

2026 SDCFOA Flag Football Rules Summer Study

Old Rules That No Longer Exist

- “No Run Zones” have been eliminated.
- The QB, and teams, may run as often as they wish from any location on the field. There are no limits on running the football, even by the QB.
- There is no 7-second clock on the QB
- The definition and foul for spinning have been deleted. Spinning is legal.
- The foul for diving has been removed. Diving is allowed.
- There are no formation restrictions on the offense other than a center must be on the line of scrimmage and snap the ball (either between her legs or from the side of the ball).

The Field

- The field size for the CIF postseason and playoffs will be 40 yards wide by 80 yards long with two 10-yard endzones. In some cases, the field will go from 10-yard line to 10-yard line. In other cases, the field will utilize one of the endzones and the other endzone will be set up on the opposite 20-yard line with the back of the endzone at the 10-yardline.
- The field will either be centered with sidelines on the field 40-yards apart or will utilize the home sideline with the opposite sideline marked 40-yards from the home sideline.
- Hash marks will be 23-yards apart and centered on the field. If the field is centered, the goal posts are 23’3” wide and will be used as the hash marks. If the field uses the home sideline, cones will be placed 23’ apart, centered on the field, and located just beyond the two endlines.
- The line to gain will be marked at the 20-yard line, 40-yard line, and 20-yard line. (or ¼, midfield and ¼ of the field space).
- The ball will be placed in the center of the field when the play ends between the hash marks. The ball will be placed at the near hash mark when the play ends outside the hash marks, in the side zone.
- The officials (referee usually) will spot the ball, not the players.

Equipment

- Jersey:
 - Must cover the players’ torso
 - Must be long enough to be tucked into pants
 - Must have both a light-colored (away) and a dark-colored (home) shirt
 - The shirt must always be tucked in
 - Sweats (including hoods) must be worn under the uniform if worn.
- Pants, shorts, compression shorts, or skirts:
 - No open pockets, belt loops, or exposed drawstrings.
 - Spandex and compression shorts may be worn under the uniform.
 - No torn shorts or sweatpants.
 - The pants or shorts must be a contrasting color to the flags.
- Flags:
 - One flag on each hip (2 flags total)
 - Flag size is no less than 1.5” X 14”
 - No more than 2’ X 16”
- Flags MUST be removable from the belt. All “pop” flags must be designated by the manufacturer to be for YOUTH. Any flag designated by the manufacturer to be an “adult” pop flag will be illegal.
- It is MANDATORY that all players wear a mouthpiece.
- Players are not permitted to wear sunglasses unless they are prescription sunglasses which will be legal.
- Softshell helmets may be worn to protect the head. All headgear must be secured to the head and worn as intended by the manufacturer and must contain no hard objects.
- A player may not wear jewelry. Religious medals and a medical alert indicator are not considered jewelry.

- No eye shade other than all black. Pink is allowed during October.
- “Adornments” such as soft bracelets, and wrist bands not worn on the wrist or arm are not allowed. All adornments are at the discretion of the officials assigned to the contest.

Coin Toss and Starting the Game

- The coin toss options are the same for flag football as with tackle football replacing “kick or receive” with “go on offense or defense”. The winner is offered “offense, defense, defer, or defend a goal.” The loser will have a choice from those that the winner did not select. The second half choice will be to determine the direction we will be playing.
- Play will start on the 14-yard line.
- Following a safety, the team whose goal line was involved shall put the ball in play by a scrimmage kick from its own **20-yard line** (New Rule).
- Ready-for-play signals that the ball may be put into play by a snap and starts the 25 second play clock.

Timing

- The game time will be four quarters with a 12-minute running clock. There will be a running clock until the last 2-minutes of each half (2nd and 4th quarters). Halftime will be 5 minutes.
- During the final 2:00 minutes, if the point differential is greater than or equal to 28 points, a running clock will remain for the final two minutes of play.
- Between the 1st and 2nd quarters the teams will change goals. They will do the same between the 3rd and 4th quarters.
- At any time following a score, a team may attempt one play in an effort to maintain possession. If the scoring team chooses this option, the ball will be placed at the 20-yard line and the down will be set to 4th down. The scoring team will be on offense and will have one play to reach the 40-yard line in order to gain a 1st down and retain possession of the ball. If they are unsuccessful, that series is ended, and the defense will get the ball 1st down at the dead ball spot (**New Rule**).
- If the game is tied at the end of regulation, each extra period shall consist of a two-possession series with each team putting the ball in play by a snap on the designated 20-yard line (unless relocated by penalty), which becomes the opponent’s 20-yard line. The line to gain is always the goal line regardless of whether a penalty enforcement places the ball more than 20 yards from the goal line to start a new series of downs.
- Each team will have **three time-outs** per half (**New Rule**). No unused time-outs are carried over to another period or into overtime.
- During regular running time, the game clock will only stop when:
 1. The down ends following a foul.
 2. An official’s time-out is taken.
 3. A score or touchback occurs. (will remain stopped during the try)
 4. A new series of downs is awarded to B or R.
 5. An inadvertent whistle is sounded
 6. The period ends
 7. The 2-minute time-out occurs.
- The referee will stop the game clock during the first dead ball with 2 minutes or less remaining in either half. The game clock will start on the snap following the 2-minute warning.
- During the last two minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarter, the game clock will only stop when:
 1. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete.
 2. The ball/runner goes out of bounds.
 3. If the offense is awarded a 1st down. The clock will then start on the ready-for-play if the only reason the clock was stopped was to award a 1st down.
- The game clock will stop (official’s time out) to remove improperly equipped players from the field of play or to allow a substitute to enter. The play clock will reset.
- **The game clock shall start with the ready-for-play** on a down beginning with a snap if the game clock was stopped for any reason other than specified in Rule 3-4-3 or an untimed down:

1. For an official's time-out, other than when B is awarded a new series or either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
2. Because the ball has become dead following any foul provided:
 - a. There has been no charged time-out during the dead-ball interval.
 - b. The down is not an extension of a period or a try.
 - c. The action which caused the down to end did not also cause the game clock to be stopped.
3. Because of an inadvertent whistle, unless B or R is in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle during a running play and chooses to accept the result of the play.
4. Team A forward fumble out of bounds.
- **The game clock shall start with the snap** if the game clock was stopped because:
 1. The ball goes out of bounds, unless 4-3-1 EXCEPTION for forward fumble applies.
 2. B or R is awarded a new series.
 3. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal kick.
 4. The ball becomes dead behind the goal line.
 5. A legal or illegal forward pass is incomplete with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
 6. A runner goes out of bounds with less than two minutes remaining in either half.
 7. A request for a charged or TV/radio time-out is granted.
 8. A period ends.
 9. A team attempts to consume time illegally.
 10. The penalty for a delay-of-game foul is accepted.
 11. The two-minute time-out has occurred.

Line of Scrimmage

- The defense's neutral zone, on all plays, is 1-yard off ~~of~~ the front of the ball (1-yard from the top of the traditional neutral zone which is the length of the ball).
- The QB may take a snap from under center (hand-to-hand) as CIF has interpreted that the QB's feet will be 2-yard back of the ball.
- Defenders are not allowed to contact any receiver. Any use of hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact is illegal.

Penalty Enforcement

- The referee will signal and then march off the penalties in a quick and efficient manner to get the game clock started again if appropriate by rule. Flank officials may help march off the penalties.
- Penalties by the opponent of the scoring team may be enforced on the try or the succeeding spot. Read Rule 8 Articles 2-4.

Scrimmage Kicks

- On 4th down the offensive team must declare whether they are "punting" or going for the first down before the expiration of the play clock. If the offensive team declares a punt, all players must remain stationary as the punter receives the snap (either in shotgun or hand-to-hand) and punts the ball from a location at least 2-yards behind the line of scrimmage.
- If the snap is grounded (not received by the punter), the ball is declared dead where the ball was grounded.
- If the punt is not fielded cleanly by either team, and is muffed or fumbled to the ground, the ball is dead at that spot.
- There are Kick Catching Interference rules consistent with tackle football rules in Rule 6.

Legal Screen Blocking and Illegal Contact

- Legal Screen Blocking is taking a position to obstruct the path of an opponent without contacting the opponent with any part of the blocker's body. Legal Screen Blocking may take place anywhere on the field, both behind the line of scrimmage and downfield.
- Legal Screen Blocking allows the blocker to move and obstruct the path of the opponent as long as the two players are moving in the same direction and there is no contact.

- If the legal Screen Blocker is moving and/or obstructing the path of the defender, the defender may not create contact with the screen blocker. Rather, the defender must move around the blocker without contact.
- Once the defender, being screen blocked, gains an angle and begins moving beyond the screen block, the screen blocker must stop the attempted screen block.
- “Right of Place” always supersedes “Right of Way”.
 - If the defender has established a position in front of the blocker, or runner, that is considered “Right of Place”.
 - A blocker or runner who is moving has “Right of Way” and can’t be contacted from a moving defender.
 - A defender with an established position (Right of Place) supersedes the runner/blocker’s “Right of Way” and the defender cannot be contacted by the runner or blocker.
 - For more on this concept view the YouTube Video at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEx9jcWz5L0&t=429s>

Passing, Flag Guarding, and Tagging

- No player may throw the ball forward if they are in or beyond the neutral zone.
- The quarterback may not intentionally ground the ball by throwing the ball into an area unoccupied by an eligible receiver. The QB may “spike” the ball immediately after controlling the snap in order to stop a running clock inside 2-minutes of each half.
- The QB may not be contacted, including contact with the QB’s arm during her follow-through. Rushers must only attempt to pull the QB’s flags from one side, not from directly in front of the QB.
- Flag Guarding is the use of hands, arms or the ball where contact occurs between the runner and an opponent that denies the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag or flag belt.
- Tagging is the act of touching a player with one hand, anywhere between the shoulder and knees. A tag will be used to down a player who has lost their flag inadvertently while in possession of the ball.

5-Yard Penalties

Delay of game
 Illegal substitution
 Encroachment
 Snap infraction
 False start
 Disconcerting act
 Illegal formation
 Numbering violation
 Illegal shift or illegal motion
 Illegally handing ball forward (**also loss of down**)

Illegal forward pass (**by A; also loss of down**)
 Illegal forward pass (by B)
 Intentional grounding (**also loss of down**)
 Helping runner
 Sideline interference
 Attendant illegally on field
 Nonplayer outside of the team box, but not on field

10-Yard Penalties

Kick-catching interference
 Forward-pass interference
 Illegal blocking technique
 Interlocked blocking
 Holding
 Runner grasping a teammate
 Illegal use of hands or arms
 Flag guarding
 Charging into an opponent obviously out of the play (**also first down if by defense**)
 Hurdle an opponent (**also first down if by defense**)

Tripping (**also first down if by defense**)
 Roughing passer (**also first down**)
 Illegal personal contact in restricted area (**also first down if by defense**)
 Unsportsmanlike conduct by player or nonplayer (**also first down if by defense**)
 Illegal participation
 Illegal kicking or batting the ball
 Sideline interference (**third and subsequent**) (**also first down if by defense**)
 Nonplayer illegally on field
 Unfair ac

