



Flag Football Local Rules & Modifications

Official 2022 Special Olympics Flag Football Sports Rules: [HERE](#)

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the coach, team manager, and Program Coordinator to have read the official rules that govern each sport. Protests or rule inquiries during game play or a tournament MUST be made by a certified head Coach.

Competition Format

- 1) The Team roster may contain a maximum of 12 players
 - a. Teams shall field 5 Players to start the game (required) but may continue with a minimum of four (4) if necessary due to disqualification or injury.
- 2) The game shall consist of two (2) 20-minute halves (running clock) until the last (1) minute of each half. During the last (1) minute of each half the clock:
 - a. Stops for: incomplete passes, scoring plays, changes of possession, out of bounds, or first downs.
 - b. Restarts on the snap
 - c. Does not start for extra point attempts (untimed down)
 - d. Mercy rule: If a team is up twenty-five (25) or more points in the last minute of the game, the clock will continue to run.
- 3) The officials and team captains will meet three (3) minutes prior to start of the contest to conduct a coin toss. The visiting captain will be given the choice of heads or tails prior to the toss. Unless the winner of the toss defers his choice to the second half, he must choose one of two privileges, and the loser is given the other:
 - a. To choose whether their team will start on offense or defense. (or)
 - b. To choose the goal their team will defend
- 4) All possessions, except following an interception, start on the offensive teams 5-yard line.
 - a. The offense will have four (4) downs to cross mid-field. Once the offense has crossed the midfield line, they have four (4) additional downs to score a touchdown.



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Competition Attire & Equipment

- 1) Uniforms:
 - a. All players must have a playing uniform with number on FRONT and BACK.
 - b. All uniforms must be tucked in at the waist.
 - c. No jewelry may be worn.
 - d. No blue jeans allowed, players must wear athletic shorts or pants without pockets.
 - e. Players must wear rubber-cleated or flat-soled athletic shoes. (no metal cleats)
- 2) Equipment:
 - a. All players must wear a mouthpiece
 - b. Ball: Teams shall play with a pebble grained leather or rubber covered ball in intermediate/youth football sizes.
 - c. Flag Belt: Each offensive player shall wear a one-piece quick release belt without any knots, at the waistline with three (3) flags permanently attached.
 - i) Defensive players are not required to wear a flag belt

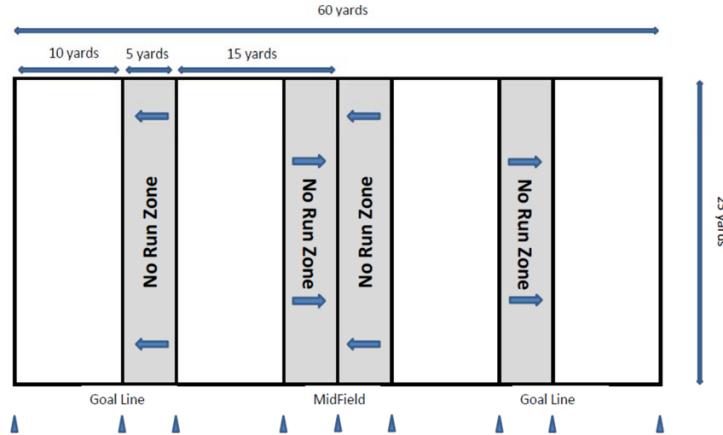
Points of Emphasis

- 1) All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage
- 2) Only direct handoffs are permitted—there are no laterals or pitches anywhere on the field.
- 3) The quarterback can't run with the ball unless it was handed off first
- 4) All defensive players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped
 - a. Once the quarterback hands off the ball all defenders are eligible to rush.
- 5) Screen blocking is the only form of legal blocking. This should be a basketball style (non-moving) screen.
 - a. The screen blocker must give an opponent at least one (1) step.
 - b. The screen blocker must not initiate contact.
 - c. The screen blocker may not take a position so close to a moving opponent that this opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing directions.
- 6) The ball is dead when it hits the ground, the offensive player's flag is pulled from their belt, the ball-carrier steps out of bounds, or the ball-carrier's body—outside of their hands or feet—touches the ground
- 7) Interceptions are non-returnable, and the ball is marked dead at the spot of the interception.
- 8) Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defense's access to the flags through contact by stiff arming, dropping the head or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.
 - a. The ball carrier may not dive, hurdle, stiff arm, or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping their flag.
 - b. Diving is illegal when used to down a player or to gain extra yards
 - c. A defensive or offensive player may dive to catch a pass.
- 9) It is now legal for a ball carrier to spin to avoid having their flag pulled.



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Field of Play



UNIFIED Sports

- 1) UNIFIED Sports Roster
 - a. The team roster may contain a maximum of ten (12) players.
 - b. The roster shall contain a proportionate number of athletes and partners. For example, five (5) athletes and five (5) partners OR six (6) athletes and four (4) partners.
 - c. Five (5) players are required to start the game, three (3) athletes and two (2) partners. a. The line-up shall never exceed three (3) athletes and two (2) partners.
 - i. Teams may continue with a minimum of four (4) players (minus one (1) partner or athlete) due to disqualification or injury.
 - ii. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
- 2) Each team shall have a non-playing coach responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team during competition.
- 3) Partners may NOT pass to another partner. 1. If a partner throws a pass, only athletes are eligible receivers.
 - a. Unified Sports® teams are expected to comply with this rule without intervention by officials.
 - i. Coaches or *designated captains* should report a violation to the official immediately.
 - ii. Failure to self-patrol will be considered unsporting and will be penalized accordingly.
- 4) A handoff can occur between any combination of players behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Combinations include athlete-to-partner, partner-to-athlete, athlete-to-athlete, partner-to-partner.
- 5) All teams are expected to adhere to and perform under the Special Olympics Unified Sports® Principle of Meaningful Involvement.
 - a. Ensures that every player is given the opportunity to contribute to the success of their team through their unique skills and qualities. This means every teammate will:
 - i. Demonstrate sufficient sport-specific skills and game understanding.
 - ii. Play a valued role on the team that emphasizes their personal talents.
 - iii. Have the opportunity to play without the heightened risk of injury