



2011 Flag Football Guidelines & Rules

These guidelines & rules for 5v5 play have been summarized / modified for Nova Scotia Flag Football from The Canadian Rule Book for Flag Football adopted by Football Canada in 2009 which is available on the Football Canada & Football NS websites.

Player Attire / Equipment:

- * All players must wear an intra-oral mouthpiece & no part must stick out more than 1 inch.
- * Players of the same team shall wear full length jerseys of the same color / design & must be tucked into their pants or shorts.
- * Players shall wear pants or shorts of the same solid color / design without pockets, belt loops, loose strings, press studs or clips. Players cannot tape or secure their pants or shorts to meet this regulation.
- * Players may wear footwear with rubber tip cleats, running shoes, turf shoes or sneakers.
- * Players may wear gloves, finger tape, play wristbands & non-metal braces.
- * Players may wear prescription glasses fitted with an elasticized sports band.
- * Players are not allowed any non prescription sunglasses or jewelry including earrings, necklaces, rings, watches, bracelets, etc.
- * Players are not allowed any kind of headwear including baseball caps, visors, hoods, headbands, bandanas, helmets or similar.
- * Players are not allowed footwear with cleats longer than .5 inch, metal studs or track spikes.
- * Players are not allowed any uniform attachments except for a 4 inch towel worn on the front side of player.
- * Cloth flags or flag belts with velcro or pop-flags will be worn by players & every effort must be made to keep one flag on each hip at all times. Flags must be clearly visible, hang down freely & must not be covered in any way by a player's uniform. Flags must be a different color than player's pants or shorts. Flags must not be altered, cut, glued or changed in any way & if a player is caught with manipulated flags they will be ejected from the game. Cloth flags require that a minimum of 1" of the white portion of the flag is showing at all times when tucked in.

Field Equipment & Layout:

- * For the Men's / Women's & Midget / U18 divisions the field dimensions are 70 yards in length & 25 yards in width with 10 yard end zones. Included are two 5 yard no run zones in front of the end zones & a 25 yard middle field line.
- * For all the Bantam / U16 or younger youth divisions the field dimensions are 60 yards in length & 25 yards in width with 10 yard end zones. Included are two 5 yard no run zones in front of the end zones & a 20 yard middle field line.
- * Disk markers & pylons are placed along the sidelines to indicate end zones, no run zone lines & the middle field line.
- * Bean bag markers are used to mark line of scrimmage & the 7 yard rush line.
- * Teams will be designated to one sideline of the field for duration of game & coaches / players must stay on their side field as well as not cross midfield during the game.
- * Teams & spectators are required to be on opposite sides of the field during game.

Possession:



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- * A coin toss determines first possession, the loser of the coin toss has choice of end zone to defend & will get possession of the ball at the beginning of the second half.
- * There are no kickoffs, the offensive team takes possession of the ball on its 5 yard line & has 3 plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has 3 plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown, the ball changes possession & the new offensive team takes over the ball at its own 5 yard line. An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the other requirement of 3 plays to either make a first down or score.
- * All possession changes, except for interceptions start on the offensive team's 5 yard line.
- * Teams will switch / change sides on the field at halftime.

Number of Players:

- * Teams will typically consist of 7 – 10 players, with 5 on the field at a time.
- * Teams may play with a minimum of 4 players, however if less than 4 players are available then the game will be forfeited and / or cancelled.

Game Timing:

- * The duration of the game is typically 45 to 50 minutes long with two halves of 20 minutes running time & a 2 minute halftime. Games will be managed by officials to ensure they are completed 5 minutes before the next scheduled game starts.
- * A team that is not ready to play within 5 minutes of the scheduled game start time will lose their timeouts & the game time will be adjusted accordingly to ensure it finishes on time. If a team is not ready within 15 minutes then they will forfeit the game.
- * Teams & coaches are verbally notified when there is 2 minutes left to play in each half.
- * The offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball once it is spotted & the play is whistled in by the officials. Officials will verbally indicate when 10 seconds are remaining if play has not started.
- * Each team has two 60 second timeouts per half which cannot be carried forward.
- * Officials can stop the clock at their discretion for an injury, penalty discussion, etc.
- * During the regular season there will be no extra game time to declare a winner & the game shall remain tied.

Overtime:

- * During playoffs or tournaments when a winner must be declared overtime will be played.
- * There will be a 2 minute break before overtime starts, a coin toss will determine first possession & there are no team timeouts.
- * Each team will get 3 plays to score a touchdown & extra point(s) from midfield. If the game is still tied after each team has used their plays, both teams will get another series of 3 plays each from midfield to try & score again. This situation will continue until a winner is declared.
- * If the game is still tied after each team has had 2 attempts to score, extra point(s) will be taken from the 12 yard line.
- * Turnovers can be returned for a touchdown or extra points & may result in a winner being declared. If points are not scored or a winner is not declared the team in receipt of the turnover will get their 3 plays from midfield to try & score.



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Scoring:

- * Touchdown – 6 Points
- * Extra Point – 1 Point (played from 5 yard line)
- * Extra Point – 2 Points (played from 12 yard line)
- * Safety – 2 points + Ball
- * Interception return to opponents end zone on an extra point – 2 points + Ball

General Rules:

- * The offensive team must huddle after a change of possession, after a time out or after a change of sides but is not required to huddle at any other time.
- * The Center is the player who gives the ball to the Quarterback.
- * The Quarterback is the player who receives the ball directly from the Center.
- * To start the play, the ball is snapped from the Center to the Quarterback between their legs.
- * The Quarterback cannot receive the ball directly from the Center (i.e. under center), the ball must leave the Center's hand(s) & travel through the air to the Quarterback.
- * The Center cannot take a direct handoff back from the Quarterback (Center sneak play).
- * The Quarterback cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage unless they have given the ball away to another player behind the line of scrimmage & received it back.
- * The Quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball & the play is blown dead if it is not thrown within this time. Once the ball is handed off, tossed or passed laterally or a fake hand off, toss or lateral pass the 7 second rule is no longer in effect.
- * All offensive players except for the Center & the Quarterback can be in motion in any direction at time of the snap.
- * An offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage, but only parallel, lateral or backward handoffs, tosses or passes are allowed.
- * Once a player crosses or receives a pass beyond the line of scrimmage they are not allowed to handoff, toss or pass the ball.
- * No Running Zones are located 5 yards from each end zone & when the ball is on or inside the 5 yard line the offense cannot run the ball or fake a run across the line of scrimmage.
- * Any player who receives a handoff, toss or lateral pass behind the line of scrimmage can throw the ball while they are behind the line of scrimmage.
- * Spinning to avoid a flag pull is allowed by the ball carrier, however jumping is not.
- * Diving, defined as intentionally leaving one's feet & extending their body forward, is not allowed by either offensive or defensive players.
- * The ball will be spotted where a ball carrier's hips are when a player's flag(s) are pulled.
- * All players are eligible to receive passes including the Quarterback if they have given the ball away behind the line of scrimmage.
- * A player must have one foot in bounds when making a reception.
- * If a player goes out of bounds they cannot return to the field of play to receive the ball unless they were forced out by an opponent & return immediately to the field.



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- * Defensive players rushing / blitzing the passer must start at a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage as marked with a bean bag. They can start anywhere behind the 7 yards & if they are within 2 yards side to side of the 7 yard bean bag before the snap they have a right of way to the Quarterback. The right of way means that the offensive players cannot interfere with the rusher's direct path to the Quarterback.
- * Rushers must avoid contact with the Quarterback's upper body while they are in the act of throwing the ball & this includes the ball itself if it is in their hand.
- * All defensive players are eligible to rush / cross the line of scrimmage once the ball has been handed off, tossed, passed laterally or there is fake handoff, toss or lateral pass.
- * On interceptions that occur & remain in the end zone the ball will belong to the intercepting team on its own 5 yard line. Should a player leave the end zone the ball will be marked at the spot where the ball carrier was flagged. However, should the player return to the end zone & be flagged then the result would be a safety for the other team.
- * When a fumble or tipped / batted pass is caught by a teammate the ball is dead & is spotted where the ball was fumbled or tipped / batted. If the ball is caught by an opponent then the play is live & can be advanced by the player.
- * Any pass or fumble is incomplete / dead if the ball touches the ground when not firmly controlled by a player or if they leave their feet, receive the ball & land on a boundary line.
- * When a handoff, toss or lateral pass is fumbled or is incomplete, the ball will be spotted at the point of last possession.
- * An offensive player may make one forward pass during each down provided the pass is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage & the pass is received by a player beyond the line of scrimmage.
- * Shovel passes are allowed, but must be across the line of scrimmage & the player delivering the pass must have their hand on top of the ball vs. under the ball.
- * Any player with only 1 flag (i.e. falls off before play starts) is still eligible to receive the ball (i.e. hand off, toss or pass), however the play will be blown dead at the place of receipt.

Dead Ball:

- * A play is ruled dead when:
 - o An official blows their whistle.
 - o A ball carrier's flag is pulled, falls off, is out of position, is covered by uniform or does not have 1" white showing.
 - o A ball carrier dives, jumps, steps out of bounds or any part of their body except their hands / feet touch the ground.
 - o A ball carrier simulates placing their knee on the ground.
 - o A player receives the ball with only one flag.
 - o When the ball touches the ground, an official or the goal post assembly.
 - o When points are scored.
- * On an inadvertent whistle by an official the ball becomes dead at the spot of the ball carrier & the team adversely affected may elect to replay the down or put the ball in play



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where it was declared dead. If the official cannot determine which team is adversely affected the down will be replayed.

Conduct of Players & Coaches:

- * No player or coach shall contact an opponent or officials.
- * No substitute or coach on the sideline may interfere in any way with the ball, player or officials while the ball is in play.
- * Offensive players are responsible to return the ball to the officials after a play.
- * Players who have pulled an opponent's flags are responsible to return them to the player.
- * No player shall try to strip or take the ball away from a ball carrier or receiver.
- * The ball carrier is responsible to avoid contact with opponent players.
- * Acts of flagrant contact such as holding, blocking, shoving, tackling, cheap shots or fighting, the use of abrasive, threatening, obscene language or gestures, engaging in activities that provoke ill will or are demeaning such as trash talking will not be tolerated & will be subject to warnings, penalties and / or ejection from the game.

Penalties:

- * All penalties are 5 yards, the down will be repeated, are assessed from the line of scrimmage, will not stop play & can be declined unless otherwise noted.
- * Officials will determine incidental contact that may result in the normal run of a play.
- * Only the team captains or coaches can ask the officials about rule clarifications & interpretations, judgment calls cannot be questioned.
- * No penalty will exceed half the distance to the opposing team's goal line.
- * Offsetting penalties by both teams will result in the down being replayed.
- * Officials may take any action they consider equitable including assessing a penalty, disqualifying players / coaches, awarding a score or suspending / forfeiting the game for any unfair tactics by players or teams that are not specifically covered by the rules.
- * A game cannot end on a defensive penalty unless it can be & is declined.
- * Legend: LOS = Line of Scrimmage; LOD = Loss of Down; AFD = Automatic First Down

Major / General Penalties:

- * Major Foul / Unsportsmanlike Conduct – players or teams striking an opponent or an official with the deliberate intent to cause bodily harm as well as any acts of roughness or unfair play considered by officials to threaten the safety of participants will result in player(s) being ejected from the game, a 15 yard penalty being assessed & LOD or AFD.
- * Personal Foul – any act of roughness or unfair play by a player or team that is not considered by the officials to be a major foul is a personal foul will result in a 15 yard penalty being assessed & LOD or AFD.
- * Objectionable Conduct – players or teams using profane language or gestures, threats, demeaning or intimidating remarks & actions, persistent arguments, fake injuries, delay of



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game or targeting players to initiate contact will result in a 5 yard penalty and / or could result in ejection from the game.

- * Illegal Substitution – player substitutions may only be done while play is dead & approved by officials or to many players on field
- * Game Interference – substitute players or coaches interfering with ball, player or official while ball is in play
- * Leaving Team Area – players or coaches leaving the designated team sideline area or crossing the middle of the field into opponent's team area will result in a 5 yard penalty.

Offensive Penalties:

- * Delay of Game – ball not snapped within 30 seconds, play whistled dead
- * Delay of Pass – ball not passed by Quarterback in 7 seconds, play whistled dead
- * False Start – player crossing LOS before snap of ball, play whistled dead
- * Illegal Snap – Center lifting or moving ball it to simulate a snap
- * Offside – player lined up across the LOS when ball is snapped
- * Diving or Jumping – ball carrier dives or jumps to avoid flag pull or advance ball
- * Flag Guarding – ball carrier uses any part of body or ball to prevent flags being pulled
- * Rusher Interference – impeding a rusher's direct path to Quarterback (+LOD)
- * Player Out of Bounds – player goes out of bounds by themselves & touches ball inbounds
- * Illegal Contact – impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking, holding & tackling (+LOD)
- * Pass Interference – player contact that interferes with opponent catching ball while it is in air also includes screening, pick plays & pushing off (+LOD)
- * Illegal Forward Pass – forward pass that does not cross LOS, second forward pass during play or pass after ball has crossed the LOS (+LOD)
- * Illegal Running Play – Quarterback run with ball across LOS or ball carrier hands off, tosses or laterals the ball to another player across the LOS (+LOD)
- * Running Inside No Run Zone – run or fake run inside 5 yard no run zone (+LOD)

Defensive Penalties:

- * Offside – player lined up across the LOS when ball is snapped
- * Disconcerting Signals – signals to distract or simulate offensive signals prior to snap
- * Interference with Player / Ball at Snap (15 yards)
- * Illegal Rushing – players rushing or crossing the LOS from inside 7 yard marker
- * Diving – players diving to pull flags or deflect / intercept pass
- * Pass Interference - player contact that interferes with opponent catching ball while ball is in air & includes screening (AFD)
- * Illegal Contact – includes impeding, redirecting, obstruction, blocking, holding, tackling & upper body contact with player throwing ball (AFD)
- * Illegal Flag Pull – pulling a flag of a player before they have the ball (AFD)