

Wellington Recreation Official Youth Flag Football Manual



Purpose of League Play

The purpose of the league sponsored by Wellington Recreation is to provide kids with the opportunity for learning and fun in a safe environment. Friendly competition and clean sportsmanship will be emphasized. Our main goal is for ALL participants (players, coaches, parents, etc.) to have FUN while building athletic, team, and social skills.

I. Field, Players, and Equipment

A. The Field

1. Size: 60 yards (goal to goal) x 40 yards wide, 10-yard end zones. Playing field will be divided into four equal zones.

B. The Players: ***No team may play without a certified coach present on the playing field.***

1. Age 6-7 play is 4v4, Age 8-9 and Age 10-12 play is 5v5. If the opposing team has fewer than four/five players, it may borrow players from the other team to make the sides equal.
2. Each player shall take equal turns/time sitting out when substitutes are needed.
3. Each player shall play both offense and defense. Players shall play every position on offense every game.
4. Any number of substitutions may enter the game for either team when the ball is dead.
5. Players must be on an official roster and may not participate if they are outside the specified age/grade group.

C. The Equipment:

1. The ball shall be a pee-pee size ball. Ball shall be provided by Wellington Recreation.
2. All participants shall wear an official flag belt. Belts provided by Wellington Recreation. Flags shall be worn on the sides and in such a manner as to be clear of any obstructions. **Shirts must be tucked in** and not hanging over the flags. Officials may whistle a ball carrier down immediately for deliberately placing flags in a non-legal position.
3. Players attire:
 - a) Athletic shoes (no metal spikes).
 - b) Protective mouthpiece.
 - c) No jewelry.
 - d) Official Wellington Recreation Jersey worn on outside.
 - e) Headwear shall be soft and without any hard brims (i.e. no helmets, ball caps).
4. Hoods on coats or other apparel shall be tucked in and not hanging out.
5. Pads and safety equipment designed for tackle football are illegal.
6. Any other equipment or attire deemed by the official to be unsafe shall be illegal.

II. The Game:

A. Timing

1. The game consists of two halves, each 25 minutes in length. Half time shall be 5 minutes in length.
2. Each team is allowed two time outs per half. Each time out will be one minute in length.
3. Time runs continuous for each half except for legal time outs or on-field injuries. If no official is present, home team shall designate a non-coach to be the official time keeper. Approximately two minutes before the end of each half the official timekeeper shall call out a two minute warning. Play shall continue without stoppage.
4. Game clock shall start when one of the following occurs:
 - a) Ball is kicked to start a half of play
 - b) Ball is hiked following a time out
 - c) Ball is hiked following an on-field injury
 - d) At the direction of the official after any other stoppage of time
4. If time for any period expires during a down, play shall continue until the end of the down.
5. The PAT attempt shall be allowed should time expire.
6. Delay of Game: forty five (45) seconds is allowed between plays. Any more time will result in a delay of game penalty (five-yard penalty).

B. Scoring

1. A touchdown shall count as six points. A touchdown shall be scored when, in an upright position, the ball carriers feet break the plane of the goal line.
2. A point after touchdown attempt (PAT) is awarded after a touchdown is scored. Defensive team cannot score on a PAT attempt. The PAT attempt shall consist of one offensive play from the following options:
 - a) Five-yard line for a 1-point conversion (run or pass).
 - b) Ten-yard line for a 2-point conversion (run or pass).
2. A safety shall count as two points.
 - a) A safety is scored when the ball is legally in possession of a player becomes dead behind their own goal line, provided the impetus which sent the ball into the end zone was given by a member of their own team. Points are awarded to the opposing team and the team scored upon puts the ball in play with a place kick or punt from their 10 yard line.
 - b) If a team commits a foul in the end zone where the spot of enforcement is designated as the spot of the foul, it will be declared a safety. *Exception - When a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage kick between their five-yard line and their goal line and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.*

III. Rule 3: Team Play

A. The Kick Off

1. A coin toss will determine which team will have their choice of kicking or receiving to begin the game. Kicking team will choose which end zone to defend (first half only). Kicking team will then receive in the second half and vice-versa. White team captain shall call the coin toss.
2. The kick off shall be a place kick and shall be taken at the beginning of each half and after each touchdown. After a safety, the offended team has choice of place kick or punt.
3. The kick off shall be taken at midfield. All players on the receiving team must be at least 15 yards from the line the ball is kicked from. All players on the kicking team must be behind the ball.
4. If a member of the receiving team controls the kicked ball, they may run, hand off, or lateral the ball until the ball carrier is downed or the ball is fumbled.
5. If the ball goes out of bounds before the ball is touched, the receiving team may take the ball at the spot it goes out of bounds or at the receiving team's 15 yard line (whatever is most advantageous to the receiving team).
6. On-side kicks are illegal. Once the ball has been put into play only the receiving team may take possession of the ball.
7. On a touch or muff (First touch), the ball will not be called dead, the receiving team will be allowed to pick it up and run with the ball. A fumble after possession has been established will be whistled dead at that spot.
8. If the kick off enters the end zone, a player may run the ball out of the end zone or down it and have the ball put in play at receiving teams own 10 yard line (touchback).
9. Kick off or punt: The ball is downed when the kicking team touches the ball first after a kick off or punt. The receiving team has the opportunity to field the ball if it is rolling or stopped but has not been touched.
10. A kick off touched in the end zone by the kicking team, will be called dead and brought out to the 10 yard line (touchback).

B. Touchback

1. After a kick off or a punt, a touchback occurs when the ball goes out of bounds behind a goal line or when the ball becomes dead in possession of a player behind his own goal line, provided the player has not previously exited the end zone. Ball is put in play at the 10 yard line.
2. An interception downed in the end zone comes out to the 10 yard line.

C. Regular Play

1. Teams on offense have four (4) downs to advance the ball from one zone to the next. A new set of four (4) downs shall be awarded upon advancement into a new zone. If, after four (4) consecutive downs the spot of the ball is not sufficient to award a new set of downs possession is awarded to the defense.
2. "Bean Bag" markers will be utilized to mark the line of scrimmage and seven (7) yard encroachment zone. (Marked by an official).
3. Teams shall trade end zones defended after halftime break.
4. Quarterback is defined as player, different from the snapper, receiving the ball from the player snapping the ball.
5. Only four/five players per team are allowed on the field during a play (see rule I.B.1 for number of players allowed). Violation of this rule carries a Too Many Men on The Field penalty of 5 yards.

D. The Line of Scrimmage & Offense

1. Advancing the Ball: To advance the ball after the snap, the team may run with it or pass it.
2. The offense must hike the ball into play within forty five (45) seconds from the time the official places the ball on the line of scrimmage.
3. All players of the offensive team must remain stationary for one second before the ball is snapped.
4. One person may start in motion, but this person cannot be on the line of scrimmage and their motion must be away from, or parallel to, the line of scrimmage. Illegal Motion penalty is 5 yards.
5. On a shift play, all players of the offensive team must come to a complete stop and remain motionless in a legal position for at least one full second before the ball is snapped. An Illegal Shift carries a 5 yard penalty.
6. The person hiking the ball must:
 - a) Hike between the legs, with the snapper facing the defense, to a teammate behind the line of scrimmage.
 - b) Transfer the ball fully to the teammate receiving the ball.
 - c) The "center sneak" is an illegal play.
7. The offense and defense cannot enter or break the plane of the neutral zone until the ball is hiked. An infraction of this rule is offsides. Any player breaking or lining-up in the neutral zone will be flagged (play is called dead for ANY offsides infraction by the offense). This penalty cannot be declined. Penalty: 5 yards.
8. At least one offensive player must be on the line of scrimmage.
9. Any number of players may line up on the line of scrimmage defensively (no requirements).
10. The ball carrier must return the ball to the closest official after the play is blown dead. Repeated failure to do so may result in a delay of game penalty.

E. Fumbles

1. If a ball carrier drops the ball, it is dead at that spot (providing the ball hits the ground), team keeps possession and advances to the next down. If fumble occurs on fourth down and the spot is not sufficient to award a first down then possession is awarded to the defense.
2. Fumbles on Quarterback/Center exchange:
 - a) Play is blown dead and down is replayed if Quarterback is directly under center.
 - b) If Quarterback is in shotgun, play continues if ball is in front of Quarterback, if ball is past Quarterback ball is blown dead and play resumes as if a fumble occurred.
3. On a punt play the punter may pick up a fumbled snap and immediately punt the ball.

F. Running Plays

1. The Quarterback cannot run with the ball. He must pass the ball forward or hand it off behind the line of scrimmage. Play is dead when the Quarterback advances past the line of scrimmage. An Illegal Run penalty of 5 yards and loss of down shall be enforced.
2. The ball carrier may run in any direction, hand off or lateral anywhere on the field. All handoffs or laterals must be to the rear of the ball carrier beyond the line of scrimmage. If dropped, the ball is dead at that spot (fumble).
3. Stiff-arms or covering the flags in any manner shall be illegal (Flag Guarding). Play is blown dead. Flag Guarding shall result in a 5 yard penalty from previous spot and loss of down.
4. No player may jump, leap, or hurdle while in possession of the ball, especially at goal line and first down situations. Officials will not call jumping over a player lying on the ground, quarterbacks jumping to get the ball over defenders and related situations. Jumping will carry a five yard penalty from the point of infraction.
5. Spinning is allowed but ball carrier cannot lose contact with the ground.
6. In running, the ball carrier must attempt to avoid tacklers. Deliberate charging into a defensive player, with or without head down, will result in a penalty of Offensive Charging (10 yards from spot of infraction). "Brushing" or other unavoidable contact is not willful charging.
7. The "center sneak" is an illegal play and shall result in an Illegal Run penalty of 5 yards and loss of down.

G. Passing Plays

1. Every player is eligible to catch a forward pass. The quarterback is eligible to catch a forward pass after he has handed it off.
2. It is a legal catch when a player gains possession of the ball with at least one foot inbounds.
3. For a defensive player to be eligible to cross the line of scrimmage before a handoff or forward pass that player shall line up beyond the seven yard zone. The seven yard zone shall be marked by the official with a bean bag. Violation of the seven yard zone carries an Encroachment penalty of 5 yards.
4. If a legal catch is not made, the ball is dead and returns to the previous line of scrimmage.
5. If a simultaneous catch takes place, the ball is dead and belongs to the offensive team.
6. Lateral (backward) passes, overhand or underhand, may be made anywhere on the field and there is no limit to the number that may be attempted in a play or down.
7. No player may hand the ball off forward of their position on the field to another teammate unless both players are behind the line of scrimmage and before the ball goes forward of the line of scrimmage. An Illegal Handoff carries a penalty of 5 yards from the spot and loss of down.
8. A ball which falls from the passer's hand shall be judged accordingly to the following:
 - a) If there is any forward motion by the arm, the ball is ruled an incomplete forward pass and returned to the line of scrimmage.
 - b) If there is no forward motion, the ball is ruled a fumble and dead at the spot the ball touches the ground.
9. It is intentional grounding when there is not a receiver in the vicinity of a thrown ball. The penalty is 5 yards and loss of down.
10. A "double pass" is illegal. (A double pass means two forward passes.)
11. Incomplete forward passes behind the goal line will not be considered touchbacks.
12. A pass is illegal if the passer has crossed the line of scrimmage or if it is the second forward pass in the same play. Penalty is loss of 5 yards from spot of foul and loss of a down.

H. Pass Interference

1. No contact with the receiver is allowed, unless it is a simultaneous effort by both players to get the ball. If ball is in the air contact, offensive or defensive, shall be called as Pass Interference. If ball is not in the air Illegal Contact carries a 5 yard penalty.
2. Defensive Pass Interference Penalty: Point of Infraction, automatic first down.
3. Defensive Pass Interference in the end zone shall result in the ball being placed at the 1-yard line, automatic first down.
4. Offensive Pass Interference shall result in a ten-yard penalty and a loss of down.
5. Intentionally de-flagging an opponent before they have possession of the ball shall result in one of the following:
 - a) If legal catch is made by player de-flagged, play continues as one hand touch.
 - b) If pass is incomplete, pass interference shall be called against offending team.

I. The Punt

1. An announcement of punts on fourth down is necessary. No rushing is permitted on punts (no motion until after punt). In cases of announced punts, both teams must have at least three players on the line of scrimmage (no maximum). No movement is allowed by the offensive team until the ball is punted, neither team may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been punted.
2. A blocked quick kick belongs to the receiving team at the spot where the ball first touches the ground following the blocked kick.
3. Punts that go out of bounds shall be brought in bounds and centered on the field at the point it crosses the sideline.
4. The punted ball can be caught on the fly or off the bounce and advanced by running, hand off, or lateral.
5. If the punt enters the end zone, a player may run the ball out of the end zone or down it for a touchback. If a punt on the fly hits in the end zone and goes through the end zone, the ball is dead and is placed on the 15 yard line. If the ball goes out of bounds it is put in play in the middle of the field adjacent to the spot it goes out.
6. When the kicking team touches the ball after a kick off or punt, it is down. The receiving team has the opportunity to field the ball if it's rolling or stopped but hasn't been touched.
7. A punted ball that is merely touched or muffed by the receiving team may be picked up and advanced. A fumble after possession has been established will be blown dead at the spot.
8. If the snap to the punter results in a fumble the punter shall pick it up and immediately punt it (5 second count by officials).
9. If a punted ball hits a member of the receiving team and bounces into hands of an opponent or falls to the ground, it will be ruled a fumble and marked dead at the point of contact.
10. Fair Catch
 - a) A player on the receiving team within the boundary and in a position to catch a punt shall be given a 3 yard halo free of defenders. Encroachment of the three yard halo by a defender carries a Punt Encroachment penalty of

10 yards.

- b) Dead where caught – When a player makes a fair catch, the ball becomes dead where caught and belongs to the receiving team at the spot where the player first touched it.
- c) No advance – After a valid signal, no receiver may advance the ball.
- d) A fair catch is signaled by fully extending one arm over the head and waving.

J. Downing the ball carrier

- 1. A legally removed flag shall be dropped immediately to the ground.
- 2. A ball carrier is considered down when an opponent removes at least one flag from the ball carrier's flag belt. A defender may not put his arm around or in front of the runner or hold the runner in any manner. Only the flags may be grabbed. Stopping the ball carrier in any other manner is to be considered Illegal Tackling. Illegal Tackling shall be enforced without hesitation. The penalty for Illegal Tackling is 10 yards from the point of infraction and an automatic first down. Unnecessary Roughness or Unsportsmanlike Conduct may be called if deemed necessary in the judgment of the official.
- 3. Contact to force a player to go out of bounds shall be deemed Illegal Tackling.
- 4. Attempts to punch, strike, strip or attempt to steal the ball while a player is in possession shall be deemed as Illegal Tackling and possibly Unnecessary Roughness.
- 5. Stiff-arming or covering the flags in any manner is illegal (considered Flag Guarding). Flag Guarding carries a 5 yard penalty from the previous spot and loss of down.
- 6. If a ball carrier makes contact with the ground with anything other than feet or hands (ball is considered an extension of a hand), he will be considered down at point of contact. Play will be called dead at the point of a slip or fall of a ball carrier (no pushing).
- 7. Play will be called dead when a ball carrier's flag is no longer attached to the flag belt; whether anyone has pulled the flag or not. The ball shall be spotted where the flag became unattached.
- 8. If a player's flag unintentionally falls off before gaining possession of the ball play continues as one hand touch. Ball carrier shall be down when touched by a defender with one hand between shoulders and waist.
- 9. Intentionally pulling of an opponent's flag before they have possession of the ball shall be deemed Pass Interference.
- 10. Intentionally throwing flag shall be deemed delay of game.
- 11. A ball carrier is considered down when any part of their body lands on or beyond the boundaries of the playing field.

K. Blocking & Stance

- 1. No contact screen blocking is allowed. Blockers hands/arms shall not be positioned wider than shoulder width. Screening principles in basketball will apply to screen blocking. Holding, grabbing or bumping into a defender while blocking carries a Charging penalty of 10 yards from the spot of the infraction. An illegal block may be deemed as Unnecessary Roughness when warranted by the official.
- 2. Illegal blocking techniques include, but are not limited to, the following and carry an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty: leaving your feet to block, crab blocking, cross body blocking, clipping, blocking below the waist, etc.
- 3. There will be NO striking with the fist, locked hands or elbows; kicking, kneeing or meeting with knee; or striking with the heel, backside of the hand on the head, face or neck of an opponent. Acts such as these shall carry an Unnecessary Roughness Penalty. Offender may be disqualified if flagrant.

L. Defense

- 1. Contact is not allowed, unless in judgment of the official contact is incidental in the process of de-flagging.
- 2. While on defense, holding or grabbing an opponent shall carry an Illegal Contact penalty of 5 yards.
- 3. There will be **NO** striking with the fist, locked hands or elbows; kicking, kneeing or meeting with knee; or striking with the heel, backside of the hand on the head, face or neck of an opponent. Acts such as these shall carry an Unnecessary Roughness Penalty. Offender shall be disqualified if flagrant.

M. Conduct & Roughness

- 1. Unsportsmanlike Conduct; Poor behavior and/or Language. Unsportsmanlike Conduct shall be penalized in the following manner: Offensive – 15 yards loss of down, Defensive – 15 yards, automatic 1st down. Second offense (same player/coach): Same penalties as first violation, ejected from game. Player must leave facility under adult supervision. Coach must leave immediately and may face suspension. If no other certified coach is present then game ends in a forfeit. Player or Coach is ineligible for next scheduled game. Coach or Player may be ejected with first penalty if actions are considered flagrant.
- 2. Unnecessary Roughness; Any player's tactics that are unnecessarily rough and any tactics that are endangering the safety of the participants shall be penalized. This includes but is not limited to; holding or tackling the ball carrier before tagging, stiff-arming by the runner, putting head down for butting purposes and unnecessary roughness in forcing a runner out of bounds. Clipping and roughing the passer would be included also. Unnecessary Roughness carries the same penalties as Unsportsmanlike Conduct.
- 3. Unsportsmanlike Conduct and Unnecessary Roughness penalties can not be declined.
- 4. Taunting and trash talking shall carry an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. Officials shall determine if a player's or coach's actions are offensive.
- 5. Begging a call: If a possible infraction occurs and players or coaches from either team, either on the field or sidelines begin yelling out (begging a call) a 5 yard penalty shall be added onto the end of the play.

IV. Penalties

A. Penalty enforcement:

1. A penalty may be accepted or rejected by the captain of the team against whom the foul was committed. If the captain refuses a penalty, the ball remains at the succeeding spot and the play just completed counts as a down.
2. When enforcing a penalty, the referee starts from the spot where the foul was committed, the previous spot or the succeeding spot, depending on the type of foul committed. The official then marks off a specified distance, which is determined by the type of foul, toward the offending team's goal line. The referee's natural walking step is approximately equal to 1 yard.
3. Violations of regulations are penalized by moving the ball a specified distance toward the goal of the team committing the foul. The distance, which the ball is moved, varies according to the violation.

B. Rules Not Specified

1. Neither a player, nor a non-player may interfere with the play by any act, which is not specifically provided for in these rules. PENALTY: The referee enforces any penalty he considers justified.
2. Any other violations and penalties will be made at the discretion of the officials.
3. All official's decisions are final and there will be no protests.

Miscellaneous:

- All players have a right to play every game and an equal amount of time if they have attended regular practices.
- Players are required to wear a mouth guard at all practices and games. A blue/white reversible jersey is required for game play.
- Playing Conditions: Field supervisor will determine if games will or will not be played. Games will be called if safety is a concern.
- Opposing parents, coaches and players should shake hands after each game.
- Wellington Recreation recommends that this age group should have in-season practices limited to one 45-60 minute session per week for Age 6-7 and one or two 60-90 minute sessions per week for Age 8-12.
- Games called due to inclement weather will not be rescheduled. It will be up to the coaches to set up a time, if any, to make up a missed game.
- Participation awards, when awarded, will be given to ALL participants.
- Parents, coaches, non-playing players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- All coaches are volunteers and as such are not employees of the Town of Wellington.
- Practice dates and times will be scheduled at the discretion of the coach.
- All coaches will be required to attend a training seminar and will be subject to a background check.
- No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be allowed or used in the parks during games or practices.
- Swearing will not be tolerated by fans, participants, or coaches. All adults need to remember that they are role models and need to be positive in their words and actions.
- A parent or fan that is loud, obnoxious, or disrupts the event will be asked to leave the premises and will be expected to comply immediately.
- Elastic Clause: The league director shall have complete charge of the Youth Sports League. Any and all situations not specifically covered by these rules shall be acted upon by the league director and all actions by the league director will be final.
- The league director reserves the right to change or amend any of the rules or regulations contained in this manual. Any questions concerning Youth Sports should be directed to:

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Youth Flag Football Penalty Chart

Penalty	Dead Ball (play stops)	Yards	Spot	Other
Illegal Equipment	N	n/a		Out until fixed
Delay of Game	Y	5	Previous	
Too Many Men	N	5	Previous	
Illegal Motion	N	5	Previous	
Illegal Shift	N	5	Previous	
Offsides	Y	5	Previous	
Illegal Run	Y	5	Previous	
Jumping	N	5	Infraction	
Flag Guarding	Y	5	Previous	Loss of down
Offensive Charging	Y	10	Infraction	
Encroachment	N	5	Previous	
Intentional Grounding	N	5	Infraction	Loss of down
Illegal Pass	N	5	Infraction	Loss of down
Illegal Contact	N	5	Previous	
Defensive Pass Interference	N	Spot of foul	Infraction	First Down
Def Pass Int in End Zone	N	Ball at 1 yd line		First Down
Offensive Pass Interference	N	10	Previous	Loss of down
Deflagging before possession	N	As pass interference	As pass interference	As pass interference
Punt Encroachment	N	10	Infraction	First Down
Charging (blocking)	N	10	Infraction	
Illegal Handoff	Y	5	Spot	Loss of down
Unsportsmanlike Conduct (O/D)	N	15	Succeeding	Loss of down/First Down
Second Unsportsmanlike	Second offense for a player or coach	Same penalties as first infraction	Ejection from game	Must leave premises immed
Unnecessary Roughness	N	15	Succeeding	Loss of down/First Down
Second Unnec Roughness	Second offense for a player or coach	Same penalties as first infraction	Ejection from game	Must leave premises immed
Kick off out of bounds	Y	n/a	Infraction or 15 yd line	
Begging a Call	N	5	Succeeding	May be Unsportsmanlike