

# 2023 Roanoke County Flag Football Rules



## Team Formation

- A. Teams will be formed by elementary school attendance zones.
- B. If a child's elementary school does not have enough players to play, the players will be assigned to the closest elementary school which still serves the child's future high school.
- C. If a child's elementary school has more than one team in an age group, players will be assigned to a team by a random lottery performed by the Recreation Club.
- D. Team rosters must feature between 6 and 10 players.
- E. **Team rosters must be filed with the Athletics office by 8:00 AM on Wednesday, July 19th.** Rosters must include the player's name, home address (street, city and zip), telephone number, date of birth and the school the player attends. **Non-residents of Roanoke County that are eligible based on school attendance must purchase a Non-resident Participation Pass from the Roanoke County PRT Athletics office prior to attending any team event.**
- F. Only players listed on the official team roster are permitted to participate for the team. Players may not be on more than 1 roster.
- G. Borrowing of players is not permitted.
- H. No player is allowed to participate in more than one (1) Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism sponsored sport within the same season
- I. No players may be added to a roster after the first regular season game unless a team is below 6 active players.
- J. Age Divisions

<u>Division</u>	<u>League Age</u>	<u>Birthdates</u>
7U	6 Years Old	10/1/16 - 9/30/17
	7 Years Old	10/1/15 - 9/30/16
9U	8 Years Old	10/1/14 - 9/30/15
	9 Years Old	10/1/13 - 9/30/14
11U	10 Years Old	10/1/12 - 9/30/13
	11 Years Old	10/1/11 - 9/30/12
13U	12 Years Old	10/1/10 - 9/30/11
	13 Years Old	10/1/09 - 9/30/10

### Equipment Regulations

- A. Football cleats are recommended. No metal or removable cleats (metal or plastic) are permitted.
- B. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not permitted.
- C. Casts and hard braces will be dealt with on a case by case basis at the referee's discretion.
- D. Players must remove watches, earrings and all jewelry that officials deem unsafe.
- E. Official NFL Flag jerseys must be worn at all times during game.
- F. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line.
- G. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.
- H. A readily visible colored mouthpiece must be worn and cannot be chewed off around the ends.
- I. Nothing may be worn that, in the opinion of the officials, restricts the ability to see a player's eyes. The league provides each player with a flag belt.
- J. All teams will utilize the Wilson K2

### Practice Regulations

- A. Team practice schedules will be posted online at [www.roanokecountyparks.com/flag](http://www.roanokecountyparks.com/flag)
- B. Teams may not practice longer than 90 minutes.
- C. Teams are only permitted to practice on posted practice days.
- D. If your practice is shortened by more than 50% or canceled due to rain, contact the athletics division for a rescheduled practice time.

### Inclement Weather

- A. Inclement Weather Prior to Game or Practice - When possible, cancellations will be made on Roanoke County's Cancellation Line (540-387-6455 extension 6) for events hosted at Roanoke County facilities. For games in other jurisdictions, please check the cancellation line of the host organization.
- B. In the event adverse weather conditions develop while an activity is in progress and a representative from Roanoke County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism is not present, it is the responsibility of the club representative, coach, teacher, or the scheduled official to determine whether or not conditions that exist will endanger the safety of the participants and whether or not the activity will have a serious adverse effect on field conditions. If a club fails to cancel field use during inclement weather and such use causes extensive field damage, the club will be responsible for any repair costs.
- C. Lightning Policy - If thunder is heard, be aware and keep a look out for lightning. If thunder lightning is seen, all players and spectators shall be moved to a sheltered area or to their cars. Wait at least 30 minutes from the last streak of lightning to resume play or practice.
- D. Extreme Heat Policy
  - i. Actual Temperature 100\* or above - All games and practices cancelled.
  - ii. Heat Index of 100\* or above - All games cancelled.

**Concussion Management Practices** - It is the policy of Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism to follow the National Federation of State High School Association's guidelines for the management of concussions.

- A. No athlete should return to play or practice on the same day of a suspected concussion.
- B. The athlete's guardian should be immediately notified of the suspected concussion by a coach so that the athlete can be immediately evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
- C. Any athlete who is suspected of a concussion must submit written medical clearance from an appropriate health-care professional to their home Recreation Club prior to returning to practice or competition. Recreation Clubs must disallow players from participating until this document is produced.

- D. Each youth sport coach should take the Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports online course from the Center for Disease Control. This online course can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/index.html>

**VA Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect** – We recommend coaches take the online course that lets you know what to look for and how to report child abuse and neglect. Here is the web address for the online training: [https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated\\_reporters/cwse5692/story.html](https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cps/mandated_reporters/cwse5692/story.html)

**The Basic Game**

- A. The home team will wear dark jerseys; visiting teams wear light colored jerseys.
- B. At the start of each game, coaches from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- C. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
- D. Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. 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.
- E. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have three (3) plays to score a touchdown.
- F. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- G. If the offense team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
- H. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense’s 5-yard line.
- I. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

**Field**

- A. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones and a midfield line to gain line. No-Run Zones precede each line to gain by 5 yards. Field sizes may vary based on field availability for each league.
- B. No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones, teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
- C. Stepping on a boundary line is considered stepping out of bounds.
- D. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to the gain the first down, and on zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).



## Game Regulations

### A. Pregame Information

1. No game is to start prior to the scheduled game time unless everyone is in agreement.
2. Only three (3) coaches are allowed on the sidelines during a game.
3. The home team is responsible for providing a game ball.

### B. Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to the philosophy, guidelines, and codes of conduct of Roanoke County Parks and Recreation. Failure to abide by these policies will result in the removal of coaching responsibilities.
2. One coach is allowed on the field during the game to give verbal instruction and assist with lining up of players prior to the snap.
3. Coaches must retreat out of the area of play prior to the snap of the ball.

### C. Timing and Game Clock

1. Total game length is 48 minutes, divided into two (2) 24-minute halves.
2. The on field official shall keep the clock.
3. Each 24-minute half will be broken down into four (4) 6-minute mini quarters to allow for the all play rule.
4. Halftime is five (5) minutes long.
5. 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.
6. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half.
7. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
8. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field.
9. If a game completed one full half of play, the game will be considered final and not rescheduled if conditions warrant the second half to be suspended for weather or other factors.
10. If a game has not completed one full half of play and conditions warrant the game to be suspended, the game will be rescheduled by the Athletics Division and be fully replayed at a later date.

### D. All Play and Sit Rule

1. Coaches are strongly encouraged to play each player equal amounts of playing time.
2. Each player is **REQUIRED** to play four (4) 6-minute mini quarters, totaling 24 minutes each game.
3. Each player is **REQUIRED** to sit for a minimum of two (2) 6-minute mini quarters, totaling 12 minutes each game.
4. Players who are injured during playing a mini quarter should reenter as soon as possible. Players who come out because of an injury counts towards their play time requirement. Their substitutes playing time in this scenario does not count towards their playtime requirement.

### E. Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.

4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals, by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play.
5. Players may only be substituted in between mini-quarters unless they are injured. Injured players should return to play as soon as possible during the next dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. A play is ruled "dead" when:
  - a. The ball hits the ground.
  - b. The ball carriers flag is pulled.
  - c. The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
  - d. A touchdown or safety is scored.
  - e. The ball carriers knee or arm hits the ground.
  - f. The ball carriers flag falls out.
  - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flags.
  - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
  - i. Inadvertent whistle occurs.

**NOTE:** There are no fumble recoveries. The ball is spotted where the ball carriers feet were at the time of the fumble.
8. 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.
9. A team is allowed to use a time out to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a time out. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the time out will not be charged. Officials should all agree upon any controversial call in order to give each team the full benefit of the doubt.

#### F. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
2. The quarterback can run the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.
3. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player, but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
  - a. 'Center Sneak' play – The ball must completely leave the center's hands on the snap and he/she must step backwards off the line of scrimmage in order to receive a direct handoff from the QB before advancing the ball.
4. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind.
5. "No-Run Zones" are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of the midfield to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams must use a pass play when the ball is spotted inside the No-Run Zone.
6. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
7. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
8. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.

9. Spinning is allowed, but players may not leave their feet to avoid a flag pull. Jumping in the air in a forward motion to advance the ball, while attempting to avoid a flag pull, is not allowed. Lateral moves to the left or right are permitted.
10. 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.
11. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
12. Offensive player must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball carrier.
13. 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.

#### G. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed, but must be behind the line of scrimmage.
3. The quarterback has a seven second pass clock. If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect
  - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage.

#### H. Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the QB if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable.

#### I. Rushing the Passer

1. One player may rush the quarterback per play.
2. Players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
3. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
4. A special marker, of the referee, will designate a Rush Line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
  - a. A legal rush is:
    - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
    - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the QB.

- iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, rest and then legally rush the QB.
    - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before they cross the line of scrimmage, they may legally rush the quarterback.
  - b. A penalty may be called if:
    - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass.
    - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
    - iii. Any defensive player, not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off.
  - c. Special Circumstances
    - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback, seven second clock is in effect.
    - ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before they play, however, if they do send a rusher, the rusher must verify with the official that they are in the correct position.
    - iii. If rusher leaves the 7-yard line before the snap, he/she may immediately drop back to act as a defender with no offside penalty enforced.
- 5. Players rushing 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.
- 6. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to clear a 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, it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rushers path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
- 7. A sack occurs if the quarterback's flag is 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.

#### J. Flag Pulling

- 1. A legal flag pull take place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- 2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball carrier.
- 3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the carrier's possession at any time.
- 4. If a player's flag falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- 5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- 6. 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.

#### K. Formations

1. Offensive must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players behind the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
  - a. One player may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
  - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second before the ball is snapped unless he/she is the only player in motion.
3. 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.

#### L. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee 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.
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee **may** give one warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
3. Players, coaches and parents may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship, as well.
  - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or teams.
  - b. Keep comments clean and positive.
  - c. Compliment all players, not just one child or team

#### M. Penalties

1. The referee will call penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted.
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgment calls.
5. Games may not end of a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half of the distance to the goal.
8. Any player who receives an Unnecessary Roughness penalty is required to sit for the remainder of the mini-quarter and must be replaced with a substitute.



**Defensive Penalties**

Offside	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Illegal Rush	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Roughing the Passer	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Taunting	+5 yards from LOS & Automatic First Down
Defensive Pass Interference	Spot Foul, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Holding	Spot Foul, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Stripping	Spot Foul, +5 yards & Automatic First Down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	Spot Foul, +15 yards & Automatic First Down

**Offensive Penalties**

Offside/False Start	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Illegal Motion	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Delay of Game	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yards from LOS & Loss of Down
Screening, Blocking or Running w/ ball carrier	Spot Foul, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Charging	Spot Foul, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Flag Guarding	Spot Foul, -5 yards & Loss of Down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	Spot Foul, -15 yards & Loss of Down

09/15/23