

AJF 2020 Season

1st – 4th Grade Flag Football Rules

Philosophy Statement: The purpose of 1st – 4th Grade Flag Football is to introduce these young athletes to the sport of football. The central points of focus at this age level are for the kids to have FUN and to EQUALLY PARTICIPATE. Winning should NOT be a priority. AJF is committed to providing an atmosphere where young athletes can have fun, play hard, and walk away from every game knowing they contributed somehow to the game. This means that it is mandatory that there is equal playing time regardless of the participant's athletic ability. Every participant should participate in both offense and defense and either have carried the ball or had one or two passes thrown in their direction. *Getting every athlete involved will take a concerted effort and must take precedence over winning.*

Coaches: Each team will be assigned one head coach. The head coach may register to coach with one assistant coach. The head coach's and assistant coach's kids will be placed on their team. The AJF Board selects all coaches for teams and reserves the right to add or eliminate coaches at any time before or during the season for any reason it deems just.

Teams: Teams will consist of approximately 8-11 players, but total number of players per team will depend on player registrations. If players register after the teams are initially formed, players may be added to existing team rosters.

General Guidelines: Teams should be at their field and be ready to start playing right at their team's scheduled game time. The game will consist of four quarters. Each quarter will be a 12 minute continuous clock. Half-time will consist a brief 2-3 minute break depending on game schedules. Each team is allowed one 30 second timeout per half.

A coin toss determines first possession. There are no kickoffs. The offensive team will take possession at its 20-yard line. The offense has four attempts to gain a first down. There are no punts. On 4th down, the offense will attempt a play and if it is unsuccessful in converting a first down, it is considered a turnover and the ball will be put into play on the opponent's 20-yard line. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offensive team's own 20 yard line. On interceptions, the ball is put into play where the player is ruled down.

The offensive team has 30 seconds to call a play in the huddle, get to the line and snap the ball. A maximum of 40 seconds is allowed from the whistle of the previous play to the snap of the next play. Each team should receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced, but this is at the referee's discretion. Teams should have 4-6 pre-set plays that the kids are familiar. This speeds up the game as well as gives more opportunities for additional plays.

Two coaches may be on the field at once (own side of the ball) to huddle players, call plays and assist in lining up players. Once the ball has been snapped and the play has started, *no coaching or instructing players is allowed.* The on-field coach(es) must be five (5) yards behind the deepest player on his/her team on both offense and defense.

A violation of said rules is considered illegal procedure and the offending team shall be assessed a five (5) yard penalty.

Offensive Guidelines: Offense will always have one more player than the defense. There will be 7 offensive players playing against 6 defensive players. For that reason, the quarterback cannot run past the line of scrimmage ("LOS") and is not eligible to receive a pass since he is not being guarded.

There shall be a two (2) yard “free zone” immediately beyond the LOS for the offense. Defensive players may not enter the “free zone” until the offensive player has either touched or caught the ball.

The offensive makeup is: 1 Quarterback, 1 Running Back and 5 Receivers. The Running Back must start the play lined up directly behind the Quarterback. All 5 Receivers must be on the LOS. There must be 3 Receivers to one side of the ball and 2 Receivers on the other side of the ball.

No hurry up offense is allowed. If necessary, the offense shall allow a few seconds before snapping the ball to make sure the defense team is ready for the play to begin.

One (1) running play is allowed, but not required, once every four downs. A running play will require either a handoff or a lateral (pitch). If a pass does not go past the LOS, it shall be considered a run. If a team gains a first down on a run, that team cannot run on the next play, you must wait another three plays before you can run again.

To be considered a pass, the ball must be thrown forward and beyond the LOS. The pass is considered a forward pass if the QB throws the ball forward from the QB position and the receiver is beyond the LOS. The pass is considered a forward pass as long as a reasonable attempt is made for the pass to be beyond the LOS. The reasonable attempt of what is considered a pass shall be at the referee’s discretion. *All passes must be overhand.* No underhand or shuffle passes are allowed. One (1) pass beyond the two (2) yard “free zone” is required every four (4) downs.

The ball is put into play by the head official handing or tossing the ball to the Quarterback. The Quarterback has five (5) seconds to handoff or throw the ball. If the ball is still in the hands of the Quarterback after five (5) seconds, the play shall be whistled dead, shall result in a loss of down and is considered a run.

Absolutely no downfield blocking or screening is allowed to aid the offensive player at any time. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.

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.

No flag guarding, picks, stiff arming, or jumping over a tackler is allowed. Absolutely no running over (bulling over) a defensive player (this is a 10 yard penalty and loss of down). All other infractions, the ball becomes dead at the point of penalty.

To be considered a catch, a player must have at least one foot in bounds. 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.

Defensive Guidelines: *Zone coverage is NOT allowed.* All defenses *must be man to man* coverage. Double teaming an offensive player is allowed, however, you must realize one of the offensive players will be running “free” at that time.

The defensive team should attempt to be ready for the play to start when the offensive team lines up for the play. The defense shall be allowed a few seconds to line up to make sure they are ready for the play to begin. The few seconds should not be used by coaches to waste time matching specific defensive players to cover specific offensive players. Coaches are free to do this, but realize you only have a few seconds in which to accomplish this if you choose.

Defensive players must be positioned at least two (2) yards off of the LOS.

No defensive player may enter the two (2) yard “free zone” area off of the LOS. This is a “free zone” for the offense only. The defensive player may not enter this area until the offensive player has either touched or caught the ball. No interceptions can be made in this two (2) yard free zone.

A defensive player cannot go forward until a pass has been attempted (ball in the air) or a handoff has been attempted. Blitzing is NOT allowed.

Interceptions may be returned for touchdowns. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that may not start on the 20 yard line. On interceptions, the ball is put into play where the player is ruled down. Fumbles are dead at the spot where they touch the ground. If a handoff is fumbled up into the air, it can be intercepted and may be returned for a touchdown. Under no circumstances is there to be any down field blocking to help aid a defensive player returning a ball. Players cannot run with the ball-carrier on an interception.