



RULE BOOK

2026

Welcome to the City of Gardena Youth Flag Football Program. We hope that you and your child will have a wonderful experience while participating in our program. Please take a minute to read over this Rule Book and utilize it as a guide to familiarize yourself with how our games are played and how the league operates. When involved in our youth sports program please remember that you are participating in a recreational league and there may be some variations to other leagues and organizations.

- Our coaches are a combination of recreation staff along with community volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, contact our Youth Sports Coordinator at (310) 217-9537.
- Coaches will be responsible for setting practice days and times (keep in mind these are volunteer coaches, with responsibilities outside of coaching as well) and schedules may change.
- Games will be played on Saturdays and some weeknights, depending on the division. Game score and standings will not be kept in the Coach Assist division. The complete game schedule will be provided prior to the start of the season. Game days, times, locations, and practice days, times, and locations are subject to change.
- All league rules are subject to change before the season, during the season, and for playoff games.
- We have zero tolerance for negative and threatening comments or negative behavior towards staff, coaches, officials, or players. If you have a disagreement regarding an official's call, please speak to the Recreation staff after the game. Spectators will be asked to leave the facility, and the game will be stopped until the spectator in question leaves the facility.
- All games will be played at Freeman Park and Rowley Park.

Always remember that collectively we must all do our part to ensure the success of the program. This game is for the children and played by your children. Positive cheering for all teams is encouraged.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
The Players.....	1
Minimum Play Rule.....	1
5 on 5 Football	2-3
Defense.....	3
Blocking.	3
Coaches and Spectators	3-4
Defensive Penalties 10 yards	4
Offensive Penalties 10 yards.....	4
Other Penalties 5 yards.	5
Equipment.....	5-6
Time Of Game	6-7
Kickoff and Punting.....	7
Scoring.....	7
Sportsmanship Rule	7-8
Tie Game Overtime System	8
Coach Assist Division Information	9

THE PLAYERS

- A. Rosters shall not exceed 10 players per team.
- B. The game shall be played between two (2) teams with five (5) players each. A minimum of four (4) players is required to avoid a forfeit.
- C. Age divisions are as follows: Coach Assist 6-7, 8-9, and 10-12
- D. Injured players are not permitted to play or continue playing in a league game or practice.

MINIMUM PLAY RULE:

- 1. Each player must play a minimum of four (4) minutes in the Coach Assist division and five (5) minutes in all other age divisions. This will include all offensive and defensive plays in each half.
- 2. Late arriving players, if time permits, must play the minimum minutes within the mandatory substitution half of their arrival.
- 3. Injuries that preclude the player out of play from returning to the game are exceptions. Injuries that preclude the player from playing for more than one (1) play will be ruled upon at the discretion of the Youth Sports Coordinator with respect to satisfactorily meeting the requirement of the minimum play rule.
- 4. Penalty for non-compliance will be forfeiture of the game.
- 5. The Youth Sports Coordinator shall determine compliance.

5 on 5 Football

The following are the game rules that will govern our league. These rules were based on the NFL Flag Rule Book, along with some modifications.

OFFENSE

- Any offensive formation will be allowed.
- All players are eligible on offense, but no direct run by the quarterback.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four (4) downs to score a touchdown. a. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield or score a touchdown on three (3) downs, and elect to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross midfield or score a touchdown, the defensive team will start its possession from the spot where the offensive play ended.
- A 30 second play clock will be used in all divisions of play.
- The quarterback has a seven (7) 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, pitched or lateraled behind the line of scrimmage, the seven second rule is no longer in effect.
- The offensive team may not change from play or punt once they declare. Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
- Teams change sides after each quarter. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
- Teams may not run a running play in the designated No-Run zones (See Figure A). **The No-run zone rule does not apply to the Coach Assist division.** No-run zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield. No-run zones are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Running plays are not permitted in these zones. Running plays ran inside the no-run zones will be declared dead and that down will be lost. The ball will then be spotted where the play originated.
(Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

Figure A – Field (No-run zones)



- Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- Direct runs from the quarterback are not permitted.
- If the offensive player loses their flag, without it being pulled off, during an offensive play the defensive player must then touch the offensive player with one hand or two hands, for the offensive player to be considered down.
- Offensive players cannot break the offensive huddle or begin an offensive play without wearing a flag. Offensive players without a flag will have to put one on prior to the 30 second play clock expiring.
- Only one (1) player is allowed in motion when the ball is snapped. The player must be in motion, off the line of scrimmage. All motion must be parallel or backwards to the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- Players may shift positions on offense at any time, all players must still reset for one (1) second, prior to the snap.
- **Ball carriers may not leave their feet to advance the ball.** However, the ball carrier may leave their feet, and the play will continue ONLY if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player, **officials' discretion.** Jumping, diving, leaping or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding. (See page 4 for offensive penalties)

DEFENSE

- Only one (1) defensive player may rush the quarterback. That player must be declared prior to the start of each down and must be lined up seven (7) yards off the line of scrimmage. Once the ball has been “snapped” into play, that player is eligible to rush.
- Defensive players may not lineup less than two (2) yards off the line of scrimmage.
- The defensive lineup is not restricted. Any defensive formation will be allowed.

BLOCKING

Blocking is not permitted in any division.

COACHES AND SPECTATORS

- A. All coaches and players, when on the sidelines, must remain within their team box. One (1) coach may enter the field at their team's huddle during timeouts.
- B. Spectators must remain in the stands or in designated spectator areas whenever seating facilities or designated spectator areas are available. If stands are not provided, spectators will keep at least five (5) yards from the sidelines and end lines, and five (5) yards from players' sidelines.

- C. After a warning, failure to comply with A or B will result in a 10-yard penalty and said coach/team for unsportsmanlike conduct. If behavior persists, the game may be forfeited at discretion of official.
- D. Coaches will be permitted on the field as follows:

Age Division	Coaches Permitted on the Field
Coach Assist 6-7	Offense and Defense
8-9	During timeouts only
10-12	During timeouts only

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES – 10 YARDS

Penalty Types
Tackling the ball carrier
Holding the ball carrier
Blocking the ball carrier
Pushing the ball carrier
Charging the ball carrier
Bumping the ball carrier
Stripping the ball carrier
Defensive roughness + automatic first down
Flying block
Hideouts
Running over the ball carrier
Unsportsmanlike Conduct
Defensive penalty inside the 10-yard line = half the distance to the goal

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES – 10 YARDS

Penalty Types
Flag Guarding (including stiff arm) + loss of down
Hurdling + loss of down
Hideouts

OTHER PENALTIES – 5 YARDS

Penalty Types
Illegal Substitution- Offense/Defense
Offsides/False Start
Delay of Game- Offense/Defense
Tied Belt- Offense
Centered Ball- Offense
Forward pass thrown beyond the line of scrimmage, + loss of down
Line Buck

Leaving the ground – Players on offense and defense may not leave their feet to advance the ball or to make a defensive play. **On offense, the team will be penalized minus five yards and a loss of down. On defense, the penalty will be five yards and an automatic first down from the spot of the foul; offensive coach may choose to accept or decline the penalty.** An exception to this rule is that both the offense and defensive player can jump to catch/intercept a thrown pass.

***In the Coach Assist 6-7 division all penalties will be enforced in an instructional manner. Called penalties will be explained to the player and coach, as needed. Repeated penalties shall then be called, and yardage will be marked.**

EQUIPMENT

- A. All game equipment, such as GAME BALLS, FLAGS, etc. will be furnished by the City of Gardena Recreation Division.
- B. Jerseys: Players must wear matching-colored jerseys with numbers that are issued by the City of Gardena Recreation Division. At the start of each play all jerseys must be tucked into shorts one (1) inch above flag football belt line. Players not wearing their jersey will be declared ineligible to play in that game. Permission may be granted for players to play without their jersey if their jersey is damaged or lost. This permission may be granted by the Youth Sports Coordinator and is only temporary until the jersey situation is resolved.
- C. Shorts: Each player must wear uniform shorts that are issued by the City of Gardena Recreation Division. The shorts must be a different color from the flags.
- D. FLAG BELT: All divisions shall use a regulation three (3) flag belt system. Flags must be a contrasting color to their opponents' flags.
- E. SHOES: Shoes must be worn; bare feet will not be permitted. Screw in or metal cleats are illegal. Use of molded rubber or multi-purpose shoes is recommended.

F. GAME BALLS: The game ball sizes shall be as follow:

Age Division	Game Ball Size
Coach Assist 6-7	Pee Wee
8-9	Pee Wee
10-12	Junior

G. Personal Protective Equipment, such as knee guards, arm guards, etc. shall be inspected by officials prior to each game. No regulation on football equipment such as helmets, pads, etc. will be allowed. Shoes with metal, ceramic screw-in or detachable cleats are illegal.

H. MOUTH GUARDS: Recommended for all participants.

GAME TIME

- A. The length of the game is listed on the table below, **see Figure B**. During running time, the clock shall be stopped by an official for a time-out or after any score. After a time-out the clock shall start on the next snap. After a score, the clock shall start on the change of possession.
- B. During the final two (2) minutes of the fourth quarter the clock will stop for the situations listed below, **see Figure C**.
- C. Each team will receive two (2) timeouts per half. Unused first half timeouts do not carry over to the second half. Each team is entitled to one (1) time-out during each overtime period. Unused time-outs may not carry over into overtime periods. Timeouts shall be one (1) minute in length.
- D. Game time is forfeit time.

Figure B- Time of Game

Division	Time of Game
Coach Assist 6-7	Four 8-minute quarters
8-9	Four 10-minute quarters
10-12	Four 10-minute quarters

Figure C- Two-Minute Warning Clock Stoppage

Stoppage	Restarting the Game Clock
Two-minute warning	Dependent on the previous play
Incomplete Pass	Restarts on the snap
Out of bounds	Restarts on the snap
Scoring play (touchdown or safety)	Restarts when the offensive team begins its series of downs
Team time out	Restarts on the snap
First down	Dependent on the previous play
Penalty administration	Dependent on the previous play (exception: delay of game-restarts on the snap)
Change of possession	Dependent on the previous play

KICKOFF and PUNTING

Kickoffs and punting the ball are not permitted in any grade division.

SCORING

- A. When a team scores, they can choose to attempt a one (1) point conversion from five (5) yards out from the goal line or a two (2) point conversion from ten (10) yards out from the goal line. Afterwards, the team on defense will then begin its series of downs from their own 5-yard line.
- B. Point After Touchdown – Passes intercepted by the defense are live and may be ran back to the opposite end zone for the number of points that were being attempted at the beginning of the play (1 or 2 points).

SCORING PLAYS

Type of Play	Point value
Touchdown	6
Safety	2
Conversion (from 5-yard line)	1
Conversion (from 10-yard line)	2

SPORTSMANSHIP RULE

If a team is leading by a score of 24 points or more, the “running time” clock will be used. The clock will only stop for charged time outs and official time outs. Should the

lead become less than a 24-point margin, the game will convert back to regulation timing.

TIE GAME OVERTIME SYSTEM- Playoff and Championship Games Only (Applies only to 8-9 and 10-12 Age Divisions)

The SCMAF tiebreaker system will be used when a game is tied after four (4) periods. Regular SCMAF flag football-playing rules apply with the following exceptions:

A coin toss will be held immediately following regulation play. The home team will call “heads” or “tails”. The winner of the toss shall choose one (1) of the following options:

1. Offense or defense, with the offense at the opponent’s 20-yard line to start the first series.
2. Which end of the field shall be used for both series of that overtime period.

The loser of the toss shall exercise the remaining option for the first extra period and shall have the first choice of the two (2) options for subsequent even-numbered extra periods. (Note: The winner of the toss may not defer their choice.)

- A. Extra Periods: An extra period shall consist of two series (one (1) by each team) with each team putting the ball in play at the 20-yard line (unless moved by penalty). Both series are played toward the same goal line.
- B. Team Series: Teams which begin their overtime period outside of the 20-yard line due to penalty will NOT receive any first downs for crossing the zone-line-to-gains in the process. Teams may receive another set of downs by penalty only (automatic first down).
- C. The team that scores the most points in the overtime period is declared the winner.
- D. An intercepted pass is live and may be run back for a score. The game will be declared over if the defensive team is successful in returning the intercepted pass for a score.
- E. If both teams fail to score during the first overtime period, the game will then head to a sudden death. A coin toss will be held immediately following the first overtime. The home team will call “heads” or “tails”. The winner of the coin toss will begin on offense at their own 20-yard line. The first team that scores will be declared the winner. This process will be repeated until a winner is declared.
- F. Tie Game Overtime System will only be used during playoff and championship games. Regular season games that are tied after four (4) quarters of play will be recorded as a half win/ half loss in the standings.

Coach Assist Division Information

- No-run zones are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.
- Defenders may not rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield.
- One coach for each team is permitted on the field pre and post snap to help their players, but post snap at a safe distance during the play. Coaches may not run with the play. 1st offense = warning, 2nd offense = 5-yard penalty.
- If the ball falls to, or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled a “Do Over” with no loss of down, once per down. On a second occurrence, the down is consumed.
- Defenders must line up at least five (5) yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap. If the ball is spotted on or inside the 5-yard line, the distance is reduced to three (3) yards.