YMCA Youth Football Program

5 – 7 year olds

Flag Football Rules

The following rules are to be used as guidelines in an effort to keep consistency and continuity in the YMCA Youth Sports Football Program.

High school rules and regulations will prevail except where changes are indicated by the following rules:

The YMCA will enforce a non-tobacco and alcohol use policy for coaches and assistant coaches at all practices and games. Parents are also strongly encouraged to refrain from using tobacco and prohibited from using alcohol at practices or games.

1. The Flag I (4-5) field shall be 60 yds long and 40 yds wide and the Flag II (6-7) field shall be 80 yds long and 40 yds wide when permissible.
2. The Players: Players will be placed in divisions, based upon their age as of August 1st of the current year. Age limits for each division are as follows:
   1. Flag I 4 and 5 year olds
   2. Flag II 6 and 7 year olds
3. Each team shall consist of no less than 12 players and no more than 16 players. There can only be 8 players on the field per team during game play. Offensive players must have a minimum of five (5) players on the line of scrimmage. The defensive team is not limited to the number of men on the line.
4. Player Equipment: Soft soled shoes are recommended. Players may have molded cleats but no metal or plastic cleats. Shoulder pads and/or helmet may not be worn. A mouthpiece must be worn at all times by each player on the field. The center and two (2) guards on the offensive team are not allowed to wear flags. All other offensive players must wear flags or the will be down at the time they come into contact with the ball. All shirts must be tucked in. All equipment must be worn to practice and all games and will be checked by each coach. The YMCA will provide a game ball, but a team may elect to use its own ball if it is of the correct size and type.
5. Scoring: Touchdown values will be 6 points, while extra points will be 1 point for running the ball and 2 points for passing.
6. Practices: Teams will have no more than four (2) practices of 1.5 hours each week during the preseason and no more than two (2) practices of 1.5 hours each per week during the regular season. Regular season begins with the first regular season game. Scrimmages count as a practice. Specific practice times and location will be determined by the coach. Every child who attends practice regularly, reports to the games on time, and whose conduct is satisfactory shall play a minimum of half the game (50%) either on defense or offense, and shall be deemed a starter on either offense or defense. Playing a child only on specialty teams is not acceptable. The first offence will result in a verbal warning. The second offence will result in a one game suspension of the head coach. The third offence will result in the forfeiture of the game in question as well as the suspension of the team’s coach for the following game. Punishment for any such occurrence following the third offence will be decided by the YMCA Sports Director and YMCA CEO and could result in a yearlong suspension of the team’s coach. Any deviation by coaches assigned practice times or practice guidelines will result in forfeiture of the most recent game.
   1. Note: Absolutely no practices on Sundays.
7. The Game: Each game will begin with both teams meeting at midfield for a group prayer. A game will consist of four (4) ten (10) minute quarters with running time with the exception of team or official timeouts. During the last two (2) minutes of the 2nd and 4th quarters a regulation clock will be used, i.e. the clock will stop for out of bounds, incomplete pass etc.
8. Starting Each Half
   1. Each half of the game shall be started with an offensive possession on the twenty (20) yard line. Flag I and II will not kick-off. Before each game time the referee in the presence of the team captains shall toss a coin after designating which captain shall call it. The winner of the following: offense, defense of a goal, or deferment of the options until the 2nd half.
   2. Between the first and second and the third and fourth quarters the teams shall not change goals.
9. Time Outs and Between Quarter Breaks: There will be a 3-5 minute break between halves, and a one-minute break between quarters. Each team will be allowed two (2) 1 minute timeouts per half. Any player may call time out for his/her team. Teams will have one time out per overtime period. Unused timeouts expire at the end of each half or overtime period.
10. Coach-Player Conferences are permitted between 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarters and time outs. The entire team may confer with the coach directly in front of his/her team’s box and within five (5) yards of the sideline.
11. The clock shall start for a period on the next offensive snap.
12. Punting
    1. Flag I teams will not punt the ball. Following the 5th offensive down the ball is turned over for a new series at the twenty (20) yard line of the other team.
    2. For Flag II, 30 yard simulated kick.
13. Ending a Half: If there is a live ball or dead ball foul by either team during the last play of the half, the penalty will be administered at the end of the 1st half. Any such foul committed after the half has ended will be administered at the start of the 2nd half.
14. Ball Ready for Play and Delay: The ball is ready for play when the referee gives the ready-for-play signal and whistle. The offensive team has 30 seconds to snap or free kick the ball. Penalty for delay of game is 5 yards.
15. Substitutions: Free substitution will be used as long as every child is getting to play minimum half the game (must be labeled a starter). Any substitution entering the game must participate in at least on play before leaving the game, and must stay out one play before reentering. The penalty for a team not playing every player at least half the game may include forfeiture of the game.
16. Forfeiture of Game: The following offences will result in forfeiture of the game by the offending team. The score of a forfeited game shall be 6 – 0.
    1. The playing of a child not on the official team roster and meeting eligibility requirement set forth in rule #2.
    2. Any violation of practice procedures will result in forfeiture.
    3. Failure of a team to have at least six (6) players in eight man flag football within ten (10) minutes after the scheduled game time.
17. After a huddle or a shift, all players of the offensive team shall come to an absolute stop and shall remain stationary simultaneously without movement of hands, feet, head or body for at least one second before the snap. The exception is an end or back, which may be put in motion.
18. Penalties: Five (5) yards for a minor infraction and ten (10) yards for a major infraction, including unsportsmanlike conduct.
19. Tripping shall not be allowed. Tripping is the use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct any opponent below his knee. A penalty of ten (10) yards will be assessed.
20. Clipping is an illegal block in which a player hits an opponent from behind, typically at leg level. Clipping is a ten (10) yard penalty.
21. Blocking: Blocking will be legal only with the shoulder and forearm, with the blocker’s hand “tucked in”, in contact with his/her body. No cross body blocks are allowed, and blocking is only legal near the line of scrimmage. Down field (away from scrimmage) only screen blocking is allowed, no contact.
22. offense: No stiff-arming is allowed. The flag cannot be protected in any manner by any part of the body. Flags cannot be wrapped around or tucked under player’s belts. In above cases, the offense is assessed a ten (10) yard penalty from the point of infraction and repeats the down. All shirts must be tucked in.
    1. Ball Carriers: Only ends and backs may advance or receive the ball. The offensive center, the guards and the tackles are not legal ball carriers.
    2. First downs: No first downs shall be made (except through penalty). A team on offense has five (5) downs to score or (for Fag II) punt the ball. In the event that no score or punt is made, the ball shall go to the opposite team.
23. Defense: Tackling is not permitted. The first violation shall result in a ten (10) yard penalty and a warning. A second tackling infraction shall result in a ten (10) yard penalty and the ejection of the offending player.
    1. A player downed by a defensive player securing his/her flag or by his knee touching the ground. In a case of the flag falling off the ball carrier, he will be down where the flag falls off. Any receiver who loses his flags before making a catch will be considered down at the point of the catch.
    2. Once the offensive team takes its place on the line of scrimmage the defensive coach is required to stand at least five (5) yards behind the defensive player furthest from the line of scrimmage. Coaches are not allowed to physically move or guide players into position once the ball is in play. The only way to shift or move a player is through verbal communication and/or signals. (4 and 5 yr olds 2 coaches on field at a time / 6 and 7 yr olds 1 coach on field at a time)
24. Example: A coach cannot hold his safety awaiting the snap of the ball and then push or guide him in the direction of the play; a coach cannot physically realign his players based on the offensive team formation unless done through some type of verbal code/key or hand signal.
25. A ten (10) yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed against any team/coach for violation of this rule.
26. 24. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: Any of the following offenses will result in a ten (10) yard penalty.
    1. Any offensive player not going to the huddle between downs.
    2. Any player leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless being replaced.
    3. Intentionally kicking the ball, spiking the ball into the ground, throwing it high in the air or from the field of play, failing to place the ball on the ground or return the ball to an official.
    4. Any profanity by a player, coach or parent will result in immediate ejection from the game.
    5. Unsportsmanlike conduct that is directed to the opposing team and/or official by a player, coach or parent will result in immediate ejection from the game.
27. All unsportsmanlike conduct calls are FINAL and cannot be appealed.
28. Tie Breaker: Each team has four plays to score from the fifteen (15) yard line plus an extra point attempt. If the score remains tied, the procedure is repeated from the five (5) yard line. If the score remains tied after the second set of downs, the game is a tie.
29. Mercy Rule: In the fourth quarter of any game, if one team is winning by more than 20 points, the clock shall run without stopping until time has expired the gap in the score becomes 20 points or less. No team will be able to stop this running clock with a time out.
30. Turnovers: Fumbles are dead at the point the ball falls. Interceptions can be returned, and remain live until the runner is downed. The player will be downed at spot of the interception if the player is without flags prior to the catch.
31. Beginning in 2012, the trick play that involves the center holding the ball following the snap will no longer be allowed. On the QB’s cadence (be it vocal, touch or silent) the ball must be snapped. Holding the ball will result in a five (5) yard penalty and loss of down.

\*\*\*\*Any practice that takes place prior to the start of the season is considered against the rules and may result in a one (1) game suspension for the head coach or forfeiture of the practicing teams first regular season game. The YMCA has this rule in place due to the fact rosters are not available and therefore some of the new players that sign up may not know of team practices. If any type of practice is held, it must be offered to all students that fall within the age group of the team holding practices. Any players that participate in these practices prior to signing up for the YMCA Youth Sports Football Program will not be covered under the YMCA’s insurance policy. In the event that an uninsured player is injured, all costs will fall on the parent, coach and possibly the school, recreation center etc, which the injury occurred.

Special Note: YMCA participants may not belong to or participate with any other youth or junior high program.

All protests are to be logged in writing and submitted to the Sports Director or the YMCA office by noon on the next business day following the game in question. Only the coach can make protest.

All accidents are to be reported to the Sports Director or the YMCA office with 24 hours of the injury. All accidents must be reported on an accident form provided by the YMCA.