Updated 8/17/2026

# Little Southwest Conference

## 1st - 6th Grade

## 2026 Flag Football Rules

| Community | Year of Responsibility |
|---|---|
| Westlake | 2026 |
| Avon Lake | 2027 |
| Olmsted Falls | 2028 |
| Rocky River | 2029 |
| North Ridgeville | 2030 |
| Bay Village | 2031 |
| Fairview Park | 2032 |

*OHSAA rules are in effect unless otherwise noted*

*Lakewood is exempt from the responsibility of the league manager for securing all the referees for all the games

*North Olmsted is exempt from the responsibility of the league manager due to performing the league schedule.

- Each City will provide field time based on # of teams
- Cities will pay for ref fees based on the number of teams
  If your city has 2 teams * 8 weeks * = You would have to pay for 8 games of officials (4 home games for each team)

### League Best Practices

- Teams should be as balanced as possible across a given city's teams. The best practice if you have multiple teams is to grade the players and hold a draft.
- Teams should be a mix of grades. For example, no team should be all 3rd or 4th graders.
- Rosters will be submitted to the league director by August 19th

### Section 1: Coaches

a. Each team will have a maximum of (4) coaches in the bench area and/or on the field (for Divisions 1-2 & 3-4) during the course of a game.
   i. Grade 1-2: two (2) Coaches allowed on the field during plays.
   ii. Grades 3-4: one (1) Coach allowed on the field during plays.
   iii. Grades 5-6: zero (0) coaches allowed on the field during plays.

b. On the field Offensive coaches must be a minimum of 5-yards behind the

Quarterback at all times. On the field Defense coaches must be a minimum of 5-yards behind the safety

c. Defensive coaches can be on the sideline or back of the end zone during the play.
d. During a dead ball that is not a charged time-out; ONE offensive player may come to the sideline to confer with the coaches.
e. Coaches may provide visual aids for their players in ALL Divisions.
f. Every effort should be made for each player to play at least half of the game.
g. Communicate written and/or verbal via phone call if you as a coach have players who repeatedly miss assigned practices.

## Section 2: Pregame Meeting

a. Pregame meeting will take place 10 minutes prior to game time.
b. Referees will check every player's equipment (flags, mouthpiece, and cleats) before each game.
c. Every game will start with a coin toss, with the Home team calling the flip.
    i. The winner of the coin toss will have the choice to start offense or defense.
    ii. The team that starts on defense in the first half will start on offense in the second half.
    iii. The home team will be defined on the schedule.
d. Each team must have a minimum of 5 players present at game time or they will be required to forfeit. If a team knows ahead of game time they won't have enough players, they are allowed to pull players up from the age group below (e.g. a 4th grader can be called up to play in a 5th-6th grade game). The call up player should wear their original team jersey. Call up players CAN play even if enough players on the original team roster show up.

## Section 3: Game Play

a. Starting Lineups are 7 players on offense, 7 players on defense.
Kindergarten Football will be 5 players on offense, 5 players on defense.
b. Each team will supply one (1) football for offense. Football Sizes:
    i. K & 1-2 Grade Division: Pee Wee Size Football
    ii. 3-4 Grade Division: Pee Wee Size Football
    iii. 5-6 Grade Division: Junior Size Football
c. Games in all divisions shall consist of two (2) 20-minute halves. Running clock except for the last two minutes of the first and second half, the clock will stop in accordance with high school rules.

d. A 25 second play clock will be in effect once the Referee marks the ball ready for play.
e. Continuous Clock: The clock will start when the ball is legally snapped. It will not stop until the last 2 minutes of the first and second half. During the last 2 minutes of each half the clock will stop based on Ohio High School rules.
f. Assigned referees will keep time on the field.
g. Halftime – a minimum of five (5) minutes long, unless both teams are ready to play.

## Section 4: Playing Field Size

a. 33.5 yds wide X 40 yds long from goal line to goal line with one (1) 10-yard end zone and one (1) 5-yard buffer zone.
b. The field will be divided into four (4) zones of 10 yards each.
c. The field will be marked in 5-yard increments.
d. There should be a one-yard wide hash in the center of the field at the (3) yard line and at the (7) yard line for use of the point after touchdown (PAT).
e. Teams shall occupy the side of the field designated for players and coaches, and the parents shall occupy the opposite side. Only coaches and players are allowed within the team area.

## Section 5: Equipment

a. All players are required to wear a protective mouthpiece at all times when on the field.
b. All players in the game must be wearing a flag belt, with at least two (2) flags per belt. The belt must be worn on the hips, with one flag on each hip. Flag cannot match the color of the player's shorts/pants.
c. Players should not wear shorts/pants that have pockets or drawstrings that cannot be tucked. All players shall tuck their shirts inside their shorts while playing.
d. No jewelry, metal cleats, or headgear containing hard, unyielding material, including billed hats. No casts (soft or hard) are allowed.
e. Towel attached at a player's waist is considered a flag and if pulled off the player is considered down at that spot.
f. All players that wear prescription glasses must wear a safety strap at all times.
g. Players that do not meet these requirements on any given game day cannot participate in the game.

## Section 6: Offense

a. 3 “linemen” must be on the line of scrimmage at the start of each play.
b. There must be at least four (4) offensive players on the line (including linemen) when the ball is snapped. Illegal formation will be called if there is less than four (4).
c. The three (3) offensive lineman must not line up wider than arm’s length apart; fingertips to fingertips (but may line up closer).
d. All players must be at least three (3) yards from the sideline when on the field so as not to deceive the defense and eligible players can be recognized.
e. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs or from the side.
f. If the snapped ball does not make it to the quarterback or is snapped over the quarterback’s head, the ball is blown dead at the first bounce. Play will resume at the same line of scrimmage, without loss of yardage (only loss of down).
    i. Note: For Grades K & 1-2 we will replay the down once without penalty; second time's a loss of down. This applies to all snaps during the course of the game (first botched snap is simply redo, second is a loss of down).
    ii. Note: the half or game cannot end on a botched snap (for Grades K & 1-2), even if the time clock has expired.
g. There are no fumbles, whether caused by an offensive drop, the ground, or by a defender. If the ball is dropped (forward or backward), the ball is dead once it hits the ground and the next play will resume from that point.
h. Interceptions thrown by the offensive team are blown dead.
i. The blocker can block the path of the oncoming rusher and make them change directions.
j. Contact will be tolerated unless deemed forceful and/or malicious.
k. Only one (1) offensive player can be in motion at a time, prior to the snap of the ball. That player may NOT advance to the line of scrimmage prior to the snap of the ball (must move parallel to the line of scrimmage).
l. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
m. There can only be one forward pass per play. Once the ball is beyond the line of scrimmage, no forward pass can be made.
    i. Note: Lateral passes are allowed, both behind and beyond the

line of scrimmage.

n. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line)
o. A player must have one foot inbounds when making a reception.
p. Shovel passes are allowed.
q. First downs will be at the 30-YD, 20-YD, and 10-YD field markers.

## Section 7: The Ball Carrier

a. Guarding the flag belt or otherwise hindering the deflagger is illegal and considered “flag guarding”. An untucked t-shirt may be considered flag guarding, at the Referee’s discretion. There is no penalty, except the ball is considered dead at the spot of the foul and the next play resumes at that spot.
b. A ball carrier should not have a belt end hanging loose so that it can be gripped as a flag.
c. A ball carrier may NOT hurdle or jump over a pile to score a touchdown or gain a first down. Players are allowed to leave their feet to avoid being de-flagged (juking/jump, stopping). Players may not leave their feet.
d. The ball carrier is down when his/her knee hits the ground, even if the flag belt is still on.
e. Stiff arming is not allowed (defined as: arm extended out).
    i. Note: the ball carrier using his natural instincts in self-defense will not be considered a stiff arm, at the discretion of the Referee.
f. An open field ball carrier must attempt to avoid a defender. The ball carrier must not run over or through a defender.
g. Blocking is allowed with hands! No Shoulder Blocks!
h. Correct Blocking technique includes shooting hands inside with thumbs up. The aiming point is the numbers/armpits of the defender. Heads up at all times!
i. You must be in front of the defender you are blocking. No blocking in the back. This will result in a penalty.
j. No dive or roll Blocks. Contact must take place above the waist and below the neck.

## Section 8: Defense

a. All divisions may run man-to-man or zone defense.
b. All defensive players must start at or beyond the 2 yard “neutral zone” as

marked by the officials.

c. Defenses must at least use a 2 Defensive Ends line to start each play and must line up at the line of scrimmage.
d. Interceptions cannot be returned. Interceptions will result in an immediate dead ball and turnover.

## Section 9: Rushing The Quarterback

a. The rusher must be located 7 yards off the line of scrimmage prior to the snap of the ball. The official will let the defender know how far back they must be. Only 1 (one) player may rush the passer.
b. Any defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage once a handoff has occurred, or the QB is outside the tackle box but not before the QB has committed to a run.
c. A gap rush is defined when a defensive end who is lined up head up/outside shade of guard makes an immediate move to the A Gap with his lower body upon the snap of the football. (Slanting/Firing the gap will be penalized)
d. The lineman must engage the center/outside shade of the Guard. Then they can react to the ball. You may choose to sit your Defensive ends, wait to be engaged, lockout and react to the ball.
e. If a player besides the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff encroachment will be called (5 YD penalty & repeat down).
f. If the defensive team is ahead by 17 points or more, no rushing is allowed. A 5 yd penalty will be enforced from the LOS if the defensive team sacks the quarterback.
g. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback.
h. Rushers may attempt to block a pass. However, NO intentional contact can be made with the quarterback or passer in any way (may be considered roughing the passer).
i. A sack occurs if the QB's flag belt is pulled behind the line of scrimmage.
j. There are no safeties (ball carrier tackled in the end zone). If this occurs, the offense retains the ball except for the loss of down and the ball is placed at the goal line for the next play.

## Section 10: Deflagging

a. The deflagger must take the flag from the ball carrier by playing the flag and not the ball carrier. No holding, wrapping up, or excessively raking is allowed.

b. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball carrier's possession or quarterback's hand at any time.
c. A defender cannot run through the ball carrier or use unnecessary roughness in removing or attempting to remove flags.
d. A defender can force the ball carrier out of bounds in an effort to pull the flags. Pushing, shoving, or other malicious acts will not be tolerated and will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
e. A player may not deflag an opponent unless that opponent is in possession of the ball or faking as though in possession or has just lost possession of the ball.
f. If a ball carrier's flags fall off without being pulled by the defense (Referee's judgment), the officials shall announce a DEAD BALL. Ball will be spotted where the ball carrier possessed the ball when the flag last was in place.

## Section 11: Punting

a. There is no punting. If the offensive team fails to achieve a first down or score after 4th down, the ball will be turned over to the opposing team and play will resume with a 1st and 10 at the initial starting point (40-yard line).

## Section 12: Scoring

a. **Touchdowns** - All touchdowns are 6 points.
    i. A touchdown shall be scored when a player is legally in possession of the ball and the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line.
b. **Point After Touchdown (PAT)** - After a touchdown, the offensive team will be given the option by the referee to score for 1 point from the 3-yard line or 2 points from the 7-yard line. Once the offensive decision has been made, the team may change the decision only by taking a charged team timeout.
    i. If a double foul occurs during the down, the down shall be replayed. When a distance penalty is incurred by the offense during a successful try, the down will be repeated, if accepted. However, if the offense penalty carries a loss of down, the try has ended and will not be repeated.
c. **Safeties -** No safeties are allowed.
d. **Field Goals -** No field goals are allowed.

## Section 13: Time-Outs

a. Each team is entitled to two (2) charged timeouts per half.
b. Each time-out will be one (1) minute in length.
c. A time-out may be called by any player and/or Coach.
d. If a team exceeds their time-out limits per half or during OT, a delay of game penalty will be assessed.
e. Referees may call additional time-outs at their discretion.

## Section 14: Playoffs for the last two weeks of the Season Schedule

a. There will be an end of season tournament with teams seeded based on regular season record. The losers of the first round games will play each other to ensure that all teams play 8 games

## Section 15: Dead Ball Scenarios

b. The ball hits the ground
c. The ball carrier's flag is pulled
d. The ball carrier's steps out of bounds
e. The ball carrier's knee hits the ground
f. The ball carrier's flag falls off
g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flags
h. Inadvertent whistle
i. Flag Guarding
j. Stiff Arming
k. Interceptions

## Section 16: Penalties

a. All penalties will be marked 5 or 10 yards (see chart below).
b. All live ball fouls (fouls which occur while play is in progress) are captain's or coach's choice.
c. All dead ball fouls (fouls which occur prior to snap or after the ball is blown dead) will automatically be marked off. This means if a foul occurs during a down and is a live ball foul and then a dead ball foul occurs both fouls will be enforced. They do not offset, even if against different teams.
d. All 10-yard penalties within the 15 yards to goal line will be marked off as "half the distance to the goal".

## General Penalties

| Infraction | Penalty | Marked From | Capt's Choice | Loss Of Down |
|---|---|---|---|---|

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| Improper Equipment | 5 yds | LOS | NO | NO |
| Delay of Game (Time Outs) | 5 yds | Result of Play | NO | NO |
| Illegal Substitution | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |
| Unsportsmanlike Conduct | 10 yds | LOS/Result of Play | YES/NO | NO |
| Faking Excessive Contact | 10 yds | 10 Yards Result of Play | NO | NO |
| Begging a Call | 5 yds | Result of Play | NO | NO |
| Encroachment | 5 yds | LOS | NO | NO |
| Offsides | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |
| Illegal Advancement | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |
| Unnecessary Roughness | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | NO |

## Offensive Penalties

| Infraction | Penalty | Marked From | Capt's Choice | Loss Of Down |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illegal Forward Pass | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | YES |
| Pass Interference | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |
| Stiff Arm | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | YES |
| Flag Guarding | 0 yds | Spot Foul & Declared Down | YES | YES |
| Sideline Interference | 10 yds | LOS | YES | YES |
| Holding | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | NO |

## Defensive Penalties

| Infraction | Penalty | Marked From | Capt's Choice | Loss Of Down |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Illegal Rushing | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |
| Roughing Passer | 10 yds | LOS | YES | YES |
| Pass Interference | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | YES |
| Stripping | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | YES |
| Illegal Deflagging | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shoving Out of Bounds | 5 yds | Spot Foul | YES | NO |
| Sideline Interference | 10 yds | Result of Play | YES | YES |
| Encroachment | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |
| Holding | 5 yds | LOS | YES | NO |

## Section 17: Code of Conduct

All participants, including players, coaches, referees, parents, and spectators are required to adhere to these policies:

- All participants must always exhibit good sportsmanship at all times.
- Respect and cooperate with officials.
- Chatter and cheering must be of positive nature and directed to ones' own team. Abusive and vulgar language will not be tolerated.
- Safety and injury prevention will be given priority over the game.
- All participants are required to demonstrate a positive attitude and set a good example of behavior. Keep the game in proper perspective. It is supposed to be fun.
- Facilities, fields and equipment will be treated with respect.

All participants must promote the adherence to the Code of Conduct. Any violation of the Code of Conduct, as determined by the referees and/or the Executive Board, may result in the following:

- Immediate ejection from that game for the parent and participant and dismissal from facilities for the remainder of day/night.
- Any ejection will result in an additional one-week suspension from all team activities including practices and the following game.
- Any coach or player ejected from two or more games during the season may not be permitted to participate the following season pending review by the LSWC Executive Board.
- Any physical contact done in an attempt to intimidate or injure will result in immediate expulsion and from participating in the program indefinitely.
- If any offender is asked to leave the grounds and fails to do so, the game will be suspended until the offender leaves the premises. Failure to do so may result in a forfeit.
- If any coach or player is removed from any game for any reason, the referee in charge must contact the Head of Referees to report the incident within 24 hours
- **Parents and spectators must be in the stands. No one will be allowed to spectate from the field, or from the track, at any of the locations. Failure to do so will result in the person being asked to leave the stadium.**