

# FLAG FOOTBALL

## History

Flag football evolved as an outgrowth of tackle football that was first played in the United States around the middle of the nineteenth century. Since that time football has become one of the most popular sports in the world. With this rise in popularity, many people became interested in participating in the sport. Most did not have access to proper protective equipment or the time needed to develop the highly organized plays necessary to play tackle football. As a result, certain changes in regular football were made while still maintaining the exciting skills of kicking, passing, catching, and running with the ball. Through this interest, flag football eventually evolved. Today, you can find flag football leagues for all levels of competition.

## Nature of the Game

Many of the fundamentals found in regulation football are retained in flag football. Some changes are necessary because of the lack of protective equipment, a lack of officials, and the lack of consistent playing fields. Therefore, the nature of the game is decidedly different.

First of all, the tackling element is eliminated in favor of detachment of a belt or flag worn around the waist by all players. Blocking or any type of intentional body contact is not legal. Flag football is a game of speed and agility. First downs are earned by crossing a mid-line on the field, not by moving the ball ten yards as in regulation football. There is no limitation placed on the number of eligible pass receivers, everyone can catch a forward pass. Since the size of the playing area varies, the number of players on a team can be anywhere from as few as five to as many as nine.

Although the number of players on a team will vary, positions and responsibilities of these positions are similar to regular football.

### Offensive Positions:

**Center** – the player on the line of scrimmage who initiates each down by snapping the ball between his/her legs to a teammate.

**Offensive Lineman** – the players who align on the line of scrimmage and are responsible for screening defensive players from getting to the ball carrier.

**Quarterback** – the player receiving the ball from the center at the start of a down. The quarterback is responsible for handing off the ball to a running back or throwing a forward pass to a receiver.

**Receiver** – a player aligning 10-15 yards from the center on the line of scrimmage. The receiver runs a pass route, then catches a thrown ball.

**Running Back** – a player aligning 4-5 yards behind the quarterback. The running back usually runs with the football. The running back may receive the football from the quarterback by handoff or by forward or backward pass.

### **Defensive Positions:**

**Defensive Back** – a player that aligns off the line of scrimmage with the primary responsibility of defending a receiver attempting to catch a pass.

**Linebacker** – a player that aligns 3-5 yards off the line of scrimmage and behind the defensive linemen. He/she is responsible for defending the run as well as the forward pass.

**Defensive Linemen** – a player that aligns on the line of scrimmage. He/she is responsible for defending against the run and to rush the passer on a forward pass play.

### **Safety/Etiquette**

1. There will be no intentional contact between players.
2. Participants are not allowed to wear any jewelry.
3. The playing field should be level with no obstacles or obstructions within 10 yards of the sidelines or endlines.
4. Flags should not be illegally worn, tied on, or worn under clothing. All shirts must be tucked in. Flags must be worn over clothing.
5. The ball is immediately declared dead on all fumbles or muffs.
6. Defensive players may not leave their feet attempting to detach a flag from a ball carrier.
7. No player may use abusive or insulting language.
8. Players may not flag guard.

### **Rules and Regulations**

The L.T. physical education department has adopted the following basic rules. These have been developed in an attempt to maximize students' safety, as well as student enjoyment of the game.

#### **Time**

The game time will consist of the time allowed in a single class period. A regular high school game consists of four 12-minute quarters.

#### **Start of Play**

1. The ball is put in play with a kick-off at the start, after an extra point play, or after a safety.
2. Any player on the kicking team may kick off from the hash mark line.
3. All players on the kicking team must remain behind the hash mark line until the ball is kicked.
4. All players on the receiving team must remain behind the hash mark line on their side of the field until the ball is kicked.
5. There will be no onside kicks.
6. The ball should be advanced after it is caught in the air or picked up off the ground. The ball can be handed off or lateraled to another teammate.
7. If the ball goes out of bounds without being touched by a receiving team player, the receiving team will put the ball on the hash mark.
8. If the ball goes out of bounds through the end zone or into the end zone, the receiving team will take possession of the ball on the numbers.

### **Scrimmage Play – Offense**

1. A scrimmage play (or down) starts when the offensive center snaps the ball to the quarterback using a shot gun snap.
2. Any time the ball hits the ground the play is over – no fumbles.
3. When taking over possession of the ball, the offensive team is given four (4) downs in which to score a touchdown or to advance the ball past the center line. If the offensive team succeeds in advancing the ball past the center line in four or fewer downs, it receives four additional downs in which to score.
4. On fourth down, the offense has the option of trying to score, trying to advance the ball for the first down, or declaring a punt. The offensive team cannot fake once declaring a punt.
5. An offensive player cannot intentionally block or run into the defensive player in an attempt to prevent him/her from getting to the ball carrier.
6. The offensive team must have at least three players aligned within a yard of the line of scrimmage at the time the ball is snapped.
7. The ball may be snapped to any player in the backfield.
8. All players are eligible to catch a forward pass.
9. A forward pass must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
10. A ball carrier may not use his/her hands or arms in any manner to prevent a flag from being pulled.
11. The offensive team is awarded possession of the ball when both players (offense and defense) catch the ball at the same time.

### **Scrimmage Play – Defense**

1. All defensive players must be on their side of the line of scrimmage prior to the ball being centered.
2. The defensive team must count out loud (1-1 thousand, 2-1 thousand, 3-1 thousand) before crossing the line of scrimmage.
3. The flag must be pulled (detached) without pushing, holding, or hitting the ball carrier.
4. A defensive player may not run into or through an offensive player in an attempt to get to the ball carrier.

### **Play is over when:**

1. the ball touches the ground at any time after it is centered. The next play will begin at the spot the ball hit the ground.
2. a ball carrier touches the ground with any part of his/her body other than the hands or feet.
3. a flag is pulled (detached) from the ball carrier for any reason.
4. a touchdown, extra point, or safety is scored.
5. a ball carrier steps on or over a boundary line.
6. a kick-off or punt goes into the end zone (touchback).
7. the defensive or kicking team downs the ball.
8. an incomplete pass is thrown.

### **Scrimmage Kick (punt)**

1. Neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.
2. The receiving team must have at least three players on the line of scrimmage at the time of the punt.
3. If the ball goes out of bounds, the receiving team will take possession of the ball at the point it crossed the boundary line.
4. A ball punted into the end zone results in a touchback.

### **Penalties**

In all penalties, the non-penalized team will have the option of accepting the result of the down or having the down replayed.

1. Offensive or defensive off sides.
2. An illegal forward pass – passer is beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. Wearing flags illegally, having the belt tied on, or under the shirt.
4. The ball carrier uses his hands to prevent the defense from grabbing the flag.
5. Defensive pass interference.
6. Offensive pass interference.
7. Pushing, holding, or hitting the ball carrier when attempting to detach the flag.
8. Illegal block or contact.
9. Unnecessary roughness.
10. Unsportsmanlike conduct (player disqualified), using abusive or insulting language, or arguing too much.

### **Scoring**

**Touchdown** – worth six (6) points. A touchdown is scored when a player carries the ball across the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line, or a legal forward pass is completed to a player standing in the end zone.

**Extra Point** – worth one (1) or two (2) points. An extra point attempt is awarded after a touchdown is scored. The scoring team is given one scrimmage play from the three-yard line. If they complete a successful forward pass in the end zone, the team receives two points. If the team successfully runs the ball across the goal line, the team receives one point.

### **Terminology**

1. Ball Carrier – an offensive player in possession of the ball who tries to advance it by running with the ball.
2. Dead Ball – signifies the time starting from the end of a down to the centering of the ball to initiate the next down.
3. Defensive Team – the team trying to prevent the offensive team from scoring.
4. Down – a unit of the game that starts with the centering of the ball and ends when the play is dead (over).
5. Forward Pass – a pass thrown by any offensive player from behind the line of scrimmage toward the opponent's goal line. Only one forward pass is allowed per down.
6. Fumble – occurs when a ball carrier loses control of the ball and it drops and hits the ground. The play is over and the ball is dead.
7. Hand off – handing the ball to a teammate during a down; usually used during a running play.

## **Terminology (cont.)**

8. Kickoff – a kick from the team’s own hash mark line at the beginning of the game and after each touchdown.
9. Lateral Pass – a pass that is thrown parallel to or backwards toward the passer’s own goal line.
10. Line of Scrimmage – an imaginary line the width of the football field from sideline to sideline that separates the offensive team from the defensive team until the ball is centered to start a down. This also determines where a forward pass must be thrown from (behind).
11. Motion – when an offensive backfield player sets for one second and then runs parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage before the ball is centered.
12. Muff – occurs when a player on the receiving team, during a punt or kick off, touches the ball but never gains control of the ball.
13. Neutral Zone – the length of the football field sideline to sideline. The offensive team is on one side of the ball and the defensive team is on the other side of the ball.
14. Offensive Team – the team that is in possession of the ball and is attempting to score.
15. Offsides – an offensive or defensive player in the neutral zone or beyond when the ball is centered.
16. Spiral – the action of a properly thrown pass - a tight spin in clockwise motion.
17. Pass Interference – an act in which a player blocks, removes a flag from, or holds an opponent to prevent him/her from catching or intercepting a forward pass after the ball has left the hands of the passer.
18. Punt – a scrimmage play where the offensive team kicks the ball using the punt technique. A punt usually takes place on a fourth down when the offensive team does not think it can get a first down or score a touchdown.
19. Screen Blocking – the only type of blocking in which the blocker is positioned directly in front of an opponent with arms positioned at the sides or folded across the chest, much like a pick used in basketball.
20. Touchback – When a ball is downed in the end zone by the receiving team. Usually on a punt or kickoff, but may also be on an interception. The team making the touchback puts the ball in play at its own 10-yard line.
21. Safety – the offensive team is downed in its own end zone. Two points are awarded to the defensive team and the defensive team receives the ball via a punt or kickoff.

## **Grading**

See activity unit breakdown, fitness grade breakdown, and final grading scale under NC/SC Grading Policy at the beginning of the study guide.

## **Technique Description Skill Tests**

Specific skills for activity units are taught on a regular basis. In some units, demonstrated knowledge of skills may be obtained through some form of skill testing. This testing is not outcome based.