



A department of MPS

Milwaukee Recreation
YOUTH SPORTS
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ELEMENTARY FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Milwaukee Recreation Youth Sports reserves the right to change rules at any time.
Rules are adapted from the Rules are adapted from the USFTL 2018-2019 Rule Book.
Last Updated: September 15, 2021

Section 1 - General League Rules

SPORTSMANSHIP – Unsportsmanlike conduct may result in ejection from the contest. Officials, coaches, parents, players, and fans should always display leadership and sportsmanship qualities. Any players or coaches ejected from the game by officials/staff for unsportsmanlike conduct will be suspended until their case is reviewed by Milwaukee Recreation. The final disposition of the case will then be made. Sports Coordinators are required to check with the Youth Sports Office before allowing the player or coach in question to continue participation in Youth Sports Activities.

SPECTATORS – Spectators are to be seated opposite the player’s bench. All spectators are asked to show good sportsmanship and character and offer only positive reinforcement.

COACHES - Only coaches and players listed on the TEAM ROSTER FORM are allowed in the team bench area. A maximum of three (3) coaches are allowed on the team bench. A coach must be present before a game may start.

FACILITY REMINDERS - Dogs, alcohol, smoking (including E-cigarettes), weapons, and grilling are prohibited during Milwaukee Recreation Youth Sports activities.

JEWELRY – Head decorations, headwear, and jewelry. This means that rings, wristwatches, hair curlers, combs, beads, earrings, or barrettes cannot be worn while participating in Youth Sports Leagues.

GAME RE-SCHEDULING/CANCELLATIONS – All school sport coordinator, coaches, or applicable staff will be notified of any reschedule games or game cancellations via email. Revised schedules will be posted on the Milwaukee Recreation Website: www.mkerec.net/YouthSports.

WEATHER HOTLINE – For inclement weather updates, contact the Weather Hotline at 414-475-8068. The hotline is updated on league play days by 8AM on Saturdays and 1PM on weekdays when inclement weather is expected. The hotline is available in English and Spanish. Coaches are responsible for informing players and their families of the weather hotline number.

ROSTERS – A copy of the team’s roster must be submitted to the Youth Sports Office one (1) week prior to the team’s first scheduled game. Roster additions are not allowed after a team’s 2ND scheduled game. All rosters MUST BE TYPED. There is no roster limit.

COED LEAGUE RULES - The term “COED” refers to the fact that both boys and girls are eligible to play on the same team. It is possible that teams will have varying numbers of boys or girls, but no special “coed rules” will apply. Teams made of one gender are allowed in the COED league.

FORFEITS – The Youth Sports Office must be notified in advance of all forfeit contests. Notification must be delivered to youthsports@mkerec.net at least 36-hours prior to scheduled game start time. Teams that forfeit will be charged a \$25.00 fee per occurrence. See the Youth Sports Opportunity Handbook for a list of forfeit situations.

PROTEST – Judgement calls made by the game officials are not eligible for protest and/or appeal. Protest on rule enforcement must be filed in writing with the Youth Sports Office with 48-hours following the incident. Protest on athlete eligibility may be filed any time during the regular season. Submit rules enforcement and athlete eligibility protest via email to youthsports@mkerec.net.

TIE-BREAKER PROCEDURES (TROPHY SPORTS ONLY) – The Youth Sports Office will have full discretion determining the position and placement of all teams. Tie-break procedures are available online at www.mkerec.net/YouthSports.

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS (TROPHY SPORTS ONLY) - League Champions can be determined one of three ways.

- A. **Tournament** - A season ending tournament in which a championship game is played. The winner of the tournament will receive the league trophies regardless of their regular season record.
- B. **Position Day** - the number 1 and number 2 teams in the league standings will compete in a single game at the end of the season to determine the league champion. League record will not prevail as the determining factor, the single match up will.
- C. **Season Record** - Best overall season record in league play will determine the league champion.

Section 2 - The Game

Article 1 - Rules are adapted from the USFTL and may be changed by the League Administrators at any time to improve the safety and understanding of the game.

Article 2 - Coin Toss (Odds Game)

1. A coin toss or odds game shall begin each game. The visiting captain/coach will call the toss, the winning captain/coach shall choose one of the following options: Offense, Defense, Side, (No defer Option)
2. Loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
3. Before the start of the second half, the choice options shall be reversed.

Article 3 - Possessions

1. Kickoffs (4th- 5th grade only) - The game will begin with a kickoff on the 20-yard line. The receiving team must stand at the 40-yard line. There are no onside kicks. The kicking team cannot touch the ball.

- a. 1st – 3rd grade teams will start on the 30-yard line.
2. First Downs- are achieved by crossing a Zone-Line-to-Gain located at the 20 and 40-yard lines. A team shall have 4 downs to advance the ball to the next Zone-Line-to-Gain.
3. All players must start with their flag belts on. If a player starts with-out his flag belt properly secured with all flags attached, his team will be assessed an illegal participation penalty.
4. Interceptions - On Interceptions, the team will take possession of the ball where the defender's flag was pulled. Penalties on interceptions will be assessed where the interception occurred.

Exception: If the referee judged that a player intentionally or flagrantly commits a penalty then the penalty will be at the point of the foul, no less that the point of interception.

Article 4 - Snaps: The ball must be snapped between the legs or from the side to start play. Direct snaps are NOT legal. The snap must be received at least 1 yard behind the Center. Illegal snap is an illegal formation penalty.

Article 5 - Huddle Clock: 25 second clock - Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. Failure to snap the ball in 25 seconds is Delay of Game.

Article 6 - Screen Blocking

1. Screen blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without contacting him with any part of the screen blockers body. The offensive screen shall take place without any contact. The screen blocker shall have his hands and arms at his side or behind his back. Any use of the arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his hand or arm to break a fall or retain balance. A player must be on his feet before, during and after screen blocking.
2. Use of hands or arms by the defense - Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgement of the official. A blocker may use his arms or hands to break a fall or to retain balance.
3. Blocking using contact is an illegal contact penalty.

Article 7 - Interception: Interceptions may be returned

Section 3 - The Field

- Article 1 - Field Dimensions - Field Size 100 yards in Length; 40 yards in Width
- Article 2 - Out of Bounds: Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- Article 3 - Team Area: Team areas are located between the 20-yard lines.

Section 4 - The Players

Article 1- Roster Size: A copy of the team's roster must be submitted to the **Youth Sports Office one (1) week prior** to the team's first scheduled game through the roster submission form online. Roster additions are not allowed after a team's **2nd** scheduled game. All rosters must be typed.

Article 2 - Number of players on the Field: **seven (7) players** on the field at a time.

Article 3 - Forfeits: To avoid a forfeit, you must have at least **five (5) players** to begin the game.

Article 4 - Playing Time: Each player shall play a minimum of 25% of the total playing time. This will be the coach's responsibility.

Section 5 - Equipment

Article 1 - The Ball: A ball will be provided by MPS Recreation.

1. 1st-3rd grade will use a pee wee sized ball
2. 4th-5th grade will use a junior sized ball

Article 2 - The Flags: Flags will be provided by MPS Recreation. Flags must be worn hanging down the hip and along the leg. They must be hanging loose and fully extended. Flags may not be knotted, tucked in pants or pockets, or inside out. Flag belt may not be inside belt loops on pants.

Article 3 - Shoes: Cleats are allowed but they must be rubber. No metal spikes are allowed. Tennis shoes are permitted. Players must have close toed shoes on.

Article 4 - Jerseys: Teams are responsible for providing their own jerseys. All jerseys should be the same color. Jerseys must be tucked inside the pants always. Jersey numbers are required for the 4-5th grade league only.

Article 5 - Mouth guards: All players must wear a protective mouth guard. Each team is given 20 mouth guards at the beginning of the season. Each site will have a few mouth guards available just in case an athlete forgets to bring their own mouth guard.

Article 6 - Jewelry: Players must remove all jewelry. If jewelry is unable to be removed, or is worn for medical or religious purposes, it must be taped down with athletic tape. Players must bring their own tape; athletic tape will NOT be provided.

Article 7 - Miscellaneous: Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Wearing illegal equipment will result in an illegal participation penalty.

Section 6 - Timing

Article 1 - Game Length

1. Regulation Time - 40-minute game time - (2) 20-minute halves with a running clock. The clock stops only for timeouts.
2. Two-minute warning - When there are two minutes left in each half, the game clock shall stop for incomplete passes, out-of-bounds, time-outs, scores, change of possessions, penalties, and first downs (clock starts on the snap always).

Article 2 - Halftime: Halftime is 5 minutes long.

Article 3 - Huddle Clock: 25 seconds long. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive a 5 second warning. Penalty: Delay of Game, 5 yards.

Article 4 - Time Outs:

1. Each team has (2) 30 second time outs per half.
2. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
3. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field.

Article 5 – Forfeits: Each team will be given a five-minute grace period from the scheduled game time. Following the five minutes, the game will be an official forfeit. Following a forfeit, teams can elect to play a scrimmage game with shortened halves as time permits.

Article 6 - Overtime: There is no overtime in regular season play. In the event of bracket play, an overtime period will be played, and rules will be communicated to coaches a week in advance.

Section 7 - Scoring

Article 1 - Scoring Values:

1. Touchdown = 6 points
2. Extra Points = 2 points
3. ALL Point After Touchdown (PAT) try's will be 2-point conversions taken from the 3-yard line
4. PATs cannot be returned if intercepted
5. Safety = 2 points
6. **Mercy Rule:** If a team is up by seventeen (17) or more points in the last two minutes of each half, the clock will run continuously. Should the point deficit drop below seventeen (17), two-minute procedures will resume.
7. **1st – 3rd grade teams will not keep score.**

Section 8 - Live Ball and Dead Ball

Article 1 - Live Ball:

1. The ball is live at the snap and remains live until the Official whistles the ball dead.
2. One foot in-bounds for Legal Catch - A player who gains possession in the air is considered in-bounds if one foot comes down in the field of play.
3. Imitating Offensive Signals - The defense may not imitate the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players. This will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.

Article 2 - Dead ball:

1. The ball is ruled dead when:
 - a. A snap to the Quarterback hits the ground.
 - b. A fumble hits the ground (no fumble recoveries allowed). The ball is spotted where the ball hit the ground.
 - c. A ball carrier's knee touches the ground.
 - d. A ball carrier steps out-of-bounds.
 - e. A ball carrier's flags are legally removed. The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of the flag pull.
 - i. **NOTE: If a ball carrier's flags fall off inadvertently, play shall revert to a one hand touch between the shoulders and knees**
 - f. A touchdown, point after a touchdown, or safety is scored.
 - g. Official whistles the play dead.
2. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
3. The official will indicate the Neutral Zone and Line of Scrimmage. **It is an automatic dead ball if any player on offense or defense enters the Neutral Zone.**
 - a. **The official may give both teams a "courtesy" Neutral Zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the Line of Scrimmage.**

Article 3 - Inadvertent Whistle: In the case of an inadvertent whistle the offense can put the ball in play where play stopped or return to the previous spot and replay the down.

- The ball in player possession - the team in possession may elect to put the ball where declared dead or replay the down.
- The ball is loose from a fumble, backward pass, or illegal forward pass - the team in possession may elect to put the ball in play where possession was lost or replay the down.
- During a legal forward pass, the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down is replayed.

Note: If a foul occurs during an inadvertent whistle, an accepted penalty shall be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, disregard the inadvertent whistle.

Section 9 - Running

Article 1 - Running Plays

1. The ball will be spotted wherever the ball was at the time of a flag pull.
2. The Quarterback may run with the ball at any time.
3. The offense may use multiple handoffs
 - a. "Center Sneak" play - The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he must step backwards off the Line of Scrimmage to receive a direct handoff from the Quarterback before advancing the ball.
4. Laterals and pitches are allowed anywhere on the field.
5. Defensive players must wait three (3) seconds (officials count) before rushing the quarterback.
6. Runners may not leave their feet (diving) to advance the ball.
7. Spinning is allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
8. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he has done so to avoid a collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
9. No contact blocking- screen blocking only is allowed.
10. Flag Obstruction - All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on a player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

Section 10 - Passing

Article 1 - Passing Plays

1. Backward passes and laterals are allowed.
2. Only one forward pass per down.
3. If a passer crosses the Line of Scrimmage and comes back behind the line of scrimmage and throws a pass, it is an illegal forward pass.
4. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions may be returned.
5. If a penalty occurs on an interception return by the return team, the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the foul.
6. If a penalty occurs on an interception return by the defensive team, the penalty will be assessed from the end of the run.
7. Intentional Grounding - A passer may not intentionally throw the ball to the ground to avoid loss of yardage.

Exception: In the last two minutes of each half, a passer may throw the ball into the ground to stop the clock and conserve time for his team. This play is legal provided the passer is not trying to avoid a loss of yardage.

Section 11 - Receiving

Article 1 - Receiving Plays

1. All players are eligible to receive passes.
2. No contact allowed on the Center or Receivers on offense.
3. Only one player can be in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage. (4th -5th grade only).
4. A player must have one (1) foot in-bounds to make a legal reception. One foot must be in bounds before the second foot touches out of bounds.
5. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
6. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception.
7. Interceptions are not returnable on extra point plays.

Section 12 - Kicking

Article 1 – Kickoff (4th – 5th grade only)

1. Kickoffs begins each half.
2. Kickoff follows a touchdown, or safety.
3. Kickoffs are taken from the 20- yard line.
4. Kick-off may be placed on a 2-inch tee or on the ground.
5. Safety - Kickoffs following a safety will be placed on the 20-yard line.
6. No Onside Kicks Allowed
7. Minimum # of Offensive Players on the Line for Kick-Off Returns - 4 Players
8. Minimum # of Defensive Players on the Line for Kick-Off Returns - 3 Players
9. The receiving team must stand at or behind the 40-yard line. There are no onside kicks.
10. The kicking team cannot touch the ball first. If the kicking team does touch the ball first it will be treated as a false start, 5-yard penalty.
11. Safety - Place ball on 20-yard line.
12. No fair catches. However, a player can make a catch and then immediately down the ball.
13. Touchback - If a kickoff returner catches a kickoff in the end zone and kneels, it's a touchback and the ball is placed on the 20-yard line.
14. **1st-3rd grade: In lieu of a kickoff, teams will start with a new series of downs on the 30-yard line to begin a half, and following a touchdown, safety, or touchback.**

Article 2 - Punt (Scrimmage Kick)

1. Punt - The referee asks the team if they want to punt. The player may choose to kick or throw the ball as far as they can for the punt. (Some players have a very hard time kicking and throwing the ball results in better field position).
2. Teams may ask to punt on any down, but it must be announced.
3. To change the decision to punt, a team must call a timeout.
4. If a punt has been announced and the kicking team purposely runs an offensive play, other than the punt, the penalty shall be a dead ball foul Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty, 10 yards and a loss of down.
5. At least four offensive players and three defensive players must be on the Line of Scrimmage at the time of the punt.
6. Defense may raise their arms or jump to try and block the punt but cannot cross the Line of Scrimmage.
7. If the punter drops the snap, the ball is dead at the spot.
8. The punter must be at least 2 yards behind the center when receiving the snap.
9. Punter must punt the ball immediately and in a continuous motion. The penalty for not punting the ball immediately shall be an illegal procedure penalty.
10. If the punting team or the punt return team touches a punt and it hits the ground, the ball is dead at the spot.
11. Muffs and fumbled punts are dead at the spot.
12. Punt in the end zone - place the ball on the 20-yard line if not returned.
13. Punt out of bounds - Play ball on spot
14. Punt that hit the ground may be advanced by the punt return team or downed by the punting team.
15. There is no fair catch.
16. Touchback - If a punt returner catches a punt in the end zone and kneels, it is a touchback and the ball is brought out to the 20-yard line, first down, zone line to gain. If a punt goes through the end zone, the ball is brought out to the 20-yard line - first down, zone-line-to-gain.
(1-3rd grade: 30 Yard Line)

Article 3 - Extra Points (Points After Touchdown)

1. 2 points = 3-yard line - Run or pass
2. Next Play- After an extra point, the next play shall be a kickoff (4th-5th grade only).
 - a. 1st – 3rd grade will start on the 30-yard line, no kickoff.
3. Penalty during an extra point attempt - if a penalty occurs during an extra point attempt, assess the penalty and the extra point value remains the same.

Section 13 - Rushing the Passer

Article 1 - Rushing Plays

1. Defensive players who rush the passer may line up on the Line of Scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
2. Defensive players must wait 3 seconds (3 Mississippi) before rushing the passer. Any number of players can rush the quarterback after 3 seconds. Failure to do so will be illegal rush.
3. A ball spotter (cone) shall be used to mark the Line of Scrimmage
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 contacting the passer will result in a Roughing the Passer penalty. Players must go for the Quarterback's flag.
5. Roughing the passer - any roughing of the passer is a 10-yard penalty and an Automatic first down, whether the extra point was good or not.
6. A sack occurs if the Quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the ball is at when the flag is pulled. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team's end zone.

Section 14 - Flag Pulling

Article 1 - De-Flagging: De-flagging is the legal removal of a flag from an opponent in possession of the ball. Pushing, striking, holding, slapping, or tripping of an opponent when attempting to pull a flag is not permitted. Defensive players may leave their feet to pull a flag. Offensive players are not permitted to protect or guard their flags.

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to flags but cannot tackle, hold on, 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.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the de-flagging reverts to a one hand touch of the runner between the shoulders and knees.
5. If a flag is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of a penalty or the play.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. Tampering with the flag in any way to gain an advantage including, tying the flag, cutting the flag, using foreign materials or other such acts are illegal.
8. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flag by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the ball or jersey.

Section 15- Formations

Article 1 - Offense must have a minimum of four (4) players on the Line of Scrimmage and up to six players on the line of scrimmage. The Quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage. Defense must have a minimum of three (3) players on the Line of Scrimmage prior to the snap.

Article 2 – Motion

1. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for 1 second before the ball is snapped unless he is the only player in motion.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion at the snap behind and parallel to the Line of Scrimmage
 - b. No motion is allowed towards the Line of Scrimmage
2. 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.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his legs or from the side to a player in the backfield (not on the Line of Scrimmage) and the ball must completely leave his hands.
4. **No motion in the 1st - 3rd grade league, this is ruled as a false start.**

Section 16 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, etc., it is at the referee's discretion to issue an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and eject the player from the game.
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abusive any opponent, coach, or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST try to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship:
7. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass Officials or other teams.
8. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
9. Team/Players leaving the bench area during a fight: If either team leaves the bench during a fight, the game will be immediately forfeited
 - a. Any player that comes off the sideline during a fight will be ejected.

FOUL	TYPE	YARDS	NOTES
False Start	Dead	5	
Illegal Snap	Dead	5	
Encroachment	Dead	5	
Illegal Substitution	Dead/Live	5	
Delay of Game	Dead	5	
Illegal Motion	Live	5	
Illegal Formation (Snap)	Live	5	
Illegal Shift	Live	5	
Illegal Equipment	Live	5	
Illegal forward pass	Live	5	Loss of Down
Illegal Rush	Live	5	
Illegal Participation	Live	5	
Flag Guarding	Live	5	
Illegally Kicking	Live	5	
Illegal Belt Removal	Live	5	
Diving to Advance the Ball	Live	5	
Illegal Contact	Live	10	
Illegal Strip	Live	10	
Holding	Live	10	
Stripping the Ball	Live	10	
Roughing the Passer	Live	10	AFD
Pass Int – Offense	Live	10	LOD
Pass Int – Defense	Live	10	AFD
Unsportsmanlike	Live/Dead	10	
Unnecessary Roughness	Live/Dead	10	AFD/LOD
Illegally Secured Belt	Live/ Dead	10	LOD/AFD + Ejection

KEY:

- **LOD** – Loss of Down
- **AFD** – Automatic First Down