

YOUTH ROOKIE PLUS FLAG FOOTBALL RULES & GUIDELINES

I. General

- A. The YMCA Rookie Plus program focuses on skill development, fun, and a sense of team in a semi competitive environment. Scores and standings will be kept. Our rules have been adjusted to ensure better parity and limit the ability of a team to “run up the score”. Players will be ensured to play half the game.
- B. Except where otherwise noted in these rules, National Football League Flag Football Rules shall govern competitions in YMCA youth flag football leagues.
- C. Divisions are determined by the player’s age and grade as of August 15, 2023.

***The Y reserves the right to adjust divisions based on player enrollment.**

II. Coach/Parent/Player Expectations

- A. Late Policy: It is imperative for games to start on time. Nevertheless, there is a 5 minute grace period for the start of the game if a team does not have at least 5 players. Teams can start with 4 players. If after the 5 minute time period a team is unable to start 4 players the game will not be played.
- B. No Show Policy: Make every effort to show-up for your game. If your team cannot show-up for a game, that game will count as a loss and will not be rescheduled. If your team misses more than 2 games in a season, your team will be removed from the league without a refund.
- C. Coaches, parents and players are expected to uphold YMCA values in both victories and in defeat.
 - 1. Coaches/Parents/Players will ensure and promote a culture of celebration. Taunting or otherwise demeaning of others will not be permitted.
 - 2. Coaches/Parents/Players will be expected to address the referees of the game in a respectful and professional manner. Coaches must hold all questions about calls until a stoppage in play.
 - 3. Coaches/Parents/Players will refrain from using profanities while representing the YMCA.
- D. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their players, parents, coaches and fans. The coach must set the tone for positive behavior from the kids and parents. The team will look at the coach as a role model and will generally replicate the coach.
- E. Coaches and players should learn and work to fully understand both standard flag football and specific Y league rules.
- F. Coaches will play all players on their roster 50% of the game.
- G. Coaches (1-Offensive & 1-Defensive) for all divisions can be on the field. All players and other coaches must remain on the sidelines and on their half of the field during play, not behind the endzone. All parents must be on the opposite side of the field from the player benches.
- H. Coaches will complete all aspects of onboarding, including completion of criminal background check and online volunteer application and attendance at Y coaches meeting.
- I. Coaches are all volunteers. Administrative support and equipment will be offered by the YMCA of Central Texas.

By volunteering to be a coach, you have chosen to be a role model for all participating children and to represent yourself and the YMCA at all games and practices throughout the year

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III. Teams

- A. Teams will be formed with the following taken into account:
 - Grade (as of August 15, 2023, is deciding factor of what division they fall in)
 - Age
 - Friend/Coach requests
 - Practice day availability
- B. Players will remain on the same team throughout the entire season.
- C. Teams shall have no more than 10 players, unless specifically changed by Sports Director.
- D. Five players per team shall participate at any time. In the event that one team has only 4 players, the opposing team shall play with only 4 players in 1st/2nd or the coaches shall mutually agree (3rd/4th & 5th/6th) on a reasonable way to have parity for the competition. No official game will be played with fewer than 4 players per team.
- E. Only players on Y rosters are permitted to participate in practices and games. YMCA Uniforms and mouth guards are required to play in the games.

IV. Game Play

- A. Any player that attends practice on a regular basis, is expected to play a minimum of 50% of game. No player may play the full game. Players not regularly attending practices and games may have limited playing time. Sports director must be contacted before limits put in place.
- B. Game Length:
 1. 1st/2nd & 3rd/4th: Two 20 Minute Halves, running clock. 2 Minute Half-Time. Regular Season games can end in a tie.
 2. 5th/6th: Two 25 Minute Halves, running clock. 2 Minute Half-Time. Regular Season games can end in a tie.
- C. Score:
 1. 1st/2nd & 3rd/4th: Score will be kept. Score will be recorded in Ygametime with +21 point max differentials. Mercy Rule applies.
 2. 5th/6th: Score will be kept. Mercy Rule does not apply.
 3. Mercy Rule: After one team is winning by twenty eight points or more, the losing team gets one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game continues in scrimmage mode playing up to the 15-minute mark in the second half if time allows. After the fifteen mark, the game is over.
- D. Weather Policy:
 1. Rain outs - Games will be declared official if half of the game has been played. We will attempt to make up any game canceled before this time. Make up games will be played from where it ended, if one full quarter has been played, otherwise, it will start from the beginning.
 2. Thunder/Lighting - if there is lightning or thunder within a 5 mile radius of the field, all individuals will be asked to return to their vehicles or shelter for 30 minutes, each time our staff sees an occurrence of lightning or thunder the time resets. Individuals can only return to the field after the YMCA staff have determined it is safe.
 3. Heat - if the heat index according to OSHA is 104 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will we cancel practices or games. For the safety of all.



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E. Games will begin with the away team beginning on offense and the second half will begin with the home team on offense. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

F. Scoring:

1. Touchdowns are worth 6 points
2. Point After Touchdown (PAT):
 - a. 1-point from 5 yard line (must be a passing play)
 - b. 2-points from the 0 yard line (can be run or pass play)
 - c. Defense **CAN** return an intercepted PAT for points. They are worth 2 points.
3. Safety is worth 2 points
 - a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in their own 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, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the endzone.
 - b. The team awarded the 2 points will start with the ball at their own 5 yard line.

G. Injuries: Play must be stopped at once. Players return to their bench during the injury timeout.

H. Times Outs:

1. 1st/2nd & 3rd/4th: Each team is allowed one 30 second timeout per half. Timeouts do not carry over. Coaches or players may call a timeout if their team has possession or if it is a dead ball situation.
2. 5th/6th: Each team is allowed 2-30 second timeouts per half. Timeouts do not carry over. Coaches or players may call a timeout if their team has possession or if it is a dead ball situation. 1-30 second timeout per overtime period.

I. Offense Play: (Ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to the side, to start play)

1. Take possession at their own 5-yard line and has 4 plays to cross midfield.
 - a. If the offense fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the other team starts their drive from their 5 yard line.
 - b. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and not cross field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
 - c. Offensive Teams **MUST** declare 4th down intent; "Play or Punt", when asked by the referee and prior to the "Ready for Play" whistle.
 - d. Teams can only change the declaration of "Play" by using a timeout.
 - e. If the declaration is "Punt" the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing Team's 5-yard line, 1st down, with **NO** option to change the declaration.
2. Once the ball crosses midfield, offense has 3 plays to score a touchdown.
 - a. If offense fails to score, possession of the ball changes and the other team starts their drive from their 5 yard line.



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3. Passing:

- a. All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, be thrown forward and out of the hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
- b. Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- c. There is no intentional grounding.
- c. Quarterbacks have 7-seconds to throw the ball.
 - i. If the pass isn't thrown, it is a lost of down.
 - ii. If handed off to another player, the 7-second clock goes away

4. Receiving:

- a. All players are eligible to receive a pass. (Including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- b. 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.
- c. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
- d. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- e. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

5. Running:

- a. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are allowed.
 - i. Player who receives a handoff may throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. All defensive players are eligible to rush once ball is handed off.
- b. Offense can use multiple handoffs, but no laterals.
- c. Quarterbacks **CANNOT** run with the ball.
- d. Center sneaks are **NOT ALLOWED**. The quarterback is not allowed to hand off to the center on the first hand off of the play.
- e. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- f. Runners may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, quarterback's passing progression or if there is a clear indication that they have done so to avoid a collision with another player and the play will continue without stoppage.
- g. Spinning/Jump Cuts are allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. **Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.**
- h. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.



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J. Defensive Play

1. All Players who rush the passer must be a minimum of 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
 - a. Referee or a special marker will designate the 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Any number of players can rush the quarterback.
 - c. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
 - d. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
 - e. If they leave early from the rush line, they may return and then legally rush or drop back into coverage without penalty.
 - f. All rushers must check in with the referee to make sure they are at the 7 yard mark.
 - g. Rushers **CANNOT** be impeded by any blocker.
 - h. Rushers may attempt to block a pass, but **CANNOT** make contact with the quarterback.
2. No blocking or tackling is allowed.
3. Interceptions:
 - a. Ball may be advanced, unless a team is up by 3 touchdowns.
 - b. Ball can be advanced on a PAT interception.
- 4: Fumbles:
 - a. No fumbles. Ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.

K. Dead Ball:

1. Play is ruled "dead":
 - i. Ball carrier's flag is pulled.
 - ii. Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - iii. Touchdown or Safety is scored.
2. Ball carrier's flag falls out.

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L. Additional Game Play Rules

1. Spinning is allowed, but no jumping or diving to avoid defensive or offensive players.
2. No blocking or screening is allowed.
 - i. Once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage in possession of the offensive player, all other offensive players must stop their motion.
 - ii. No running with the ball carrier.
3. Must have a minimum of 1 player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to 4 players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - i. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
 - ii. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs towards the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
 - iii. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between their legs to a player in the backfield.
4. No-Run Zones (only in 3rd/4th & 5th/6th)
 - i. In place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones (5-yards before midfield and 5 before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a hand off.
 - ii. 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).

V. Penalties (Same across all leagues)

A. Spot Fouls (assessed from the spot on the field where the foul occurred):

1. Defensive Spot Fouls:
 - a. Defensive Pass Interference- Automatic First Down
 - i. Player significantly hinders an eligible receiver's opportunity to catch the ball
 - b. Holding: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Player restrains another player who is not in possession of the ball
 - c. Stripping : +10 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Player smacks or grabs the football out of the ball-carrier's possession
2. Offensive Spot Fouls:
 - a. Screening, blocking or running with the ball: -10 yards and Lost of Down
 - i. Player uses physical attempts to gain yardage by obstructing the path of their opponent
 - b. Charging: -10 yards and Lost of Down
 - i. Player challenges their opponent for space without using their arms or elbows
 - c. Flag Guarding: -10 yards and Lost of Down
 - i. Ball-carrier intentionally obstructs the defender's access to their flag
 - ii. For Example, they might stiff arm, cover their flag with open hand, or lower their elbow.



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B. Defensive Penalties (assessed from the Line of Scrimmage (LoS))

- a. Offside: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped
- b. Illegal Rush: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage
- c. Illegal Flag Pull: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball
- d. Roughing the Passer: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass
- e. Taunting: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams
- f. Unnecessary Roughness: +10 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent
- g. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: +10 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking a player

C. Offensive Penalties (assessed from the Line of Scrimmage (LoS))

- a. Offside/False start: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Players charges or moved in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped
- b. Illegal Forward Pass: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage
- c. Pass Interference: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball
- d. Illegal Motion: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped
- e. Delay of Game: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play
- f. Impeding the rusher: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player
- g. Illegal Procedure: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Technical rules violation, as such illegal formation
- h. Taunting: -5 yards and Loss of Down
 - i. Type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams
- h. Unnecessary Roughness: -10 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent
- i. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: -10 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking a player

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AGE GROUP	BALL SIZE	GAME LENGTH	PLAYERS ON FIELD	FIELD SIZE	REFEREE	SCORE
1st/2nd Coed	Pewee	Two 20-Minute Halves, running clock. 2 Minute Half-Time.	5 vs 5 Can start with 4.	30-Yards Wide 70-Yards Long	2 Referees (1 Coach allowed on field)	Score will be kept. Final scores will be recorded with a +21 point differential. Regular Season games can end in a tie.
3rd/4th Coed	Peewee	Two 20-Minute Halves, running clock. 2 Minute Half-Time.	5 vs 5 Can start with 4.	30-Yards Wide 70-Yards Long	2 Referees (1 Coach allowed on field)	Score will be kept. Final scores will be recorded with a +21 point differential. Regular Season games can end in a tie.
5th/6th Coed	Junior	Two 25-Minute Halves, running clock. 2 Minute Half-Time.	5 vs 5 Can start with 4.	30-Yards Wide 70-Yards Long	2 Referees (1 Coach allowed on field)	Score will be kept. Regular Season games can end in a tie.

YMCA of Central Texas Youth Sports