



SOUTH SHORE FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES

IN CONJUNCTION WITH ELITE FOOTBALL ACADEMY & UNION POINT SPORTS

GENERAL LEAGUE GUIDELINES

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense. Teams may not defer the choice of offense or defense.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (4) downs to score a touchdown.
- If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not crossfield, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its 5-yard line.
- All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
- Teams will use footballs provided by the league.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
- 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.
 - (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be passing plays, even with a handoff.
 - Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.



- Each offensive team 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).

- Teams must consist of at least five players with a maximum of 10 players.
- Teams must start games with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field but no fewer than four.
- Games are played on a 50-minute continuous clock with two 25-minute halves unless one team gains a 24-point advantage in the second half with less than 10 minutes to go and possession of the ball, which will then end the game. Clock stops only for timeouts or injuries and with under 2 minutes to go in the second half when high school clock rules will be used.
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- If the score is tied at the end of 50 minutes, the game is declared a tie. An overtime period will only be used in the playoffs.
- Playoff Overtime: Coin toss to choose offense or defense. Each team gets a possession from midfield. If the score remains tied, then each team gets another possession and so on. The team that started on offense will start on defense for the second possession and so on.
- If the mercy rule is place in effect, then the referee will temporarily stop the game, notify both head coaches of the victory for the team that is ahead and will indicate that the remaining time is being played out in a scrimmage mode. Coaches are encouraged to use players in different positions and to spread the ball around to more players.

SCORING

- Touchdown: 6 points
 - PAT (point after touchdown) is from the 7-yard line.



Note: 1 point PAT for a run; 2 points for a pass

- For divisions where rushing the QB is allowed the goal will be used as the rush line. Interceptions may not be returned for points; the play is dead if the defense intercepts a PAT.
- Safety: 2 points
 - Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, or their knee or arm touches the ground. A fumbled snap that lands in the end zone is not a safety, the ball will be placed back at the previous line of scrimmage.
- After one team is winning by 24 points with less than 10 minutes to play in the second half and possession of the ball, the game is over. Once the 24 or more-point advantage is gained, no PAT will be attempted. The game will continue in scrimmage mode for the remainder of the game.

Note: Forfeits are scored 24-0 for the winning team.

COACHES CONDUCT

- Coaches are expected to adhere to coaching guidelines and a professional code of conduct.
- Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball.

BALL IN PLAY

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
- It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.



- A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbound as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
- 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 conduct penalty.

- Any official can whistle the play dead.
 - Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - The ball hits the ground.
 - If the ball hits the ground because of a bad snap, the ball is then placed at the previous line of scrimmage.
 - The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - Inadvertent whistle.

FUMBLES

- There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier’s feet were at the time of the fumble.
- In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.



- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
- “Center sneak” play is not allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
- No-run Zones are 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 subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
- Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
- 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.
- No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
- Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.

PASSING

- All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward.
- The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received past the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.

If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).

RECEIVING



- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
- A player must have at least one foot inbound when making a reception.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception.
- Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
- Interceptions are returnable but not on conversions after touchdowns.

RUSHING THE PASSER

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players who are not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
- A legal rush is:
 - Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the quarterback.

A Penalty May be Called If:

- The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).



- Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped –offsides (5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
- Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).

Special Circumstances:

- Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven-second clock in effect.
- Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- 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 contacting the passer will result in a roughing of the passer penalty.

The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up before the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding of the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and avoid contact.

- A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when the flag is pulled.
- A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

FLAGS

- 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 PULLING

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.



- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down upon being touched by a defender.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 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.

Players **MUST** hand the flag back to the offensive player. Failure to do so the first time is a warning, subsequent times is an unsportsmanlike penalty.

FORMATIONS

- Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands. If the center chooses, they may side snap the ball to the quarterback in a rapid and continuous motion.

UNSPORTSMANSHIP CONDUCT

- 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!**
- Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. 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 or players will be ejected from the game.

- Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- Ball-carriers MUST try to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
- Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
- Keep comments clean and profanity free.
- Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.
- Fans are required to keep fields safe and kids friendly:
- Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
- Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalties

- a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
- b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

General Penalties

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run 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 calls.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

Defensive Spot Fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
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Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards and automatic first down

Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening, blocking, or running with the ball	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down

Defensive Penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive Unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

Offensive Penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down