



Roanoke Parks and Recreation

PH: 540.853.2236

215 Church Avenue, SW
Municipal North – Rm. 303

FAX: 540.853.1287

Roanoke, Virginia 24011

City of Roanoke

Youth Flag Football League

The purpose of Youth Recreation Athletics Leagues is to provide an enjoyable experience for each youth participant, while developing character, skills, sportsmanship, and to promote good will among all teams and individuals. Although sports are competitive by nature; the City of Roanoke Parks and Recreation Department’s intentions are to place less emphasis on winning, while promoting lifetime physical activity and health for each participant.

2017 By-Laws

The Youth Football leagues are governed by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) and these rules will apply to the By-laws except as modified herein.

Age Classification - Flag – Player must have turned 5 by August 1 of current season.

League	Ages	Weight Restrictions	Length of Quarters/halves	Ball Size
Flag	5 & 6	Unlimited	1 st Half: 20m (Running Clock) Halftime – 4m 2 nd Half: 20m (Running Clock)	Equivalent Wilson K2

Game

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
5. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense’s 5-yard line.

7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense

Equipment

1. Cleats must be rubber soled or rubber cleated shoes only. Metal cleats are prohibited.
2. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
3. No player shall participate while wearing illegal equipment. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the official is dangerous, confusing or inappropriate. Illegal equipment shall include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Hard and unyielding items (guards, cast, braces, etc.) on the hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, or upper arm unless padded with closed cell, slow recovery foam padding no less than ½ inch thick.
 - b. Knee braces worn over the pants
 - c. Jewelry
 - *Religious and medical alert jewelry are not considered jewelry. A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert medal must be taped and may be visible.**
 - d. Communication devices (i.e. walkie-talkies, cameras, etc.)
4. Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
5. **Players must wear shorts or pants that do not have pockets. Shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets must be taped shut. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.**
 - a. **Flag belts cannot be the same color as shorts or pants.**

Field

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain.
2. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

Rosters

1. Teams must consist of at least five players with a maximum of 14 players.
2. Teams must start games with a minimum of five players.
 - a. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field but no fewer than four.

Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 40 minute continuous clock with two 20 minute halves. Clock stops only for timeouts or injuries.
2. Halftime is four minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.

4. Each team has one 30-second timeout per half.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.

Coaches

1. Coaches are expected to adhere to NFL FLAG philosophies, coaching guidelines and code of conduct.
2. Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. Coaches must not interfere with the play.

Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A player who gains possession in the air is considered inbounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
4. The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground.
 - i. If the ball hits the ground as a result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle.
 1. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 1. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 2. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

NOTE: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.

Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball-carrier has the ball. Forward progress will be measured by the player's front foot.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. Handoffs may be in front, behind or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - a. "Center sneak" play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
4. Absolutely NO laterals of any kind are permitted past the line of scrimmage.
5. Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
6. Once the ball has been handed off in front, behind or to the side of the quarterback, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
7. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
8. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
 - a. Players spinning out of control will be called for flag guarding.
9. Runners may leave their feet if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
10. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
11. Offensive players without the ball must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
12. Flag obstruction – All jerseys MUST be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

Passing

1. All passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed.
3. The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - a. If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).

Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.
6. Interceptions are returnable.

Rushing the Passer

1. All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. A special marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7 yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - iii. If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7 yard area), they may return to the rush line, reset and then legally rush the quarterback.
 - iv. If a rusher leaves the rush line early and the ball is handed off before he/she crosses the line of scrimmage, he/she may legally rush the quarterback.
 - b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass – **illegal rush** (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – **offsides** (5 yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
 - iii. Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off – **illegal rush** (5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect.

- ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, NO contact can be made with the quarterback in any way. Blocking the pass or attempting to block the pass and then making contact with the passer will result in a roughing the passer penalty.
5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. If the “path or line” is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense’s responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher’s path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. **If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher’s responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.**
6. A sack occurs if the quarterback’s flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball is placed where the quarterback’s feet are when flag is pulled.
 - a. A safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

Flag Pulling

1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier’s possession at any time.
4. If a player’s flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender’s access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

Formations

1. Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - a. One player at a time may go in motion 1-yard behind and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
 - b. No motion is allowed toward the line of scrimmage.
2. Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
3. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected

from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered.

FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

2. Offensive or confrontational language is not allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the player, spectator, or coach will be ejected from the game.
3. Players, spectators, or coaches may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball-carriers **MUST** make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
6. Fans must also adhere to good sportsmanship as well:
 - a. Yell to cheer on your players, not to harass officials or other teams.
 - b. Keep comments clean and profanity free.
7. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - a. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - b. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Terminology

- Boundary Lines - The outer perimeter lines around the field. They include the sidelines and back of the end zone lines.
- Line of Scrimmage (LOS) - an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
- Line-to-Gain - The line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- Rush Line - An imaginary line running across the width of the field seven yards (into the defensive side) from the line of scrimmage.
- Offense - The team with possession of the ball.
- Defense - The team opposing the offense to prevent it from advancing the ball.
- Passer - The offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
- Rusher - The defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/ her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
- Downs (1-2-3-4) - The offensive team has four attempts or "downs" to advance the ball. It must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- Live Ball - Period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties. Live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- Dead Ball- Refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- Inadvertent Whistle - Official's whistle that is performed in error.

- Charging - An illegal movement of the ball-carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head or initiating contact with a shoulder, forearm or the chest.
- Flag Guarding - An illegal act by the ball-carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball-carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head or by blocking access to the runner's flags with a hand or arm.
- Shovel Pass - A legal pitch attempted beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Lateral - A backward or sideways toss of the ball by the ball-carrier.
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct - A rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

Penalties

General

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations.
5. Games may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.

Specific

1) **Defensive spot fouls**

- a) Defensive pass interference - Automatic first down
- b) Holding - Automatic first down
- c) Stripping - +10 yards and automatic first down

2) **Offensive spot fouls**

- a) Screening, blocking or running with the ball - 10 yard loss and loss of down
- b) Charging - 10 yard loss and loss of down
- c) Flag guarding - 10 yard loss and loss of down

3) **Defensive Penalties**

- a) Defensive Unnecessary Roughness - +10 yards and automatic first down
- b) Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct - +10 yards and automatic first down
- c) Offside - +5 yards from line of scrimmage
- d) Illegal Rush - +5 yards from line of scrimmage
- e) Illegal Flag Pull (Player Without Ball) - +5 yards from line of scrimmage
- f) Roughing the Passer - +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
- g) Taunting - +5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

4) **Offensive Penalties**

- a) Offensive Unnecessary Roughness – 10 yard loss and loss of down
- b) Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 10 yard loss and loss of down
- c) False Start/Offside - 5 yard loss from line of scrimmage
- d) Illegal Forward Pass (Pass received or landing behind line of scrimmage and throwing a pass after crossing line of scrimmage) - 5 yard loss from line of scrimmage and loss of down
- e) Offensive Pass Interference - 5 yard loss from line of scrimmage and loss of down
- f) Illegal Motion (More than one person moving) - 5 yard loss from line of scrimmage
- g) Delay of Game - 5 yard loss from line of scrimmage
- h) Impeding the Rusher - 5 yard loss from line of scrimmage