegal Rush.
2. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. This 7 yard line is known as the "Rush Line". Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
3. Once the ball is handed off or backward passed (pitched), the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
4. A special marker, cone or referee alignment will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. (10 yards for 2/3 grade level)

Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.

- a. A legal rush is:

1. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the line of scrimmage. (10 yards for 2/3 grade level)
 2. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off or backward passed (pitched) by the quarterback.
 3. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 or 10 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 4. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
- b. A penalty may be called if:
1. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass- illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS).
 2. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped- Offside (5 yards from LOS).
 3. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line and crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off-Illegal Rush (5 yards from LOS).
- c. Special circumstances:
1. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
 2. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play,

However if they do send a rusher, the rusher, as a courtesy, should check in with the official.
 3. If the rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as defender with no offside penalty enforced.
 4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
 5. It is the rusher's responsibility to go around a stationary offensive player and to avoid contact.
 6. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the ball is when flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

XV 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. Penalty is 10 yards added to end of run.
4. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball. Penalty is 5 yards from LOS.
5. 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. Penalty is 10 yards from the spot of the foul and LOD.
6. Any player whose flag or flags fall off during a play cannot be eligible to make a defensive or offensive play. When they realize this they must stop playing
7. If the ball carrier's flag, while carrying the football inadvertently falls off. If a running back is attempting to receive a hand off and they are missing a flag(s) the play will be whistled dead and ball spotted at that spot. If a receiver is running a route and their flags falls off and they catch the pass. The play is dead and the catch is nullified and ball is returned to the original line of scrimmage.

XVI. Formations

1. Offense must have a minimum of three (3) players on the line of scrimmage (the center and 2 others) and up to three other players behind the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage. 5 players on the Line and a Quarterback in position to receive the snap would be a Legal formation.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed towards the line of scrimmage that simulates the snap.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.

Failure to do so will result in a penalty for Illegal Motion and be penalized 5 yards from LOS.
3. Movement by a player who is set or player who runs toward the line of scrimmage and simulates the snap while in motion is considered a False Start

result is a 5 yard penalty from LOS.

4. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion sidesaddle or between his/her legs to a player in the backfield , and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.
5. No motion is allowed in the k-1 grade levels. Snapping or hiking the ball by either direct through the center/snapper legs or side swipe is allowed at all ages.
6. Offense must have a minimum of 3 players on the line of scrimmage including the center/snapper. The QB must be off the line of scrimmage and either in an under center or shot gun formation.

Violating either of these formation restrictions will result in an Illegal

Formation penalty of 5 yards from LOS.

XVII Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player(s) or coach(es) will be ejected from the game.
3. Player(s) or Coach(es) may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official. Violating this rule will result in a penalty for Unsportsmanlike Conduct of 10 yards from LOS and immediate ejection from the game.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. Penalty is Charging and is a 10 yard spot foul and LOD.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.

Penalty is defensive Charging and is a 10 yard spot foul and AFD.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.

- c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team
7. Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
- a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 5 yards off the field.
 - b. Fans may not be or have items (chairs, coolers, etc.) between fields.

XVIII Penalties

i. General

1. The officials will call all penalties.
2. Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal course 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. Players may not question judgment calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

ii. Penalty Enforcements

1. Offense:
 - a. Illegal Equipment.....5 yards from LOS
 - b. Illegal motion, false start, illegal formation.....5 yards from LOS
 - c. Illegal forward pass..... 5 yards from previous spot and replay the down if accepted
 - d. Offensive pass interference.....10 yards from previous spot and replay the down if accepted
 - e. Screening, blocking, or running with the runner.....10 yards from spot of foul
 - f. Illegal block or moving screen at or behind LOS.....5 yards from LOS
 - g. Delay of game.....5 yards from LOS

- h. Flag guarding.....10 yards from the spot of the foul and Loss of Down
- i. Charging (not attempting to avoid contact with the defender) this will be assessed the same as unnecessary roughness.....10 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down if on the offense and automatic first down if on the defense.

2. Defense

- a. Illegal rush, off-sides, illegal flag pull.....5 yards from LOS
- b. Charging on the defender.....10 yards from the spot of the foul or added on to the end of the run.....whichever is more severe and an automatic first down for the offense.
- c. Holding/Stripping/illegal contact.....10 yards added on to the end of the run
- d. Defensive pass interference10 yards from previous spot replay the down if accepted
- e. Roughing the Passer.....Pass is incomplete penalty is 10 yards from the previous spot and AFD. If completed, tacked on to the end of the run and an automatic first down.

3. TEAM

- a. Unnecessary Roughness----- 10 yards from spot of foul and AFD if on defensive player or LOD if on an offensive player
- b. Taunting /Unsportsmanlike Conduct----- 10 yards from spot of foul

