

**Small School Athletic Federation (SSAF)**  
Technical Guidelines  
***Elementary and High School Open Flag Football***

Revised May 27/09

**General Rules**

- (1) Each game will consist of 2 x 12 minute halves, run time with a 2-minute half time. The time will be stopped for a declared timeout. Each team will be allowed a one-minute time out in the last two minutes of the game. The head referee will keep the official time for the game. Officials will warn the teams when there are 2 minutes left to play in the second half. This is for round robin play and playoff rounds. Teams will change ends after half time. A coin toss will determine first possession. The winner of the coin toss will choose who gets first possession.
- (2) The tournament will be played on a rectangular field. Each end zone will be 10 yards deep, and no-running zones must be marked 10 yards from each end zone. Each team will start with the ball on its own 20-yard line to start the half, or after the opposing team scores. There is no punting. Each team will have 4 downs per possession, no first downs. In other words, a team has 4 downs to score a touchdown. If a team fails to score, the defending team will take over the ball at the point of last possession.
- (3) To begin the series of 4 downs, the ball is placed on the ground at the offensive team's line of scrimmage. All offensive players must take a position on or behind the line of scrimmage. All defensive players must take a position at least 10 yards from the ball. A player designated as the centre will begin play by snapping the ball between the legs to the quarterback. All players on the offense are allowed to be in motion prior to the snap. Receivers are not allowed to cross the line of scrimmage until after the snap. There MUST be a centre who snaps the ball to the quarterback. NO SELF-SNAPS. This allows for a good passing game and fair play. The referee will mark the 10 yards prior to the beginning of each play.
- (4) The centre (the player who gives the ball back to the quarterback via a snap) cannot take a direct hand-off from the quarterback (no centre sneak play). However, all players are eligible to receive a forward pass from the quarterback. All forward passes must originate from behind the line of scrimmage.
- (5) A pass is incomplete when the ball touches the ground, the goal post, an official, or lands out of bounds.
- (6) A pass caught simultaneously by players on opposite teams will be awarded to the team that had possession prior to the pass.
- (7) Beanbags are used by the officials to mark the line of scrimmage and 10 yards from the ball for the defensive team. Officials will place these bags at the appropriate spot prior to the start of each play.
- (8) Teams are permitted only one forward pass on each scrimmage play. Teams may lateral the ball among teammates as many times as they wish during a play. A lateral is a pass in which the ball travels parallel to the passer, or backwards from the passer. An attempted lateral that results in the ball going forward to a teammate is illegal, and is ruled an offside pass when touched by a teammate.
- (9) There will be no fumbles. Instead, a dead ball will be called and a loss of down. When a ball is fumbled, or muffed, including an incomplete attempted lateral or hand-off, the play is blown dead and the ball is placed at the point where it first touched the ground. The only exception will be snaps to the quarterback. The quarterback may recover a muffed snap until he/she has possession. If the quarterback has possession then fumbles, the ball is dead.

- (10) If the ball carrier touches the ground with any part of their body other than their feet, the play is whistled dead at that point.
- (11) After the ball carrier is flagged, the ball is spotted where the ball is at the time of the flagging. No extensions are allowed.
- (12) If the ball is intercepted by the defending team, the play continues until the ball carrier is flagged. Then that team continues with a new set of 4 downs to score from the point where the player who intercepted the ball was flagged.
- (13) There is no spinning, no leaving the feet to avoid a defensive player, no blocking, and no diving either to avoid a defensive player or to grab an opponent's flag. No shielding flags.
- (14) Under 20 teams will use an NFL regulation size football, and Elementary teams will use a Junior football. All teams will be allowed a maximum of 15 players on their team roster with 6 players on the field at one time. There is no limit to the number of females on the field at once since not all teams have females.
- (15) Cleats are allowed, but must be rubber. It is recommended that all players wear a mouth guard.
- (16) The defence must line up 10 yards from the ball. Anyone may rush from this point when the ball is lifted off the ground by the centre. A team may use more than one rusher on a play. The rusher is allowed a clear and unobstructed path to the quarterback after the ball is snapped. No one is permitted to block or obstruct the rusher in any way.
- (17) Running the ball is allowed, but only in the running zones. There will be a no-running zone. This zone will be marked at the ten-yard line before the end zone. From this point the offense may not run the ball directly into the end zone. They may only throw the ball into the end zone, or throw a short pass which may be run into the end zone after it is caught. There is also no rushing the quarterback in this zone, as the defense does not line up at least 10 yards from the ball.
- (18) Each team will be required to wear appropriate flag belts with **2 flags**; one on each hip (standard 2 flag system)
- (19) Teams only have 25 seconds between plays. Each time the ball is spotted, the offense has 25 seconds to snap the ball. This is to eliminate time wasting, and allows for a faster game. Teams that do not begin play after 25 seconds will be penalized 10 yards from the spot of the ball.
- (20) There is no intentional grounding.
- (21) If the referee stops the clock to take a timeout as a result of an injury, the injured player must be removed from the game for at least one play. If a player has incurred a wound that is bleeding, the participant must leave the field until the problem is resolved to the satisfaction of the referee. The team may substitute for that player.

## **Scoring**

- (1) Points are awarded for touchdowns and converts.
- (2) A touchdown will be worth 6 points. Touchdowns are scored when a team gets the ball into the opponent's end zone by running with the ball across the goal line, or by gaining possession of the ball in the end zone through a completed pass from a teammate.

- (3) After each touchdown, a two-point convert may be tried from the 10-yard line instead of a field goal. Since the convert takes place from the 10-yard line, running and rushing are both allowed. There are no field goals.
- (4) All round robin games that are ties remain a tie.
- (5) Overtime in finals will be decided by flipping a coin for possession. The team that wins the flip will have first possession from their own 20-yard line. The second team will also be given a set of 4 downs to score, from their 20-yard line. If the score is still tied, sudden victory will occur. There will be a new set of downs for the first team (the team that won the coin toss). If this team scores, they win, as the team that is scored on will not get a set of downs to score.

### ***Penalties***

- (1) All offside calls, and minor rule infractions will result in a 5 yard penalty. 10-yard penalties will be assessed at the referee's discretion for more major infractions.
- (2) Discretionary penalties are as follows:
  - Shielding your flag or spinning
  - Diving for the opponent's flag
  - Grabbing the opponents flag belt
- (3) Any intentional physical contact between players, including holding and blocking will be assessed a penalty deemed appropriate by the referee.
- (4) A defender is not permitted to hold on to any part of the ball carrier, or their uniform when reaching for the flag. If the hold is minor and does not impede the progress of the ball carrier, it is applied as a 5-yard minor holding penalty. If the hold has an impact on the ball carrier's progress, it is considered to be a major holding penalty, and is assessed as a 10-yard penalty from the point of the infraction, and an automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down is awarded.
- (5) The deliberate stripping of the ball, or latching onto it, when it is clearly in the possession of the ball carrier has an impact similar to that of a major (10-yard) hold, and the same penalty is applied.
- (6) Certified officials will be used for the tournament. Zero tolerance for verbal abuse towards officials is in effect. If this is violated, players will be suspended from the tournament.
- (7) There is also zero tolerance for trash talking. This will lead to the team being penalized and possible removal of players who consistently abuse this rule. Trash taking will result in a 10-yard penalty and loss of down.

### ***Team Responsibilities***

- (1) All teams must complete the league eligibility sheet and fax it to the league convenor at least 48 hours prior to the tournament.
- (2) Host school must have scorers and timers for each game. A single timer and a single scorer may be used if they are trained and acceptable to the referees. The same timer and scorer should be employed throughout the game. These minor officials shall be located at the scorer's and timer's table on the side of the field.
- (3) Goal posts are not required, but if they are present, they must be padded to prevent injury. Goal posts cannot be in the field of play.

- (4) All players must wear the same colour numbered jerseys, each player with a different number. There is to be no sharing of jerseys. Each player must have their own.
- (5) Players must take responsibility for making sure no part of their uniform (including their pants, drawstrings, jersey, sweaters under jerseys, etc.) hangs below their flag belt, other than the flags, at the time of the snap. Infractions of this type will result in a 5-yard illegal procedure penalty.
- (6) Jewellery must be removed prior to the start of the game. This includes, but is not limited to any plastic or metal items.
- (7) Only the highest standard of sportsmanship and conduct are expected of players, coaches, and others associated with the team. There is no tolerance for unfair tactics, unsportsmanlike conduct, or manoeuvres deliberately designed to inflict injury.
- (8) Each team must have alternate colour numbered pinneys or jerseys in case of colour conflict. The Home Team will change jerseys.