



2025 OFFICIAL  
**SANCTIONED  
TOURNAMENT**

USA FLAG™ 5'S **RULEBOOK**



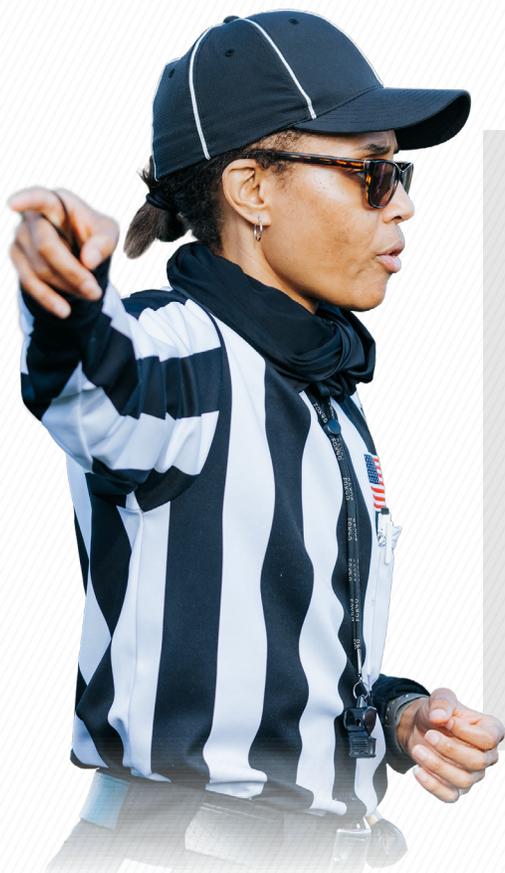
RECOGNIZED SPORT  
ORGANIZATION

# OFFICIALS CERTIFICATION



## STEP UP YOUR GAME WITH USA FOOTBALL'S OFFICIALS CERTIFICATION

This program immerses flag football officials in **USA Flag™ 5's** principles, enhancing your expertise. Plus, you will dive into mental wellness sessions, equipping you with resources to help you **stay resilient both on and off the field.**



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USA Football is the leader in education and training for flag football officials and the only pathway to officiating at the National Team Development Program and U.S. National Team competitions.

Officials gain the expertise needed to officiate high-level national and international events, which positions them for potential opportunities to officiate at the world's biggest stage in Los Angeles in 2028.

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Learn more at [usafootball.com/officials](https://usafootball.com/officials).

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## Definitions

<b>BOUNDARY LINES</b>	The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
<b>LINE OF SCRIMMAGE</b>	(LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
<b>LINE-TO-GAIN</b>	The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
<b>RUSH LINE</b>	An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
<b>OFFENSE</b>	The team with possession of the ball.
<b>DEFENSE</b>	The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
<b>PASSER</b>	The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
<b>BLITZER</b>	The defensive player, identified by raising one hand above the head continuously until the snap, that is at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass. The act of raising the hand beyond the 7 yard line guarantees the blitzer Right of Way.
<b>RUSHER</b>	Any player who legally crosses the line of scrimmage through the normal course of game play.
<b>DOWNS (1-2-3-4)</b>	The offensive team has four attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
<b>LIVE BALL</b>	Refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
<b>DEAD BALL</b>	Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
<b>WHISTLE</b>	Sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for reporting a penalty, a timeout, halftime or the end of the game.
<b>INADVERTENT WHISTLE</b>	Official’s whistle that is performed in error.
<b>CHARGING</b>	An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
<b>FLAG GUARDING</b>	An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm or ball.
<b>SHOVEL PASS</b>	A legal pitch attempted behind the line of scrimmage.
<b>UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT</b>	A rude, confrontational, physical or offensive behavior or language.
<b>RIGHT OF PLACE (ROP)</b>	Right of place is given to any stationary players who maintains normal player posture and make no movements in any horizontal direction to change their position. A purely vertical movement, including a lift from the ground, in order to throw or catch a pass does not mean that a previously established right of place has been lost. Right of place supersedes right of way when determining who is guilty of a foul.
<b>RIGHT OF WAY</b>	Right of way is given to a player according to rule who has established a direction of movement in a regular manner and does not alter that direction. A player with right of way has a higher privilege when determining who is guilty of a foul than all other players except those with right of place.
<b>AGE GROUPS</b>	<b>Adult:</b> Aged 18+   <b>Junior:</b> Aged 14-17   <b>Youth:</b> Aged 13 and under.

# USA FLAG™ 5'S RULEBOOK

## RULE 1: GAME, FIELD, BALL, AND EQUIPMENT

### SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

#### Article 1. Coin Toss

- a. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
- b. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense. Teams change direction after the first half.

#### Article 2. Possession and Change of Possession

- a. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown. Crossing midfield is the only opportunity for an offense to gain a first down within a single possession.
- b. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- c. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- d. If the defense intercepts the ball, a defensive player can attempt to return it until down or out of bounds.
- e. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.

#### Article 3. Coaches

- a. USA Football recommends 2-3 coaches per team.
- b. At the Youth level, one coach is allowed on the field to call plays and direct players according to need. Once the quarterback begins his or her cadence, however, coaches can no longer speak and must be behind the deepest offensive and defensive players and out of the action.
- c. At the Youth level, Coaches can assist in the alignment of their players to facilitate a fast-paced game, but coaches on the field may not provide extra instruction or make audibles to play calls once the huddle is broken. Coaches on the sidelines can provide this information to players on the field.
- d. For adult and junior games no coaches are allowed on the field

## SECTION 2: ROSTERS

### Article 1: Team Rosters

Teams must consist of at least five players with a recommended maximum of 15 players.

**NOTE: FLEXIBILITY IS GRANTED FOR ROSTER SIZED AT THE DISCRETION OF TOURNAMENT OPERATORS.**

### Article 2: Uniform Colors

Home teams wear dark color jerseys. Visiting teams wear light color jerseys.

### Article 3: On Field Participants

Teams must start games with five players on the field. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field but no fewer than four.

## SECTION 3: POSITIONS

### Article 1. Offense

The five players on offense consist of a center, a quarterback and three receivers.

- a. **Center.** This player is responsible for snapping the ball and is eligible to go out for passes, once they have snapped the ball.
- b. **Quarterback.** The quarterback is the offensive player who first gets possession of the ball after the snap. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball across the line of scrimmage without first handing the ball off to a teammate and then receiving a second handoff back or receiving a pass.
- c. **Receiver/back.** Any player who does not initiate the snap nor receive the snap is considered an eligible receiver/back and can either receive a handoff or catch a pass.

**NOTE: LEAGUES MAY CONSIDER WAIVING THE RESTRICTION ON LINING WITHIN THREE YARDS OF THE CENTER FOR YOUNGER AGE GROUPS.**

## Article 2. Defense

- a. **Blitzer.** A defender who lines up with all parts of their body more than 7 yards away from the scrimmage line at the snap can establish themselves as a blitzer with a legal signal by raising one hand clearly above the head at least during the last second prior to the snap. This grants them right of way which supersedes the general right of way for the offense, because they are pursuing the runner. The rush of a blitzer shall be immediately after the snap, quick and straight towards the point where the quarterback receives the snap in order to retain the right of way. If a blitzer is rushing late, slowly, towards a different spot, changing direction during the rush or just does not rush the quarterback, the player loses the right of way but still can participate as any other defender. If a blitzer is forced to change direction due to an offensive foul (shielding), the blitzer will not lose their right of way for a further direct rush to the point where quarterback received the snap.
- b. **Rusher.** A defender who does not give a signal and legally crosses the line of scrimmage. Following a legal handoff, any member of the defense can cross the line of scrimmage.

## SECTION 4. EQUIPMENT

### Article 1: Flag Belts

The organization provides each player with an official flag belt and team jersey. Teams will use footballs provided by their league. See Flag Specifications section for more details.

### Article 2: Footwear

Players must wear rubber soled shoes. Cleats may not be allowed at certain locations. Cleats with exposed metal are never allowed and must be removed.

### Article 3: Additional Equipment

Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed. Players must remove any jewelry and head wear (acceptable head wear is determined by league officials).

### Article 4: Uniform Standards

Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.

We recommend players wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.

- a. **Flags cannot be the same color as shorts or pants. Flags must sharply contrast with shorts or pants.**

**OFFICIALS HAVE ULTIMATE DISCRETION IN MAKING ANY FINAL DETERMINATION REGARDING FLAGS THAT DO NOT FIT THAT CRITERIA.**

### Article 5: Mouthguards

All players must wear mouth guards while on the playing field.

## SECTION 5. THE BALL

The ball shall be made of four panels of pebble-grained leather in natural tan color with eight equally spaced lacings and new or nearly new with no alterations. The ball shall be an ellipsoid spheroid of regulation dimensions and inflated to a pressure of between 12.5 and 13.5 psi (0.85 – 0.95 bar).

### Article 1. Types of Football

Dimensions	Adult	Junior	Youth
Length	11.00 to 11.50 inches (27.9 – 29.2 cm)	10.50 to 11.00 inches (26.7 – 27.9 cm)	10.25 to 10.75 inches (26.0 – 27.3 cm)
Length circumference	27.00 to 28.00 inches (68.6 – 71.1 cm)	26.00 to 27.00 inches (66.0 – 68.6 cm)	25.00 to 26.00 inches (63.5 – 66.0 cm)
Diameter	6.25 to 6.75 inches (15.9 – 17.2 cm)	6.00 to 6.50 inches (15.2 – 16.5 cm)	5.75 to 6.25 inches (14.6 – 15.9 cm)
Cross circumference	20.00 to 21.00 inches (50.8 – 53.3 cm)	19.00 to 20.00 inches (48.3 – 50.8 cm)	18.00 to 19.00 inches (45.7 – 48.3 cm)
Weight	14 to 15 ounces (400 – 425 g)	12 to 13 ounces (340 – 370 g)	11 to 12 ounces (310 – 340 g)

### Article 2. Sizes

- For men's or co-ed games, adult sized ball shall be used.
- For women's games, use youth ball dimensions. (example: USA Football Youth or Wilson TDY)
- For junior games, youth sized ball shall be used. (example: USA Football Youth or Wilson TDY)
- For youth games, junior sized ball shall be used. The ball need not be leather. (example: USA Football Junior or Wilson TDJ)
- For youth games aged under-8, peewee sized ball shall be used. (example: USA Football peewee)

**TEAMS AT ANY AGE MAY CHOOSE TO USE A LARGER SIZE BALL. IT IS PROHIBITED FOR TEAMS TO USE A BALL SMALLER THAN THE SIZES LISTED ABOVE.**

## SECTION 6. FLAG SPECIFICATIONS

### Article 1. General Provisions

Players of a team shall wear tightly fixed flag belts with pop-sockets and 2 identical flags. Every effort shall be made to keep one flag on each hip of the player. The sockets shall be placed facing outwards and downwards. The flags shall be clearly visible, hang down freely and must not be covered in any way by the player's uniform and all colors must be contrasting with all colors on the pants. The flags and sockets may not be greased, glued or altered in any way. Any player, who deliberately manipulate their flags shall be disqualified. The flags and sockets each shall be made of the same material in the same color without sharp edges.

## Article 2. Sizes

Dimensions	Measurements
The flags shall measure	2 inches (5 cm) x 15 inches (38 cm)
Flag length from socket	15 to 16 inches (38.1 – 0.6 cm)
Flag width:	1.9 to 2.1 inches (4.8 – 5.3 cm)
Brand or logo	On each flag one single color brand or logo in the upper quarter is allowed with a maximum size of 2x3 inches (5 x 7.5 cm)
Flag thickness:	Maximum 0.03 inches (0.75 mm)
Flag weight	Minimum 3.5 ounces (100 g)

## SECTION 7. THE FIELD

### Article 1: Field Dimensions

Field dimensions are 25 X 70 yards in total with two 10- yard end zones and a 50 yard field of play. No-run zones are only before the goal line. However, some locations may use smaller fields due to available field space.

### Article 2: No-Run Zone's

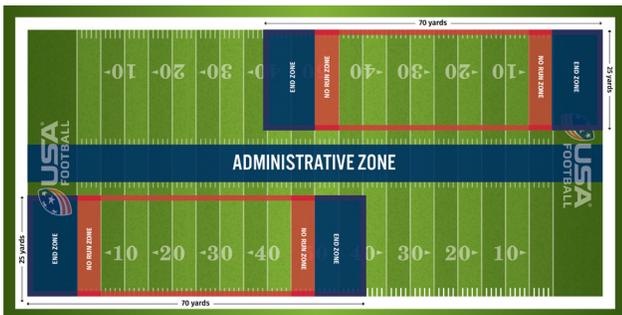
A No-run zone is in place to prevent teams from conducting run plays. While in the No-run zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: THE NO-RUN ZONE MAY BE REMOVED FOR PLAYERS WHO ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC PASSING AND CATCHING SKILLS.**

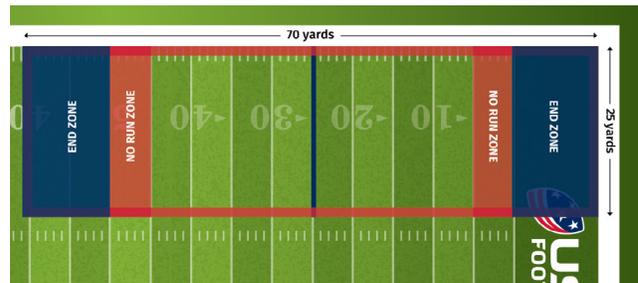
## Article 3: Field Setup Diagrams



\*Yellow line indicates lines of a soccer field



\*Administrative Zone should be 3 yards wide



## RULE 2: LEAGUE AND TOURNAMENT PLAY

### SECTION 1. LEAGUE PLAY

#### Article 1: Game Clock Settings

Games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock with two 20-minute halves unless one team gains a 30-point advantage at which point, the score is no longer kept. The clock stops for timeouts or injuries only, though officials can stop the clock at their discretion for injury, to stop a team from delaying or other unsportsmanlike conduct. For 18+ we recommend a pro-clock be run during the last two minutes of both halves.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDS A RUNNING CLOCK AT THE YOUTH LEVEL (5-12 YEARS OLD), BUT IT IS UP TO THE LEAGUES DISCRETION TO USE A PRO-CLOCK INSTEAD. FOR JUNIOR ATHLETES (13-17 YEARS OLD) USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDS THE USE OF A RUNNING CLOCK IN THE FIRST HALF AND A PRO-CLOCK IN THE SECOND HALF.**

#### Article 2: Halftime

Halftime is five minutes.

### **Article 3: Delay of Game**

Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. If there is a visible play clock, a warning will not be issued.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: OFFICIALS SHOULD USE DISCRETION WITH TEAMS WHO ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS AND MAY NEED MORE TIME TO LINE UP AND GET A PLAY OFF.**

### **Article 4: Timeout's**

Each team has two 30-second timeouts per half.

### **Article 5: Injury Stoppage**

In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play and both teams are lined up ready to restart the play.

### **Article 6. League Play Overtime**

1. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first. In overtime the visiting team calls the coin toss.
  - a. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
  - b. The referee will determine on which end of the field the overtime will take place.
  - c. No charged team timeouts shall be granted.
2. In the first extra period, each team will have one series starting at the mid-field. On the first series, if the defense intercepts the ball and scores, then the overtime period is over.
3. Each team retains the ball during its series until it scores (including try downs for 1 or 2 points) or exhausts its series of downs. The ball remains alive after a change of team possession until it is declared dead. The series is then ended even if there is a second change of team possession during that down.
4. If after the first period (with 2 series including tries) the score is still tied, the second and following periods consist of series with each team playing a 1-point try from the 5-yard line. The overtime ends when the score after a period is no longer a tie or the defense scores during the first series of a period.
5. The team scoring the greater number of points during overtime shall be declared the winner.

## SECTION 2. TOURNAMENT PLAY

### Article 1: Tournament Play Clock Settings

Level of Play	Total Length of Game	Length of Halftime	Clock Settings
Youth (5-12 years old)	Two 12-minute halves	2 minutes	Running clock
Junior (13-17 years old)	Two 15-minute halves	2 minutes	Running clock- first half Pro clock- second half
Adult (18+)	Two 20-minute halves	2 minutes	Pro clock

\*Up to tournament organizer's discretion on what type of game clock setting they would like to use.

### Article 2: Pro-Clock Operation

#### PRO-CLOCK CLOCK STOPS

1. To award a first down, also after a change of team possession.
2. To complete a penalty.
3. When the ball or the runner goes out of bounds.
4. When a pass or fumble (forward or backward) strikes the ground.
5. When a score is made and during and after the following try and onside snap.
6. When a charged timeout is granted.

### Article 3. Tournament Play Overtime

1. A coin flip will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
  - a. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime.
  - b. The official will determine on which end of the field the overtime will take place.

2. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts, the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of its own.
  - a. Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the five-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win.
  - b. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
3. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
4. There are no timeouts in overtime.

## **RULE 3: LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL**

### **SECTION 1. LIVE BALL**

#### **Article 1: Live Ball Definition**

The ball is live at the snap and remains live until an official's whistle blows the ball dead.

#### **Article 2: Ball Spot**

The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage by spotting the ball before each play and signaling ready for play with a short whistle.

- a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, an official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification prior to the snap to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.

#### **Article 3: Pre-Snap Defense**

The defense may not mimic the offensive team's signals by trying to confuse the offensive players while the quarterback is calling signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

#### **Article 4: Possession**

A player who gains possession of the ball is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

## **SECTION 2. DEAD BALL**

### **Article 1: Dead Ball Definition**

Any official can whistle the play dead.

Play is ruled “dead” when:

- a. The ball hits the ground.
  - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
- b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
- c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
- d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
- e. Any part of the body other than feet or hands touches the ground.
- f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
- g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
- h. An inadvertent whistle.

### **Article 2: Inadvertent Whistle**

In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:

- a. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
- b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

### **Article 3: Dead Ball Substitution**

Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.

### **Article 4: Ruling Challenges**

- a. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official’s rule interpretation. If the official’s ruling is correct, the team is charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout is not charged and the proper ruling will be enforced. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of each call.
- b. A team with no timeout remaining cannot challenge a rule interpretation, though officials can come together independently and reverse a call by unanimous decision.

## **RULE 4: GAME PLAY**

### **SECTION 1: SCORING**

#### **Article 1: Touchdown**

**Touchdown:** Six 6 points

#### **Article 2: Extra Points**

**PAT** (point after touchdown) **1 point** (5-yard line) or **2 points** (10-yard line).

- a. Because of the No-run zone, a one point PAT is pass only; two point PAT can be run or pass.
  - i. Defense touchdown on a try - 2 points.
  - ii. Safety - 2 points
  - iii. Safety on a try - 1 point.

**NOTE: AT YOUNGER LEVELS, LEAGUES SHOULD CONSIDER WAIVING THE NO-RUN ZONE FOR TOUCHDOWNS AND POINT-AFTER TRIES.**

- b. A team that scores a touchdown must declare prior to the snap whether it wishes to attempt a one- or two-point conversion. Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.

#### **Article 3: Safety**

**2 points**

- a. A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his or her own endzone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, a knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the endzone or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone. A penalty in the end zone (i.e. flag guarding) can also be ruled a safety.

#### **Article 4: Mercy Rule**

- a. After one team is leading by 30 points or more, the game is over and no PATs are attempted.
- b. Forfeits will be scored 30-0.

### **SECTION 2: RUNNING**

#### **Article 1: Spotting the Ball**

The spot of the ball is the position of the ball when the flag is pulled, not the location of the feet or hips.

## **Article 2: Legal Running Plays**

Only direct handoffs and backward passes behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must take place behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball.

- a. The “center sneak” play is not allowed as centers are ineligible to receive handoffs.
- b. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- c. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.

## **Article 3: No Run Zone**

No-run zone are located five yards before the end zone in the direction the offense is headed. They are designed to avoid short-yardage, power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in this zone.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: THE NO-RUN ZONE MAY BE REMOVED FOR PLAYERS WHO ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC PASSING AND CATCHING SKILLS.**

## **Article 4: Flag Guarding**

- a. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender’s access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey
- b. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
- c. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
- d. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
- e. Flag obstruction – All jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

## **Article 5: Blocking / Screening**

No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.

## **Article 6: Running With the Ball-Carrier**

Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. There is no running with the ball-carrier.

## **SECTION 3: PASSING**

### **Article 1: Forward Pass**

A pass is considered a forward pass if the ball first touches anything beyond the spot where the ball is released. All other passes are backward passes, even if it is lateral (parallel to the scrimmage line).

- a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. The pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage and be in the vicinity of a receiver.
- b. Quarterbacks cannot spike the ball dead unless the ball travels beyond the line of scrimmage and is in the vicinity of a teammate.
- c. Any player who has received a legal handoff can throw the ball forward as long as they are still behind the line of scrimmage.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: FOR TEAMS THAT ARE STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS, OFFICIALS SHOULD USE THEIR DISCRETION FOR BALLS THAT DO NOT REACH THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE AS LONG AS THE PLAYER MADE AN HONEST EFFORT TO MAKE IT THERE.**

### **Article 2: Shovel Pass**

Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

### **Article 3: Seven Second Clock**

A seven-second pass clock begins upon the snap and continues until there is a handoff or pass. If the seven-second clock expires while the quarterback still has the ball, the play is blown dead, a down is lost and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage as if an incomplete pass occurred.

## **SECTION 4: RECEIVING**

### **Article 1: Eligible Receivers**

All players – are eligible to receive passes.

### **Article 2: Legal Reception**

A player must have at least one foot inbounds to make a legal reception.

### **Article 3: Simultaneous Possession**

In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.

### **Article 4: Interceptions**

Interceptions are returnable and are the only changes of possession that do not result with starting on the 5-yard line.

## SECTION 5: BLITZER AND RUSHER

### Article 1: Blitzzer

All Blitzzers must be a minimum of seven yards behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped and must declare themselves by raising their hand. Players not blitzing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage. No more than two players may establish themselves as Blitzzers on a given play.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: FOR TEAMS STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS, ELIMINATE PASS BLITZERS TO ALLOW PLAYERS THE FULL SEVEN SECONDS TO THROW THE BALL WITHOUT PRESSURE.**

### Article 2: Rusher

Once the ball is handed off, the 7-yard rule no longer is in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. At this point players crossing the line of scrimmage are Rushers.

### Article 3: Legal Blitzing

A marker, or the official, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position and identify themselves before every play.

- a. A legal blitz is:
  - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
  - ii. If a blitzzer leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
  - iii. If a blitzzer leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the second receiver.
- b. A penalty may be called if:
  - i. The Blitzzer leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
  - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
  - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line or declared crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – illegal rush (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
  - iv. A maximum of 2 players may establish themselves as a blitzzer. If a player who signals is less than 7 yards from the line of scrimmage or if a player is giving an invalid signal or if more than 2 players simultaneously keep their hand raised after the snapper has touched the ball, it's a foul for illegal signal. Foul - 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.

c. Special circumstances:

- i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.
- ii. Teams are required to identify their Blitzler before the play.

**Article 4: Roughing the Passer**

Players blitzing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.

**Article 5: Impeding the Blitzler**

The offense cannot impede the Blitzler in any way. The Blitzlers have the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the Blitzler. Any disruption to the Blitzler’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the blitzler penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the Blitzler’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.

**Article 6: Quarterback Sack**

A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flag are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when flag is pulled.

- a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

**SECTION 6. HOLDING, SHIELDING, CONTACT AND AIMING**

**Article 1: Holding**

Holding is grasping an opponent or their equipment, not releasing immediately and impacting the opponent.

**Article 2: Shielding**

Shielding is obstructing an opponent without contact by moving into their path. A moving player without right of way who impedes an opponent from running a pass route, getting to the runner or impedes a legal blitzler is guilty of shielding. A player standing still (with the right of place) is not shielding, even if the player is obstructing an opponent.

**Article 3: Contact**

Contact is touching an opponent with impact. Touching with no impact is not a foul.

**Article 4: Aiming**

Aiming is to target and initiate contact with an opponent or to run into an opponent on purpose, even with right of way. Aiming is any deliberate or avoidable contact with excessive force, even in an attempted flag pull or while playing the ball during a pass. Aiming is to attack a ball in possession or take away the ball from the runner.

## **SECTION 7. FLAG PULLING**

### **Article 1: Legal Flag Pull**

A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.

### **Article 2: Diving and Holding**

Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

### **Article 3: Stripping**

It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.

### **Article 4: Inadvertent Loss of Flag**

If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the play is declared dead.

### **Article 5: Illegal Flag Pull**

A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.

- a. If a defender makes a good-faith flag pull while a receiver bobbles or juggles what will be a completed catch, the ball is down where possession is made.

## **SECTION 8. FORMATIONS**

### **Article 1: Offensive Formations**

Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and any number of players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.

- a. A shift is a simultaneous change of position by 2 or more offensive players after the ball is made ready for play and before the snap. The shift ends when all players have been stationary for 1 full second.
- b. One player at a time may go in motion 1 yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
- c. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.

### **Article 2: False Start**

Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.

### **Article 3: Legal Snap**

The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

## **SECTION 9. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT**

### **Article 1: Intentional Contact**

If the field monitor or official witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

- a. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
- b. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- c. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.

**USA FOOTBALL RECOMMENDATION: FOR TEAMS STILL LEARNING BASIC FOOTBALL SKILLS, REMOVE ANY PLAYER WHO COMMITS AN UNSPORTSMANLIKE OR DANGEROUS ACT FROM THE FIELD TO RECEIVE INSTRUCTION FROM A COACH AND A COOLING OFF PERIODS. OFFICIALS CAN EJECT THE PLAYER AT THEIR DISCRETION IF THERE ARE CONTINUED INFRACTIONS THAT ARE DEEMED INTENTIONAL.**

### **Article 2: Offensive Language**

Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.

### **Article 3: Spectator Conduct**

Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:

- a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
- b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
- c. Compliment ALL players, not just one child or team.

### **Article 4: Field Safety**

Fans are required to keep fields safe and kid-friendly:

- a. Keep younger kids and equipment such as coolers, chairs and tents a minimum of 10 yards off the field in the end zone area.
- b. Stay in the end zone area, not between fields. The Administrative Zone is reserved for league administration, game officials, medical personnel, coaches and players only.
- c. Dispose of ALL trash in designated trash cans.

### **Article 5: Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty**

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:

- a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
- b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

## **RULE 5: OFFICIAL DUTIES**

### **SECTION 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

#### **Article 1: Jurisdiction of Officials**

Jurisdiction of Officials - The officials' jurisdiction begins with the coin toss and ends when the Referee declares the score final.

#### **Article 2: Number of Officials**

Number of Officials - The game shall be played under the supervision of 2 (R and FJ), 3 (R, DJ and FJ) or 4 (R, DJ, FJ and SJ) officials.

- a. If officiating crews contain 2 or 3 officials, the other job responsibilities are to be split accordingly.

### **SECTION 2. REFEREE**

#### **Article 1: Position**

The initial position of the Referee is behind and to the side of the FJ in the offensive backfield. On a 2-man crew, the Referee is positioned and working like Down Judge.

#### **Article 2: Basic Responsibilities**

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Referee has general oversight and control of the game, has final authority for the score and their decisions upon rules and other matters pertaining to the game are final.
- b. The Referee shall inspect the field and report any irregularities to game management, coaches and other officials.
- c. The Referee has jurisdiction over player equipment.
- d. The Referee shall indicate that the ball is ready for play, award new series of downs and administer penalties.
- e. The Referee shall notify both head coaches of any disqualifications.
- f. After the snap, the Referee shall be responsible for ruling on the play behind the scrimmage line around the ball.
- g. The Referee is responsible for coverage of the quarterback.

## **SECTION 3. DOWN JUDGE**

### **Article 1: Position**

The initial position of the Down Judge is on the scrimmage line at the side line with the down indicator.

### **Article 2: Basic Responsibilities**

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Down Judge is responsible for the operation of the down indicator.
- b. The Down Judge shall keep count of the downs.
- c. The Down Judge has jurisdiction over the scrimmage line and their side line.
- d. Once the ball has crossed the scrimmage line, the Down Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field.

## **SECTION 4. FIELD JUDGE**

### **Article 1: Position**

The initial position of the Field Judge is 7 yards deep at the side line opposite to the down indicator.

### **Article 2: Basic Responsibilities**

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. On a 2 or 3-man crew the Field Judge is responsible for timing the game or supervising the game clock operator.
- b. The Field Judge has jurisdiction over their side line.
- c. Once the ball has crossed the scrimmage line, the Field Judge shall be responsible for ruling on the play around the ball and forward progress on their side of the field.

## **SECTION 5. SIDE JUDGE**

### **Article 1: Position**

The initial position of the Side Judge is 7 or more yards deep at the side line with the down indicator.

### **Article 2: Basic Responsibilities**

Basic Responsibilities:

- a. The Side Judge is responsible for timing the game or supervising the game clock operator.
- b. The Side Judge shall be responsible for observing receivers on deep routes for ruling on long passes and the status of the ball and forward progress in their area.

## RULE 6: PENALTIES

### SECTION 1.

#### General Provisions

The officials will call all penalties.
Game officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted (spot fouls).
Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

### SECTION 2.

#### Defensive Spot Fouls

Holding	Automatic first down
Stripping	+10 yards and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 Yards From the Spot
Illegal Equipment	+5 from the spot. *Further infractions may result in unsportsmanlike conduct up to ejection.

### SECTION 3.

#### Offensive Spot Fouls

Screening, blocking or running with the ball	-10 yards and loss of down
Charging	-10 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down
Illegal Equipment	-5 yards from the spot of the foul. *Further infractions may result in unsportsmanlike conduct up to ejection

**SECTION 4.**  
**Defensive Penalties**

Defensive pass interference	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards from the line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Offsides	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal Signal	+5 yards from the line of scrimmage. Live ball foul
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards & automatic first down

**SECTION 5.**  
**Offensive Penalties**

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offsides / false start	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion (More than one person moving)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the Blitzer	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Taunting	-5 yards and loss of down
Center Sneak	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
Backwards pass	-5 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down

**SECTION 6. OFFICIALS SIGNALS**



**Ready for play**



**Stop the clock**



**Touchdown**



**Safety**



**First down**



**Loss of down**



**Incomplete pass**



**End of period**



**Offside  
Illegal blitz**



**False start  
Illegal procedure**



**Delay of game  
Delay of pass**



**Illegal participation  
Illegal substitution**



**Unsportsmanlike  
conduct**



**Pass interference**



**Illegal forward pass or  
backward pass**



**Illegal contact**



**Shielding**



**Disqualification**



**Jumping**



**Diving**



**Flag guarding  
Illegal flag pull**

**\*\*THIS REPRESENTS PRACTICE AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES BASED ON OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE. RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS MORE RESEARCH AND INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.\*\***

## **RULE 7: SANCTIONED EVENT INFORMATION & TEAM RANKINGS PROCEDURES**

### **SECTION 1. SANCTIONED EVENT INFORMATION**

Eligible 5v5 Sanctioned Tournaments may allow participating teams to score points towards USA Football Team Rankings which count towards seeding at USA Football Qualifiers and at-large bids to The One Flag Football Championship tournament annually. The Sanctioned Tournament cycle will run from August 1 – July 31 annually with The One Flag Football Championship tournament always being played in July.

### **SECTION 2. TEAM RANKINGS AND SCORING**

Team Rankings are scored based on several factors:

1. The place a team finishes in the Sanctioned Tournament.
2. The number of teams that are in Team's division at the Sanctioned Tournament.
3. Overall W-L record from participation in all Sanctioned Tournaments and/or overall points scored against.
4. Time of year in which the tournament takes place:
  - a. January 1 – July 31: Full Point Scale
  - b. August 1 – December 31: Half Point Scale
5. Age as of date: January 1 of the competition year. Any questions as to Participant age should be addressed to [sanctioning@usafootball.com](mailto:sanctioning@usafootball.com).
6. Age Divisions: USA Football runs on an evens age division system. If the tournament has odd age divisions, USA Football will round up the scores to an evens division.
  - a. For example: If a team plays in a 13U division in a tournament, USA Football recognizes them and they are ranked as a 14U division.
7. Rosters for The One Flag Football Championship: Each player on your roster must have been actively rostered for at least one sanctioned tournament or qualifier with your team within the current sanctioning cycle (August 1, 2023 – July 31, 2024)
8. Points follow the team, even if they age up during the sanctioning cycle.

USA Football team rankings will be updated monthly.



2025 OFFICIAL  
**SANCTIONED  
TOURNAMENT**

USA FLAG™ 5'S **RULEBOOK**

[usafootball.com/tournaments](https://usafootball.com/tournaments)



RECOGNIZED SPORT  
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