



Catholic Youth Organization Athletics Flag Football Rules

Flag Football Rules and Regulations |

CYO Flag Football is 6-vs-6, non-contact sport, for boys & girls in grades 1st and 2nd (Pee-Wee), grades 3rd and 4th (Minor), and grades 5th and 6th (Cadet).

League Divisions |

PEE WEE	MINOR	CADET
1 st – 2 nd	3 rd – 4 th	5 th – 6 th
Bronze – Silver – Gold		
No Standings		League Standings
No Tournament		League Tournament

Game Play |

- The Home Team is the first team listed on the schedule.
- The Visiting Team will receive the ball to begin the game.
- Immediately prior to the start of the game, both teams and coaches will meet at mid-field for a pre-game conference with game officials regarding sportsmanship, expectations, and to recite the CYO Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance.
- The play starts by snapping the ball either between the player's legs or from the side.
- The offense begins at their 5-yard line and has 3 downs to reach midfield for a 1st down. If they don't, they can either:
 - Punt: The other team starts from their own 5-yard line, or
 - Go for it on fourth down. If they fail, the other team takes over at the spot where the play ended.
- Once a team crosses midfield, they have 3 downs to score a touchdown. If they do not, the ball is placed on the other teams 5-yard line.
- Interceptions can be returned for touchdowns, or the distance gained counts when possession changes. Interceptions cannot be returned for points on a PAT (point after touchdown).
- Teams switch sides at halftime, and the team that didn't start with the ball in the first half gets possession.

Game Rosters |

Most teams consist of 8-12 players with 6 on the field. Teams must field a minimum of 4 players to play a recorded game. ONLY players listed on the roster submitted to the CYO office are allowed

to play for their own team. Any coach using a fill-in player not from the team roster will forfeit the game in which they were used.

Equipment |

- Teams are responsible for supplying each player with jersey with a number on the back
- Flag belt (3 flag clip style, not ball-in-socket)
- Each player must wear a mouth guard while on the field
- Home team will provide the game ball –
 - Pee Wees and Minors will play with a Size 5 Pee-Wee football
 - Cadets will play with a Size 6 intermediate junior ball composite leather or leather
- Cleats with exposed metal are PROHIBITED; Sneakers or molded cleats are encouraged
- Players may tape forearms, hands and fingers; Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads
- Braces with exposed metal are PROHIBITED per OHSAA rules
- All jewelry is PROHIBITED

Coach Participation |

- Pee Wee (1/2) and Minor (3/4) Divisions: One coach is allowed on the field per team
- Cadet (5/6) Division: Coaches must remain on sidelines

Length of Play |

Games are a total of 40 minutes, played with four 10-minute running quarters. There is a 1-minute break between quarters for water and substitution and a 5-minute break for halftime. Each team receives 2 timeouts per half which do not carry over to the 2nd half if unused. Each time the ball is spotted, an offense has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams may receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced. If the score is within 8 points difference, the clock is stopped in the final 2 minutes of the 4th quarter. During this time the clock will stop for all incomplete passes; when a ball carrier steps out of bounds; after a first down; during change of possession and penalties (unless declined). **There is no overtime during the regular season.**

Substitutions |

Coaches are free to handle substitutions as they deem appropriate on a play-by-play basis. Please be respectful of all players and the “All Play” Player Participation Rule.

Scoring |

- Touchdown = 6 Points
- Extra Point (5-yard line, pass ONLY) = 1 Point
- 2-Point Conversion (10-yard line, run or pass) = 2 Points

Overtime (Tournament Only) |

- Each offense has 3 downs starting at the opponent’s 10-yard line. Visiting Team goes first. One complete overtime period is defined as each offense having had one opportunity to convert.
- To the extent an offense converts their opportunity into a touchdown, they will then attempt an extra point. They may choose to go for either 1 or 2 points. Exception: If the first team does not score and the second team does, the game ends and there will be no extra point attempt.

- The winner is whichever team is leading (including any extra points) after each team's offense has had its opportunity.
- If both teams are tied after the first OT, each team will play the same OT rule again going from the 10-yard line and attempting an extra point after a touchdown. Home Team will go first in the second OT.
- If the game remains tied after two complete OTs, each team will receive one play from the 5-yard line. Each team alternates a play from the 5-yard line until one team scores and the other does not. This is a pass only zone.

Passing |

- Pre-Snap Alignment: Offenses can only have up to two players close together. If three receivers are on the same side, they must be spaced apart at arm's length.
- Pass Clock: The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw the ball. If they don't, the play is dead and they lose a down. This rule doesn't apply after a handoff.
- Interceptions: Can be returned, except during extra point attempts, where the play is dead if intercepted.
- Pass ONLY Zones: Located 5 yards from the goal line and 5 yards before midfield. In these zones, only passes are allowed to reduce the risk of contact and injury.
- Forward Pass Rules: Shovel passes and underhand tosses are only considered forward passes if the ball crosses the line of scrimmage. Screen passes that don't travel beyond the line of scrimmage in the air are not allowed in the Pass ONLY zones.
- Eligible Receivers: All players, including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off, lateraled, or pitched behind the line of scrimmage, can catch passes. To catch a pass, a player must have at least one foot inbounds.
- Motion: **Cadet division only, 1 player can be in motion prior to the snap.**

Offensive Rushing |

- The quarterback can't run with the ball.
- "Center sneaks" are not allowed.
- Hand-offs, laterals, and pitches are allowed, as per OHSAA rules.
- The player who gets the ball from a hand-off, lateral, or pitch can throw it if they're behind the line of scrimmage.
- In Pass ONLY zones, players must throw the ball forward after receiving a hand-off, lateral, or pitch.
- A forward lateral or pass behind the line is a running play. It must cross the line of scrimmage in the air to count as a forward pass.
- Once the ball is handed off, lateraled, or pitched, all defenders can rush.
- Spinning and jumping are allowed, but diving is not. Diving results in a 5-yard penalty.
- The ball is marked where it is when the flag is pulled.
- Ball carriers must avoid running into or initiating contact with defenders. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties may be given for severe offenses.

Dead Balls |

The play is ruled dead when:

- The play stops when the ball carrier's flag is pulled, they step out of bounds, their knee touches the ground, or a touchdown/safety is scored.

- If the ball carrier's flag falls off without a defender pulling it, the play continues until a defender is close enough to make a flag pull, then it stops at the official's discretion.
- The play stops if the ball carrier's flags are not positioned at the hips, with the spot determined by the referee.
- The play stops if the ball is fumbled and hits the ground, except during the center/quarterback exchange. In that case, only the quarterback can pick up the ball unless they have difficulty doing so as a defender approaches.

Rushing the Quarterback |

- Players rushing the quarterback must start at least ten yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. One player can rush the quarterback.
- Players not rushing the quarterback cannot cross the line of scrimmage until the ball leaves the quarterback's hands (by pass, handoff, etc.).
- Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hands, all defenders can cross the line of scrimmage, and the ten-yard rule no longer applies.
- Before the snap, the referee will mark the ten-yard line from the line of scrimmage.

Press Coverage |

Defensive players can press wide receivers at the line of scrimmage, but contact must be minimal. No grabbing, pulling, or pushing is allowed, and penalties will be given for these actions. Some minor contact may happen when the field is shorter or when positioning, but defensive players cannot commit fouls against offensive players. The referee will decide if the contact is intentional or not.

Penalties (All Penalties can be declined) |

Referees call all penalties and sometimes must make tough decisions. They also decide if incidental contact during normal play is a penalty. Only the team captain can ask the referee about rules or interpretations; other players can't question judgment calls. A game cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense decides not to accept it.

Defensive Penalties:

- Offside: 5 yards, repeat down
- Pass Interference: 5 yards, repeat down
- Illegal Contact: (blocking, running into the QB, etc.) 5 yards, repeat down
- Illegal Flag Pull: (pull flag before receiver has ball) 5 yards, repeat down
- Illegal Rushing: (leaving early from 10-yard rush mark) 5 yards, repeat down
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct (includes any contact with the quarterback's throwing arm.) 10 yards from spot of foul and automatic first down / possible ejection

Offensive Penalties:

- Illegal Motion: (false start, more than one player in motion) 5 yards, repeat down
- Illegal Forward Pass: (pass thrown from beyond line of scrimmage) 5 yards and loss of down
- Offensive Pass Interference: (illegal pick play, pushing off from/away defender) 5 yards and loss of down

- Flag Guarding: 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down
- Blocking/Shielding: (offensive player intentionally blocks or shields a defender) 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down
- Impeding the Rusher: 5 yards, repeat down
- Charging: (not trying to avoid the defender, thus causing contact) 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down
- Delay of Game: Clock stops, 5 yards and repeat down. If it happens two times in a row, it will result in an additional 5 yards and a loss of down
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct: 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down / possible ejection

CYO Prayer

Lord God, we thank you for bringing us together today and ask that you watch and guide over us.

Help the athletes use their talents to the fullest and remain injury free.

Help the coaches to teach these young athletes not only about the game, but more importantly, about being good Christians.

Help the game officials do their best to enforce the rules and remain fair at all times.

And help the spectators to be considerate of all players, coaches, officials and each other.

Thank you for giving all of us the opportunity to put our faith into action today.

-Amen-

Updated 8/7/2026