

SSSAAE – Intermediate Flag Football Rules Package

Gameplay Principles

The most important principle of the rules is to avoid any significant and impactful contact.

The first important aspect of this principle is to make the flags an easy target. The runner is restricted from using anything other than legal flags and legal tactics (e.g. spinning) to restrict an opponent's access to their flags. In return the flag puller must take all reasonable steps to minimize contact during the act of removing the flag from an opponent.

The second important aspect of this principle is Right of Place (RoP) and Right of Way (RoW), which determine who is charged with avoiding contact. As a rule, priority is given to the offense up to the point before the ball is passed or handed off and to the defense thereafter. However, these rights must not be abused to provoke contact. Intentionally contacting an opponent, even with RoW priority, will be penalized. Ball carrier must try to avoid defenders. Defenders cannot jump in front of a ball carrier and declare RoP. RoP can be clearly defined at the snap or if a position is taken with regard to an opponent that clearly gives the ball carrier enough time to avoid the defender.

Positioning Principles

Right of Place (RoP) and Right of Way (RoW), as defined earlier, offer an excellent starting point for understanding the interaction between offensive and defensive players on the football field. Here is the order of RoP and various Rights of way.

1. Right of place
2. Right of way of Rusher to the Quarterback
3. Right of way of receivers
4. Right of way

Players Equipment

1. Cleats are allowed but must be rubber. Metal spikes of any kind are not permitted.
2. Players must wear team provided uniforms – NO EXCEPTIONS
3. Shorts or pants cannot be the same color as the players flags (Yellow).
4. Shorts or pants cannot have open pockets.
5. Ensure if pockets, that they are taped – NOT ENCOURAGED
6. Before the beginning of every play, players flags must be on hips and be properly tucked into their bottoms with at least half an inch of white showing.



7. Baseball caps, sunglasses and jewelry of any kind are not permitted on the field of play.
8. All player shirts must be tucked in while on the field of play. Untucked shirts block flags
9. If a player has a cast, he/she MUST cover it with soft padding to protect all players on the field, including themselves.

General Play

1. There are no kickoffs or punts.
2. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has 3 plays to attain a first down by moving ten yards. This will repeat if the offensive continues to progress down the field, score, or is stopped by the defence. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line.
3. The team on offense has 25 seconds to put the ball in play and teams will be notified verbally when there are 10 seconds left. The officials will give a reasonable period of time for both teams to regroup and will then whistle the 25 seconds period to start. If the ball is not put in play before the end of the 25 seconds, the offense will receive a penalty for a delay of game violation.
4. To begin a play, the ball must be snapped by the offensive Center, from the point of scrimmage to the quarterback, which is the first person on the offense to obtain possession of the ball behind the line of scrimmage. There is no minimal distance required by the quarterback who can be either up close to the center or in shot-gun formation.
5. QB must use a cadence, no silent count permitted.
6. There is a 1-yard neutral zone extending 1 yard forward from the Line of Scrimmage that the defensive players cannot line up in or enter before the snap of the ball.
7. An automatic first down by penalty will overrule the other requirements regarding 3 plays to make either a first down or score.
8. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
9. All possession changes, except interceptions from scrimmage play, start on the offensive 5-yard line. Defensive interceptions that give the defense possession between their own 1- and 4-yard line will be brought to the 5-yard line for the start of their next possession.
10. If an offensive penalty past midfield occurs, which takes the next down behind midfield marker, the offensive team must still make a touchdown in 3 plays.



11. "No Run Zones" are located 5-yards in front of each end zone. When the offense starts a play within this zone, the play must result in a legal forward pass.
12. The quarterback, defined as the player that gains possession of the ball from the Center, cannot run with the ball past the line of scrimmage, unless the ball has been handed off, tossed, pitched or lateraled to another player and then returned.
13. If a quarterback is sacked behind the line of scrimmage, it is a loss of down.
14. Once the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage the ball cannot be handed off, tossed, pitched or passed forward in any way.
15. Forward passes/pitches/handoffs are allowed behind the line of scrimmage. However, once received the offense can no longer make another pass/pitch/handoff to another offensive player.
16. Spinning and dipping is allowed, but the ball carrier cannot dive forward or jump to avoid a defensive player or gain yardage (no diving).
17. Legal Forward Pass – A ball thrown that originated from behind the Line of Scrimmage and is thrown towards the opponent's endzone.
18. To start the second half, either the team that lost the opening coin toss or the team that deferred their choice to the second half will have the option to start with the ball or choose a side to begin play.
19. Prior to a forward pass or handoff, an offense may use multiple backwards behind the line of scrimmage.
20. The game time can be altered based on the skill level of the athletes, number of participants and size of the playing surface.
21. If an offensive penalty in the "No Run Zone" occurs that takes the team outside the "No Run Zone", then the team still cannot run.
22. Only one running play (direct hand off) are allowed within every 3 plays.
23. **A play action or play fake is not considered a run play (updated 2019)**
24. **A running play is defined as any action where a player on offense runs over the line of scrimmage as the ball carrier (updated 2020)**
25. Extra point: 1-point (from midpoint of 5-yard line) or 2-points (Played from midpoint of 10-yard line only). Pass plays only.



Scoring

1. Touchdown – 6 points
2. Extra point(s) – 1 point (played from 5-yard line - **Must be a PASSING PLAY** - a play-action fake or backwards toss is considered a running play and will result in a dead ball and a loss of down)
3. Extra points(s) – 2-point convert (player from 10-yard line – can be a pass or run)
4. Interception on Convert – an interception on a convert that is returned to opponents end zone will count as 2 points.
5. Safety – 2 points – results in change of possession and scoring team takes over the ball at their opening line of scrimmage.

Touch Downs

1. A touchdown is scored when a player has legal possession of the ball in the opponent's end zone.
2. The ball is considered to be in the end zone when the center of the ball carrier's hips is on or over the ground in the end zone, or when they are across the extended plane of the goal line.
3. When the ball is in the end zone, it is considered to be still in the end zone until the center of the ball carrier's hips are entirely out of the end zone into the field of play.
4. The team scoring the most points during regulation time is declared the winner. If the teams are tied after regulation time and a winner must be declared (in playoffs only), the team scoring the most points during overtime is declared the winner.

Overtime

1. **Only in Playoffs** - In the event of a tied, overtime will be played. The period between the end of the game and the start of the overtime halves will be 2 minutes. A coin toss determines first possession of overtime. There will be no time outs granted during the overtime period.

Running

1. At the start of each play, the ball must be snapped between the legs of the center.
2. The center is the player who gives the ball to the quarterback via a snap. The center cannot take a direct handoff back from the quarterback (no center sneak play)
3. The quarterback is the player who first receives the ball directly from the snap.
4. The quarterback cannot run the ball past the line of scrimmage.



5. An offense may use multiple handoffs behind the line of scrimmage. Only backward or lateral handoffs are allowed during a down.
6. Tosses or sweeps behind the line of scrimmage are allowed, as are running plays.
7. Downfield tosses (once the ball passes the line of scrimmage) are not permitted. Once a player has possession of the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, any loss of possession (i.e. fumble) will be blown dead by the official
8. "No running zones" are located 5 yards from each end zone. When the ball is on or inside the 5-yard line going towards the opponent's end zone, the offense cannot use a running play to cross the line of scrimmage. A play-action fake or lateral/backwards toss is considered a hand-off within the 5-yard no run zones. If a run or play-action fake or lateral/backwards toss occurs within the five yard no run zone, the play will be blown dead, a loss of down will occur and the ball spotted at the original line of scrimmage.
9. Any player who takes a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
10. Spinning is allowed, but offensive players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player. If a player leaves their feet, the play will be blown dead by the official and the ball will be placed from the spot the player left his/her feet or will result in a turnover on downs (if on 3rd down)
11. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's hips are when the flag is pulled, not at the spot of the ball.
12. It is up to the ball carrier to avoid contact with the defender. Good defensive position will be rewarded to the defense by the officials.
13. If the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage and laterals the ball, or throws the ball forward, the play is blown dead, and the ball is spotted at the point of the lateral or forward pass.
14. There are **no** fumbles in flag football. Any fumble will be considered a dead ball and will result in a the subsequent down or a turnover on downs.
15. Any fumble by the offensive team in their own end-zone will result in a safety.

Dead Balls

1. Play is ruled "dead" when:
2. Official blows/sounds the whistle.
3. Ball carrier's flag is pulled or becomes illegal.
Note: "Illegal," meaning the flag is in a position unable for the defense to pull, i.e. falls off
4. Ball carrier steps out of bounds, jumps or leaves feet.
5. Touchdown or safety is scored.
6. When any part of the ball carrier's body, other than a hand or foot, touches the ground.



7. When the ball is fumbled.

Note: There are no fumbles. The ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's feet were when the fumble was made. If a fumble occurs, it will result in a loss of down or a turnover on downs. If a fumble occurs in the end zone it will result in a safety. A fumble in the endzone resulting in a safety will only occur when a player other than the centre has possession of the ball.

Example 1: Bad snap results in loss of down and re-spotted at original line of scrimmage.

Example 2: Good snap and QB drops ball while in possession of the ball or a dropped hand off or toss. This play results in a safety.

8. If the ball carrier's flag falls off, the play will be whistled dead and the ball will be spotted at the spot where the flag fell off.

Defensive Rushing

1. Only one rusher is permitted and must start from one yard on either side of the bean bag.
2. Only players starting from a minimum of 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage can rush the passer.
3. A bean bag designates the seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
4. Any number of players may rush the quarterback upon a run play of play action pass.
5. No additional rusher can rush the quarterback on the snap of the ball unless there is play action or a run play.
6. A rusher lined up **within** two yards (1 yard on either side of the bag) of the 10-yard marker is entitled to a free rush at the quarterback – the rusher may not be interfered. If interfered, it will result in an offensive rusher interference penalty.
7. A rusher cannot be directly over top of the bag. He/she must designate the side that they wish to rush from. Once they have chosen the side, they are NOT allowed to switch (players cannot switch last minute before the snap. The center is expected to get out of the way; therefore, the rusher must choose either side of the bag prior to snap)
8. ONLY one rusher is entitled a free rush at the quarterback.
9. ONLY one rusher is allowed to be within two yards of the bean bag.
10. A rusher lined up **outside** the two yards (side to side) of the 10-yard marker is **not** entitled to a free rush to the quarterback and may be interfered. (For example - a running back or receiver in motion or in a pattern who runs into the rusher)
11. All defensive players are eligible to rush once the ball has been handed off or tosses, or there is a play-action fake or toss.



12. A rusher **may not** hit the quarterback's arm or any other part of their body while the quarterback is throwing.
13. **IMPORTANT** – Rushers must be UNDER CONTROL.
14. A rusher must have his/her entire body behind the bean bag before the snap.

Interceptions

1. The defense can return interceptions.
2. Interceptions change the possession of the ball.
3. If an interception occurs in an end-zone, the ball will become dead and will result in the ball belonging to the intercepting team on their 5-yard line.
4. If an interception occurs in the end zone and the ball carrier leaves the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead.
5. If the ball carrier intercepts in the end zone, subsequently leaves the end zone, then returns to the end zone and is de-flagged, or the ball is ruled dead, the result will be a safety for the other team.
6. Interceptions that give the defense possession between their own 1 yard and 4-yard line will be brought to the 5-yard line to start possession.
7. After an interception occurs in any location on the field, the intercepting team can return the ball for yardage, wherever the intercepting team is downed, that team will gain possession where the yardage is gained. Example – if the interception happens on the defensive teams 10-yard line and they are downed at the 20-yard line. The intercepting team

Diving/Jumping Situations

1. Rushing:
 - Rusher can jump to block pass (as long as it is straight up and down)
2. Receiver:
 - Receiver can jump to catch the ball and land and continue to run.
 - Receiver can lay out for ball **ONLY** if player is not going into a crowd.
 - NO diving into a crowd to catch the ball.
 - This play **COULD** result in roughing penalty.
3. Ball Carrier:
 - NO jumping
 - NO diving
 - Ball is spotted where the players hips are, not the ball. There is no need to dive.
4. Tackling:
 - Can lay out to make athletic move to pull the flag.
 - Diving into a player is a roughing penalty.

The spirit of the rules for diving and jumping is to promote safety while not penalizing athletic play. Safety comes first.



Penalties

1. All penalties may be declined - the official should check with the coach or captain after each penalty to determine if they accept or decline the penalty.
2. Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage except for flag guarding and defensive diving.
4. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.
5. If the offense and defense are both penalized with two penalties that are of the same distance (i.e. 5 yard and 5 yards), the down will be repeated
6. If the offense and defense are both penalized, but one side is penalized with a 15-yard penalty, the difference between the penalties will be assessed, and the down will be repeated.

Defensive Penalties

5 Yards & Down Repeated

1. Any penalty by the defense from the 5-yard line or closer, the ball is spotted at the 1-yard line and the down is repeated
2. Disconcerting signals – Signals to distract opponents or simulate offensive signals prior to the snap.
3. Illegal contact with the QB / roughing the passer.
4. Pass interference: **Note:** Along with the standard rules for pass interference, if a defensive player pulls the flag of an offensive receiver just as the receiver is about to make a catch, the defensive player will be penalized for pass interference.
5. Interference with ball at the snap
6. Illegal contact – holding, jamming, stripping of ball etc.
7. Offside – occurs when a player is passed the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball.
8. Illegal Rush - occurs when a rusher is passed the minimum 10-yard rushing length before the ball is snapped when attempting to rush the quarterback.
9. The rusher must pass the line of scrimmage to be considered an illegal rush.
10. Illegal Flag Pull – Defending players cannot pull flag prior to receiver catching the ball.
11. Illegal flag pull penalty will only be applicable if the ball is caught. Since the offensive player is unable to continue play without both flags, the point of foul will be where the offensive player caught the ball.
12. Play will be marked 5 yards up from point of catch.
13. Should the pass be incomplete, there will be no infraction on the play, as the illegal flag pull did not affect the outcome of the play.



14. If the same players continue to pull the flag early (ie. Illegally), this player will be penalized with unsportsmanlike conduct as it is harming the nature of the game.

15 Yards & Automatic 1st Down

15. Unsportsmanlike conduct – intentional physical conduct, verbal abuse, player ejected.

LAST MAN RULE:

16. If a player is on the verge of scoring and there is one player left to prevent the touchdown, he needs to make an attempt to grab the flags. If he tackles, trips, or pushes the player out of bounds, and the penalty happens outside the 20-yard line (mid field), the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line. If the penalty happens at/or within the 20-yard line (mid field), the ball will be spotted at 1 yard line. This is an automatic first down. Referee Discretion: If a player hits or tackles a player at the goal line to prevent a touchdown, the defense will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty (assessed on the ensuing possession). A repeat offense during the same game or during the season, may result in an automatic ejection and be reviewed by the board for possible suspension.

Offensive Penalties

1. Any offensive penalty that occurs on the 40-yard line is a loss of down, no yardage lost **5 Yards & Down Repeated**
2. Any procedure penalty against the offense must be blown dead and the play does not happen.
3. Flag guarding – using hands, arms or elbows to intentionally block the defender from pulling the flag.
4. Stiff arming a defender is a form of flag guarding and may also result in a roughing penalty. This is a **SPOT FOUL**
5. Delay of game – inability to snap the ball before the 25 second play clock expires.
6. False Start / Offsides
7. Illegal Snap – snap must occur between the legs of the snapper to the quarterback.
8. Player out of bounds – if a player goes out of bounds, without interference, the player may not return to the field or catch the ball.
9. Interference on the rusher
10. it is illegal for a receiver, running back or center to run a pattern that interferes with the designated rusher who is at minimum of 10-yards from the line of scrimmage and who is two yards (side to side) of the 10- yard rushing marker.



11. Receiver may cross the face of the rusher but may **NOT** impede the rusher.
12. Illegal run play (calling a second running play within a set of 3 plays).
13. Illegal Pick/Illegal contact (Offensive P.I.)– holding, jamming etc.
14. it is up to the offensive players without the ball to get out of the way. No blocking/pick plays allowed in flag football.
15. Roughing – it is up to the ball carrier to avoid contact with the defender. Good defensive position will be rewarded to the defense by the officials.
16. No cadence by quarterback

15 Yards & Loss of Down

17. Unsportsmanlike conduct – intentional physical conduct, verbal abuse, player ejected.

