



## ***Rules Unique to FCA Flag Football***

To assist you at practices and games, the following are the rules unique to FCA Flag Football. They include not only the rules of play but also information on the field of play, ball sizes, down and clock format and offensive and defensive basics.

### ***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. 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.
- A typical field is 70 yds x 30 yds. This includes two 10yd endzones.

### ***Down Format***

#### ***1st-3rd 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. There will be no punts for this division. All four downs will be used without the concern of giving up field position

#### ***4th-7th 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 ball changes possession at the spot of the ball
  - 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 position aspect of football

### ***Clock Format***

- Games consist of four 9-minute quarters with an 8-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
  - During a called timeout until the ball is snapped
  - On a change of possession

## Game Format

- Referees lead both teams in prayer at midfield before every game
- The visiting team (wearing the darker-colored jerseys) calls the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss may choose to play offense or defense first or choose which goal to defend. The other team has the choice (possession or end to defend) not made by the team winning the toss. 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
- Score and standings will be kept in all grade divisions
- Each team will have six players on the field at a time. 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
- **Each team can put one coach in the offensive 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 ONLY) The 5-yard attempt is from the no-run zone
  - 2 points (played from the 10-yard line with a run OR pass). This spot will be marked
- *Safety*: 2 points. The scoring team will also receive possession on its own 5-yard line. No physical kicks will occur in FCA Flag Football

## Offensive Basics

- A minimum of three players must be on the line of scrimmage at every snap, consisting of a center and then at least two receivers positioned anywhere along the line of scrimmage
- Only one player can be in motion when the ball is snapped
- In the 4th-7th grade division, the ball must be snapped between the center's legs to begin play. 1st-3rd grade players may use the side snap
- Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete possession of the ball. A possession change between the center and quarterback must occur in order to run the play – no center runs allowed.
- A low-profile field cone or beanbag may be used to mark the line of scrimmage
- **In younger age divisions, a coach may assume the role of the quarterback. This is left up to each individual league.**

## Running the Football

- The quarterback cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage
- 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 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*)
- The quarterback is the only player who can make the pitch. The pitch can occur at any time while behind the line of scrimmage
- Once the pitch is received, the ball carrier can run the ball, hand off the ball or pass the ball
- Direct handoffs and laterals are legal. Multiple handoffs may be used.
- The five yards leading toward the goal line and the five yards leading to the midfield first-down line are no-run zones. The no-run zones do not apply to the K5 division. Plays beginning in the no-run zone must have a forward pass beyond the line-of-scrimmage
- A player receiving a handoff or immediate 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
- The ball carrier's feet determine the spot of the football when a flag is pulled, not the location of the football

### *Receiving the Football*

- All six players are eligible to receive passes. *(The quarterback becomes eligible after a handoff or pitch)*
- A completion consists of a receiver gaining control of the football while having at least one foot in bounds
- 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

### *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. However, while in the no-run zone, all forward passes must be completed beyond the line-of-scrimmage. 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 9 seconds to throw a pass. If a pass is not thrown within 9 seconds, it is treated as an incomplete pass (loss of down). A handoff or pitch will end the 9-second pass count

### **Blocking**

- Offensive players may block defenders without extending arms and "shoving" on contact.
- Shielding is also allowed as players run down the field.

### *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
- 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.**
- Interceptions made in the end zone can be returned. However, if a tackle is made while still in the endzone, it will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line.

### *Rushing the Passer*

- All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin 9 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the 9-yard rush line. With no blocking allowed, this gives the quarterback enough time to make a play or escape a rush.
- With the 4th through 7th-grade division, any number of players may rush the quarterback. The 1st and 3rd-grade division may only rush one defender.
- Defenders not rushing the quarterback may line up on or off the line of scrimmage.
- Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the 9-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.

## Substitutions

This substitution system is designed to provide every player equal opportunity for improvement. The substitution system ensures that:

- Every child will play at least half of the game.
- No child will sit out more than one possession at a time.
- Every child will play offense and defense.
- Every child will have an opportunity to be in the starting lineup.
- In most cases, each child will play against someone of equal ability.
- Coaches are not open to making unfair substitutions or being accused of such.
- Coaches are free from monitoring playing time for each player.
- Playing time for all players is virtually even over the course of the season.

For the 1st/3rd Grades – Substitutions will be made at the end of every period.

For the 4th/7th Grades – Substitutions will be made at the midpoint of every quarter.

## 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.

<i>Defensive Penalty</i>	<i>Result of Penalty</i>
<i>Encroachment</i>	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay the down.</i>
<i>Illegal Rushing</i> (enforced when players start rushing from inside the 9-yard rush line)	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay the down.</i>
<i>Interference</i>	<i>Ten (10) yards from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down.</i>
<i>Illegal Contact</i> (pulling the jersey, holding, blocking, pushing)	<i>Ten (10) yards from the spot of the foul and replay the down.</i>
<i>Illegal flag pull</i> (before the receiver catches the football)	<i>Ten (10) yard from the line of scrimmage and an automatic first down.</i>

<i>Offensive Penalty</i>	<i>Result of Penalty</i>
<i>Illegal motion</i> (more than one person moving)	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay of the down.</i>
<i>Illegal formation</i> (false start, not enough men on the line of scrimmage)	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay of the down.</i>

<i>Illegal pass</i> (a pass thrown after the ball carrier has crossed the line of scrimmage)	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.</i>
<i>Delay of game</i>	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay of the down.</i>
<i>Illegal run</i> (a running play in the no-run zone or a quarterback crossing the line of scrimmage)	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and replay of the down.</i>
<i>Intentional grounding</i>	<i>Five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.</i>
<i>Offensive pass interference</i> (illegal pick play, pushing a defender)	<i>Ten (10) yards from the line of scrimmage and a loss of down; replay the down.</i>
<i>Flag guarding</i> (intentional or unintentional use of the arm to prevent the flag from being pulled)	<i>Five (5) yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.</i>
<i>Illegal use of the hands</i> (stiff-arming, arms extended)	<i>Ten (10) yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.</i>
<i>Diving</i> (diving toward the end zone or first down)	<i>Ten (10) yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down.</i>

### Tournament Play and Overtime

The season will end with a tournament for the 4th-7th grade league. If the tournament game ends in a tie, there will be as many overtime periods allowed as needed. Each team will have one possession in each overtime period. Overtime rules are:

- Winner of flip of a coin will determine which team has the ball first
- Offensive team will line-up on the opponents Red Line (just past mid-field)
- The offensive team will have four downs to score. If they do, the team will have the option to go for one or two extra points
- The defensive team will then become the offensive team and have the same opportunity to score
- If the score remains tied, the process will repeat with the original defensive team beginning the period as the offensive team