



Austin Inter-Parochial League Athletics

2017 Flag Football Rules

- 2 Teams, each having 8 players on the field at a time. A minimum of 6 player to avoid forfeit.
- A provisional forfeit is defined as a game that a team must forfeit due to lack of eligible players or extenuating circumstances. If a team does not have at least 6 players to begin a game due to extenuating circumstances such as traffic accidents (not heavy traffic) the game will be a provisional forfeit five minutes after the start time. The provisional forfeit will be overturned if the game is able to be rescheduled.
- **Time Outs:** Each team has 2 time outs per half, 1 minute each (none carry over). 1 T.O. for overtime
- Two halves are divided by a 5 minute halftime. Each half is 18 minutes (running clock) followed by 7 plays.
- Clock stops for time-outs and injuries (and officials discretion).
- **Coin Toss:** Visiting team makes the call. Winner of toss to decide possession (Ball, defend, or Defer). The loser of the toss decides direction. There is automatic change of direction at the Half.
- **Kick-Offs:** will take place from the 30 yard line of kicking team. Onside kicks are legal. Kickoffs DO count as a play in the play series (unless it is the last play of the series, add one extra play if a touchdown was not scored.
- Sonic type flags will be used (suction cup style). Flags must be at least 12 inches in length not counting the hitch mechanism. Flags will be a contrasting color to the shorts and may not be rolled, curled or frayed.
- Players will not dive at any point for flags or kick-off possession, except to catch a live ball in the air.

I: Equipment & Playing Field

Section A: THE BALL:

It is required that 5/6th graders play with a "junior" size football and 7/8th graders play with a "youth" size football. The ball will be leather or synthetic leather. The Offense will always be allowed to play with their own ball. Coaches can decide to use the same ball for both teams.

Sections B: UNIFORMS:

Jerseys: Teams will have shirts/jerseys that match. Numbers are suggested but not required. Jerseys should be contrasting in color to the opposing team. Pinnies should be worn if needed. Visiting team will wear pinnies provided by home team if visiting team does not have their own. All shirts/jerseys MUST be tucked in (excluding short cut) and not covering any part of the flag.

Shorts: Shorts must NOT have pockets and must be of a contrasting color to the flags worn.

General: No jewelry, casts/splints (except finger splints with all metal covered), baseball caps, helmets, or metal braces.

Shoes: All players must have either flat soled or soft soled soccer/football type cleats; no metal cleats. All cleats must be less than ½ inch.

Flags: Players are required to wear a one-piece belt with two SONIC flags (suction type). This belt must be worn snugly around the waist with a flag on each hip. The flags MUST be at least 12 inches in length and free from any obstruction. The 12 inch length does not include the "hitch/plastic" portion. Flags must be unaltered in any way (except cut to legal length). Flags must be in good shape (not torn or tattered) and cannot be rolled/curled in any way. If a player receives the ball and is wearing one flag, no flags, or is wearing the flags incorrectly, the player will be downed where he/she receives the ball.

- Note: If any player has improper equipment/attire, said player may not play in the game until he/she is in compliance with the rules. If discovered during the game, this constitutes a uniform violation for the offending team (5 yards penalty).

Section C: FIELD:

Markings: The field shall be a rectangular area 100 yards long by 40/45 yards wide. This area will be divided into 8 zones (including end zones). Respective lines to gain for a 1st down should be 10 yd line, 20 yd line, 40 yd line, 20 yd line, 10 yd line. The end zones will be 10 yards deep and the field should have a total of 6 zones that are 10 yards deep (including end zones) and 2 zones that are 20 yards deep. The sidelines and end lines are out of bounds. The entire width of each goal line shall be part of the end zone. Complaints regarding unsafe field conditions will be referred to the LAB for assessment.

Note: A player's hips (flags) shall determine where his forward progress ends (not the BALL). Also, a player that steps out of bounds during the play (without the ball) is eligible to catch the ball if he/she gets both feet inbounds before touching/catching the ball (similar to basketball).

Team Areas: Teams must be on opposite sides of the field, determined by the home team. Players and Coaches will stay between the 20 yard lines (excluding time-outs

and injuries). Repeated warnings about this rule will result in a sideline penalty (5 yards). Spectators will maintain a safe distance away from the playing field and all team areas.

II: START OF GAME / KICKOFF:

After the coin toss, kicking team will place the ball along their 30 yard line. A tee can be used or the ball may be kicked from the ground with a holder. Holder may place the ball on his foot (ball of said foot will be on the ground)

1. If a touchback occurs, receiving team will start with the ball on the 20 yard line.
2. If the ball travels 10 yards it is considered "live" and can be downed by contact or picked up and advanced by the receiving team. The kicking team can gain possession if they contact the ball first but cannot pick up and advance the ball. Any player contact (body) constitutes possession. Players will not dive to gain possession.
3. If the ball does not travel 10 yards, it will belong to the receiving team where it is downed.
4. If the "live" ball travels out of bounds, the receiving team can choose from the following: A 5 yard penalty and re-kick, or start with the ball on their own 35 yard line, or start with the ball where it went out of bounds.

III: LENGTH OF GAMES AND TIME OUTS:

Periods: The game shall be played in two halves, 18 minutes in length. In all games the clock will run continuous unless stopped by the referee for an injury or time out. At the end of the 18 minutes, the referee will inform both teams that the 7 play period has begun. Extra points will not count as a play. Kick-Offs and Punts will count unless they are play number 7 and the return did not result in a touchdown.

When the referee declares the ball ready for play (whistle blows), the offense has 25 seconds to put the ball into play (snap or kick-off).

Halftime will last 5 minutes.

Timeouts: Each team will be given 2 timeouts per half (cannot be carried to second half or overtime). Timeouts will be 1 minute in length. Each team will be allowed 1 timeout during overtime. Timeouts can be called by players on the field or coaches. A team may call a timeout to change their option on a P.A.T or 4th down (punt/play).

IV: SCORING:

6 POINTS: Touchdown, hips in which both flags are attached must be on or in advance of the goal line before any points can be awarded.

P.A.T. (point after touchdown) 1 point - run or pass from the 3 yard line, 2 points - run or pass from the 10 yard line. Teams must declare before the official can mark the ball ready for play. Once the ball is declared ready for play, a team can only "re-

declare" if they use a timeout. The clock continues to run during the P.A. T. however, it does not count as a play during the play period.

Once the decision to try an extra point from the 3 yard line or 10 yard line is made by the scoring team coach, the decision can be changed if either team calls a timeout prior to the extra point attempt. If a penalty occurs by the offensive or defensive team after the initial decision is made, the extra point decision cannot be changed.

2 POINTS: Safety (punt or place-kick the ball from 20 yard line)

2 POINTS: Defense returns attempted P.A.T. for a touchdown

Mercy Rule: If a team is trailing by 17 or more points at the beginning of the final 7 play period, the coach of the team behind can decide to end the game. If games are behind schedule, the referees and home team can decide to end the game.

V: PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTIONS:

Players: each team should have 8 eligible players on the field during the game. A team may field no less than 6 players at any time.

- Substitutions: Teams may substitute freely as long as players being substituted are off the field prior to the snap of the football or are out of the area of the play and departing the field in haste.
- Sleepers: Sleepers on substitutions will not be allowed on any play. No player may line up closer than 5 yards to the sideline unless he came out of the huddle or unless he was on the field of play during the previous play and did not leave the field of play.

VI: PLAYER BEHAVIOR:

Any verbal badgering of officials or derogatory language between opposing players will **NOT BE TOLERATED!** First derogatory action or language should be penalized 10 yards (Unsportsmanlike Conduct) and captain warned. Second derogatory action or language will cause players to be disqualified plus 10 yard penalty.

Sideline players are subject to the same disqualification for abusive, obscene or badgering language to either opposing players or officials. If the captain or coach of the penalized team cannot control the actions of his players, game can be forfeited.

Fake Excessive Contact-Any player, who in the judgment of officials, fakes excessive contact for the sole purpose of drawing a penalty may be warned once by the officials and then penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct on the next offense. A warning to one player may be applied to a team as a whole if the officials so state that this warning is to the team.

Begging a Call-During a play, if a possible infraction occurs and players or coaches from either team on the field or on the sideling begin yelling out or "begging a call," a penalty of 5 yards can be tacked on or subtracted from the end of the play. This penalty will be marked off as a dead ball foul even if it occurred while play was in progress.

Protest-Judgment calls/interpretations of rules are not open for protest. Mis-enforcements of penalties may be questioned but not protested. Player eligibility can be protested and needs to go to the Vice President of the APL.

VII: PLAYING REGULATIONS:

Centering: The ball must be centered between the legs and travel at least 2 yards backwards or laterally. A snap that hits the ground (bouncing or rolling) may be fielded by the quarterback as long as it is not fumbled or travels behind the quarterback. Rules for centering are different during a punt (see punting).

Punting: A team **MUST** declare its intentions to punt on 4th down. The punter may take a direct snap from the center if desired. The Kicker will be allowed to punt the ball even if he fumbles before the punt!

The **defense** must have 5 players on the line of scrimmage, those players must remain on the line until the play is concluded or the ball carrier advances the ball past the line of scrimmage. Offensive players must remain on the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. Illegal Formation will be called if teams do not follow these rules. If the defensive players move illegally after the ball is kicked (punted), the infraction will be enforced as a down-field blocking rule. The Punt will count as a play during the 7 play series but cannot be the last play of the series (add an 8th play) unless a touchdown is scored.

Huddle: After the official marks the ball ready for play, the offense has 25 seconds to snap the ball or be penalized 5 yards for delay of game. It is not necessary to huddle but if the offense substitutes without a huddle, please see sleeper plays.

Shifts and Motion: Players may shift to make different formations as long as they are "set" for at least one full count before the ball is snapped. Only one player may be in motion while the ball is being snapped.

Line of Scrimmage / Offside: The offense may have any number of players on the line of scrimmage. Any movement towards the line of scrimmage immediately before the snap of the ball or once all players are set will result in offensive offside. The defensive line of scrimmage will be 1 yard in front of the offensive line of scrimmage. No defender will be allowed to line up directly in front of the football (3 yd buffer). Defenders on the line of scrimmage will be at least 1 yard to the left or right of the ball. If the defense jumps into the neutral zone once the center has touched the ball, the defense will be called for offside. Offside on Offense or Defense will be a dead ball penalty and called immediately. The official watching the line of scrimmage for both teams should point towards the team that is lined up offside so as to allow that player to get back onside before the snap and avoid a penalty.

Rushing / Screening (blocking): This is a **Non-Contact sport** and neither offensive nor defensive players are allowed to initiate contact. Blockers will keep their arms by their side and hands behind their backs while they "screen" the defenders. Blocking may **ONLY** be done on or behind the line of scrimmage. Blocking, screening or setting picks downfield will result in a penalty. Defenders **MUST** go around blockers. They may not use their hands to touch, push or move the blockers.

OFFENSE: If a pass is caught by the defender and offensive player at the same time, the offensive player will receive credit for the catch. If the Quarterback's arm is in motion while a defender is pulling the flag, the pass will be allowed to count. Only one foot needs to be in bounds for a catch to be complete although a foot touching out of bounds during a catch will be considered incomplete. The ball carrier is considered down when his flag is pulled, he steps out of bounds, if he falls to the ground or if his flag is off when he receives the ball. Putting his free hand on the ground does NOT make the ball carrier down. Spinning is allowed as long as no contact is made. Diving is ILLEGAL and will be penalized. Jumping or leaping is allowed as long as no contact is made. All players are eligible receivers.

DEFENSE: Defensive players may not try to strip the ball from the ball carrier. Rushers may not make contact with the arm/hand of the quarterback. No player may line up in front of the center (3 yard buffer zone) or within 1 yard to the left or right of the center. NOTE: Blocking a pass that is still in the QB's hand is considered unnecessary roughness to the QB. (rushers should go for the flag, not the ball)

7 PLAY SERIES: The point after touchdown try is the only play that does not count as a play during the 7 play series. Punts and Kickoffs will count as a play but if they are the 7th play of the series, the receiving team will be allowed one additional play from the line of scrimmage (another words, an 8th play) if they do not score from the punt or kick-off.

QUICK WHISTLE: If the official whistles the play dead prematurely, the offense shall have the choice of (1) accepting the ball where it was whistled dead or (2) replaying the down

VIII: PENALTIES:

All penalties will be marked 5 or 10 yards. Players may be ejected for their conduct if deemed necessary by the officials (Safety is paramount to the players). Half the distance to the goal will be in force when 5 yard penalties infractions take place inside the 10 yard line and 10 yard penalty infractions take place inside the 20 yard line.

In order to establish a simple philosophy in assessing penalties, these general guidelines will be followed:

1. All ACCEPTED PENALTIES: Are marked from the End of Run (E.O.R.), Line of Scrimmage (L.O.S.) or Point of Infraction (P.O.I). The Down may or may not be replayed.
2. ALL REFUSED PENALTIES: The ball stays where it was blown dead and the down is NOT replayed.
3. ALL LIVE BALL FOULS: Will be captain's choice. "LBF" Result of play or penalty
4. ALL DEAD BALL FOULS: No Choice. "DBF" penalty enforced
5. NON-CONTACT PENALTIES: Will be 5 yard penalties. (Ex, offside, uniform violation,

6. PENALTIES INVOLVING CONTACT: Will be 10 yard penalties. (Ex: Charging, Holding, Flag Guarding)
7. UNSPORTSMANLIKE PENALTIES: Will be 10 yard penalties as well as AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWNS.
8. DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE IN THE END ZONE: Ball placed on the 1yrd line, automatic 1st down.
9. Neither Half can end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.
10. A first down will not be awarded if the offensive penalty (LBF) brings the ball back behind the first down zone.
11. A first down will be awarded if a dead ball foul brings the football behind the first down zone.
12. During the 7 play series, defensive penalties that are accepted by the offense will not count as a play.

MOST COMMON PENALTIES CALLED

OFFSIDES DBF: 5 yds from L.O.S. , (Defense is offside if they jump into the neutral zone once the offense is set). Also see illegal procedure, illegal shift, illegal formation, encroachment etc...

FLAG GUARDING LBF: 10 yds from P.O.I. (or L.O.S. if it occurs behind the L.O.S.) and loss of down. Also protecting flags.

DOWN FIELD SCREENING/BLOCKING LBF: 5 yds (10 yds if contact is made) from P.O.I. and loss of down. Also setting picks.

ILLEGAL SCREENING/BLOCKING LBF: 5 yds (10 yds if contact is made) from L.O.S. and loss of down.

ILLEGAL RUSH LBF: 10 yds from L.O.S. and repeat the down.

OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE LBF: 10 yards from L.O.S. and loss of down.

DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE LBF: 10 yds from L.O.S. and automatic first down. 1 yard line and 1st down when flagged in the endzone.

DELAY OF GAME DBF: 5 yds from L.O.S. repeat down.

ILLEGAL PARTICIPATION/TO MANY PLAYERS ON THE FIELD LBF: 5 yds from L.O.S. and repeat down or take the result of the play

HOLDING THE BALL CARRIER: 10 yards from E.O.R. (or L.O.S. if ball is not advanced past the L.O.S.)

****NOTE**, If the defender momentarily grabs the shirt, shorts or flag belt of the ball carrier and IMMEDIATELY let's go so as not to affect the runners progress, then no penalty will be enforced.

STRIPING THE BALL: 10 yards from P.O.I., E.O.R. or L.O.S., whichever more greatly rewards the offense. It is NOT considered striping the ball when both offensive

and defensive players are trying to catch the same pass. If both players struggle for the ball and the defense wins, possession will be given to the offense at the point where both players had possession.

ILLEGAL FORWARD PASS: 5 yds from P.O.I. and loss of down. Also illegal advancement.

INTENTIONAL GROUNDING: 5 yds from P.O.I. and loss of down. Judgment of Referee (if QB throws ball directly to the ground or in front of the line of scrimmage when no receiver is in the area). The defense must be close to sacking the QB before intentional grounding can be called.

IX: OVERTIME:

In a nutshell, each team will be given two attempts to score from the 10 yard line (2 point conversion), if the score is still tied each team will take two attempts from the 3 yard line (1 point conversion).

The team winning the "overtime" coin toss will have the option to select ONE of the following:

1. Choose to play Offense or Defense.

2. Choose which end zone both teams will use during the overtime.

The team playing offense first will have two successive tries to score an extra point from the 10-yard line (2 points). Penalties will be in force, which may allow for more than two opportunities. Two points will be awarded for each successful try (up to 4 points possible). The team playing defense first will then be given two separate opportunities to score from the 10-yard line.

If the score is still tied after both teams get their two tries, then each team will be given two opportunities to score from the 3-yard line. The team playing offense first from the 10 yard conversions will play defense first from the 3 yard line. If the game is still tied, the teams will alternate possessions from the 3-yard line until one team scores and the other fails to score.

Interceptions can be run back for 2 points as defined in the rulebook for regular PAT's. The offense throwing the interception will still get their second attempt if conclusion is in doubt.