

TIFTAREA YMCA YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL

RULES AND REGULATIONS

(Revised 09/2026)

A. Governing Body

- a. The governing bodies are the Tiftarea YMCA and the Athletic Advisory Committee (hereafter indicated as AAC).
- b. The AAC shall meet as called, and has the power to act upon any rule or situation in regards to player/spectator behavior (such decisions are subject to final approval by the Tiftarea YMCA).
- c. Ample notice must be given for all meetings, and a simple majority of those present will constitute a decision. The AAC chairman will vote only in case of a tie; a telephone vote is permissible.

B. The Field

- a. The field dimensions are 40 yards in length and 20 yards in width (3-6 year olds), 60 yards in length and 25 yards in width (7-9 year olds), and 80 yards in length and 40 yards in width (10-12 year olds).
- b. The field will be divided into zones at 8 yard intervals for the 3-6 age group, 12 yard intervals for ages 7-9, and 15 yard intervals for the 10 and older. Intervals will reach from goal line to goal line.
- c. The end zone will be 5-10 yards in length.

NOTE: Please see playing rules section for discussion of line to gain zones.

C. Equipment

- a. Each team must use matching shirts with a number on the back.
- b. An official youth game football (TDJ) will be used for all games (supplied by YMCA).
- c. Players may wear cleats with rubber spikes only, or a rubber-soled, sneaker type of shoe.
- d. Any equipment which, in the opinion of the referee, would confuse or endanger other players is illegal.
- e. Each player must wear a flag belt with a flag on each hip (supplied by YMCA).
- f. Shirts must be tucked in prior to game, and during game.
- g. **Shorts should be either black or of a contrasting color to the flags.**

NOTE: Securing a flag belt in any way which hinders de-flagging is illegal and will be penalized.

PENALTY: 15 yards and possible disqualification.

D. Substitutions

- a. No substitute shall enter the game during a down or between downs.
- b. Any number of substitutes may replace players by coming directly from their team area.
- c. No substitute may enter and then withdraw, or vice-versa, unless a dead ball occurs.

PENALTY: substitution infraction, 5 yard penalty.

E. Playing Rules

a. Teams and Coaches

- i. For ages 3-6 each team shall have up to seven (7) players and up to 3 coaches on field at all times. For ages 7-9 each team shall have 6 players and one (1) coach on the field at all times. For ages 10-12 each team shall have 5 players and one (1) coach on the field at all times. Coaches may communicate with his/her team until the huddle is broken. **After the huddle is broken, the coach must stay at least 10 yards behind his/her team's back players.**
- ii. For ages 13 and up, each team shall have six (6) players on the field and one (1) coach on the sidelines at all times.
- iii. Five (5) players are required to avoid forfeit. Once other players arrive, players should be entered in the game using the correct substitution rule. (With the exception of the 10-12 year old age group)

- iv. The coach may communicate with his/her team until the huddle is broken, once the huddle is broken for ages 7 and up, there may be no communication between the coach and team within 10 yards.
- v. If any intentional disruption by the coach occurs, the coach will be removed to the sideline or from the game entirely.

PENALTY: coach infraction, 5 yard penalty.

b. Field of Play

- i. For the 3-6 age groups, play begins with the ball placed on the offensive team's own 10 yard line. For 7-12 and older age groups, play begins on the offensive team's own 12(15) yard line. The team that won the coin toss will have the option to be on offense at this time, if they decline they will have the ball to begin the second half.
- ii. For the 3-6 age groups, the playing field is divided into 4 10 yard zones, which are line to gain markers. For the 7 and older age groups, the playing field is divided into (12)15 yard line zones, which are line to gain markers.
- iii. Each team will have four (4) consecutive downs to advance to the next zone. A new series of downs is awarded when a team moves into the next zone. In case of penalty: the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series is the zone line to gain.
- iv. On the 4th down, if the offensive team elects to punt the ball to the opposing team, it must be announced to the referee. At this time, the ball is advanced to the 10 yard line for 3-6 or 12(15) yard line for 7-12 on the other side of the field.

EXCEPTION: the ball may not be moved inside the opponent's 10 yard line.

F. Player Conduct

- a. The game officials and park supervisor will have complete jurisdiction within the rules and will be supported by the YMCA and the AAC.
- b. Profane language and other unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated, and may result in a team penalty and/or ejection from the game.
- c. Any player ejected from a game will follow the YMCA ejection policy.
 - i. If ejection occurs in the first half of the game, the player will be removed for the rest of the game.
 - ii. If ejection occurs in the second half, the player will be removed for the rest of the game, as well as sit out the first half of the next game.

G. Periods & Time Factors

- a. A coin toss will determine who will get the ball to start the game. The captain winning the toss will have the option to get the ball first in the first half or the second half. The captain not winning the toss will choose which goal to defend.
- b. Grace Period and Game Times
 - i. Games are scheduled by the YMCA and will typically be played on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays(potentially a Saturday) unless weather or other extreme circumstances arise.
 - ii. There will be a 10 minute grace period for the first game of the day. Supervisors and staff will officially call the game 10 minutes after start time.
- c. Five (5) players on each team must be present for play to begin and to avoid forfeit. Once other players arrive, they should be entered in the game with correct substitution.
- d. Playing Time
 - i. For ages 3-6, playing time will be two halves lasting 13 minutes.
 - ii. For ages 7 and older, playing time will be two halves lasting 18 minutes.

- iii. The clock will run continuously throughout play until the last 2 minutes of each half. At this time, the clock will be stopped for touchdown, extra point, safety, timeout, out of bounds, incomplete pass, and penalty.
- iv. Players MUST play at least 50% of total game time. This rule applies to all players who attend practice regularly and exhibits a proper attitude. Each player must come out of the game for at least two minutes of each game (exception 3-6-year-old players). **Failure to comply with the rules will result in forfeiture of game.**
- v. Halftime will be five minutes long.
- e. Each team will be allowed two (2) charged timeouts, with a maximum of one minute in length, per half, at any time during the half.

H. Offense

- a. All plays from scrimmage must be started by a legal snap from a point on the inbounds line.
- b. A legal snap shall pass between the snapper's legs, or from the side, from his/her position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion, resulting in the ball leaving the hands. The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may not change the ball position or simulate a snap. Ages 3-6 the ball can touch the ground between center and QB and not be a fumble. For ages 7-12 the ball will be dead where it hits the ground.
PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards.
- c. No offensive player shall make a false start. An infraction of this rule may be penalized, whether or not the ball is snapped, and the penalty for any resulting encroachment or contact foul shall be cancelled.
PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards.
- d. In a snap preceded by a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in a legal position without movement of feet, body, head, or arms for at least one full second before the snap.
PENALTY: Illegal shift, 5 yards.
 - i. One offensive player may be in motion from side to side but shall not move in a forward motion to the line of scrimmage.
PENALTY: Illegal motion, 5 yards.
- e. The offensive team must have at least three (3) players for ages (7 and up) and four (4) Players for (3-6) on their scrimmage line at the snap; the remaining players must either be on their scrimmage line or behind their backfield line. All players must stay inbounds.
- f. **Blocking (there will be no moving blocks)**
PENALTY: personal foul, 10 yards.
- g. All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. A runner may pass the ball backward at any time, and a backward pass may be caught by any player and advanced. A backward pass or fumble behind the line of scrimmage is a dead ball when it touches the ground. If a runner past the line of scrimmage fumbles a ball forward into the opponent's end zone, it is ruled as a touchback. A backward pass or fumble in the offensive team's end zone is ruled a safety unless caught in flight by the defense; in which case it will be ruled as a touchdown.
- h. A legal forward pass must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage, there can only be one forward pass per down.
- i. Illegal forward pass:
 - i. Passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - ii. Ball is intentionally grounded to avoid loss of yardage.
 - iii. Passer catches his/her own untouched pass.
 - iv. More than one forward pass per down.
PENALTY: 5 yards from the spot of the foul, **and** loss of down.

- j. A pass is complete when it is caught by a player with at least one foot inbounds at the time of the catch.
- k. Quarterback will have 10 seconds to pass the ball from the snap. Will count down from 8
PENALTY: loss of down and 5 yards
- l. Pass interference rules will be the same as GHSA.
- m. **PENALTY:** 10 yards and automatic 1st down
- n. The offensive team will have **30 seconds** between plays, if time exceeds this amount a delay of game will be called.
PENALTY: Delay of game, 5 yards.
- o. Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for the opponent to pull or remove the flag belt.
PENALTY: 10 yards.

I. Defense

- a. The defensive line must be at least 1
- b. yards from the offensive line. Indicated by cone
- c. Defensive players may not initiate contact to opponent or ball carrier. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official.
PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
- d. The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt.
PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
- e. Defensive player cannot de-flag a player before they have possession of the ball.
PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
- f. If an offensive player inadvertently loses his/her flag belt during a play (before they have the ball in their possession), a one hand tag must be used.
 - i. The tagger may leave his/her feet in order to make the tag.
 - ii. Pushing, striking, slapping, and holding a player are not permitted.
 - iii. If a player trips or runs into the runner in his/her attempt to make a diving tag, it will result in penalty.
PENALTY: personal foul, 10 yards.

****TACKLING AN OFFENSIVE PLAYER IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND WILL RESULT IN A PENALTY****

The penalty will be 10 yards awarded to the offensive team.

First occurrence- a warning to player and notify coach

Second occurrence- if by the same player in the same game, sit them out for a period of time

Any subsequent issues in the same game with the same player will result in player ejection from the game. Additional restrictions may apply, handled on a case by case basis.

J. Scoring

- a. A touchdown shall be scored when a legal forward pass is completed, or a backward pass is caught on or behind the opponent's goal line or when a player is legally in possession of the ball while any part of it is on, above, or behind his/her opponent's goal line.
TOUCHDOWN VALUE- 6 Points
- b. An opportunity to score one point from the 5 yard line, two points from the 10 yard line, or three points from the 15 yard line shall be granted to the scoring team (for ages 3-6 there is no extra point attempt).
 - i. The team captain or coach must declare which extra point option they will attempt. Once decided, it cannot be changed, even if a penalty occurs.

EXAMPLE: Team A decides to attempt for one point, but a penalty pushes them behind the 10 yard line, the extra point will still only be worth one point.

- c. A safety will be scored when an offensive player carries the ball from the field of play to, or across, his/her own goal line and flag belt is removed. The ball then becomes dead there in his/her team's possession. **VALUE:** 2 Points the defensive team will then gain possession of the ball.

K. Definitions of Playing Terms

Catch – A catch is an act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight.

Clipping – The act of running or diving into the back, throwing, or dropping the body across the back of the leg(s) of an opponent, or pushing an opponent in the back.

Encroachment – Indicates a defensive player who is illegally in the neutral zone (an entering substitute is not considered to be a player for encroachment restrictions until he/she is on his/her team's side of the neutral zone).

Foul – A rule infraction for which a penalty is assessed.

Fumble – The loss of player possession other than by handing, passing, or kicking the ball.

Goal Line – A vertical plane separating the end zone from the field of play; the plan of goal extends beyond the sideline.

Hurdling – An attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet, or knees foremost over a player who is on his/her feet. **NOT ALLOWED!!**

Interception – A catch of an opponent's pass or fumble in flight.

Live Ball – A pass or fumble, which has not yet touched the ground, is a live ball in flight and then can be caught and advanced by either team.

Neutral Zone – The area between the offensive and defensive line of scrimmage that has been established by the spot cone markers, and extends to each sideline. It is established when the ball is ready for play.

Forward Pass – A pass thrown with its initial direction toward the opponent's end zone; a pass continues to be a pass until it is caught or strikes the ground.

Backward Pass – A pass thrown with its initial direction parallel with or toward the passer's end zone; it will continue to be a pass until it is caught or strikes the ground. A backward pass that hits the ground is ruled the same as a fumble: it will be dead at the spot that it strikes the ground.

Penalty – The loss of yardage imposed by rule upon a team that has committed a foul.

Punting – (N/A YMCA- walk off occurs) In place of a punt, the ball will be advanced 20 yards, from the spot of the ball, towards the opponent's end zone.

Screen Blocking – Legally obstructing an opponent without initiating contact with him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body.

Tagging – The act of placing one hand anywhere between the shoulders and knees of an opponent with the ball in their possession. (YMCA Local Rule – Only allowed when a flag falls inadvertently to the ground, then tagging would be permitted)

Tripping – The use of the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent, including the runner, below the knee.

L. Conduct of Players and Others

- a. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated
 - i. No player shall commit non-contact acts during a half or intermission. Examples include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Any acts of unfair play.
 - 2. Using disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offense's signals or movements.
 - 3. Intentionally kicking at or tripping any opposing player.

4. Intentionally swinging an arm, hand, or fist at any opposing player.
- ii. Dead ball player fouls:
 1. Intentionally kicking the ball.
 2. Spike the ball into the ground.
 3. Throw the ball high into the air.
- iii. Prohibited acts: There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the rules. Examples include, but not are limited to:
 1. Attempting to influence an official's decision.
 2. Addressing an official in a disrespectful manner.
 3. Indicating objections to an official's decision.
 4. Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally.
 5. Using profanity, insulting, and vulgar language and/or gestures.
 6. Intentional physical contact to an official during the game by persons subject to the rules.

M. Personal Fouls

- a. No player shall commit a personal foul during a half or an intermission. Any act prohibited here under or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. These acts include, but are not limited to:
 - i. To punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession of the ball.
 - ii. To trip an opponent.
 - iii. To intentionally contact an opponent who is on the ground.
 - iv. To throw the runner to the ground.
 - v. To hurdle any other player.
 - vi. To contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
 - vii. To make contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary in any nature, this includes: using fists, locked hands, elbows, or any part of the forearm or hand, unless it is specifically stated in the Flag Rules.
 - viii. To deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
 - ix. To clip an opponent.
 - x. To tackle the runner.

N. Summary of Fouls & Penalties

a. 5 yards

- i. Delay of game
- ii. Illegal substitution
- iii. Illegal snap
- iv. Defensive encroachment
- v. False start
- vi. Illegal shift
- vii. Illegal motion
- viii. Illegally handing the ball forward
- ix. Illegal forward pass (includes loss of down)
- x. Intentional grounding (includes loss of down)
- xi. Helping/aiding the runner

b. 10 yards

- i. Offensive forward pass interference
- ii. Defensive forward pass interference
- iii. Unsportsmanlike conduct
- iv. Tackling a runner
- v. Tripping an opponent
- vi. Throwing a runner to the ground
- vii. Flagrant contact of any nature
- viii. Hurdling a player
- ix. Clipping
- x. Roughing the passer
- xi. Guarding the flag belt
- xii. Obstruction of a runner
- xiii. Illegal participation
- xiv. Re-entry of disqualified player
- xv. Illegal Blocking

c. Ejections associated with penalties

- i. Flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct
- ii. Flagrant personal fouls
- iii. Intentional tampering with the flag belt

RULES FOR THE TIFTAREA YMCA FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUES (Revised 09/19)

1. Players' ages are all prior to September 1st of the current year.
2. Helmets **WILL NOT** be used!
3. All players must register and pay fees to the YMCA prior to the designate date, as set forth by the YMCA.
4. All players must participate in mandatory try-outs.
5. All playing rules will be in accordance with the current edition of the National Federation of High Schools Rule Book and Georgia High School Association rules, except as herein amended:
 - a. No kick-offs: play will begin with the receiving team putting the ball in play on the 10 or 15 yard line. The same procedure will be followed for putting the ball in play after scores and to begin the second half.
 - b. All players must participate in the game, unless coaches' reasons are declared to the opposing coach and officials prior to the game.
 - c. Flag belts must be worn at the waist with flags attached to the belt at all times. Tying, looping, or tucking in of the belt are not permitted.
 - i. Shirttails must be tucked in at all times.
 - ii. **Shorts should be either black or of a contrasting color to the flags.**
 - d. 10 minutes after Game time is forfeit time. A team must be ready to play at their scheduled game time.
 - e. No stiff arming or flag guarding will be allowed.
 - f. Hands cannot be used in blocking.
 - i. Hands should be on the chest, palms facing inward, with elbows facing outward.
 - g. Rushing is only allowed in the 6 and older age groups:
 - i. Rushing is allowed from the 7 yard rush line, which will be marked off with a bean bag by the official.
 - ii. If there is no rush, the quarterback will have 8 seconds to throw the ball.
 - iii. The quarterback cannot run unless the rusher has crossed the line of scrimmage.
 - iv. Ages 3-4 can have Quarterback run at anytime.
6. The purpose of this program is to provide wholesome recreation with emphasis placed on fun, participation, and fundamentals. The maximum participation of each team member is strongly recommended and expected. It is also a purpose of this program to teach and practice good sportsmanship. The YMCA reserves the right to exercise whatever action it deems necessary to assure the fulfillment of these purposes.