

Sussex Lions Club – Sussex Area Service Club

Flag Football Program Rules

Update 8-12-2024

These rules are for use in all Lions Flag Football games. These rules are coordinated with national rules as established by the National Alliance Athletic Association. Rules are subject to change based on Flag Football Committee

Field

1. The fields are 40 yards wide and 80 yards long, divided by cross strips into two 10 yard end zones and four 20 yard sections.

Uniforms

1. Shoes — Metal cleats are not allowed. Program official's will have the last say as to the legality of shoes.

2. A football jersey will be provided to each player. During the game, the jersey must be tucked inside the pants at all times.

3. Colored mouthguards are required to be provided by each player. The colored mouthguards allow for the refs to be able to verify the player has a mouthguard in.

4. A set of flags will be provided. They must be worn with the flags on each hip hanging down along the side of the leg. They must be hanging loose, fully extended, and may not be knotted or tucked in the pants or pockets. The flag belt must be tight. **If the ball carrier's flags are not at his/her side, the play will be stopped at the point the flags moved, or when the player receives the ball if the flags are already out of place. The player will have to sit out one play to get the flags and belt fixed.**

5. If flags that are cut or tampered with are discovered, the player will be ejected from the game and an un-sportsmanlike conduct penalty will be assessed. The game will be forfeited if several flags are altered.

6. Soft Shell Helmet and mouth guards **MUST BE WORN** by all players.

7. **Red pants or shorts are prohibited.** (This is because it matches the color of the flags.) Players wearing red pants or shorts, (OR with a Red Stripe) will be ineligible to play.

Players and Referees

1. A regulation team consists of 10-12 players. 8 Players on the Field at a Time unless otherwise changed on a by year basis for a specific grade level.

2. At least five offensive players (**four if there is only 7 players on the field at a time, and 3 if only 6 on the field**) must be on the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. A player is considered to be in the backfield if he or she is one yard or more from the line of scrimmage. **5 Yards - LOS**

3. Unlimited substitution is permitted whenever the ball is not in play.

Players and Referees Continued

4. During the same dead ball interval, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and reenter as a substitute. **5 Yards - LOS**
5. All players must have a starting position on either offense or defense. This doesn't refer to special teams. **'UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT' 15 Yards - LOS**
6. Players cannot be transferred from one team to another after team rosters are set. Final player assignments are at the discretion of the board.
7. Injuries and casts: Players will be allowed to play with casts providing a doctor's release is shown before each game. Careful observation must be given that the player's cast is not used to his or her advantage.
8. Each team must supply one referee, and there will be **at least** one neutral referee (**no neutral referee for 1st & 2nd grade**). Any team that does not supply a referee will forfeit the game. Team referees will be on opposite side of field as their team.

Stance

1. A Three-Point Stance is no longer required for any player. However, at a minimum, Players must be in a "Two-Point Stance" upon the Center touching the Football. This means that both feet must be set Pre-Snap and No Pre-Snap Motion is allowed. **5 Yards - LOS - (This is a dead ball foul)**

Examples for Coaching a 2 Point Stance

- a. For an Offensive Linemen or Running Back: To get in a good two-point stance, start with your feet shoulder-width apart, facing toward the line of scrimmage. Keep your weight centered, knees bent, chest big, back flat and head up. Your hands should be above your knees so they're ready for movement. First movement can only occur when the football is snapped.
- b. For a Wide Receiver: Front foot pointing straight ahead and flat on the ground, the heel of your back foot should be about an inch off the ground. Knees should be bent with hips relaxed and weight should be put slightly over your front knee. The receiver's first movement can only occur when the football is snapped.

Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. Point after the touchdown (Extra point attempt will be made even if time has expired. The only exception would be if scoring team is ahead at end of 2nd half.)

Choice made by the offensive team:

- a. 1 point for running or passing the football into the end zone from the 2 yard line.
- b. 2 points for running or passing the football into the end zone from the 7 yard line.

Scoring Continued

Choice must be made by the offensive coach or captain before the ball is set in place by the referee and before offensive huddle begins. Once the ball is set, it can not be changed unless a time out is taken. There will be a time limit of 30 seconds from the ball being set by official. When the official is ready to set the ball, he/she will look over to the offensive team's sidelines for their choice of 1 or 2 points. If no choice is designated, the ball will be spotted on the 2 yard line and the extra point attempt will be for 1 point.

3. Safety: 2 points. Made when the impetus of the ball comes from the team that put the ball into play and this ball is downed behind that team's goal line. Kick-off from the 20 yard line by the team whose goal was crossed. May be free kick (either punt or kick-off), kick-off rules apply.

Length of Game

1. A game shall consist of two 20 minute halves with a three minute rest period between halves. Teams will change ends at the half. (If the team winning the pre-game toss elects to kick, they automatically receive in the second half.)

2. Three, one minute, time outs are allotted to each team during each half. Clock will restart at the snap of the ball.

3. The clock will be continuous through each play, except for time outs (official and/or team called) and after touchdowns. After each touchdown the clock will be stopped. Immediately after the extra point attempt, the ref will spot the ball for the kick-off. The kicking team will have 30 seconds after the ref puts the ball down to kick off. A penalty will be assessed if the kick is not made within 30 seconds or if the receiving team is not ready.

'DELAY OF GAME' 5 Yards - LOS

4. The Clock will stop in the Final 30 Seconds of a Game that is within 8 Points on:

- a. Timeout,
- b. Incomplete Pass
- c. Player ruled Out of Bounds
- d. Scoring Play
- e. Change of Possession
- f. Penalty committed by the Team that is in the Lead
- g. In a Tie Game, penalty by the Defense.

Foreign Substances

1. No players may use stickum or pine tar to help hold the ball. Such action may result in disqualification of the offending player. **'UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT' 15 Yards - LOS**

Kick-Off

1. Kick-offs will be from the 35 yard line for 1st & 2nd Grade, 30 yard line for 3rd & 4th grade, and from the 25 yard line grades 5-6. At least five players (**four if there is only 7 players on the field at a time**) of the receiving team will be on the 35 yard line for 1st & 2nd grade, and on the 40 yard line for grades 3-6, for the kick-off. **5 Yards - LOS**

Kick-Off Continued

2. A kick-off is a place kick.
3. Out of bounds kick-offs are put into play as follows:
 - When the ball is kicked beyond the forty yard line, the ball is placed at the forty yard line.
 - When the ball is kicked short of the forty yard line, the ball is put into play where it went out of bounds.
4. The ball must be kicked at least ten yards before it can be returned. **5 Yards - LOS and ball will be kicked over**
5. The kicking team may not recover the ball. (No on-side kicks allowed).
6. After each touchdown the clock will be stopped. Immediately after the extra point attempt, the ref will spot the ball for the kick-off. The kicking team will have 30 seconds after the ref puts the ball down to kick off. A penalty will be assessed if the kick is not made within 30 seconds or if the receiving team is not ready. **'DELAY OF GAME' 5 Yards – LOS**

Punting

1. When a team intends to punt, they must designate so by calling “punt” before they get to the line of scrimmage. If “punt” is called, the referee will call out to the defensive players. If there is a penalty or time out during that play, when play resumes, the offensive team must call a punt again if they still intend to punt. **'Violation of punt rules' 5 Yards - LOS**
2. No member of either team may move until the ball is kicked, except for positioning the receiving backs. Refs will reset players and let play continue. Repeated movement will result in offside penalty. **'OFFSIDES' 5 Yards - LOS**
3. On punts only, the ball may be picked up off the ground and kicked after the center snap.
4. Defensive players may not hold up their hands to block the punt. The defensive players may not attempt to block the punt. **'BLOCKING PUNT' 5 Yards - LOS**
5. If the ball is punted into an offensive player, the play will be stopped. **5 Yards - LOS and ball will be kicked over**
6. Offensive players must remain in a 2-Point stance until the ball is punted. Refs will reset players and let play continue. Repeated movement will result in offside penalty. **5 Yards - LOS**
7. Punter must punt the ball from the point where he receives the ball, and he must be within 5 yards (side to side) of the center snap. The kicker has five seconds to punt the ball after the center snap. **5 Yards - LOS**

Yards and Downs

1. Four downs are permitted to advance the ball 20 yards from the original line of scrimmage.

Sideline Play

1. Whenever the ball becomes dead within 10 yards of the sideline, or it goes out of bounds, it shall be brought back towards the center of the field and put at a spot 15 yards from the sidelines.
2. No sleeper play. All Players must break from the huddle. (The huddle can be as short as someone saying break and then the players going to their positions.) **10 Yards - LOS**

Advancing the Ball

1. By regular football tactics. All offensive plays must start with all players in a huddle. (The huddle can be as short as someone saying break and then the players going to their positions.)
2. A team shall have 30 seconds to put the ball in play.
3. The ball is put in play by the center snap. A player other than the center must **clearly** have the ball.
‘UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT’ 15 Yards - LOS
4. There are no fumbles. Ball is down at the point of grounding except on punts. Possession is retained by the same team. (This is to prevent piling on). The ball is live until it hits the ground. In a snap situation where the QB cleanly catches the ball but it makes partial contact with the ground, the play will be allowed to continue on at the Referees discretion. This is a judgement call by the Referees and play should only stop if a whistle is blown.
5. Defensive players may not try to strip the ball in any manner. **‘UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT’ 15 Yards - LOS**
6. No Diving: Diving or lunging over the line of scrimmage or goal line is prohibited. (This is for safety reasons.)
‘UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT’ 15 Yards – LOS

Downing the Ball Carrier

1. Pulling either flag from the carrier. The defensive man should hold up the flag at once. The ball will be marked at the spot where the ball was when the flag was pulled. (At the goal line, the position of the ball in relation to the goal line determines a touchdown or extra point, not the position of the defending player’s body or feet.)
2. If a player catches or intercepts a pass, or in any legal way receives the ball and does not have both flags showing, he shall be considered down at the spot where he received the ball.
3. If a flag falls off of a ball carrier, the play shall be deemed ended where the flag hit the ground.
4. Intentionally pulling flags from the players who do not have the ball will constitute an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. (If in the judgment of the referee a flag has been intentionally pulled from a receiver and no defensive player is near, a touchdown may be awarded.) **‘UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT’ 15 Yards - LOS**
5. Inadvertent whistle: Offensive team has the choice of running play over or taking ball where play was blown dead.

Blocking and Rushing

1. At least one of the blocker’s feet must be on the ground when contact is made. Flying blocks are not permitted. **15 Yards - LOS or POI whichever is more severe**
2. Offensive players may not hold in any manner. Offensive players may block with hands and extended arms, however, the use of hands is restricted to the body INSIDE the shoulders. **10 Yards - LOS**

Blocking and Rushing Continued

3. The use of hands by defensive players is restricted to the body and shoulders of the offensive players. **10 Yards - LOS**
4. A defensive player may not tackle, block, hold, or push out of bounds, the ball carrier in any manor to down him. Unintentional bumping may occur. This involves referee judgment on the play. A touchdown may be awarded if in the judgment of the referee a touchdown would have otherwise been made. **15 Yards - LOS or POI whichever is more severe**
5. The ball carrier may not deliberately try to run over the defensive man. This is a referee judgment call. **15 Yards - LOS**
6. The ball carrier may not hurdle or jump over any player at any time. **15 Yards - POI**
7. Stiff arming is illegal. Slapping or pushing the arm or hand of an opponent is interpreted as stiff arming as well as covering the flag with the hand. **15 Yards - POI**
8. No players on offense or defense are permitted to block or make deliberate contact with an opposing players head at anytime. Taller players should be taught to block opposing player's body. Defensive linemen are not allowed to jump over opposing players or **jump** through a gap in the offensive line. **'UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT' 15 Yards - LOS**
9. Blocking in the back is illegal. **15 Yards – POI**

Forward Pass

1. Only one forward pass may be thrown each down, but any number of lateral, or backward passes are permitted. **5 Yards - LOS**
2. Any player except the passer is eligible to receive the pass.
3. A forward pass may be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage.
4. Any contact, other than pulling the flag, with the quarterback while attempting to pass or after the pass will be ruled **"Roughing the Quarterback"**. This includes any contact made after the pass has been tipped or blocked. **15 Yards - LOS**
5. Spiking the ball is an incomplete forward pass.

Superbowl Overtime

In the event of a tie game after regulation time has expired, the overtime will begin with the flip of a coin. The ball will be placed at the 20 yard line and the team winning the coin toss will be given 4 downs to score a touchdown. The other team will be given 4 downs from the 20 yard line as well. An interception will be ruled as a dead ball and will result in a loss of possession. If no team has scored after their 4 downs, the game will end in a tie and both teams will receive trophies.

Conduct By Non-Players — Coaches and Fans

1. All coaches will have the right to ask questions about referees penalty calls and receive an answer without being assessed a penalty, as long as the conversation is civil and without profanity.

2. No coach shall act in an unsportsmanlike manner, before, during, or after a game.

‘UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT’ 15 Yards - LOS

Examples are, but not limited to:

- Using profanity, insulting language or gestures
- Attempting to influence a decision by an official
- Disrespectfully addressing an official
- Indicating objections to an official’s decision
- Use of a mechanical device to coach or attract attention
- Failure of team to be ready at start of game or half
- Be on field, except to assist an injured player, only when directed by a referee

3. All of above examples apply to the fans as well. It is the responsibility of the coach (and staff) to control the fans.

4. Unfair Acts:

- No player, coach or fan shall hinder play by an act which has no specific rule coverage
- No team shall repeatedly commit a foul on purpose
- No team shall commit any act, including verbal abuse, which in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game.

The penalty for any of the above “unfair acts” shall be at the sole discretion of the referee, including awarding score, or in the event of repeated fouls, the game may be forfeited.

Other General Rules

1. Teams will rotate down markers and chains at each halftime.

2. Coaches for 1st & 2nd Grade are allowed on field at all times. Coaches for 3rd & 4th Grade are allowed on field in pre-season game only. No other coaches are allowed on field during games.

3. All regular Season games (not pre-season) count toward Superbowl berth.

Grades 3rd & 4th (If 8 Teams)- Team with best overall record in each Conference go to Superbowl.

Grades 3rd & 4th (If 6 Teams)- Two teams with best overall record go to Superbowl. (No Conference)

Grades 5th - 6th - Two teams with best overall record go to Superbowl. (No Conference)

4. Tie Breakers between 2 Teams (to get into Superbowl)

Winner of their Head to Head Regular Season Game (If they played twice, point differential in H2H)

If still a tie, the team with the least amount of points scored against them for the Season goes.

If still a tie, have playoff game.

5. Tie Breakers between 3 or more Teams (to get into Superbowl)

Best Winning % in Games played against each other

If still a tie, the team with the least amount of points scored against them for the Season goes.
If still a tie, have playoff game.

In the event of a tie game after regulation time has expired in a playoff game, the sudden death overtime will begin with the flip of a coin. The ball will be placed at the 20 yard line and the team winning the coin toss will be given 4 downs to score a touchdown. If that team does not score the other team will be given 4 downs from the 20 yard line. An interception will be ruled as a dead ball and will result in a loss of possession. If no team has scored after their 4 downs, the team that won the coin toss will get the ball back and repeat the process until there is a winner.

Penalties

Variable Yard Loss Infractions

1. Pass Interference- Defensive team- Automatic first down **POI**

Loss of 5 Yards

1. Offside - **LOS**
2. Intentional grounding of pass (also loss of down) - **LOS**
3. Delay of game - **LOS**
4. Violation of punt rules - **LOS**
5. Illegal procedure - **LOS**
6. Illegal motion - (movement by offensive team before the ball is snapped) - **LOS**
7. Violation of sideline restrictions (coaches and non playing team members can not be on the field or in the end zone). Exception - 1st and 2nd grade games (and 3rd and 4th, Pre-Season Game) - **LOS**
8. Blocking Punt - **LOS**
9. Illegal substitutions - **LOS**
10. Illegal Formation (Offense not having 5 on Line) – **LOS (Dead ball foul)**
11. More than one forward pass per down - **LOS**
12. Encroachment - If Defensive man violates Neutral Zone - **LOS (Dead ball foul)**

Loss of 10 Yards

1. Holding and/or Illegal use of hands or arms - **LOS**
2. Offensive pass interference - **LOS**
3. Sleeper play - **LOS**
4. No Offensive Huddle - **LOS**

Loss of 15 Yards

1. Tackling - Referee may rule a touchdown if in his/her judgment the tackle prevented a touchdown - **POI** or **LOS** whichever is more severe.
2. Unnecessary roughness - **LOS**
3. Intentionally running into the ball carrier attempting to reach for flag. This is impeding the ball carriers progress - **POI**
4. Ball carrier intentionally running over defensive player - **LOS**
5. Guarding the flags - **POI**
6. Flying Blocks - **LOS** or **POI** whichever is more severe
7. Stiff Arming - **POI**
8. Roughing the quarterback. Any contact, other than pulling the flag, with the quarterback while attempting to pass or after the pass - **LOS**
9. Profane language (may result in disqualification) - **LOS**
10. Unsportsmanlike conduct (may result in disqualification) - **LOS**
11. Block in the Back - **POI**
12. Player not having starting position - **LOS**
13. Ball Carrier Diving or Lunging - **LOS**
14. Pulling flag from non-ball carrier - **LOS**

- 15. Blocking or hitting in head - **LOS**
- 16. Jumping over Players - **POI**
- 17. No Center Snap - **LOS**

LOS - - - - Line Of Scrimmage
POI - - - - Point of Infraction

Marking Off Penalties From Inside the 30 Yard Line

Never more than half the distance to goal