

City of Fort Collins Youth Flag Football Rules

Anything not covered in this rules document will default to the NFL Flag Rules Book.

Updated July 2025. Rules changes will appear in *highlighted italics font*.

5-on-5 Flag Football Overview

Flag football mirrors how pros train—passing, catching, and pulling flags instead of tackling. It uses real football positions, downs, yardage, and plays. All players should have opportunities to try various positions to gain a well-rounded understanding of the game.

Key skills include passing, catching, running with the ball, pulling flags, and defending. Coaches should introduce both zone and man-to-man defense. Adjust complexity to match your team's skill level.

1. Game Basics

- Coin toss decides possession.
- Offense starts at the 5-yard line, with 4 downs to reach midfield, then 4 downs to score.
- Screen blocking only—Offensive players must keep hands at their sides or behind their back; no physical contact allowed.
- No running starts/screens; similar to basketball screening.
- Teams switch sides after 18 minutes (2 halves of 18 minutes each).

2. Players

- Must have 5 players on the field at all times.

3. Timing

- 36-minute running clock.
- 2 timeouts per half, 30 seconds each.
- Teams have 30 seconds to snap the ball after the official spots it.
(K-1) divisions, teams are allowed 45 seconds to snap the ball
- No overtime; ties allowed.

4. Scoring

- Touchdown = 6 points
- Extra point:
 - 1 point (pass from 5-yard line)

- 2 points (run/pass from 12-yard line)
- Safety = 2 points

5. No Running Zones

- Located 5 yards from each end zone and midfield.
- The play must be a pass attempt (see “passing” section 7)
- No handoffs, pitches, or laterals
- Forward passes don’t have to cross the line of scrimmage

6. Running

- QB cannot run.
- One backward pass or pitch allowed per play
- No diving or hurdling
- Handoffs allowed behind the line
- Ball is marked where the flag is pulled

7. Passing

- All players are eligible receivers
- Shovel passes allowed
- Forward passes don’t have to cross the line of scrimmage
- Once a pass is caught beyond the line of scrimmage, no pitches or laterals are allowed (no hook & latter)

8. Dead Ball Situations

- Flag pulled, out of bounds, touchdowns, kneeling, flag falls off, or ball hits ground (no fumbles).

9. Interceptions

- Interceptions can be returned
- Extra point interceptions are dead

10. Rushing the QB

- Only players lined up at least 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage at the snap may rush the quarterback

- K-1 grade: no rushing allowed; QB has 7 seconds to throw.

11. Sportsmanship

- Unsportsmanlike behavior results in ejection
- No tackling, blocking, or cheap shots allowed

12. Penalties

a. Defensive Penalties

- Offside – 5-yard penalty and automatic first down
- Pass Interference – 10-yard penalty and automatic first down
- Illegal Contact – Includes holding, blocking, or making contact with the ball carrier. Results in a 10-yard penalty and automatic first down
- Illegal Flag Pull – Pulling the flag of a receiver before they have possession of the ball. Results in a 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and an automatic first down
- Illegal Rush – Rushing from inside the 7-yard marker before the snap. 5-yard penalty and automatic first down

b. Offensive Penalties

- Illegal Motion – More than one player moving at the snap or a false start. 5-yard penalty and loss of down
- Illegal Forward Pass – Throwing a forward pass after crossing the line of scrimmage. 5-yard penalty and loss of down
- Offensive Pass Interference – Includes illegal picks or pushing off defenders. 10-yard penalty and loss of down
- Delay of Game – Failing to snap the ball within 30 seconds. 5-yard penalty and loss of down. (Clock stops until the next snap in the second half)
- Flag Guarding – Using hands, arms, or tying the flag to prevent a defender from pulling it. 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down
- Illegal Screen Block – Making illegal contact while attempting a screen. 10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down
- Illegal Pitch – More than one backward/lateral pass per play. 5-yard penalty and loss of down

Other Regulations

- Referees determine incidental contact

- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless declined

Attire

- Cleats allowed (no metal)
- Mouthguards optional.
- Official jerseys required

Mercy Rule

- If up by 25+, the leading team cannot rush the QB

Tournaments

- No Middle School tournaments as of Fall 2025

Grade Modifications

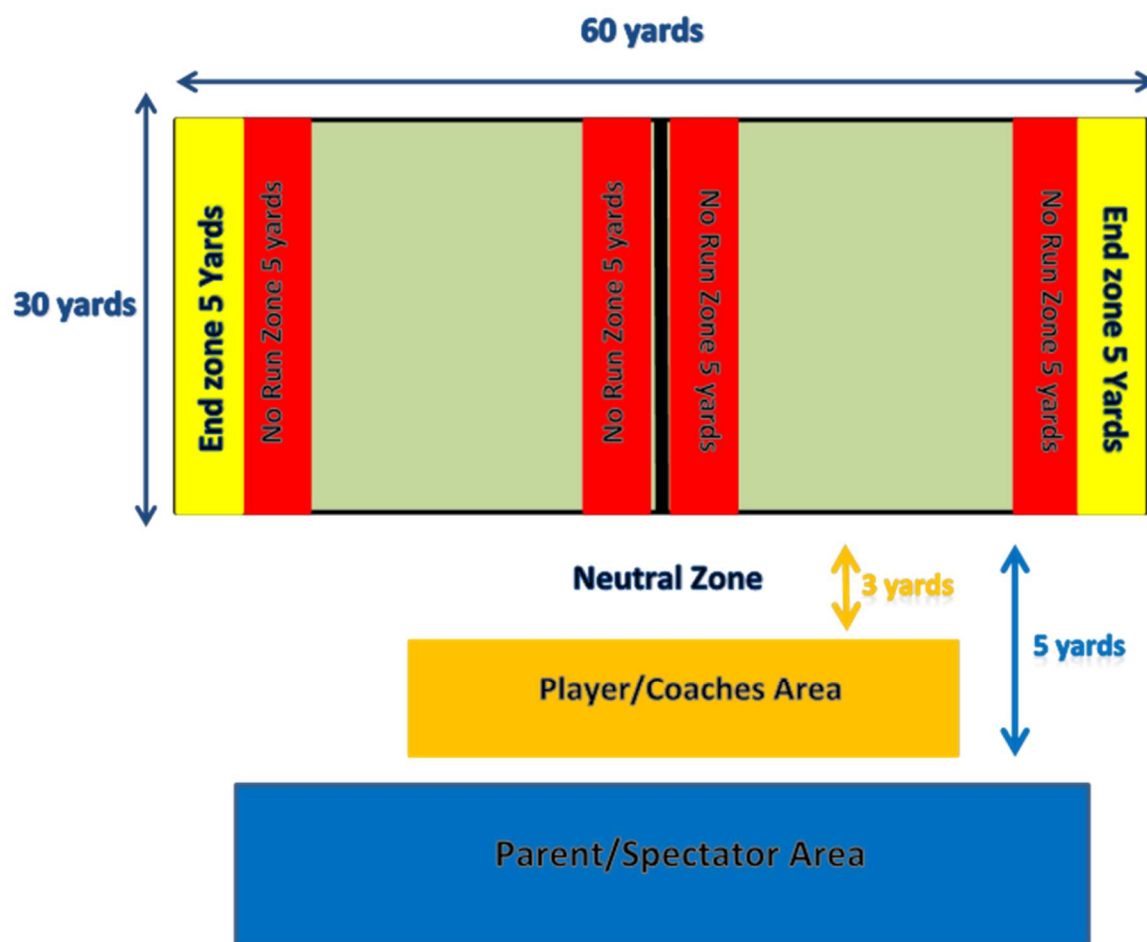
Grades K–3

- One coach allowed in offensive/defense huddle
- Pee Wee football size

Grades 4–8

- Coaches stay on sidelines
- Football sizes:
 - 4th–5th: TDJ
 - 6th–8th: TDY

Flag Football Field



Field Dimensions and Zones – 5-on-5 Flag Football

1. Overall Field Size
 - Length: 60 yards
 - Width: 30 yards
2. End Zones
 - Each end zone: 5 yards deep × 30 yards wide
 - Located at both ends of the field
3. No Running Zones
 - There are four No Running Zones (5 yards each):

- One before each end zone
- Two on either side of midfield (center line)
- These zones are 5 yards long and stretch across the full width of the field

4. Sideline Zones

- Neutral Zone (Buffer):
 - Begins 5 yards off each sideline
 - Must remain clear — no players, coaches, or spectators allowed
- Player/Coach Area:
 - Starts 5 yards off the sideline
 - Reserved for rostered players and coaches only
- Spectator/Parent Area:
 - Begins 5 yards behind the Player/Coach Area
 - For parents, guardians, and all non-participants