

Rules Unique to Upward Flag Football

The rules unique to Upward Flag Football are designed to provide the best sports experience for every child.



Field Diagram and Rules

The offensive team is awarded a first down when it crosses the midfield line. Based on the field size, one first down is sufficient to advance the football for a score.

The lines 5 yards from each end zone and on both sides of the midfield line are no-run zones. No-run zones do not apply to the Kindergarten division. The no-run zones are designed to take away power-running plays. If an offensive team picks up a first down but is then pushed back into the no-run zone, the no-run rule will not apply, as the offensive team cannot pick up another first down.

The offensive team begins the game and second half by taking possession of the ball at its 5-yard line (15 yard line for Kindergarten division). With the no contact rule, this also means no blocking in Upward Flag Football. With kick-offs, the goal is to block and clear the way for the return, which is not a part of Upward Flag Football.

Down Format

Kindergarten and 1st-2nd Grades

The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown.

If the team fails to cross midfield in four downs or score a touchdown, the other team takes possession on its own 5-yard line (15 yard line for Kindergarten division). There will be no punts for this division. All four downs will be used without the concern of giving up field position.

3rd-6th Grades

The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown.

On fourth down, a team has two options.

A team may attempt to gain a first down or a touchdown. If a team fails to convert on fourth down, either by scoring or picking up a first down, the opposing team may choose to take possession at the no-run zone going into midfield OR at their 5-yard line.

A team may "punt" as its fourth-down play by notifying the referee. In this case, the ball will be placed on the opposing team's 5-yard line, and there will be a change of possession. For the older divisions, defensive stands will be awarded. This also teaches the field possession aspect of football.

Offensive starting points

(Kindergarten-2nd grade)

SITUATION	STARTING FIELD POSITION AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION
After a touchdown and extra point attempt	Offense's 5-Yard Line (15 yard line for Kindergarten division)
After a turnover on downs	Offense's 5-Yard Line (15 yard line for Kindergarten division)
After an interception	At the spot of the interception

(3rd-6th grades)

SITUATION	STARTING FIELD POSITION AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION
After a touchdown and extra point attempt	Offense's 5-Yard Line
After a "punt"	Offense's 5-Yard Line
After a turnover on downs	No-run zone going into the first down (midfield line) OR Offense's 5-yard line
After an interception	Spot where interception is returned to

Clock Format

- For 1st-4th grade teams, games consist of four 9-minute quarters with an 8-minute halftime. For Kindergarten division, games will consist of four 6 minutes quarters. For the 5th-6th division, games will consist of four 11-minute quarters with a 7-minute halftime.
- The game clock stops briefly at the end of every quarter for predetermined substitutions.
- Each team has one 30-second timeout per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half. The clock will stop during the timeout.
- A 30-second play clock begins after the referee spots the ball as ready for play.
- The clock will stop in the final minute of the first half and in the final minute of the game for the following situations:
 - After an incomplete pass
 - After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
 - After a touchdown
 - During an extra-point attempt
 - For an official's timeout
 - After an interception
 - During a called timeout until the ball is snapped
 - On a change of possession

Game Format

Upward Flag Football leagues feature a unique game format.

- Referees lead both teams in prayer at the parents' sideline before every game. This is a good time to give reminders about the game and to check that flags are on hips, jerseys are tucked in, jewelry has been removed, and coaches have their substitution cards prepared.
- The visiting team (wearing the lighter-colored jerseys) will start the game on offense; the home team (wearing the dark-colored jerseys) will start the game on defense. The home team will pick which end zone to defend. The team that plays defense first will play offense first to start the second half.
- Because the end of a quarter does not signal a change of possession, the team with possession at the end of the quarter will retain possession after substitutions take place.
- Teams will switch ends of the field at the half, not after each quarter. (Kindergarten division will not switch ends)
- Score will not be kept in the Kindergarten or 1st-2nd grade divisions.
- Standings are not kept in any division. Such standings add unnecessary pressure and intensity. In Upward Flag Football, there will not be a playoff system, championship tournament or a division champion thus eliminating the need for any standings.
- Each team will have six players on the field at a time (5 in Kindergarten division). This equips the offense with an appropriate amount of players without crowding the field.
- Coaches are allowed to walk the sidelines and encourage their players without stepping in the playing area.
- In the 3rd-6th grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle for the first two games of the season. In the Kindergarten and 1st-2nd grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle throughout the season.
- Teams will use substitution rules, as detailed on the next page.

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra point: 1 point (played from the 5-yard line with a pass) or 2 points (played from the 10-yard line with a run or pass) The 5-yard attempt is from the no-run zone. (No 2 point conversion for K division)
- Safety: 2 points. The scoring team will also receive possession on its own 5-yard line. No physical kicks will occur in Upward Flag Football.

Offensive Basics

- A minimum of three players must be on the line of scrimmage at every snap. This mirrors traditional football format which requires seven players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. The three players on the line for Upward Flag Football will consist of a center and then at least two receivers positioned anywhere along the line of scrimmage. This adds some structure to offensive sets.

- Only one player can be in motion when the ball is snapped. This is in place to keep the integrity of the game of football.
- In the 3rd-6th grade divisions, the ball must be snapped between the legs to begin play, either under center or shotgun. Kindergarten and 1st-2nd grade players may use the side snap in addition to under center or shotgun. Side snap must be used in all divisions if there is a male/female exchange at QB/C.
- Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete possession of the ball. They may not touch the ball and hand right back to center. No center to QB to center run play is allowed.
- A low-profile field cone or beanbag may be used to mark the line of scrimmage.

Running the Football

- The quarterback cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage as a runner under any circumstances, either via the snap, or after a handoff, lateral or pitch from another player during the play. This is in place to include others in each offensive play. Without this rule, a quarterback could dominate each play by advancing the football. After handing off or laterally pitching the football, the QB may go out for a forward pass, catch the ball, and advance the ball after the catch.
- The person who receives the snap from the center (under center or shotgun) is considered the quarterback and cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage. A QB may go out for a pass after handing off the ball/pitching the ball to another player. A pitch from the quarterback can be executed immediately after the snap or on a delay (similar to an option play without the quarterback being able to advance the football).
- Anyone may pitch/lateral the ball behind the line of scrimmage. Once the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, no pitches/laterals may take place.
- Once the pitch is received, the ball carrier can run the ball, hand-off the ball or pass the ball.
- Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Multiple handoffs may be used. After the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, handoffs and laterals are not permitted. This rule exists for safety reasons and to discourage the multiple laterals that would occur to avoid a flag pull.
- The 5 yards leading toward the goal line and the 5 yards leading to the midfield first-down line are no-run zones. The no-run zones do not apply to the Kindergarten division. Plays beginning in the no-run zones must have a forward pass in the play. A forward pass can be completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. A player receiving a handoff or pitch can pass the ball (halfback pass) from behind the line of scrimmage.
- A ball carrier may not dive. A dive will result in a penalty. This is for safety and abides with the no contact rule. Diving for advancement of the football can bring on injury or contact.
- The ball carrier's feet determine the spot of the football when a flag is pulled, not the location of the football. This is to discourage a dive for advancement.

Receiving the Football

- All six players are eligible to receive passes. (The quarterback becomes eligible after a handoff or pitch.) With the no contact rule, no blockers can be used thus allowing all offensive players to be eligible.
- A completion consists of a receiver gaining control of the football while having at least one foot in bounds. This rule is to keep the integrity of the game.
- If a player catches a pass with his knee(s) on the ground, the play is dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the completion. This rule helps to keep the no contact rule intact.

Passing the Football

- All forward passes can be completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass can be completed per play. A forward pass is not a handoff to a receiver in front of the QB. The QB must make a throwing motion, the ball must be leave the QB's hands (be "in the air"), and the receiver must catch a thrown ball. The referees have discretion to determine if it is a "pass". Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the defender can make a play on the ball. The defender must avoid contact with the receiver.
- The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw a pass. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds (10 in K division), it is treated as an incomplete pass (loss of down). A handoff or pitch will end the 7-second pass count. This rule keeps a scrambling quarterback from taking too much time with each possession.

Dead Balls

Play is ruled dead when one of the following occurs:

- The ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out.
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- The ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- A touchdown or safety is scored.
- A pass falls incomplete.
- At the point of an interception for Kindergarten and 1st-2nd grade divisions.
- The ball hits the ground as a fumble. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble. One exception to this rule is with the center/quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback and only the quarterback may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack).

Defensive Basics

- Teams may run man-to-man, zone defenses or a combination of both. This rule allows for defensive schemes and helps equal ability match-ups. Players can have an easier time covering a zone vs. a receiver man-to-man in the open field.

- Interceptions may be returned only in 3rd-6th grade divisions. Interceptions may not be returned in the K and 1st-2nd grade divisions-change of possession will be awarded at the point of the interception
- Interceptions made in the end zone will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard in the 1st-2nd grade divisions (15 yard line for K division). For 3rd-6th grade divisions, if a player returns the football out of the end zone, the ball will be spotted where the flag is pulled.

Rushing the Passer

- All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the 7-yard rush line. With no blocking allowed, this gives the quarterback enough time to make a play or escape a rush.
- With the 3rd through 6th grade division, any number of players may rush the quarterback. The Kindergarten and 1st-2nd grade divisions may only rush one defender.
- Defenders not rushing the quarterback may line up on or off the line of scrimmage. In the Kindergarten Division, three defenders must line up 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Having three players line-up 7 yards from the line of scrimmage for the Kindergarten group keeps the congestion from forming along the line of scrimmage. This is key since the majority of Kindergarten plays are running plays. This also helps the defense disguise the rush, since it could be any one of the three players lined up at the rush line.
- Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier. This allows the defense to react quickly to a play behind the line of scrimmage.

Penalties

- Referees will call all penalties.
- If a penalty happens near the end zone, where the penalty yardage would place the ball in the end zone, then the penalty will be half the distance to the goal.