

# SALT LAKE COUNTY FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

## Duration of the Game / Time Outs

1. The game consists of two 20-minute halves with a running clock. The clock will be stopped the last minute of each half for time outs, penalties, incomplete passes, out of bounds runs, and change of possession.
2. Offense has 45 seconds from the time the referee sets the ball to start the play.
3. Half Time will be three minutes.
4. Each team will have two time outs per half. A time out lasts one minute.

## Players, Formation, and Substitutions

1. Each team is allowed 8 players on the field. A team may play with fewer if necessary.
2. **Offense** must have at least four players on the line until the ball is snapped. The ball must be snapped through the legs to an offensive player, other than the center, prior to the play continuing (exception- 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade division can toss the ball up from the left or right.) No center sneaks. The center is an ineligible runner. All offensive players are eligible pass receivers. Offense is allowed one player in lateral motion prior to the snap. Offense has 45 seconds to put the ball in play. The offense does not need to wait for the defense to set up before putting the ball in play.
3. **Defense** must have at least three players on the line until the ball is snapped. Once the ball is clearly snapped, the defensive players may rush the passer.
4. Substitutions are unlimited, but may occur on dead balls only.
5. Players must tuck in shirts. If player's shorts or pants have belt loops, then the belt loops must be taped to avoid injuries to defensive players.
6. Players may wear cleats, as long as they do not have metal studs.

## Kick-Off

1. The team designated as the home team on the schedule (first team listed) will receive the opening kick-off. The other team will kick and choose which goal they want to defend. At the start of the second half, the teams switch directions and the team that kicked to start the game will receive to start the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.
2. The game is started with a kick from a kicking tee. The 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade divisions will kick-off from mid field. The 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade division will kick-off from their own 15-yard line. The kick-off must travel at least 10 yards or it will be re-kicked. A kick-off also takes place after each score, with the scoring team kicking off, except in the case of a safety, in which the team scored against must kick-off.
3. The receiving team must allow at least a 10-yard buffer between the line from which the ball is being kicked and where they line up. No receiving team player may line up closer than 10 yards to the kick-off line. Also, no receiving team player may enter the 10-yard buffer until the kicked ball has traveled 10 yards. No kick-off team member may cross the kick-off line until the ball has been kicked.
4. There are **no** "on-side" kicks. If the kicking team recovers the ball before the receiving team, the ball is down at that point and the receiving team gets possession.
5. Kicks into the end zone come out to 15-yard line. Out of Bounds Kicks will be placed at mid field.

## Touchback

Any kicked ball over the goal line or through the end zone is ruled a touchback and is brought out to the 15-yard line to be put in play by the receiving team. A pass intercepted behind the goal line can be a touchback if the player does not attempt to run it out. If the player does attempt to run it out and is downed in the end zone, it will be a touchback, or the spot of the field afterwards.

## First down

To keep possession of the ball, the offensive team must advance the ball to the next zone in four downs. As soon as the ball is advanced to the next zone, the following down is "first down".

## Safety

Safeties occur when the offensive player's flag is pulled and marked down while the offensive player is still in the end zone. The offensive team that allowed the safety will have to kick off to the other team after the safety. The result of the safety is a loss of possession.

## Neutral Zone

There is a 4-yard neutral zone between the offensive and defensive lines that no player may enter until the ball is snapped. Once the offensive team moves the ball inside the defenses 15-yard line, the neutral zone becomes 2-yards.

## Forward Pass

All forward passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. All players on the field are eligible to receive or intercept a pass. The receiver must have flags on at the time of the reception; otherwise the pass is incomplete and the ball is dead. Neither receivers nor pass defenders may initiate contact with an opposing player. If contact occurs, the officials will determine who is at fault and assess a pass interference or illegal contact penalty.

## Running with the Ball

All players running with the ball must be wearing flags. A player running with the ball may not stiff-arm, jump, spin, or guard their flags in any manner. No running up the middle is allowed. Runner must deviate to the left or right before hitting the line of scrimmage.

## Punting

All punts must be announced to an official prior to the play. The official will then notify the other team, so that they may get into the appropriate formation. Neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked. Both teams are still required to have their minimum number of players on the line of scrimmage until the ball is snapped. Kick receivers may not make a forward pass after receiving the kick. (See "Dead Balls" regarding punter and receiver fumbles).

## Defense

1. Defensive players stop the progress of the offense by pulling one of the ball holding player's flags off of their flag belt. Once a defensive player pulls a flag, he/she should raise the flag high into the air so the official may see.
2. If a defensive player raises their hand as if they have pulled a flag when they really haven't, an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be called. Pulling a flag off of any player other than the player with the ball will also result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Offensive players tampering with their flags, making them more difficult to pull will be assessed an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
3. Defensive players may not leave their feet in an attempt to grab a player's flags. They may lunge as long as both of their feet do not leave the ground.
4. Defensive players may not strip the ball from a ball carrier. This action will result in an "unsportsmanlike" penalty.

## Dead Balls

1. A player is "down" once one of his/her knees contacts the ground or his/her flag is pulled.
2. Any bad snap or fumble that hits the ground is a dead ball and the next play starts where the ball contacted the ground or at the spot where the player was located when he/she fumbled the ball (whichever spot is further from the goal line the offensive team is trying to reach).
3. A punter who fumbles the ball may pick it up punt it – no dead ball on this play.
4. A kick-off or punt receiver may muff or fumble upon their initial receiving of the ball without it being ruled a dead ball. Once the receiver gains control of the ball, any fumble will be ruled a dead ball.
5. If at any time, the belt or flag of a ball carrier falls off, the ball carrier is down and the ball is dead.
6. An inadvertent whistle results in a dead ball and the official's fair placement of the ball for the next play.
7. The officials have the authority to call a dead ball at any time in order to restore order when they deem it necessary. The officials will then attempt to fairly place the ball for the next play.

## Blocking

1. A player may block for his/her runner or passer by using a screen block. No contact should take place. If a blocker uses his/her arms, elbows, or legs; lowers a shoulder; jumps leaving his/her feet, or initiates contact with the defensive player in any way, it is an illegal block.
2. If the defensive player initiates contact by running over or pushing or making contact in any other way with the offensive blocker, that defender will be penalized.
3. **Blocking is the most difficult element of flag football – for offensive players to make effective non-contact screen blocks for their players; for defenders to avoid a properly set screen block; and for officials to determine which player (offensive or defensive) is guilty of initiating the illegal contact when a collision takes place. For the official, it is a total judgement call. Coaches should instruct their players to try and avoid initiating contact as much as possible. This will help the officials, who already have the difficult challenge of monitoring a total of 16 players spread out over a large field. If an official determines that a coach is instructing his/her players to block or engage blockers with reckless abandon, that team will be penalized for unsportsmanlike conduct, as well as the illegal contact that results from the play.**

## Scoring

1. **No official score shall be kept**, as this is a recreational league with emphasis to be placed on sportsmanship, fun, and fair play.
2. Typical Flag Football Scoring is as follows:  
**Touchdown** – a touchdown scores 6 points.  
**Conversions** – after the touch down  
**Safety** – A safety occurs when the defending team forces offensive team be downed or have a dead ball behind their own goal line. A safety scores 2 points.

## Coaches on the Field

1. Each team is allowed one coach on the field to call plays and help their players get set prior to each play (2 in 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>).
2. Once the play has started, coaches on the field are not permitted to physically or verbally direct their players in any way, and they are required to stay out of the way of the action. Violations will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. **Exception:** In the 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade division, coaches will be allowed to verbally direct their players during the play. In all divisions, coaches on the sidelines may verbally direct their players all they want.

## Controversies / Rule Interpretations

The Head Official or Site Supervisor has the final say in all controversies or rule interpretations. The game will not be delayed for any extensive discussion. Remember this is a recreational league based primarily on sportsmanship.