



2021 Non-Contact Rulebook Changes

Rule 2, Section 2, Article 2.

Rule 2: Field and Equipment

Section 2 - The Ball

For youth leagues / recreational play it is recommended that appropriately sized footballs are used for both male and female players to accommodate the players abilities (see examples below).

-Nike JR Pewee – U8 + U10

-Nike Vaper One Junior Size + Nike JR Pewee – U12

-Nike Vaper One Youth Size + Nike Vaper one Junior Size – U14 + U16

-Nike Vaper One Official Size + Nike Vaper One Youth Size – U18

For senior men's and women's leagues / recreational play they will typically use whatever ball they are comfortable with unless otherwise specified by the league.

For regional, national & international tournaments or championships the ball(s) to be used will be specified in the Technical Package for that event.

We are now recommending the use of Nike balls.

Reason for change: Alignment with Nike & T. Litzen partnership with Football Canada

Rule 2, Section 4, Article 3.

Rule 2: Field and Equipment

Section 4 – Uniforms

Players must not wear shorts or pants that have pockets, belt, press studs or clips of any kind. Shorts or pants must be of a color **different from** the flags, to avoid camouflage of flags. Players cannot tape or secure their shorts or pants to meet this regulation. Short pockets may be sewn shut so that an opponent's finger does not get caught and passes inspection of the game official.

Flags must be a different color from the players shorts or pants.

Reason for change: Avoid Camouflaging the flags to player's uniform.



Rule 2, Section 5, Article 6.

**Rule 2: Field and Equipment
Section 5 – Player Equipment**

Sunglasses are now permitted

Sunglasses are now permitted to be worn during play.

Reason for change: Agreed that it is not a hazard to player safety to permit sunglasses.

Rule 2, Section 5, Article 11.

**Rule 2: Field and Equipment
Section 5 – Player Equipment**

Play Cards, Play Books, and play sheets may be used if safely secured during play.

Play Cards, Play Books, and Play sheets are now permitted.

Reason for change: Agreed that different variations of Play sheets are acceptable player equipment as long as they are secured during play.

Rule 2, Section 5, Article 12.

**Rule 2: Field and Equipment
Section 5 – Player Equipment**

Soft headgear is permitted as long as it has not been tampered with or contains metal/hard plastic components.

Soft Shell headgear is now permitted.

Reason for change: Safety

Rule 3, Section 2, Article 1.

**Rule 3: Team Members
Section 2 – Substitutions**

Substitute players may enter the field only from their bench area and only when the ball is dead.

Offensive players may not enter the field once the center is prepared to snap the ball. Defensive players can move on and off the field up until the snap of the ball. The penalty for violating these rules is illegal substitution.



Better defined illegal substitution.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 3, Section 3, Article 2.

Rule 3: Team Members

Section 3 – Captains

Only a team captain is entitled to an explanation of the rules, including choices for penalty options. Only a team captain **or head coach** is entitled to request an equipment check.

Added clarification that Head coaches are entitled to requesting equipment check.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 4, Section 5, Article 3.

Rule 4: Timing/Overtime/Timeouts

Section 5 – Timeouts

Timeouts can be called by any official or any player, coach, or manager on or off the field.

Further clarified who can call timeouts and from where.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 5, Section 1, Article 3.

Rule 5: Game Procedures

Section 1 – Pre-Game Conference

The winner of the coin toss shall choose if they would like to start with the ball, choose a side, or defer their choice to the beginning of the 2nd half.

Added option for coin toss winner to defer choice to 2nd.

Reason for change: Gives more choice to winner of coin toss.

Rule 5, Section 2, Article 3.

Rule 5: Game Procedures

Section 2 – General Play

There is a 1-yard neutral zone extending 1 yard forward from the Line of Scrimmage that the defensive players cannot line up in or enter before the snap of the ball.



Defined neutral zone.

Reason for change: Further definition and clarification

Rule 5, Section 2, Article 11.

Rule 5: Game Procedures

Section 2 – General Play

In youth play (U18 and below) forward passes/pitches/handoffs are not allowed behind the line of scrimmage. U20 and over forward passes/pitches/handoffs are allowed however, once received the offense can no longer make another pass/pitch/handoff to another offensive player.

Handoffs behind the line of scrimmage can now be forward in U20 and over. However, only one forward pass is allowed per play.

Reason for change: Alignment of international rules for older age groups. The reason forward handoffs are not allowed in U18 and below is to promote skill development of quarterbacks in younger age groups to confidently be able to throw beyond the line of scrimmage.

Rule 5, Section 2, Article 12.

Rule 5: Game Procedures

Section 2 – General Play

Legal Forward Pass – **in U18 and below** the ball must be thrown at or behind the line of scrimmage **by an offensive player** and received across the line of scrimmage.

Adjusting definition of legal forward pass to accommodate rule changes to U20 and over in regards to forward passes/pitches/handoffs behind the line of scrimmage.

Reason for change: Clarification and adjustment from previous rule change.

Rule 8, Section 2, Article 4.

Rule 8: Control and Possession of Ball

Section 2 – Possession of the Ball

Both offensive and defensive players are not allowed to slap or strip the ball from a ball carrier while it is in their hands or from a receiver who is catching the ball.



Clarification of wording to not allow both offensive and defensive players to slap or strip the ball from a ball carrier/receiver.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 9, Section 1, Article 2.

Rule 9: The Huddle

Section 1 – Huddle

The team on offense has **twenty (20)** seconds to put the ball in play. The official will give a reasonable period of time for both teams to regroup and will then whistle the **twenty (20)** seconds period to start. If the ball is not put in play before the end of the **twenty (20)** seconds, the offense will receive a penalty for a time count violation.

Reduced play clock from 30 seconds to 20.

Reason for change: Speed up the pace of the game and reduce impact of purposeful draining of the play clock. Teams no longer need 30 seconds to prepare as flag football is not as new anymore; younger age groups may keep the 30 second play clock if need be.

Rule 14, Section 2

Rule 14: Passing

Section 2 – Legal Forward Pass

- 2.1 A legal forward pass is a ball thrown by an offensive player behind the Line of Scrimmage towards the opponent's goal line to another offensive player who is across the Line of Scrimmage.
- 2.2 Any forward pass that violates these rules will be treated as an illegal forward pass.

Elimination of Section 2; Including articles 1 and 2

Reason for change: Eliminated Redundancy

Rule 16, Section 7, Article 2

Rule 16: Complete/ Incomplete Passes

Section 7 – Blocked or Deflected Forward Pass



On a forward pass thrown by an offensive player that is tipped / blocked by a defensive player and is caught by the same offensive player behind the Line of Scrimmage they can no longer attempt another forward pass and **must run with the ball across the Line of Scrimmage.**

Clarification that they must run with the ball and that no forward passes may be attempted in this scenario.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 18, Section 1, Article 4

Rule 18: Sportsmanship/Roughing

Section 1 – Sportsmanship

After the center sets the ball for the snap, a defender cannot move directly in front of the center and prevent the center from moving forward after the snap. Any defensive player must be at least three (3) yards from the center **directly in front** of them or one (1) yard on either side at the time of the snap if intending to assume a stationary position.

Added “Directly in front” for clarification purposes.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 21, Section 4, Article 1

Rule 21: Penalties

Section 4 – General/Major Penalties

Illegal Substitution - **Any offensive player substitution after the center is prepared to snap the ball and any defensive player substitution during the play.**

Further defined illegal substitution from the Offence and the Defence.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 21, Section 3, Article 1

Rule 21: Penalties

Section 3 – Offensive Penalties



Delay of Game- ball is not snapped within 20 seconds, play whistled dead.

Changed delay of game timeframe to reflect previous changes to the play clock.

Reason for change: Clarification and reflecting previous play clock rule changes.

Rule 21, Section 3, Article 11

Rule 21: Penalties

Section 3 – Offensive Penalties

Illegal Forward Pass – a forward pass that is caught before a player crosses the LOS, a second forward pass during a play or a forward pass after the ball has crossed the Line of Scrimmage, play whistled dead (Loss of Down no yards applied).

Added Loss of down with no yards applied to Illegal Forward Pass Penalty.

Reason for change: Clarification

Rule 23, Section 1, Article 2

Rule 23: No Run Zone

Section 1 – No run Zone

Fake handoff or play action fakes will be penalized as misleading tactics in the No Run Zone.

Eliminated the rule of penalizing fake handoffs and play action fakes in the No Run Zone.

Reason for change: Encourages greater strategy and flexibility in gameplay. Greater alignment with international rules

Other Rulebook Changes:

- Replaced “Referee” terms throughout the rulebook to read as “Officials”
- Looked to cut out redundant language wherever possible.
- Language updates to 5 on 5 and 7 on 7 rulebooks to read better.
- Addition of penalties section to 7 on 7 rulebook. (Modelled after Flag Penalties)