

RULES

- A coin toss determines first possession.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to cross midfield, with the option to go for it on 4th down. Each team also has three (3) plays, and the option to go for it on 4th down to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score and/or get a 1st down, the opposing team takes possession of the ball where the offensive team's 4th down play ended
- Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced. Each team has one (1) 60-second time out in the second half only
- Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- Half Time...
 - Teams change sides after the first 25 minutes, but possession does not change. As soon as players switch sides, the game will resume.

PLAYER GAMES & SCHEDULES

- Teams must always field a minimum of seven (7) players. Note Rule Change: The following age groups will play 9 on 9, 4-8, 9-12 and 13-15. Note: If one team has a total of 7 players and the opposing team has a total of 9 players, both teams will play with a lesser number of players than both teams have present on the field.
- The Age Determination Date for a Backyard Flag Football player is the actual age of a child six months prior to the start date of the upcoming season.
NOTE: Backyard Flag Football reserves the right to move/keep a player down in a lower age group if we feel the player is not ready to advance and considering other determining factors.

SEASON AWARDS

- Player of the Week Medals and Certificates will be awarded to the 4-8 and 9-12 year old division players only.
- Each player in the 4-8 and 9-12 year old divisions will receive one medal and certificate per season.
- After distributing the Player of the Week Medals to the 13-15 year old division players for many years, the players in the age groups were disinterested in receiving the medals. After much discussion with coaches, players, and parents within the 13-15 year old division, it was decided it was in the best interest of

the players to present this age group with End of Season trophies only in lieu of the medals and certificates.

PLAYERS ABILITY TO PLAY UP IN AN OLDER AGE GROUP

- If a player expresses interest in playing up in an older age group, consideration will be given with the approval of said player's parent/guardian (this consideration will only be given if said player's date of birth is in within one year of the minimum age for that division).

PLAYERS ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A YOUNGER AGE GROUP

- Upon a request from any player's parent/guardian, a player that expresses interest in playing in a younger division for the betterment of said player, consideration will be given after an in depth conversation with the parent/guardian presenting the request (this consideration will only be given if said player's date of birth is in within one year of the maximum age for that division).
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TIE BREAKERS FOR STANDINGS IN REGULAR SEASON

- If there is a tie in the Standings at the end of the Regular Season, the following tie breaker scenarios will be the determining factor...
 - Head-to-Head Play – Among tied teams
 - Number of Wins and the Winning Percentage of the teams each tied team has played in the regular seasons win percentage
 - Number of shut outs the teams in the tie breaker have.
 - If the above still results in a tie, both teams will be awarded a 1st Place Trophy and end the Regular Season as Co-Champions. A coin toss between the 2 teams that are tied will determine who will be the #1 Team in the Playoffs.
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TIMING/OVERTIME – PLAYOFFS ONLY

- Games are played with a 50-minute running clock. Note: Game times are subject to change depending on the number of games and season being played.
- Each team will receive the ball at midfield, and they will have 4 plays to score. If the team does not score, a ball marker will be placed where the team changes possession. The opposing team will have an opportunity to score or move the football further towards the opposing team's goal line.

The team that advances the furthest in four downs is the winner.

- If a team scores a TD and the opposing team does not, the team that scores will be determined the winner.
- **Overtime in the Playoffs:** A coin toss will determine whether a team receives the ball first or if they elect to play defense. Once a goal has been established for overtime play, we will not switch sides of the field for any reason.
 - Each team will receive the ball at mid-field, and they will have 4 plays to score a Touchdown.
 - If both teams score, they must go for a 2-point conversion.
 - If both teams score a Touchdown and make their 2-point conversion, we will have a 2nd overtime with the same rules as the 1st overtime.
 - If neither team scores a Touchdown – the winner will be determined by the team that got closest to the end zone.

TIMEOUTS

- There are no timeouts in the 1st half of a game – continuation of play following halftime.
- Each team will have 1 one-minute timeout in the 2nd half of each game and the clock will stop with 1 minute remaining in the 2nd half.
- The clock will stop under 1 minute for the following:
 - Incomplete pass
 - Player steps out of bounds
 - Defensive penalty (NOT an offensive penalty)
 - Change of possession

SCORING

- **Touchdown:** 6 points
- **Extra Points:** 1 point (played from 5-yard line), 2 points (played from 12-yard line), or 3 points (played from the 15-yard line)
- **Safety:** 2 points

MERCY RULE

- When a team is up by 21 points at the end of the 1st half of a game, the team that is down gets the ball at the start of the 2nd half regardless of who had the ball at the end of the 1st half. In addition, the team trailing by 21 or more points will have the ball in the 2nd half for as long as it takes that team to

score a TD. Having the Mercy Rule in effect enables teams that are struggling to score to have an opportunity to run more offensive plays; therefore, teams will be able to work on more offensive plays than they would normally be able to work on if the Mercy Rule were not in effect.

- When a team is trailing by 21 points at any point during a game, the opposing team automatically gets the ball and has possession of the ball **UNTIL THEY SCORE A TOUCHDOWN!**
- **NOTE:** If a team is winning by 21 points and the defensive team intercepts a pass, they can return it for a Touchdown; however, once a team is ahead by 28 points or more, the team that is trailing gets the ball **UNTIL THEY SCORE A TOUCHDOWN!**

If an interception occurs while a team is up by 28 points, as soon as the interception occurs, the ball is dead (which means the player cannot advance the ball.)

When a team is trailing by more than 28 points at any time, the ball will be placed on the opposing team's 15-yard line, and they will maintain possession of the ball **UNTIL THEY SCORE A TOUCHDOWN!**

REMINDER...When the Mercy Rule is in effect, the defensive team **CANNOT BLITZ ANY PLAYER AT ANY TIME.**

NOTE: THERE IS NO MERCY RULE IN THE PLAYOFF GAMES!

RUNNING

- CENTER SNEAKS ARE ALLOWED. NOTE: THE BALL MUST TOUCH THE "QUARTERBACKS HANDS" BEFORE THE CENTER CAN RUN THE BALL.
- THE QUARTERBACK CAN LINE UP DIRECTLY BEHIND THE CENTER OR IN SHOTGUN FORMATION.
- "No-running zones," located 5 yards from each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield, are designed to avoid short-yardage and power-running situations.
- Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush. Note: The ball carrier must cross the line of scrimmage to constitute a run. Reminder: The rusher can cross the line of scrimmage at any time if he or she starts from the rush marker.
- If a player is running with the football and the ball carrier's flag belt falls off, the whistle is blown, and the play is dead. The ball is marked where the runner's flag belt came off.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no diving).
- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled,

not where the ball is.

QUARTERBACK RUNNING – 4-8, 9-12, AND 13-15 YEAR OLD GROUPS

- The quarterback is allowed to run the ball once every 4 downs. What constitutes a run by a quarterback is any player lining up directly behind center or in shot gun formation who has possession of the football and crosses over the line of scrimmage. Once a player who has possession of the football crosses over the line of scrimmage, any player on defense can automatically rush into the offensive backfield.

RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Two players are the maximum number of players permitted to move in motion at any time.
- If a player is receiving the football and the ball carrier's flag belt falls off, the whistle is blown, and the play is dead. The ball is marked where the receiver's flag belt came off. A player is considered ineligible to catch a pass if his/her belt is not on.
- A player can be moving towards the line of scrimmage, or along the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.

PASSING

- All passes must be forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage to constitute a legal forward pass (the definition of a forward pass is especially important in the "No Run" Zone). Screen passes are legal.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a 7-second "pass clock". If a pass is not thrown within the 7 seconds, play is dead, loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule no longer is in effect.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Note: If a team fails to make a first down or a touchdown, the ball will be spotted accordingly.

INTERCEPTIONS

- All interceptions can be returned, including extra point conversions. For example, if a team is going for a 3-point conversion and the pass is intercepted and returned for a touchdown, the team returning the ball gets three points. If a team is going for a 2-point conversion and the pass is intercepted and returned for a touchdown, the team returning the ball gets two points. If a team is only going for a 1-point conversion and the pass is intercepted and returned, the team will get one point.
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DEAD BALLS

- The ball must be snapped between the legs, not off to one side, to start play. NOTE: In the 4-8 year old division ONLY, the Center can center the ball from the side.
 - Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
 - Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - *Ball carrier’s flag is pulled.*
 - *Ball carrier steps out of bounds.*
 - *Touchdown or safety is scored.*
 - *Ball carrier’s knee hits the ground.*
 - *Ball carrier’s flag falls out.*
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FUMBLES

- There are no fumbles or stripping of the football. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.
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OFFENSE

- Each team will have the choice after third down to either turn the ball over and the ball will be placed at the opponent’s 5 yard line or go for it on fourth down. If a team fails to make the first down or touchdown on fourth down the ball will be turned over on downs and spotted accordingly.

QUICK SNAP - ON OFFENSE

- Out of courtesy to the team on defense, the team on offense must give the defensive team time to substitute players and to get the players set before the offensive team can hike the ball.
 - **NOTE:** This does not mean the defensive team can take 5 minutes to get set – 1-2 minutes is the maximum time needed.
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RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK

- All players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of 15 yards from the line of scrimmage in the 4-8 year old division, 15 yards from the line of scrimmage in the 9-12 year old division and 20 yards from the line of scrimmage in the 13-15 division when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
 - Once the ball is handed off, the 15-yard rule, or the 20-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may go beyond the line of scrimmage. Remember, no blocking or tackling is allowed.
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SPORTSMANSHIP/ROUGHING

- If the field-monitor or referee witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. **FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.**
 - Any foul language/cursing or trash talking by a player or coach will constitute an automatic 15-yard penalty, loss of down and ejection from the game. (Trash talking is talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, or spectators) NOTE: If a player is ejected from a game, the severity of the ejection will be discussed with the referees, coaches, and league president after the game to determine if the player is eligible to play in the next game.
 - **Coaches:** In the 4–8-year-old division (only) two coaches are always permitted on the field. In the 9-12 year old divisions one coach may be on the field if he or she is off the field at the time the ball is snapped. If not a 5-yard penalty will be called.
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PLAYER OR PLAYERS IN MOTION

- Two players can move simultaneously at any time if they do not cross the line of scrimmage before the ball has been centered. A maximum of 2 players can move towards the line of scrimmage before the ball has been centered.
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SUBSTITUTION RULE

- If a coach is deemed not rotating players in the lineup in a regular rotation, an official will blow the whistle and call a dead ball foul on the offensive or defensive team guilty of the infraction and a 15-yard penalty along with a loss of down will occur. Note: Referees discretion!
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FLAG PULLING

- When a player pulls a flag, the flag must be dropped on the ground and spotted at the point it was pulled. If a flag is pulled and thrown, a 5 yard penalty will be called from the spot of the foul.
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ATTIRE

- A protective mouthpiece must be worn during the games.
 - All flags must be worn on top of the game jersey – they cannot be worn under your game jersey or tied during the game
 - Players must always wear Football or Baseball Gloves
 - Towels may be worn – but they must be tucked in
 - No jewelry
 - No metal cleats.
 - Players are not allowed to cut the length of the team jersey provided.
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KICKOFFS/BLOCKING

- THERE ARE NO KICKOFFS AND NO BLOCKING IS ALLOWED.
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PLAYOFF STIPULATION

- If a team forfeits a game or does not have a minimum of 7 players in the final week of regular season games, they automatically surrender their right to participate in the Playoffs!
 - **Backyard Sports implemented this rule to prevent teams that do not have a chance to move up or down in the standings from acting in this manner and then expecting to jump into the Playoffs without any consequences.**
 - **No players may be added to the rosters following Week #3 of the regular season.**
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GAME CANCELLATIONS

- Backyard Sports reserves the right to cancel any game due to field, weather or unforeseen medical conditions and permit issues at any time during the regular season and playoffs. We set out to play 6 regular season games plus the playoffs and do our best to get all the games played. If there is a cancellation, we will do everything in our power to make up the cancelled game(s). In the event we cannot accomplish this task, the game(s) will be cancelled and not made up.

- In the event of any disruption to the Fall/Winter or Spring/Summer Schedules due to COVID restrictions/shutdowns implemented by Allegheny County and/or Governor Wolf, Dr. Levine, and the State of Pennsylvania, Backyard Flag Football will be unable to make up any games or extend the season past the end date stated on the registration form due to field permit restrictions. No refunds will be issued as stated on our registration form.
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PENALTIES

- The referee will call all penalties.
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DEFENSE

- Offsides – 5-yard penalty
 - Pass Interference
 - Defensive – Ball will be placed where defensive pass interference occurred.
 - Offensive – 10-yard penalty
 - Illegal Contact (holding, blocking, etc.) - 10 yards and automatic first down
 - Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has ball) - 10 yards and automatic firstdown
 - Illegal Rushing (starting rush from inside 7-yard marker) - 10 yards/from spot of ball
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct (live ball) - 10 yards from previous spot
 - Unsportsmanlike Conduct (dead ball) - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Steal/Strike/Attempt to Steal Ball - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Trip an Opponent - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Contact with Opponent on Ground - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Throwing Runner to Ground – 15 yards from spot of foul and automatic ejection
 - Hurdle another Player - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Drive or Run into Player - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Clipping - 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Tackling - 10 yards plus automatic first down from the previous spot
 - Roughing the Passer – (hitting the Quarterbacks arm while throwing the football) 10 yards from spot of foul
 - Illegal Use of Hands - 10 yards from spot of foul
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OFFENSE

- Illegal Motion (more than two players moving, false start, etc.) - 5 yards and loss of down.
- Illegal Forward Pass (pass received behind line of scrimmage) - loss of down
- (only applied in “No Run” Zone)
- Offensive Pass Interference (illegal pick play, pushing, off/away defender) - 10 yards and loss of down
- Illegal Use of Hands - 10 yards from spot of foul unless it is behind the line
- Flag Guarding - This penalty is a spot foul. “10-yard penalty from the spot of the foul and loss of down.”
- Delay of Game - Clock stops, 10 yards and loss of down.
- Encroachment (dead or live ball) - 5 yards from previous spot
- False Start (dead ball) - 5 yards from previous spot
- Illegal Snap (dead ball) - 5 yards from previous spot
- Player Out of Bounds when Ball is Snapped - 5 yards from previous spot
- Illegal Shift - 5 yards from previous spot
- Intentional Grounding - 5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
- Illegal use of hands (stiff arming, blocking) – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
- Diving (diving toward the end zone or first down) – 10 yards from the line of scrimmage and loss of down
- Helping the Runner - 5 yards from spot of foul

Playoff Tie Breaker Rule

1. Head-to-head play
2. Opponents winning percentage.
3. Total combined points of opponents

NOTE:

There is no tie breaker that involves number of points scored or number of points allowed.