



Malaysian Flag Football Association (MAFFA)



2010 Rule Book

Flag Football Rules



General Overview

- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at their 5-yard line and has four (4) plays / tries / downs to cross the first 15 yards.
- Once a team crosses the first 15 yards, they will have four (4) more plays to cross the next 15. Proceed until end zone to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score within the 4 downs, the possession of the ball changes to the other team at the spot of the turnover

Scoring

- A touchdown is scored when the ball carrier breaks the plane of the end zone.
- A touchdown will net the scoring team a total of 6 points.
- Other ways of scoring points are as follows:
 - Safety – 2 points (when the ball carrier is de-flagged with the ball in his own end zone, or when an intentional grounding penalty is called on the quarterback while he is in his own end zone or when the ball is fumbled within the end zone. The ball will then be spotted at the 5 yard line from the end zone of the team that recorded the safety, in which they will have the possession of the ball.
 - Point after Touchdown or PAT
 - After a touchdown is scored, the scoring team will have a chance to score additional points.
 - The additional points that can be scored is either
 - 1 point, in which the ball is spotted 5 yards away from the end zone.
 - Or 2 points, in which the ball is spotted 10 yards away from the end zone.
 - Each team will inform the referee of their decision in whether to go for 1 or 2 additional points after a touchdown has been scored.
- A mercy rule will be invoked by the referee once a team is leading the other by a margin of 28 points, in which the game will be considered over, with the team in lead winning the game.

Sportsmanship

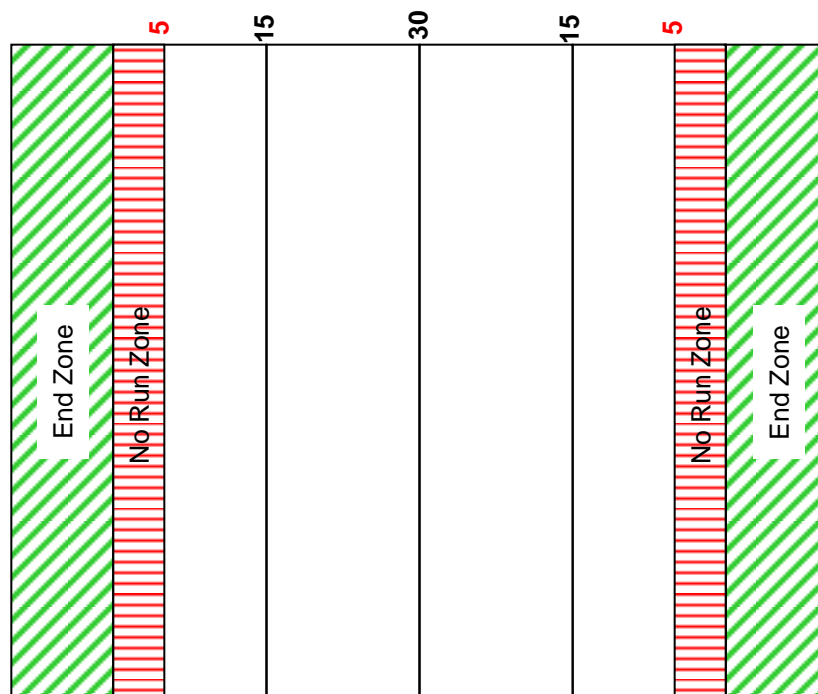
- Tackling of any sort is not allowed. Any cheap shots, elbowing, tackling or **any form of cheating** will not be tolerated. All instances of unsportsmanlike conduct will be penalised by the referee with an unsportsmanlike penalty.
- It is up to the prerogative of the referee to further penalise, eject or even stop the on-going game if the unsportsmanlike behavior continues to persist.
- All players found guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct will be referred to the association disciplinary committee. Please refer to the disciplinary rules for more info on this matter.
- Trash talking is allowed, but please keep it civil (no foul language). It is also the referee's prerogative to penalise a player if he feels that the player is going overboard. The ruling is applied to respect the audiences at the sidelines who may bring families and kids to watch the game
- Referee needs to always consult the touch judge & asst. referee if any of the officials disagree in the call made. A corrected call can be made after the discussion
- Verbal abuse to the referee will **NOT** be tolerated. That includes intimidation and foul language. Yardage will be penalize to the team that commits the foul under the call of unsportsmanlike conduct and ejection if persist.
- A play stops at the blow of the referee's whistle. **These includes:** *TD, de-flagging, false start, snap fumble, delay of game, force fumble, encroachment, flag-guarding, illegal motion & illegal formation,*

Flag Football Rules



Equipment / Clothing / Field

- Each player within the field will be required to wear flags around their waist. In the case that non-tournament grade flags are used, the referee will ensure that after each touchdown, that the ball carrier can be de-flagged with a single hard tug. If the ball carrier can't be de-flagged, then the score will be reverted and the ball carrier team will be penalised for the infraction.
- Each flag must be at least 15 inches long.
- All the player within the same team should try to wear matching shirt colors. All shirts need to be tucked in with the exception of female players.
- Wearing baseball caps are allowed, but they must be turned backwards.
- Wearing any visible jewelry is not allowed.
- Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body is not allowed
- Any physical hard pads worn above the waist is not allowed
- Wearing cleats are encouraged, but no metal cleats / spikes will be allowed
- Mouth pieces are not required, but are encouraged.
- Color of pants should not match the color of the flag belts worn, i.e.: Yellow and Red
- Pants worn during the game shall consist of no pockets. This is a strict ruling. Pants with pockets may cause finger injuries during a deflagging moment.
- The game will be played with a regulation sized ball (either NFL or College size ball)
- In the case that the ball carrier is de-flagged by accident before catches the ball, the play will continue until a defender touches the ball carrier with both hands simultaneously (two hand touch)
- The size of the playing field is 80 yards in length x 40 yards in width.
- The field is divided into two (2) end zones (10 yards in length each) and four (4) first down markers (15 yards in length each) as illustrated below.



Flag Football Rules



Time

- Playing time is a total of two (2), 20 minutes half of running time / continuous clock. In the first 18 minutes of each half, a team can stop the clock from running by calling a timeout.
- However, the clock will revert to a non-continuous clock after the 2 Minute Warning that is the last 2 minutes of each half. The clock will stop when the ball or ball carrier goes out of bounds, any incompleteness, change of possession or after a touchdown is scored.
- Each team will have 40 seconds to snap the ball after the ball is spotted by the referee after the previous play is over.
- Only a total of two (2) timeouts is provided to each team for the whole game. This translates to one (1) timeout per half. A time-out will be 1 minute in length
- If the teams are tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game will move directly into overtime.
- In overtime, each team receives one offensive play each. The teams will then be allowed to choose how many points that are planning to score. The choices are as follows:-
 - 5 yards away from the end zone - 1 point
 - 10 yards away from the end zone - 2 points
- If the teams are tied again after the first overtime, the process will be repeated until a winner emerges.
- An official timeout can be called by the referee when necessary. For e.g.: injury on the field, officials discussion on the on the ruling on the field, & etc. During this moment, the game clock stops.

Offensive Formations

- All formations are allowed, however only a maximum of 5 players are allowed to line up on the line of scrimmage. A penalty of illegal formation will be called if more than 5 players line up on the line of scrimmage.
- There must be at least 3 players on the line of scrimmage at all times before the start of the play, with a minimum of two offensive linemen.

Passing

- Only one forward pass per play is allowed by any of the players within the offensive team.
- The forward pass must be thrown before the passer crosses the line of scrimmage. Any forward pass that is thrown after the line of scrimmage will be called an illegal forward pass and the team will be penalised for it.
- Laterals or a backward pass is allowed, but only before the line of scrimmage.
- If the passer is sacked before the ball is being passed, the ball will be spotted at the point the player holding the ball was de-flagged.
- QBs can either elect to receive the ball or snaps either through the shotgun formation or in the form of a direct snap (under the center)
- If the QB purposely throws the ball on the ground within the Offensive Linemen zone to avoid being sacked, the referee may penalise the QB for intentional grounding. Spiking is allowed
- In the instance where a simultaneous sack and forward pass thrown happens, the advantage will always be given to the forward pass thrown. The play will continue until the ball drops to the ground or the receiver who caught the ball is de-flagged or goes out of bounds.
- The defense is allowed to intercept all passes, and all interceptions can be returned for touchdowns.

Flag Football Rules



Receiving

- All the offensive players apart from the linemen are eligible to receive passes.
- All receivers must line up behind the line of scrimmage. An off sides penalty will be called on the offensive team if any of its receivers are lined beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Players only need to have one (1) foot in bound when making a catch.
- Incompletion will result in a loss of down, and the ball will spotted at the original line of scrimmage.
- Offensive linemen are not allowed to pass the line of scrimmage on passing downs. An ineligible receiver penalty will be called on the offensive team by the referee if there are offensive linemen beyond the line of scrimmage before the ball has passed the line of scrimmage. **Exception** to accommodate a *screen pass* when an eligible receiver catches a ball behind the LOS **AND** behind a "screen" of offensive linemen.
- Only one player is allowed to be in motion at any one time. The player in motion towards the line of scrimmage needs to stay put or set before the ball can be snapped, unless the player in motion is moving parallel to the line of scrimmage. An illegal motion penalty will be called on the offensive team if more than one player moves after the line is set, or the ball is snapped before the player moving towards the line of scrimmage is set.
- Once the ball is caught, all the offensive players are allowed to block (legal block) other defensive players from de-flagging the ball carrier.
- Offensive players are allowed to push off the defenders to create separation **ONLY** within the 5 yards area after the Line-of-Scrimmage (LOS) and behind the LOS to catch the ball. An offensive pass interference will be called on the player if the push-off occurs outside the defined region
- Other receivers are not allowed to purposely block the path of defenders to create separation for the intended receiver. An offensive pass interference will be called on the player in this particular instance.

Kickoffs, Punts & Free-Kicks

- A kickoff will occur at the start of each halves to indicate the start of the game. The game clock begins at the point the ball is kicked. Any team that starts the kickoff on the first half will not start the kickoff on the second half.
- A kickoff is also awarded to the team that made a touchdown right after their PAT attempt.
- Ball is spotted on the own (Kicking team)10 yard line for the kickoff. Before the ball is kicked, the eligible distance for the receiving team to stand will be 10 yards away from the line of kickoff. An offside penalty will be called if the returning team fails to follow.
- An offside penalty will be called if any player from the kicking team crosses the line of kickoff before the ball is kicked. The ball is only eligible to touch after the ball travels 10 yards from the line of kickoff
- If the ball travels less than 10 yards after a kickoff, the kicking team is deemed ineligible to recover the ball. The returning team will then start where the spot of the ball is recovered.
- If the ball is kicked out of bounds, or bounce out of bounds (sidelines), the returning team will begin possession on the 30 yard line.
- During a kickoff, a **touchback** occurs when the ball travels past the returning team's endzone or when the returning team catches and drops a knee at the End Zone with the ball in possession. Once a touchback occurs, the ball will be spotted at the returning's team own 5 yard line.
- Punts occur when the offensive team decides to punt the ball away so the defensive team gets to gain possession in the next round where the ball was received. Just like a snapping position, the center snaps the ball to the punter for the punt to occur. Snap fumble penalty will still be applied.

Flag Football Rules



Kickoffs, Punts, Free-Kicks

- Defensive players are not allowed to engage the snapper **only until after he regains his balance**. *A non-accurate way to measure is to allow 3 seconds to pass after the snap.*
- In a non-protected punt, defensive players are allowed to penetrate the line of scrimmage to block a punt or a play to occur. However, they are not allowed to engage the punter when he's in the event of punting the ball. He's only allowed to jump straight up the air to block a punt (considered a live ball if the ball is successfully blocked).
- A "**Protected Punt**" can be declared if the offense calls for it. The referee will then inform the defensive team of the offense's choice. If it's called, the punt **MUST** occur. If the punt did not occur and an ineligible receiver receives the ball, it's deemed as an ineligible receiver. Other penalties will be called according to their respective areas.
- The decision of a protected punt can only be reversed if the down is interrupted by a timeout, or a foul that results in a repeat of down. Defensive players may block the punt by jumping straight up the air. They may not penetrate the line of scrimmage at a protected punt. If that occurs, a defensive offside penalty will be called.
- If the ball is punted out of bounds (sidelines), the ball will be spotted at the point it went out. If the ball is punted beyond the endzone, the ball will be spotted at the returning team's 5 yard line.
- Free-kick occurs just right after a safety. A free-kick is like a punt without a snapper in a kickoff position. After a safety occurs, the offensive team will then make a free-kick at their own 10 yard line. All rules from the kickoff position of players on both sides of the team still applies.
- A safety point will be awarded to the opposite team if the returning team gets deflagged at their own endzone.
- Unlike a normal catch, the returning team for kicks / punts have the option to call for a "**faircatch**". *To signal a faircatch, a returning player has to verbally call it out Loud while Waving his hand.*
- A faircatch means that the returning team gets to receive a protected catch with no contact made on the receiver of the catch (returner). If the kicking / punting team makes contact to the returner at a faircatch, it's *unsportsmanlike* to do so, and they will be penalized, The ball will be spotted where the catch was made.
- In the event when a kick / punt hits no returning team players, the ball will be spotted where it was downed by the opposite team.
- If the ball hits a returning team player and falls off the ground after a kick / punt, it's considered as a live fumble; regardless of a faircatch call! Any team that regains the ball will have the possession the next round.
- Any form of foul conducted in the play will be penalized to either sides of the team after the kick / punt has been returned.
- If a foul is committed in the play during a kick / punt where:
 - Kicking team commits the foul (like block on the back), the returning team is awarded yardage from where the play ends
 - Returning team commits the foul (like block on the back), the kicking team gets to *re-kick* with awarded yardage

Flag Football Rules



Rushing

- The offensive team is allowed to run the ball with any of its players apart from the offensive linemen. However, the quarterback or QB is only allowed one (1) run for the whole drive that either results in a touchdown or change of possession.
- The last 5 yards before then end zone is designated as no runs zones. No running plays will be allowed in this area.
- The offensive team is allowed to have multiple hand-offs behind the line of scrimmage. Direct hand-offs, tosses, laterals and reverses behind the line of scrimmage is legal. Anything beyond the line of scrimmage will be considered illegal and the team will be penalised for it.
- The player who receives the hand-off is allowed to throw the ball forward as long as he stays behind the line of scrimmage while undertaking the act of a forward pass.
- Players are allowed to spin while carrying the ball, but both the players feet can not be off the ground at the same time or jumping to avoid a defensive player.
- The ball will be spotted at the point where the ball carrier was de-flagged.
- Offensive linemen and other players within the offensive team is allowed to block (legal blocks) the defensive players from de-flagging the ball carrier.
- Unnecessary roughness penalty will be called by the ref where he feels fit. That includes punching, elbowing, kicking, choking, tripping, head but while carrying the ball. Also includes charging with the head / shoulders.
- Stiff arm or any acts that closely resembles “covering the flag” will be penalize under the *flag-guarding* ruling
- The QB is also not allowed to run during point after touchdown conversions.

Blocking

- Only legal blocks are allowed in the game. Blocks are permitted if it's:
 - Open palms, cross arms, or shoulder techniques
 - Applied on the body zone between the shoulder and the waist area while coming from the front or side of your opponent
 - In a running game, all players except the ball carrier are allowed to block to create an opening (on the offense) or limit an opening (on the defense)
 - If the QB remains in the pocket with the ball, eligible receivers can bump (or block) the defensive player to create separation as long it stays behind the 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. (aka expanded neutral zone) The same ruling applies on the defensive side. The expanded neutral zone breaks down only once the QB is out of his pocket. If that occurs, blocking for both sides of the team is permitted anywhere on the field. Important note: Pass interference ruling **still applies** even within the extended neutral zone.
- Types of illegal blocks:
 - Blocking from the back
 - Exposing your back to conduct a block
 - Blocking outside the allowable body zone
 - Tugging, holding of a body part or clothing or any form of grabbing that constitutes a hold.
 - Ineligible receivers blocking passes the line of scrimmage in a forward pass play. (a non strict ruling of additional one yard is permitted provided contact still persists).
- Even if the QB runs out of the pocket, ineligible receivers are still not permitted to block pass the line of scrimmage in a forward pass play. If violated, an ineligible receiver penalty will be called

Flag Football Rules



Change of Possession

- A change of possession can occur if any of the following occurs during the game:
 - The offense scores a touchdown.
 - The offense commits any of the following turnovers
 - Interception
 - Safety
 - Not acquiring a first down after four tries (Turnover on downs)
 - Fumble recovery with the exception of fumbled caused by bad snaps & force fumbles

Dead Balls / Fumbles

- The play is dead when any of the following occurs:
 - The ball carrier was de-flagged
 - The ball carrier steps out of bounds
 - A touchdown or safety occurs
 - The ball carrier knee (s) hits the ground
 - Fumbles caused by bad snap – the ball will be spotted at the point where the fumble first hit the ground.
 - Force fumbles.
- A live fumble occurs when the ball hits the ground and **no whistle is blown**
- All live fumbles are considered in play, and play will continue until the person who recovered the ball is de-flagged or knees on ground or goes out of bounds. **Exception** snap fumbles are not considered live

Challenges

- A challenge occurs when the team feels that a call made by the referee during the game is questionable. However, managers or team captains can only challenge the following calls only.
 - In bound or out of bound receptions
 - Spot of the ball
 - Touchdowns
- Only two (2) challenges are allowed per team, per game. Challenges which the referees determine to be justified, will result in a repeat of down.
- Referee needs to always consult the touch judge & asst. referee if any of the officials disagree in the call made. A corrected call can be made after the discussion
- Referees have the full authority to determine incidental contact, which may result from normal run of play!
- Complaints regarding rule clarification and interpretation are to be submitted within 24 hours after game time to the association.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

Flag Football Rules



Defending the Pass

- All defensive players guarding the receivers / tight ends / running backs are allowed to bump / have contact with their opposing offensive players within the first five (5) yards. Any contact after the first five (5) yards that is not incidental will be called for illegal contact
- If the defensive player is playing the receiver instead of the ball, he will also be called for defensive pass interference. Hindering an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept or swat the ball is pass interference, even though no contact was made
- All defenders are allowed to tip or intercept the pass.
- All interceptions can be returned for touchdown.
- Tripping will be penalized under the ruling of Unnecessary Roughness

Rushing the Quarterback

- All defensive players are allowed to rush the QB. Players not lined up as defensive linemen need to be a minimum 3 yards away from the line of scrimmage if the rush / blitz is from outside of the offensive linemen zone.
- The offensive linemen zone is defined as the zone in between the right shoulder of the right offensive lineman to the left shoulder of the left offensive linemen.
- A defensive linemen is defined as the player standing 2 yards away from the line of scrimmage and satisfy the offensive linemen zone ruling
- Defensive players who are blitzing from within the offensive linemen zone, are required to satisfy the 3 yards requirement.
- All defensive linemen are required to have at least *3 points of their bodies* on the ground before the ball is snapped.
- Defensive linemen need to be lined up within the offensive linemen zone before the ball is snapped. Failure to do so will result in a penalty.
- The defensive players can start to cross the line of scrimmage to rush the quarterback once the ball has been snapped by the center.
- The distance between the offensive linemen and the defensive linemen needs to be at least two (2) yards.
- Contact between defensive players and offensive players are allowed during the process of rushing the quarterback. The allowable zone for contact will be between the shoulders and waist area and must be coming from the front or sides of your opponent. However, calling a penalty on excessive contact is up the purview of the referee.
- If the quarterback is de-flagged behind the line of scrimmage before the ball was thrown, a sack will be awarded to the defensive team, and the ball will be spotted at the point the QB was de-flagged.
- If the quarterback was sacked in his own end zone, a safety will then be awarded to the defensive team, and the offense will have to conduct a free-kick on their own 5 yard line.
- No excessive contact on QB after the ball is thrown (Late Hit). If blocking a pass, the arms has to be straighten up. Roughing the passer will be called if deemed necessary.

Flag Football Rules



| Penalties (Offense) | | |
|---|---|--|
| Penalty | Definition | Result of Penalty |
| Delay of game | Off. team did not snap the ball within 40 seconds after the ball was spotted by the referee. | Loss of 5 yds |
| Flag guarding | Ball carrier uses hand to or any part of the body to shield the flags from being taken by the defenders. Includes <i>jumping forward, stiff-arm</i> | Loss of 5 yds from spot of foul |
| False Start | Any player moves after he has gotten in his set position before the snap in a way that simulates the start of the play. This movement might be as minute as a couple of centimeters. | Loss of 5 yds |
| Illegal motion | More than 1 Off. player moving at one time after the line is set, or the Off. player moving forward to the LOS has not stopped before the ball is snapped | Loss of 5 yds |
| Illegal forward pass | Occurs when the Off. player throws the ball after the LOS, or a second forward pass was thrown in a single play | Loss of 5 yds Loss of down |
| Illegal Lateral / Handoff / Backward Pass | Occurs when the Off. players lateral / handoff or pass the ball backwards after the LOS | Loss of 5 yds from the LOS, Loss of down |
| Illegal formation | Occurs when they are more than 5 players lined up at the LOS | Loss of 5 yds |
| Ineligible receiver | Occurs when an ineligible receiver (Off. linemen) crosses the LOS during a pass play. Exception to accommodate a <i>screen pass</i> when an eligible receiver catches a ball behind the LOS AND behind a "screen" of offensive linemen. | Loss of 5 yds |
| Intentional Grounding | Occurs when the QB or passer purposely throws the ball into the ground to evade a sack <i>within the pocket</i> . No penalty for "spiking" the ball to stop the game clock, however must be executed immediately after the snap | Loss of 10 yds or spot of foul (whichever further), Loss of down. If it happens in the EZ, a safety is Awarded |
| Offensive pass interference | Off. player pushes off a defender to create separation (beyond 5 yds after LOS) OR purposely blocks the path of a defender to create separation for a team mate during a pass play OR is assumed illegally withholding a defensive player from making an interception | Loss of 15 yds |
| Offensive holding | Occurs when an Off. player holds, grabs any part of the Def. player including jersey, shorts, belt | Loss of 10 yds |
| Offensive offside | Off. player is lined up beyond the LOS | Loss of 5 yds |
| Running play in No Run Zone | Occurs when the Off. team executes a running play in the no run zone (5 yds away from the end zone) OR QB run during PAT | Loss of 5 yds, Loss of down |
| Snap fumble | Occurs when the ball touches the ground directly after the snap. Foul will be called at the spot the ball 1st lands. | Spot of foul, Loss of down; Spot on 1 if at EZ; Safety if over EZ |

*All penalties result in replaying the down unless stated otherwise

**Highlighted fonts are fouls that stop plays from continuing once the referee's whistle is blown

***If yardage is penalized to the defensive team ends up being at their own EZ, ball will be spotted half a distance to their goal, unless stated otherwise.

Flag Football Rules



| Penalties (Defense / Others) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Penalty | Definition | Result of Penalty |
| Defensive holding | Occurs when a Def. player holds, grabs an Off. player including jersey, shorts and belt | Loss of 10 yds, |
| Defensive pass interference / | Def. player pushes off an Off. player to create separation or initiate contact after the first 5 yds from the LOS AND is assumed playing the Off. player instead of the ball. Hindering an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept or swat the ball is pass interference, even though no contact was made. | Spot of foul & auto 1 st down or spot on the 1 if foul occurs on the EZ. / |
| Illegal Contact | Making significant contact with a receiver after the receiver has past 5 yds after the LOS. The illegal contact is called ONLY if the QB is still <i>in the pocket</i> and the ball is still <i>in his hands</i> . | Loss of 5 yds + auto 1 st down |
| Encroachment / Defensive Offside | Def. player(s) crosses LOS AND makes contact with the opponent before the ball is snap. / Def player in or crosses the neutral zone at the time of the snap. | Loss of 5 yds |
| Force fumble | Def. player strips ball off from the ball-carrier on purpose | 15 yds from spot of foul or LOS (whichever further) |
| Not handing the flag back to ball carrier | Occurs when a Def. player does not hand the flag back to the ball carrier after the play is dead | Loss of 5 yds |
| Illegal blitz / rushing | Occurs when Def. players blitz the QB from less than 3 yds from the LOS OR the Def. linemen are not lined up within the Off. linemen zone OR Def. linemen was in the zone but did not fulfil the 3 points stance condition | Loss of 5 yds |
| Roughing the kicker or passer | Roughing the kicker or passer after he has kicked or thrown the ball. Includes "forward" jumping to block a kick or throw | Loss of 15yds & auto 1 st down |
| Block in the back | A blocker contacting a non-ballcarrying member of the opposing team from behind and above the waist | Loss of 10 yds |
| Clipping | A blocker contacting a non-ballcarrying opponent from behind and at or below the waist | 15yds; + auto 1 st down if committed by Def |
| Illegal participation | > 7 players on the field at the time of the snap | Loss of 5 yds |
| Unnecessary Roughness / | A conduct- or <i>safety-related infraction</i> , when any player uses unnecessary contact; e.g.: (<i>punching, elbowing, kicking, choking, tripping, tackling, chop block, head but, head or shoulder charge</i>) during play. Includes roughing the snapper (Special Teams); <i>roughing the ball-carrier</i> ; blocking outside the allowable body zone. | 15 yds from spot of foul or LOS (whichever further); + auto 1 st down if committed by Def. |
| Personal Foul | Includes kicking the football unnecessarily. Includes physical abuse to game officials. Includes unnecessary contact with an opponent who is away from or out of the play of the ball | Ejection if deemed necessary |
| Unsportsmanlike conduct (non-contact) | A conduct when it's a non-contact foul; if contact is involved it becomes a personal foul. Occurs when actions taken by players are outside of the bounds required for flag football. Includes saying "hut" on the Def. Side OR faircatch interference. Includes verbal abuse, intimidation, foul-language to the game officials. | 15 yds; + auto 1 st down if committed by Def |