

# FCFFL/IFFL Flag Football game and rules primer

Based on the USFFA rulebook ([www.usffa.org](http://www.usffa.org)), with VFFA minor modifications ([www.vffa.com](http://www.vffa.com)), and FCFFL/IFFL minor modifications.

## Participants:

- 8 players maximum per side on the field
- **Player pants/shorts must have no pockets! (safety hazard for flag pulling)**
- **NO hardbilled caps, no jewelry except for wedding bands (must be taped)**
- **No shouted profanity**
- **No extended “in the face” taunting (a second or two “in the face” is fine, otherwise maintain several yards distance if doing so).**
- All players must wear Flag-A-Tag Sonic Flag Football Belts. You can buy them online for \$59/dozen, just do a search.
- Teams must provide their own footballs: NFL regulation size, leather or synthetic.
- Players must wear same colored and numbered t-shirts or jerseys. At the very least you can use a permanent markers to draw numbers on white (or any color) t-shirts. The league usually gives a one week grace period if teams do not have numbers week 1.

## Coin Toss:

- At the coin toss, the winner selects to either kick or receive.
- The loser selects field half to defend.
- For the second half, options are switched.
- Grace period: teams have until halftime to field at least 6 players (or forfeit), but the game clock starts at the appointed time. At the coin toss, if one team has 6 or more and the other does not – the team with 6 or more receives both kickoffs at the start of each half.

## Kickoff:

- If the receiving team has less points than the kicking team, the receiving team can choose to start at their own 20 yard line in lieu of a kickoff.
- Kicking team has 60 seconds to kick off the ball following a score.
- Kicking team must have 8 players on or behind the kickoff line.
- On an 100 yard field team kicks from its 40, and on an 80 yd field from its 20.
- Receiving team must have 4 players on the line 20 yards from the kickoff point. The remaining 4 receiving team players can be anywhere behind the other 4.
- No kicking team players may cross the kickoff line before the ball is kicked
- No receiving team players can block or screen kicking team players moving downfield.

- If an untouched ball goes out of bounds before traveling 20 yards, ball is spotted for the receiving team at the place where it goes out of bounds.
- If an untouched kickoff ball goes out of bounds after traveling 20 yards but before the endzone, ball is spotted for the receiving team at its 40 on a 100 yard field, or 30 on an 80 yard field.
- If an untouched kickoff ball goes out of bounds in the endzone, the receiving team takes possession at its 20.
- The first team to touch the ball in bounds after it travels at least 20 yards (whether or not it touched the ground first) takes possession at the spot of touching. If the ball is caught by the receiving team, the player catching the ball can advance the ball forward until a flag is pulled. If the ball bounces off a receiving player (muff), the kicking team can take possession if they catch the ball before it hits the ground – otherwise a muffed ball by the receiving team is dead where it hits the ground.
- A player calling for a fair catch of an airborne ball must remain stationary (otherwise fair catch interference rule is not in effect) and must be given a yard of space to attempt to catch the kick (interference rule). Players cannot fair catch a ball that has already hit the ground.
- There is no blocking downfield. Players on the receiving team who advance up field in front of the ball carrier, or move laterally to screen players on the kickoff team pursuing the ball carrier will be called for downfield blocking. Players on the receiving team advancing up field next to or behind the ball carrier (for a possible pitch) will not be called for downfield blocking or interference.

### **Clock:**

- Each half is a 25 minutes. The clock runs continually to the 23 minute mark at which point it stops for the 2-minute warning until the ball is snapped. Inside 2 minutes the clock stops for defensive penalties, out of bounds plays, and incomplete passes (including a QB ‘spike’). Each team has 2 time-outs per half. Injury time-outs are official time-outs, and if the clock is stopped for an injured player – that player must come off the field for the next play. The play clock is 25 seconds, and runs once the ball snap position is spotted by the officials.

### **Gameplay** (other than field goals/punts):

- The field is divided into 20 yard zones. The offensive team has 4 plays to advance the ball into the next zone. Once the ball is advanced into the next zone, the offensive team is award 4 new downs to get into the next zone.
- Before the ball is snapped, there must be at least 4 offensive players on the line of scrimmage (usually the center and 3 WRs as the O-linemen are a step or 2 back)
- Other offensive players can set anywhere behind the line of scrimmage.
- An offensive player in motion (only one) must remain in motion, and cannot face and move downfield until the ball is snapped.
- Defensive players can line up anywhere behind the neutral zone (1 yard forward on the line of scrimmage – will be marked by the officials) before the ball is snapped (they do not have to have 4 on the line). The only exception is that defensive players cannot line up directly over the center. They must be one yard to the right or left – minimum.

- Aside from a player in motion, all offensive players must be set before the ball snap. If an offensive player moves before the snap it's a false start (unless a defender moved into the neutral zone first – in which case it's an offside on the defense).
- Snapped ball is that touches the ground is dead at the spot.
- Once the ball is snapped, offensive players can move downfield, and defensive players can move upfield. All offensive players (including linemen and the center) are eligible receivers.
- Upper-body blocking is restricted to behind the line of scrimmage. Blockers must initiate blocks either in the chest or shoulder of the defender, not in the back. If a block breaks, it cannot be re-engaged in the back. An offensive ball carrier cannot be blocked.
- If the QB's arm or body is contacted by a defender while his arm is in forward motion, it's roughing the passer. If the defender got "all ball" it's not.
- There is no blocking and no screening downfield; however, defenders do have a 5 yard "bump" zone off the line of scrimmage against receivers.
- Once the ball is snapped, an offensive player with the ball can hand-off, pitch, run or attempt a forward pass (if behind the line of scrimmage).
- Once a forward pass crosses the line of scrimmage, the ball cannot be forward passed back behind the line of scrimmage (though it can be pitched backward anywhere on the field).
- Players must come down with both feet in bounds for a completed catch.
- Offensive players moving downfield in front of the ball carrier (behind or lateral to is okay) will be called for blocking/screening if they get in the way of a defender pursuing the ball carrier.
- Ball carriers can pitch (laterally or behind) to other players, but should make sure they do not continue downfield in front of the new ball carrier.
- A ball carrier whose hand or arm blocks a defender from reaching his flag (purposefully **or** inadvertently) will be called for flag guarding.
- A defender going up to defend (intercept or knock down) a pass, who also makes contact with the receiver must be facing and reaching for the ball – otherwise it's pass interference. Same applies to offensive player trying to prevent an interception.
- Offensive "charging" results when an offensive ball carrier runs through/over a defender who had established position to attempt a flag pull. Defensive "impeding the ball carrier" occurs when a defender, without prior positioning established, moves in front of and collides with the ball carrier. These are judgment calls by the officials, but you can use the NBA penalties (charging/blocking) as a point of reference.
- A defensive player may make incidental contact with a ball carrier in attempting to pull a flag, but a defensive player who physically restrains or impedes the ball carrier before pulling the flag will be called for holding or impeding.
- After the snap, the ball is dead when (1) ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls off, (2) ball carrier runs out of bounds or across the goal line, (3) once the ball touches the ground (fumbles/bad snaps/dropped pitches are dead balls at the spot) – except for kickoffs & punts, (4) the ball carrier contacts the ground with any body part other than his feet or hand, (5) a player with less than 2 flags catches a pitch or pass – ball is dead at the spot, (6) an official stops play.
- When a ball carrier is downed the ball is spotted where the flag was pulled, or where he went out of bounds, or where he touched the ground.

- On 4<sup>th</sup> down, a team can elect to “go”, kick a field goal, or punt. An unsuccessful “go” (failure to move the ball into the next zone) gives possession to the defending team at the spot of the dead ball.
- For punts, 4 defensive players, and 7 offensive players must be on the line (punter is behind the line). No players from the punting team may cross the line until the ball is kicked – defenders cannot rush to block the kick. Punts can only be recovered by the receiving team (\*exception\* is a muffed ball that has not first hit the ground and touches a receiving player which the punting team catches before it hits the ground). Out of bounds punts are spotted where they went out of bounds, punts into the end zone are spotted at the 20. The return team cannot block for ball carriers. Dropped or touched punts are dead at the spot where they hit the ground.
- For field goal attempts, 6 offensive players must be on the line. The holder and the kicker are behind the line. Defenders cannot cross the line and rush field goal attempts, but they can jump at/behind the line to try and block. If the holder starts with a knee on the ground, he cannot come off his knee to catch a snap then put the knee back down (dead ball). He can come up to catch the snap and then put a knee down if he started without his knee down. The kicker has 5 seconds to kick the ball after the snap.

### **Scoring:**

- Touchdown is 6 points.
- 2-point conversion is a pass or running play from the 10 yard line into the endzone. (no 2 pt kick)
- 1-point conversion is a pass or run into the endzone from the 3 yard line, or a kick from the 3 yard line.
- Safety (offensive player downed in his own endzone, ball snap goes out of endzone or hits the ground in the endzone, offensive holding in the endzone) is 2 points.
- Field Goal is 3 points.
- Mercy rule – game is called if the score difference is greater than 25 at the 2 minute mark of the second half.

### **Overtime:**

- During the regular season games can end in a tie. For playoffs and tournaments, overtime is played.
- Overtime begins with a coin toss. Winner chooses offense first or defense first. This establishes the possession order throughout overtime.
- The ball is spotted at the 20, and the team on offense has 4 plays to either score a touchdown or kick a field goal (on any down).
- An interception ends the offensive series for that team.
- Extra points are done the same as in regulation.
- Once the first team has completed its possession, the other team goes on offense from the 20.
- After both teams have completed offensive possessions, the team with the higher score wins. If the teams are still tied, overtime continues in the same order.