



FLAG

SARATOGA

NFL FLAG

FOOTBALL

LEAGUE RULES





I. Team Selection

- a. All registered players must attend a pre-season player evaluation session to ensure fairness and promote a positive competitive gameplay.
- b. Family members from the same household will be placed on the same team, unless a parent or guardian specifically requests the players be separated.
- c. Requests for team changes for non-family members may be considered, but are subject to the discretion of the Board of Directors.
- d. All coaches will have their children assigned to their team; however, a team may lose or gain draft position based on their child's evaluation and/or draft ranking.

II. Team Structure

- a. All registered players will be placed in a division based upon grade level.

Divisions	No. of Players	On Field
Pre-K - K	7 – 9	6 vs 6
1 – 2	9 – 12	6 vs 6
3 – 4	9 – 12	6 vs 6
5 – 6	9 – 12	6 vs 6
7 – 9	7 – 9	6 vs 6

- b. Requests for play-ups or play-downs are subject to the discretion of the Board of Directors.

III. Coaches and Referees Selection

- a. Teams shall have one (1) Head Coach and one (1) Assistant Coach, unless special approval is granted by the Board of Directors.
 - i. Teams may have additional volunteers, as needed.
 - ii. Pre-K – K teams may be permitted one (1) additional Assistant Coach.
 - iii. One of the Coaches must be present for all official team activities.
- b. A coach may only serve as Head Coach of one team, unless otherwise authorized by the Board of Directors.
- c. Head and Assistant Coaches may be permitted to volunteer for a team in another division; however, they are discouraged from doing so, unless there is a resource constraint.
- d. The Board shall annually assign Head and Assistant Coaches to specific teams
- e. Head and Assistant Coaches shall attend all applicable pre-season player assessments.

IV. Field

- a. The field dimensions are 35 yards by 50 yards with two 8-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain.
- b. Play begins at the 10-yard line at the beginning of each game and the start of each second half.
- c. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

V. Timing and Overtime

- a. Games are 50 minutes in duration, played in two 25 minutes halves.
- b. Halftime is 5 minutes.

- c. Halves are played with a running clock except in the last 2 minutes of each half where the clock stops at the end of the play entering into the final 2 minutes (i.e., a two-minute warning) and on any dead ball, excluding fumbles.
- d. Each team has two (2) timeouts per game. Timeouts may be used at any time.
- e. There are no forfeits. All games which have commenced will be played to full duration.
- f. The game clock runs continuously except:
 - i. A team calls a timeout.
 - 1. The clock will resume when the ball is snapped on the next play.
 - ii. When an injured player requires assistance on the field.
 - 1. The clock resumes when the injured player leaves the field.
 - iii. A team receives a delay of game penalty or the offensive team takes longer than 30 seconds in the huddle.
 - 1. The clock will resume when the ball is snapped on the next play
 - iv. Inside of the final two (2) minutes of each half, the clock is stopped for all of the reasons listed above as well as:
 - 1. On any change of possession, including:
 - a. Scoring a Touchdown
 - i. When a team scores a touchdown, the clock stops and remains stopped for the extra point attempt. The clock resumes on the first snap of the next drive.
 - b. Safety
 - i. The clock resumes on the first snap of the next drive.
 - c. Turnover on Downs
 - i. The game clock will stop on the whistle. The clock resumes on the first snap of the next drive.
 - d. Incomplete Pass
 - i. Clock resumes on the next snap.
 - e. When a player runs out of bounds
 - i. Clock resumes on the next snap.
 - f. When a penalty is called.
 - i. Clock resumes on the next snap.

- g. When the QB intentionally spikes the ball
 - i. must be immediate (does not satisfy the throw requirement).
 - ii. Clock resumes on the next snap.

g. Overtime

- i. If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, the following overtime rules will apply.
 - 1. A coin toss will determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first.
 - 2. Each team will take turns getting one (1) play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts, the team that started on defense gets at least one attempt on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.

VI. **Scoring**

- a. Touchdown: 6 points
- b. PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point from the 5-yard line or 2 points from the 10-yard line.
 - i. interceptions made on a PAT attempt may be returned
 - ii. the points awarded for a return are the same as the PAT attempt
- c. Safety: 2 points
- d. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 10-yard line).

VII. **Gameplay: First Downs, Field Position**

- a. A single first down is marked at midfield (25-yard line). Teams have 4 downs to gain a first down. If the offense gets a first down, the offense has 4 additional downs to score a touchdown.
- b. A turnover on downs will result in the defensive team starting on their own 10-yard line. There are no punts.

- c. The ball may be advanced on an interception.
 - i. If the player advances the ball beyond midfield but fails to score a touchdown, the defensive team will gain possession at midfield.
 - ii. If the player does not advance the ball beyond midfield, possession begins at the 10-yard line.
- d. On a fumble the ball is placed at the spot of the fumble. The ball cannot be advanced on a fumble.
 - i. If a player fumbles in their own end zone, it's a Safety.

VIII. **Gameplay**

a. Offense

- i. All offensive players must break the huddle to be considered eligible for the next play.
 - ii. No Offensive Linemen will be used except for the Center snapping the ball.
 - 1. In the PreK-K Division, there are no snaps. The QB will begin with the ball at the line of scrimmage (LOS) or in a shotgun formation.
 - a. The QB must begin play in the middle of the field with the ball held clearly in front of the body and visible to the defense.
 - iii. All players must start in a 2-point stance (no 3- or 4-point stances are allowed).
- iv. Blocking
- 1. All offensive players may block defensive players throughout the play. All blocking must be open hand, above the waist and to the shoulders/chest area.
 - a. Exception: the defensive player(s) at the rush cone cannot be blocked if they are rushing the quarterback
- v. The QB must use a cadence audible to all on the field.
- vi. Play begins when the Center snaps the ball to the QB or (Pre-K-K Division) the QB makes a football move.
 - 1. The Center must be facing forward with a hand on the ball when it is snapped.

vii. Motion

1. Only one offensive player may be in motion during a single play. All other players must remain set until the ball is snapped or the QB makes a football moved.
- viii. Minimum Passing Requirements
1. Pre-K-K & 1-2 Divisions must pass the ball a minimum of 1 of every 4 downs
 2. 3-4 & 4-5 Divisions must pass the ball a minimum of 2 of every 4 downs
 3. A violation of this rules results in a replay of the down
- ix. To satisfy the throw requirement, the offensive player must actually attempt a pass. A sack of the QB is not considered a pass or run.
1. Any overhand forward pass outside of the tackle box or across the line of scrimmage whether complete or incomplete satisfies the throw requirement. The offensive player may throw the ball out of bounds to satisfy the throw requirement.
- x. If the offense and defense both catch the ball simultaneously, possession goes to the offense at the spot of the catch.
- xi. One foot in bounds is required for a completion
- xii. No single player can rush/run the ball on two consecutive plays.
1. The penalty is a loss of down, if accepted, at the original line of scrimmage.
- xiii. A player is down or the play stops on the following:
1. If any offensive player drops or loses the ball during a play (there are no fumbles)
 - a. In the Pre-K-K Division a team suffers a loss of down after two missed hand-off attempts.
 - b. In all other divisions a dropped handoff constitutes a loss of down.
 2. An incomplete forward pass
 3. A defensive player pulls the ball carrier's flag
 4. The offensive ball carrier falls down
 5. The ball carrier steps on or over the out of bounds.
- xiv. When de-flagged, a player is marked down where the flag is pulled (not the position of the ball). There is no forward progress granted after being de-flagged.
1. Exception: if the ball breaks the plane of the goal line before the flag is pulled the player is awarded a touchdown.
- xv. If a player's flag falls off without being touched, play continues until touched with at least one hand by a defensive player.

- xvi. On negative yardage situations, the ball is placed at the spot of the “tackle”.
The ball is not returned to the original line of scrimmage
 - 1. this can be modified at the K-1 level depending on game situation.
- xvii. Ball carriers may use spin moves to avoid their flag being pulled but may NOT flag guard, stiff arm, or leap over defenders to avoid de-flagging.
 - 1. There is also no diving allowed
- xviii. Offensive players must attempt to avoid contact with a defensive player that has established position.
 - 1. Running through or over a defensive player will result in the stoppage of play at the point of contact.
- xix. Offensive players may lateral the ball at any time during an offensive play.
The ball can be thrown overhand if the receiver was behind the passer and the line of scrimmage.

b. Defense

- i. The defense must be a minimum of 3 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
- ii. The defensive player must hold up the flag of a de-flagged offensive player and wait for a coach or referee to retrieve it for ball placement.
- iii. Blitz Cone
 - 1. A blitz cone will be placed 8 yards from the line of scrimmage and will be reset by the referee after each play.
 - a. Defensive players that leave their position and move inside the 8-yard blitz cone and rush the QB will be called for a penalty.
 - 2. One or more players lined up behind the 8-yard blitz cone at the time of the snap may rush the Quarterback.
 - a. No stunting is allowed
 - b. No offensive player may block the defensive player rushing the QB (when a handoff does not occur)
 - 3. Defensive player(s) that start at the “rush cone” can only be blocked if the offensive play is a running play. If the play results in a pass and the blitzers are blocked, it’s considered rusher interference.
 - a. Defense may choose to decline the penalty or replay the down
 - b. This only applies to rushes that start at the blitz cone.
- iv. The defensive backs may cross the line of scrimmage outside the tackle box after the ball is snapped as long as they do not go in the direction of the QB.
- v. If the QB fakes a hand off the defensive backs cannot continue to rush in and must drop back into coverage.

- vi. All defensive players may drop back into coverage.
- vii. Defensive players rushing the QB may block a forward pass, but cannot make contact with the arm of the QB (hitting the arm or knocking down the QB will result in a roughness penalty a replayed down).
- viii. All defensive players may cross the line of scrimmage once the ball has been handed off or the ball leaves the QB's hands.
- ix. There is no tackling. Defensive players may not forcefully contact an offensive player with open hands, shoulders or their head in an attempt to force them out of bounds or knock them to the ground. They may not wrap up a player from behind and drag them to the ground.

IX. Officials

- a. The League will use paid officials to referee games; however, Pre-K – K teams will generally use student volunteers as referees.

X. Uniform & Required Equipment:

- a. The league provides a reversible NFL Jersey and shorts with each registration.
- b. The league provides flags for all practices and games.
- c. All jerseys must remain tucked in at all times.
- d. Sneakers or plastic/rubber cleats (preferred) as footwear
- e. A mouthguard is required at all practices and games
- f. No hard protective gear of any kind may be worn.
- g. Hats and other head coverings are prohibited.
- h. No jewelry of any kind may be worn.
- i. Athletes may wear soft padding at the League discretion. All items should be cleared with coaches before practice/games.

XI. Penalties

- a. Coaches are not permitted to interact with the student referees to question, influence, guide, or dispute any calls. An adult supervisor or adult referee will be available to handle these questions or challenges. The coach may explain their position to the supervisor and request that the supervisor discuss the call with the referees and render a decision. A coach will be given one warning if they display negative behavior toward a referee. A second incident will result in removal from the game and the premises.

- b. If an inadvertent whistle is blown the offensive team may choose to take the ball at the spot of the whistle and play the next down, or redo the down from the original line of scrimmage.
- c. In the case of offsetting penalties, the play will be redone from the original LOS
- d. False Start or Illegal Motion- Replay down
- e. Offsides on Defense - Replay Down or Decline Penalty and Keep Down
- f. Offensive Holding/Illegal Block (Incidental) - If the holding or illegal block affects the outcome of the play the defense can opt to redo the play from the original line of scrimmage.
 - i. Any flagrant acts will be considered Unnecessary Roughness.
- g. Defensive Holding/Illegal Block (Incidental) - If the holding or block affects the outcome of the play the offense can opt to redo the play from the original line of scrimmage.
 - i. Any flagrant acts will be considered Unnecessary Roughness.
- h. Minimum Pass Rule - If a team fails to make the minimum pass requirement in 4 downs, the offensive team must replay the down. The defense may decline the penalty and take the resulting play or turnover on downs.
- i. Run the Same Player Rule - If a team runs the same player on two consecutive downs the defense can take the play as is or it will be considered a loss of down and the ball will be placed at the original line of scrimmage.
 - 1. Note: for the purposes of this rule, if a pitch or lateral occurs within a play, the last player with the ball is deemed the runner. A player is deemed the runner if they receive a pitch or handoff from the QB, or subsequent lateral, and does not throw the ball.
- j. Flag Guarding - Ball will be marked down at the spot of the flag guarding. If done multiple times by the same player it may be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and considered for a loss of down.
- k. Defensive Pass Interference - Ball will be placed at the spot of the foul. Replay the down from that point.

- i. If the penalty is occurs in the endzone, replay the down from the 1-yard line (unless the original LOS is between the 1-yard line and endzone in which case replay the down from the original LOS).
 - 1. The same rules apply on a PAT attempt.
- l. Offensive Pass Interference - Defense may take the play as is or force the offense to redo play from original LOS.
- m. Intentional Pre-Mature Flag Pulling- If a defender pulls the flag of an intended receiver before the ball is caught by the offense, a spot foul will be assessed and an automatic first down will be awarded to the offense.
- n. If a penalty occurs on the return team during an interception return, the ball will be placed on the side of the field (10-yard line or midfield) where the interception first occurred.
- o. Delay of Game - A 60 second play clock is always in effect. If a team delays beyond a minute, the clock stops, and they will be assessed a loss of down
- p. Unnecessary Roughness/Unsportsmanlike Conduct
 - i. If a player is flagged for "roughness" that is not deemed as flagrant by a referee, the resulting penalty will be:
 - 1. Defensive Offender - The offense will replay the current down from the spot where the play ended (If it was second down before the penalty, it remains second down).
 - 2. Offensive Offender - The offense will incur a loss of down and start from the original line of scrimmage. If the penalty occurs on 4th down, the result will be a turnover on downs.
 - 3. Examples of "roughness" include but are not limited to:
 - a. Forcing a player out of bounds on the sideline (except when it is the natural motion of the play or the result of an entanglement with players near the sideline).
 - b. Tackling a player rather than attempting to pull a flag
 - c. Offense running over a player with no attempt to avoid contact.
 - d. Blocking a player in the open field without open hands to the chest.
 - e. Hitting the QB's arm when attempting a pass.

4. Roughness penalties are clear rule infractions, but they occur in natural state of gameplay without a severity that creates an immediate concern of injury.
- ii. If the referee DOES decide that the play is flagrant
 1. The penalties above will be still enforced and the offending player will be removed from the game for 5 minutes.
 2. The flagrant decision is made by the referee alone and shall not be contested by either coach. Please keep in mind that this decision about flagrant/not flagrant is about the severity of the foul, not the intent of the athlete. If the excessive nature of the play creates the obvious potential for injury, flagrancy will be assessed. Examples of “flagrant” conduct include but are not limited to:
 - a. Pushing or driving a player out of bounds several yards.
 - b. Tackling a player and falling on them driving them into the ground
 - c. Running full speed into a defensive player, lowering the shoulder to drive them back or down.
 - d. Extending your arms on an open field block to knock a player to the ground rather than shielding them with open hands.
 - e. Knocking a QB to the ground in the act of throwing rather than attempting to de-flag or block the pass.
- iii. Beyond a flagrant call, if the behavior is deemed intentional or malicious, or the same player is flagged twice in a game for a flagrant offense above, the player will be removed for the entire game.
 1. The board will meet on each of these situations to determine if further suspension is warranted.
- iv. Acts of this nature which are considered unsportsmanlike include things like intentionally stepping on a player while down, grabbing a player by the neck, picking up and throwing down to the ground, punching a player after the play. They are egregious or repetitive offenses.
- v. In addition to the physical actions indicated above athletes that engage in serious verbal infractions are subject to a penalty and discipline in a similar manner. These may include:
 1. Taunting or other form of disrespect to a teammate or opposing player
 2. Arguing or swearing at another player, coach or referee
 3. Throwing any object in frustration.

- q. Players are not allowed to participate in any excessive or formal/organized touchdown celebrations (this does not include clapping hands, cheering or congratulating the scoring player).
 - i. Any player or team that does so will result in the opposing team starting at midfield rather than the 10-yard line.

- r. If a coach feels the game is going in a direction that is unacceptable they are asked to call an official's timeout and ask for the board member on duty. That member will come to the field and help officiate or deescalate the situation. The referees can do this and either coach can do this.