



# RULE BOOK

Version 1.1

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# Article 1: General Rules, Administration, & Player Eligibility

## 1.1 – League Policies

1. All staff, officials, spectators, coaches, and players must avoid using profanities. Use of profanities, especially the F-word, is grounds for immediate ejection at the discretion of the officials and league representatives.
2. Tobacco products, vaping products, alcohol, intoxicants, and weapons are prohibited on our fields and events.
3. All staff, officials, spectators, coaches, and players must comply with the rules of our rented facilities. Failure to follow the rules will result in punishment up to and including game forfeiture and future game suspensions.
4. While flag football is considered a non-contact sports, incidental contact can and does occur. Incidental contact, however, can be considered a penalty if it is deemed by the official to be excessive or overly aggressive.
5. **Only the team's head coach** may moderately dispute any rules interpretations or implementations. Coaches may not protest an official's discretionary calls.
6. If, at any time, a spectator, coach, or player conducts himself or herself in a manner that is deemed to be unsportsmanlike or makes disrespectful, derogatory, discriminatory, obscene, and/or threatening gestures or remarks about, or to, any officials, opposing players, opposing coaches, or spectators, the officials or league representatives may institute penalties on his or her team, including loss of down and yardage, game forfeiture, ejections, game suspensions, season suspension, and league expulsion.
7. Any spectator, coach, or player caught fighting with any staff, officials, other spectators, opposing coaches, or opposing players shall be ejected from the game and potentially face further punishment up to and including expulsion from the league.
8. Any spectators, coaches, or players who are ejected from a game must immediately leave the site and cannot participate or return to the game. U.S. Elite Flag Football reserves the right to institute additional penalties based on the severity of the action up to and including expulsion from the league.
9. Adults, other than coaches, officials, and league staff, are not allowed on the field during a game for any reason without the consent of the officials.
10. Remember there are no college scouts on our sidelines and no college scholarships are being awarded at our game days. Relax, have fun, and enjoy the games.
11. For the safety of the officials and their ability to effectively officiate the games, all spectators, coaches, and players must remain **at least two yards off the sidelines** when possible.
12. All spectators must follow U.S. Elite Flag Football's regulations on where spectators can and cannot observe the game from.
13. At the conclusion of games, coaches and players are required to clean up and remove any garbage from their team tent area prior to the next game.
14. **U.S. Elite Flag Football does not use instant replay.** Photos and/or videos will never be used to contest or overturn an official's ruling during a game. No exceptions.

## 1.2 – Conduct

1. While flag football is considered a non-contact sports, incidental contact can and does occur. Intentional contact is never allowed and will be penalized as Illegal Contact or Unsportsmanlike Conduct at the discretion of the officials.
2. Good sportsmanship is of the utmost importance to U.S. Elite Flag Football. All staff, officials, spectators, coaches, and players are expected and required to behave in a civil manner.
3. After a flag pull, players are expected to return the pulled flag to the offensive player. The offensive player is also expected to take the returned flag in a friendly manner. Actions like flag slamming, flag throwing, or ripping the flag out of the defenders hand can result in a verbal warning or an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty (10 yards).
4. Quick and reasonable celebrations with teammates after a good play or score are acceptable. What is considered an excessive celebration is at the discretion of the officials.
5. Taunting, trash talking, using profanities or other offensive language by players, coaches, or a team's fans directed toward the opposing players, coaches, or fans will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty (10 yards). A second Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will result in forfeiture of the game and possible further game suspensions.
6. Play that is deemed by the officials as unnecessary and/or reckless play (shoving a player, pushing a ball carrier out of bounds, cheap shots, etc.) will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty (10 yards). A second Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty by the same player during a single game will result in the player's ejection from the game and possibly future game suspensions.
7. In the opinion of an official, if a player commits any act, which is deemed deliberate and malicious that could injure an opposing player (fighting, elbowing, blatant tackling without any effort to go for the ball carrier's flags, etc.), the game will be stopped, and the player shall be ejected from the game and potentially face further league punishment. The team will also be penalized with an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty (10 yards). Two similar actions by the same team during a single game will result in immediate forfeiture of the game and possible further league suspensions or expulsion.  
**Foul play will not be tolerated!**
8. Any coaches, teams, and/or players caught intentionally cheating will immediately forfeit their game and face future league suspensions. **Cheating will not be tolerated.**
9. **Post game hand shake** – All players and coaches must participate in the post game hand shake. Failure to participate will result in a one game suspension for any non-participating players or coaches.
10. U.S. Elite Flag Football officials, field supervisors, or staff have the authority to stop play and declare a game forfeiture if spectators, coaches, or players behave in a way that violates our code of conduct or is threatening or dangerous.

## 1.3 – Concussion Protocol

1. If a player received a contact to the head, he or she must leave the game for at least one play to allow a coach, parent, or league representative to check for symptoms of a concussion.

2. If it is suspected that a player has sustained a concussion, the player must be removed from team activities until he or she is evaluated by a medical professional. The player's parents must provide U.S. Elite Flag Football a written clearance from a medical professional before the player can resume team activities.
3. Since officials may not always see the contact to the head, it is the responsibility of the player's parents and coaches to inform the officials of any player that has sustained contact to the head.
4. If a player sustains a concussion outside of a U.S. Elite Flag Football game or practice, the player's parents must report the concussion to the league and provide U.S. Elite Flag Football a written clearance from a medical professional before the player can resume team activities.

### **1.4 – Player Eligibility**

1. A player will be considered age eligible for the complete season if they are age eligible on the date of the scheduled Opening Day.
2. Players may “play up” in an older division. For example, a six year old can play in the 7-8 Age Division if his or her parents and coaches agree.
3. Players are never allowed to “play down” in a younger division for any reason. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**
4. Only players rostered on a U.S. Elite Flag Football roster are allowed to participate in organized team activities, such as practices and games. Players may only participate in team activities for the team which they are rostered on.
5. A player can only be rostered to one team per season in each age division the player is age eligible for. Ex: An age eligible 8 year old is allowed to play on one team in the 7-8 Age Division, as well on one team in the 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15 Age Divisions.
6. Playing ineligible or illegal players will result in immediate forfeiture of the game and potential league suspension. An ineligible player is a member of the team but is ineligible to play in the game because of an infraction of the rules during the game, or because of a previous violation or disciplinary action. An illegal player is a player that is not registered and rostered to the team.

### **1.5 – League Officials**

1. The game officials will administer the rules of U.S. Elite Flag Football only. The rules of other leagues or organizations are not valid in our games.
2. Some of our officials are adult professional officials. Some of our officials are high school students, who are learning to be officials. Please treat them appropriately and with respect.
3. **Officials will call the penalties THEY see only.** What a spectator or coach can see from their position on the sidelines is not the same as what the official can see from his or her position on the field. Coaches cannot argue what an official did or did not see.
4. When applicable, officials will employ a “preventative” style of officiating. This will allow them to remind players about the rules and help them to avoid rules' violations whenever possible.

## Article 2: Player Equipment and Uniforms

### 2.1 – Safety Equipment

1. Players are required to wear protective mouth pieces at all times during games and practices. If a player does not have a mouth piece, they are not allowed on the field.
2. Players are required to wear pants or shorts without pockets, belt loops, outer draw strings, or zippers. If a player's pants or shorts have pockets, the pockets must be taped shut prior to the start of the game. **Pants or shorts colors and tape colors must contrast the player's flag colors.**
3. Players are required to wear closed-toed shoes. Cleats with screw in or molded cleats are recommended. Metal cleats are not allowed.
4. Prescription glasses or flexible sports sunglasses are allowed.
5. Large watches/fitness trackers, earrings, necklaces, and other jewelry must be removed if deemed hazardous by the game officials.
6. Players are allowed to wear gloves, elbow and/or knee pads. Players are allowed to tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. If casts or braces are required, they must be padded. The officials will inspect the padding of any casts or braces to ensure safety and compliance with the rules. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
7. Baseball caps are not allowed on the field during games.

### 2.2 – Team Jerseys

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football will provide each player with an official NFL Flag Football jersey. Players must wear the official NFL Flag Football jersey for games, unless prior arrangements were made with the league.
2. Teams are designated as home or away based on the schedule. The home team will wear the colored side of the NFL Flag Football jersey. The away team will wear the white side of the jersey.
3. If, for some reason, a player does not have a team jersey on the game day, U.S. Elite Flag Football may temporarily approve a non-NFL Flag Football shirt. The shirt must be of similar color to the NFL Flag jersey. Ex: If the NFL Flag Football jersey is red and the team is the home team, the player may be allowed to wear a red t-shirt.
4. If a jacket, hoodie, sweatshirt, or rain gear is needed, it must be worn under the player's approved jersey.
5. A player's jersey should be long enough to remain tucked in to the player's pants or shorts for the entire play. If a jersey is hanging out over the player's flag belt, a flag guarding penalty may be called.
6. If a player's jersey cannot remain tucked in, the player must wear his or her flag belt over the jersey.
7. Keep jerseys tucked in.

### 2.3 – Flag Belts

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football will provide each player with an official NFL Flag Football flag belt.
2. Only official NFL Flag Football flag belts can be used during a game.

3. Flag belts must be worn with the flags properly secured at the outside of the player's hips, in line with the hip joint, with the flags pointing outward.
4. Pants and shorts colors and tape colors **must** contrast with the player's flag colors.
5. If a player's flag belt is found to be altered or tampered with, the team will immediately forfeit the game. The player and coach(es) could also face future league suspensions. Cheating will not be tolerated.

## **2.4 – Footballs**

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football will provide an official NFL Flag football or official game ball, which must be used during games.
2. Both teams will use the same official game football. No other footballs may be used for game play, unless agreed upon by both coaches and league representatives.
3. The 5-6 and 7-8 Age Divisions will use the blue pee-wee sized NFL Flag football.
4. The 9-10 and 11-12 Age Divisions will use the brown junior sized NFL Flag football.
5. The 13-15 Age Division will use a league supplied youth sized football.

## **Article 3: Football Field**

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football's field will be 50 yards by 30 yards with 7-yard to 10-yard end zones at each end of the field. The total field size with playing surface and end zones will be 64 yards to 70 yards long by 30 yards wide.
2. Fields will have a midfield line-to-gain at the 25 yard line.
3. Fields will have No-Run Zones 5 yards before midfield and 5 yards before the end zones in both directions. No-Run Zones may be denoted by cones on the sidelines or dotted painted lines on the field of play.
4. Fields will have a marking on the field 7 yards before midfield. This marking denotes where to place a kicked off ball that accidentally was kicked out of bounds beyond midfield.
5. Fields will have a marking on the field 15 yards before midfield. This marking denotes the Kick Off spot for the 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15 NFC Divisions. The AFC Divisions do not do kick offs. This marking is also the spot for the 2-Point PAT Conversion.
6. Fields will also have a marking 2 yards inside each end zone. This marking denotes the legal rush point for a 1-Point PAT attempt for the 7-8 and 9-10 Age Divisions, as it is 7 yards from the 1-Point PAT attempt line (5 yards before the end zone).
7. End zones will be marked with 4 orange pylons. The front two pylons on the goal line are considered to be in-bounds. The back two pylons at the end of the end zones are considered out of bounds.
8. Midfield and No-Run Zones will be marked with colored cones on each sideline.





## Article 4: Teams

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football is a 5-on-5 flag football league, so there are five players on offense and five players on defense on the field.
2. Teams can vary in size from five players to ten plus players at the discretion of the league.
3. Only U.S. Elite Flag Football registered and rostered players are allowed to participate in team activities (practices and games). Any team caught playing an unregistered or unrostered player will immediately forfeit their game and face possible league suspension.
4. Teams must start a game with a minimum of four registered and rostered players. The opposing team can field all five players, however the team can, but is not required to, "adjust down" to four players.
5. If a team has less than four registered and rostered players at the time of kickoff, the team will automatically forfeit the game. The teams can still play the game as a scrimmage for fun. If playing a scrimmage, the forfeiting team can borrow players from the other teams in the same age division.

## Article 5: Coaches

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football coaches are adults, mainly parents, who are volunteering their time to help our players learn to play the amazing game of football and to enjoy the game.
2. Each team is allowed a maximum of three coaches on the sidelines during a game. However, **only the head coach can address the game officials** about any rules interpretations or implementations. Coaches cannot protest an official's discretionary calls.
3. U.S. Elite Flag Football expects all coaches to adhere to our youth sports philosophy, our coaching guidelines, our code of conduct, and the spirit of the game.
4. Each team's coaching staff is responsible for the conduct of their sidelines, including spectators, coaching staff, and players.
5. Each team's coaching staff must remain between the midfield line and the end zone on their half of the coach/team sideline. Coaches are not allowed to cross over into the opponent's coach/team sideline area. In the situation where teams are on opposite sides of the field, each team's coaching staff must remain on their sidelines.
6. In the AFC Divisions, one coach per team is allowed on the field during play to help players with positioning and play calling. At the snap, the coach must be at least 10 yards behind their back-most player.
7. Coaches who are on the field must make every effort to avoid the play and must avoid physically interfering with the play. On field coaches are allowed to give verbal directions as long as they do not assist or interfere with the offense's snapping of the ball. For example, a coach cannot try to verbally draw the defense offsides. The players should be doing their own offense's cadence. On field coaches should avoid "chasing" the play down the field.
8. In the NFC divisions, coaches are not permitted on the field during play. Coaches must coach from the sidelines. NFC coaches may come out onto the field during a time out.
9. In the AFC Divisions, no parents are allowed on the field, unless a player is injured. In the NFC Divisions, no parents or coaches are allowed on the field, unless a player is injured or during a timeout (coach only).
10. Coaches should keep track of the game time, downs, and line to gain. While it is the officials' job to announce these, it is not the officials' job to make sure the coach know these important items.
11. Coaches are responsible for making sure their team tent is cleaned up after their game. It is not the job of U.S Elite Flag Football's staff to clean up after a team. Teach the players to clean up after themselves.

## Article 6: Game Timing

### 6.1 – Regulation Game Play

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football games will consist of two 20-minute halves and a 2-minute halftime.

2. The game clock runs continuously during the first half of the game, unless a team timeout is called or an official stops play (injured player, rule question, referee discussion, etc.)
3. The game clock runs continuously during the first 18 minutes of the second half of the game. In the last 2 minutes of the second half, the controlled clock stops for:
  - A. An incomplete pass. Clock starts on the snap.
  - B. A penalty. Clock starts on the snap.
  - C. A ball-carrier runs out of bounds. Clock starts on the snap.
  - D. A change of possession. Clock starts on the snap.
  - E. Scoring – The clock does not run during PAT attempts in the final two minutes of the second half. Clock starts when a player on the receiving team of the kickoff touches the ball.
  - F. Timeouts. Clock starts on the snap.
4. The First Half and Second Half clock starts when a player on the receiving team of the kickoff touches the ball, not on the kick. If the kick goes out of bounds or into the end zone, the clock will start on the snap of the ball by the offense.
5. If there is a point differential of 18 points or more, the game clock will run continuously during the last two minutes of the game.
6. U.S. Elite Flag Football officials can stop the clock at their discretion to tend to an injured player, talk to coaches and/or players, etc.
7. Each team will have one 60-second timeout per half. An unused timeout is lost and does not carry over to the second half.
8. After the 60-second timeout, the 30-second play clock will start. At this point, the offense must snap the ball before the 30-second play clock expires.
9. Neither half or the game can end on an obvious timing error or defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty. In the case of a defensive penalty, the offense can replay the last down with all penalties assessed.

## 6.2 – Play Clock

1. After the ball has been “spotted”, the offense will have 30 seconds to snap the ball.
2. If the offense does not snap the ball within the 30 seconds, a Delay of Game penalty will be assessed.
3. Hurry-Up Offense - Once the officials have “spotted” the ball, the offense can snap the ball at anytime, whether the defense is set and ready or not. **Exception:** On the first down after a change of possession, the offense cannot run a hurry-up offense.
4. The ball is considered “spotted” when the line of scrimmage has been established, the ball has been placed on the line of scrimmage, the rush marker has been established, and the officials are ready. The officials will do their best to get the ball “spotted” quickly for teams that are running a hurry-up offense. However, the offense must allow the officials to fully “spot” the ball or a False Start penalty can be assessed.
5. The officials should vocalize the 30-second play clock (i.e.; 15 second warning, 10 second warning, countdown the last five seconds). However, it is the coach’s and team’s responsibility to snap the ball before the 30-second play clock expires. If the official is not adequately vocalizing the 30-second play clock, coaches should politely ask the

official to do so. If the official continues to not vocalize the 30-second play clock, the coach should alert the league representative immediately.

### **6.3 – Dead Ball**

1. A play is ruled dead when:
  - A. The ball touches the ground from an incomplete pass, a missed snap, or the quarterback or ball carrier fumbles the ball.
  - B. The ball carrier step out of bounds.
  - C. Any part of the ball carrier other than his or her hand or foot touches the ground.
  - D. The ball carrier's flag is pulled
  - E. Touchdowns, PATs, and Safeties.
2. On kickoffs and punts (NFC Division only), the ball is live until it goes out of bounds or into the end zone, the player who fielded the kickoff or punt has his or her flag pulled, or the ball is touched by a player on the kicking team. The officials may whistle a play dead if they feel a kicked off or punted ball rolling around on the ground is creating a player safety issue.
3. Player substitutions can only be done on a dead ball.
4. Players must substitute in from their own sidelines only.

## **Article 7: Pre-Game**

### **7.1 – Equipment Check**

1. Prior to the coin toss, U.S. Elite Flag Football officials will conduct an equipment check on all players.
2. Players must have a mouth piece. Mouth pieces must be worn by all players while on the field.
3. Jersey must be tucked in.
4. Pants or shorts do not have pockets, or the pockets have been taped shut.
5. Cleats do not have metal spikes.
6. All players have an appropriate regulation flag belt.
7. Flags are in line with the hip joint pointing outward.
8. Players cannot wear large watches/fitness trackers, earrings, necklaces, or other jewelry that could be hazardous to the player or other players.
9. Any casts or braces are covered with a protective padding. Braces with exposed metal are not allowed.
10. Baseball caps are not allowed.
11. Prescription glasses or flexible sports sunglasses are allowed.
12. Players are allowed to wear soft-shell, padded helmets to protect their head.
13. Players cannot wear Go-Pros or any other type of recording equipment.
14. Officials may explain some rules to the coaches and players at this time, as well.

## 7.2 – Coin Toss

1. A coin toss will be done to determine initial possession for the AFC Division and the opening kickoff in the NFC Division.
2. U.S. Elite Flag Football officials, at least one coach, and at least one team captain from each team will meet at midfield for the coin toss and pre-game instructions.
3. Officials will remind the coaches and players the importance of good sportsmanship and explain some of the rules at this time.
4. A member of the visiting team will loudly and clearly call “heads” or “tails” when the coin is in the air. If the call is correct, the visiting team is the winner of the coin toss. If the call is incorrect, the home team is the winner of the coin toss.
5. In the AFC Divisions, the coach of the winning team of the coin toss can choose to begin on offense or begin on defense. If the team chooses to start on offense, the losing team will start on offense in the second half. If the team chooses to start on defense, the losing team will start the game on offense and start the second half on defense.
6. In the NFC Divisions, the coach of the winning team of the coin toss can choose to begin the game by kicking off or receiving the kickoff. There are no deferrals. If the winning team chooses to kick off to start the game, they will receive the kickoff to start the second half. If the winning team chooses to receive the kickoff to start the game, they will kick off to start the second half.
7. The coach of the losing team of the coin toss will choose which goal to defend during the first half of the game.
8. Teams will switch end zones at half time.

## Article 8: Scoring

### 8.1 – Scoring Chart

1. **Touchdowns:** 6 points.
2. **PAT (point after touchdown):** 1 point (pass only from the 5-yard line), 2 points (run or pass from the 10-yard line), or 3 points (run or pass from midfield).
3. **Safety:** 2 points.
4. An interception during regular play can be returned for a touchdown – 6 points and a PAT attempt.
5. An interception on a PAT attempt can be returned for a score – 2 points.

### 8.2 – PAT (Point After Touchdown)

1. After scoring a touchdown, the scoring team’s coach must inform the officials of their PAT attempt choice (1, 2, or 3 points).
2. For a 1 point PAT, the ball will be placed on the 5-yard line and the play must be a forward pass as the play is in the No-Run Zone, except for the AFC 5-6 age division.
3. For a 2 point PAT, the ball will be placed on the 10-yard line, and the offense can run or pass the ball.
4. For a 3 point PAT, the ball will be placed at midfield, and the offense can run or pass the ball.

5. If the offense commits a penalty on a PAT attempt, the attempt will be rule no good.
6. If the defense commits a penalty on a PAT attempt, the offense can retry the PAT with all penalty yardage applied, but cannot change the PAT point choice. The offense can also choose to decline the penalty.

### **8.3 – Safeties**

1. When a safety occurs, the defense is awarded 2 points and the ball. The ball is placed on their 5-yard line and they start out with 1<sup>st</sup> down and midfield to gain.
2. A safety is awarded to the defense when:
  - A. The quarterback or offensive ball carrier has his or her flag pulled in the end zone.
  - B. The quarterback or offensive ball carrier fumbles the ball in the end zone.
  - C. The quarterback or offensive ball carrier runs out of bounds in his or her own end zone.
  - D. The offense commits a penalty in its own end zone.
  - E. The player who receives a kickoff or punt intentionally runs into to his or her end zone and is downed in the end zone, except in the NFC 7-8 age division (touchback).
3. Exception:
  - A. A defensive player intercepts the ball in the end zone and has his or her flag immediately pulled in the end zone – touchback.
  - B. A defensive player intercepts the ball in the end zone and his or her momentum causes the player to go out of bounds in the end zone – touchback.
  - C. A defensive player intercepts the ball between the 5-yard line and the goal line and his or her momentum takes the player into the end zone and they are downed in the end zone – touchback.

### **8.4 – Mercy Rule**

1. U.S. Elite Flag Football does not have game ending or game altering Mercy Rule.
2. When there are two minutes left in the second half, if there is a point differential of 18 points or greater, the game clock will run continuously.
3. If the trailing team scores and gets the point differential to less than 18 points, the two-minute stop clock will be put into effect.

## **Article 9: Kick-Offs**

### **9.1 – AFC Division**

1. There are no kickoffs in the AFC Divisions.
2. At the start of the first half and second half and after a score, the offense will start at the 5-yard line going out toward midfield.

### **9.2 – NFC Division**

1. In the NFC Division, the 7-8 Age Division will kick off from midfield. The 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15 Age Divisions will kick off from the 10-yard PAT marking.

2. After the ball is kicked off, it is considered a live ball until the player who fielded the kickoff has his or her flag pulled, the ball goes out of bounds or into the end zone, or the ball is touched by a player from the kicking team.
3. If a kickoff breaks the plane of the goal line, it will automatically be ruled a touchback. The ball will be placed at the 5-yard line. If a player catches the kickoff in the end zone, the player does not have the option of returning the football.
4. A safety can occur on a kickoff if a player on the receiving team fields the ball, intentionally runs into the kicking team's end zone, and has his or her flag pulled in the end zone.
5. The only possibility for a turnover on a kickoff is if the returning team attempts a legal, backwards lateral pass and it is intercepted by a player on the kicking team. There are no fumbles on a kickoff.
6. All players on the kicking team must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the ball has been successfully kicked. If any player on the kicking team crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is kicked, the kicking team will be called for an Offside penalty. The receiving team will have the option to add 5 yards to the end of the return or have the kicking team re-kick the ball from 5 yards back from the original kicking spot.
7. Intentionally kicking the ball out of bounds on the sidelines to prevent a return will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty. The ball will be spotted where it went out of bounds plus the 10-yards for the penalty, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot. Repeated, intentional kicking the ball out of bounds will result in a game forfeiture and possible future game suspensions.
8. If the kicking team unintentionally kicks the ball out of bounds on the sidelines after midfield and the ball is not touched by the receiving team before it goes out of bounds, the ball will be spotted at the 7-yard marking behind the midfield line, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot.
9. If the kicking team unintentionally kicks the ball out of bounds on the sidelines before midfield and the ball is not touched by the receiving team before it goes out of bounds, the ball will be spotted where it went out of bounds, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot.
10. If a player from the kicking team touches the ball before it crosses midfield, the ball will be spotted at the spot where it was downed, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot.
11. In the NFC 7-8 age division, if a kicked ball fails to travel 7 yards, the ball will be spotted at the 7-yard marking behind the midfield line, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot.
12. In the NFC 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15 age divisions, if a kicked ball fails to travel 7 yards, the ball will be spotted where it stops, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot.
13. In the NFC 7-8 age division, there will not be any safeties on kickoffs. If a kicked ball is fielded by a player on the receiving team and that player has his or her flags pulled in the end zone, the play will be ruled a touchback. The ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line, and the receiving team will be awarded a first down from that spot.

## Article 10: Spotting the Ball

1. The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled or when the ball carrier goes out of bounds. The ball carrier may extend the ball out to gain additional yards.
2. Before each play, the officials will spot the ball at the center of the field.
3. A bean bag will be set with the spotted ball to set the spot and establish the line of scrimmage.
4. The ball cannot be advanced by a player missing a flag or his or her flag belt. If a player starts a play with a missing flag or without a flag belt, the player can receive the ball either by handoff or a pass, but the ball will immediately be ruled dead at the spot where the player received the ball.
5. If a defensive player intentionally pulls a receiver's flag before a catch is made, the defense will be called for an Illegal Flag Pull penalty, and the penalty will be assessed from the spot of the reception, not from the spot of the flag pull.
6. If the ball carrier's flag falls out or the flag belt falls off, the play is ruled dead and the ball will be spotted where the flag or flag belt came off.
7. A missed snap will be re-spotted at the line of scrimmage. The down is not replayed.
8. A ball that is fumbled backwards or straight down will be spotted where the ball hit the ground.
9. A backwards pass or lateral pass that hits the ground will be ruled a fumble and spotted where the ball hit the ground.
10. If a ball carrier fumbles the ball forward, the ball will be spotted where the ball carrier's forward most grounded foot was when he or she fumbled the ball, not where the ball hits the ground. A fumbled ball cannot advance the offense's field position.

## Article 11: Offense

### 11.1 – General Offense

1. The offense has 4 downs to get to midfield and get a first down.
2. Once the offense crosses midfield and gets a first down, they will have 4 downs to score.
3. If the offense has not reached midfield by their fourth down, the offense's coach has the option to "go for it" or "punt".
4. If the offense decides "to go for" and fails to achieve the midfield line to gain, the opposing team will take possession of the ball from the spot it became dead on the fourth down play.
5. If the offense chooses to "punt", the ball will be moved to the opposing team's 5-yard line and the opposing team will take possession of the ball (AFC Division) or the offense will punt the ball to the defense (NFC Division).
6. The defense is not allowed to strip the ball from the ball carrier.
7. The ball carrier can slightly hop, jump, spin, juke, twist, etc. to attempt to avoid having his or her flag pulled, as long as he or she does not put another player's safety at risk.
8. Jumping, diving, leaping, lunging, etc. forward **to advance the ball** is prohibited. The play will be ruled dead, and the ball will be spotted where the player left his or her feet.



9. Hurdling a player to advance the ball is prohibited. The play will be ruled dead, and the ball will be spotted where the player left his or her feet.
10. The ball carrier may jump over another player to avoid falling on or tripping over a fallen player.
11. The ball carrier must make every effort to avoid contact with a defensive player in a stationary, established position (both feet on the ground and the player is not moving). Failure by the ball carrier to avoid this contact can result in an Illegal Contact penalty or an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
12. Blocking or screening is not allowed, even if unintentional. An offensive player cannot run interference, screen, or make contact with a defensive player to impede the defensive player's motion or ability to pull the ball carrier's flag. A Blocking penalty may be called in the official's discretion.
13. A receiver running his or her pass route will not be considered blocking or screening, as long as the receiver is not intentionally impeding a defensive player's motion.
14. An offensive player closely "chasing" a play down field could be called for blocking if he or she inadvertently gets between a pursuing defensive player and the ball carrier.
15. All offensive players must substitute into the game from their sideline only.
16. If an offensive player **voluntarily** goes out of bounds during a play, he or she may not return to the field or participate until the ball is dead.
17. If an offensive player is forced out of bounds by contact with a defensive player during a play, he or she may return to the play without penalty.

## **11.2 – Hiking the Football**

1. The center must snap the ball from the spot where the official places it.
2. The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his or her legs to start the play. Shotgun snaps are allowed.
3. The center may snap the ball to any offensive player. The player who receives the snapped ball from the center becomes the quarterback.
4. Center sneak plays are prohibited. The center must completely release the ball to the quarterback. After the snap of the ball, the center must take at least one forward step to receive a forward pass, or the center must take at least one backward step to receive a hand off.
5. Only one offensive player can be positioned "under" the center to receive the snap. If more than one offensive player lines up behind the center in an attempt to hide the location of the ball during the snap, the offense will be flagged for a False Start penalty.
6. Prior to the snap, all offensive players may move/shift/adjust to get into the proper position. However, all offensive players must come to a complete stop (set) before the ball is snapped.
7. Once the offense is "set," only one offensive player can go in motion. The player "in motion" may move backwards or laterally along the line of scrimmage. Motion forward/towards the line of scrimmage will be flagged as a False Start penalty.
8. If more than one offensive player is in motion when the ball is snapped, the offense will be flagged for a False Start penalty.

9. Any movement by one or more players that simulates the snap without a simultaneous snap will result in a False Start penalty.

### **11.3 – Running the Football**

1. A **handoff** is a move in which a player “hands” the ball to another player, and the receiving player takes possession of the ball before it leaves the hands of the giver (thus the ball is never in flight). A handoff can be to a player in front of, behind, or to the side of the quarterback or ball carrier. A handoff can only occur behind the line of scrimmage.
2. In a handoff, the player handing the ball off must completely release the ball. Having a second player simply touch the ball without taking full possession of the ball does not constitute a handoff.
3. A **lateral** is an underhand or overhand throw of the ball to a player parallel to or behind the ball carrier.
4. Any player who receives the ball through a handoff or lateral behind the line of scrimmage is eligible to run the ball.
5. Once the quarterback hands off or laterals the ball to another offensive player behind the line of scrimmage, all defensive players are eligible to rush the ball carrier.
6. The quarterback cannot run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage **unless** a defensive player legally or illegally crosses the line of scrimmage. If any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage, the quarterback becomes eligible to run the ball. It is not the quarterback’s responsibility to know if the defensive player is a legal rusher or not.
7. Backward laterals are allowed beyond the line of scrimmage, like in a hook and ladder play. However, if the throw beyond the line of scrimmage goes in a forward motion, the play will be flagged for an Illegal Pass penalty at the spot of the throw.

### **11.4 – Passing the Football**

1. A **forward pass** is any ball that is thrown or tossed in an overhand or underhand motion to an offensive player standing in front of the player throwing the ball.
2. All forward passes must be received in front of the quarterback’s front foot. A forward pass does not have to cross the line of scrimmage.
3. A forward pass cannot be dropped from the quarterback’s hands to the receiver’s hands. The ball must move in the direction of the play.
4. Underhand, shovel passes are allowed, but they must be received in front of the quarterback’s front foot.
5. Only one forward pass is allowed per play.
6. The passer’s body must be entirely behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.
7. Any offensive player who takes a handoff or lateral behind the line of scrimmage and remains behind the line of scrimmage can throw a legal forward pass.
8. If the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, it cannot be returned behind the line of scrimmage and passed forward. In this case, an Illegal Forward Pass penalty will be called.
9. If the player throwing a forward pass has his or her flag pulled while the ball is still in his or her hand, it will be called a sack, even if the player’s arm was in the passing motion.

10. The quarterback has 7 seconds to handoff or pass the ball. An official should vocalize the 7-second pass clock count. If the quarterback still has the ball behind the line of scrimmage at the end of the 7-second pass clock, the play will be ruled dead and ball will be spotted at the original line of scrimmage, like an incomplete pass.
11. If a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage, the 7-second pass clock is still in effect, and the quarterback still must handoff the ball, pass the ball, or run beyond the line of scrimmage before the 7-second pass clock expires.
12. Once the ball has been thrown, any offensive or defensive player can catch and advance the ball. Interceptions can be advanced until the receiving player's flag is pulled or he or she scores.
13. The quarterback is allowed to throw the ball away or out of bounds to avoid a sack, as long as the ball goes beyond the line of scrimmage.
14. In the last two minutes of the game, the quarterback is allowed "spike" the ball into the ground (not out of bounds) to stop the clock, but it will be ruled an incomplete pass and result in the loss of the down.

### **11.5 – Receiving a Pass**

1. Once a pass is in the air, all offensive and defensive players on the field are considered eligible receiver. Any eligible receiver has a right to catch the ball.
2. A catch is ruled complete when the receiver maintains possession of the ball and gets at least one foot inbounds.
3. If a receiver catches the ball in the air, the first foot to touch the ground will determine whether the receiver was in-bounds or not. If the first foot lands legally in the field of play, the catch will be ruled a completed catch. If the first foot lands out of bounds, the pass will be ruled incomplete. If both feet land simultaneously with one foot in-bounds and one foot out-of-bounds, the catch will be ruled a completed catch.
4. If a receiver falls to the ground while attempting a catch, he or she must maintain possession of the ball for it to be ruled a catch. If the receiver loses his or her grasp on the ball due to contact with the ground, the pass will be ruled incomplete.
5. If two or more eligible receivers make unintentional contact with each other while attempting to catch or bat the ball, it will not be considered pass interference, as both or all the players were going for the ball. The officials will determine what is unintentional, incidental contact and what is contact that warrants a Pass Interference penalty.
6. If a pass is simultaneously caught and controlled by an offensive and defensive player, the ball will be ruled dead at the spot of the catch and possession will be awarded to the offense. There is no change of possession in this instance.
7. Once a pass is in the air, any eligible receiver can bat the ball to prevent a catch by an opposing player.

### **11.6 – No-Run Zones**

1. No-Run Zones are located 5 yards in front of each end zone and 5 yards on each side of midfield.
2. All plays that start in the No-Run Zones must be passing plays.

3. All plays that start in the No-Run Zones must begin with a forward pass from the person that received the snap from the center.
4. While a designed running play is not allowed for plays that start in the No-Run Zones, if a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is thrown by the quarterback, the quarterback can now run or pass the ball.
5. Each No-Run Zone is directional and applies to the current line to gain only. If a team has crossed midfield, their line to gain is the goal line. The midfield No-Run Zone no longer applies, even if a penalty were to push the team behind midfield.
6. There are no No-Run Zones in the AFC 5-6 age division.
7. There are no midfield No-Run Zones in the AFC or NFC 7-8 age divisions.

### **11.7 – Punting**

1. On a fourth down play, the offense's coach has the option to "go for it" or "punt" the ball.
2. In the AFC divisions, if the offense chooses to punt on fourth down, the ball will be spotted at the opposing team's 5-yard line, and possession will change to the opposing team.
3. In the NFC divisions, if the offense chooses to punt on fourth down, the offense will perform a punt to the defense. In the NFC 7-8 age division, the offense can pass or kick the punt. In the NFC 9-10, 11-12, and 13-15 age divisions, the offense must kick the punt.
4. The offense must declare their intention to punt on fourth down.
5. Fake punts are not allowed.
6. In the NFC divisions, when the offense declares a punt on fourth down:
  - A. All defensive players must line up behind the age appropriate rush cone.
  - B. Defensive players cannot rush the punter.
  - C. Once the ball is snapped to the punter (under center or shotgun snap), the punter has 7 seconds to punt the ball.
  - D. The punting team must remain behind the line of scrimmage until the ball has been "punted." An Offside penalty will be added to the end of the punt return.
7. If a punted ball goes out of bounds without being touched, the ball will be spotted where the ball left the field.

### **11.8 – Flag Guarding**

1. **Flag guarding** is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defensive player's ability to pull his or her flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey or football.
2. The ball carrier also cannot flail their arms, swat a defensive player's hands, or pin the flags against his or her body using the ball, arms, or hands.
3. If a ball carrier starts the play with his or her jersey untucked or the jersey becomes untucked during the play and covers the flag belt, flag guarding may be called.
4. If a ball carrier's natural running motion causes the ball carrier's hands or arms to block a defensive player from pulling his or her flag, flag guarding may be called.

5. Flag guarding is sometimes a judgment call by the officials. The officials will call what they see and what they feel is flag guarding. Coaches cannot argue what the officials did or did not see.
6. If no defensive players are within a reasonable distance of the ball carrier, flag guarding will not be called.
7. Even if the defensive player successfully pulls the ball carrier's flag, flag guarding may still be called.
8. If a player's flag belt is found to be altered or tampered with, the team will immediately forfeit the game. The player and coach could also face future league suspensions.  
**Cheating will not be tolerated.**

## **Article 12: Defense**

### **12.1 – General Defense**

1. The defense is not allowed to strip the ball from the ball carrier.
2. Defensive players lined up in front of the designated rush line when the ball is snapped cannot cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been handed off, or until the ball has been touched by a receiver behind the line of scrimmage. A ball thrown behind the line of scrimmage can only be intercepted by a legal defensive rusher or if the pass was bobbled by the receiver.
3. Defensive players cannot cross the line of scrimmage to cover a receiver behind the line of scrimmage. If this happens, a Defensive Offside penalty will be called.
4. After placing the ball at the current line of scrimmage, the officials will mark the defense's rush line. For the 7-8 and 9-10 age divisions, the rush line will be 7 yards in front of the line of scrimmage. For the 11-12 and 13-15 age divisions, the rush line will be 10 yards in front of the line of scrimmage. Rushing the passer is not allowed in the 5-6 age division.
5. There are no defensive requirements for the minimum or maximum number of defensive players on the line or rushing.

### **12.2 – Flag Pulling**

1. A defensive player may only pull the flag of the person with possession of the ball.
2. When attempting a flag pull, the defensive player can only use his or her hand or hands to pull the flag free from the flag belt.
3. When attempting a flag pull, the defensive player cannot grab the shorts, jersey, head, neck, shoulder, arm, waist, etc. of the ball carrier. If this happens, a Defensive Holding penalty will be called.
4. If a defensive player wraps up, plays through, shoulder blocks, pushes, shoves, trips, etc. the ball carrier, an Illegal Contact penalty will be called. If the official deems the move as overly aggressive, an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty may be called.
5. If a defensive player pushes or shoves the ball carrier out of bounds instead of attempting a legitimate flag pull, an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will be called.

6. Diving by the defensive player to pull the ball carrier's flag is allowed, as long as the defensive player makes minimal to no contact with the ball carrier.
7. If a diving defensive player trips the ball carrier while attempting a legal flag pull attempt, an Illegal Contact penalty will be called. If the official deems that the defensive player was tackling the ball carrier and not going for his or her flags, an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty may be called. Safety and good sportsmanship are of the utmost importance.
8. Pulling the flag of an offensive player not in possession of the ball is not allowed.
9. After pulling the ball carrier's flag, the defensive player is encouraged to hold the flag above his or her head to assist the official in spotting the ball and/or show good sportsmanship by returning the flag to the offensive player. Actions like flag slamming, flag throwing, or ripping the flag out of the defensive player's hand can result in a verbal warning or an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.

### **12.3 – Rushing the Quarterback**

1. Before the snap, the officials will spot the ball and mark the age appropriate rush line.
2. Any defensive player that is "rushing" the quarterback must line up behind the rush line and remain behind the rush line until the ball has been snapped.
3. Defensive players lined up in front of the line of scrimmage cannot enter the backfield until the ball has been handed off or touched by a receiver behind the line of scrimmage. If a defensive player "illegally" crosses the line of scrimmage, a Defensive Offside penalty will be called.
4. Any number (0-5) defensive players can rush the quarterback.
5. When any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage, the quarterback becomes eligible to run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage, even in the No-Run Zones.
6. Any defensive player rushing "up the middle" (within 2 yards of either side of the rush marker) cannot make contact with or impede the motion of the center.
7. A defensive rusher that lines up more than 2 yards from either side of the rush marker has a clear line to the quarterback. Any offensive player that intentionally impedes the defensive rusher's line to the quarterback will be called for a Blocking penalty. A receiver running a passing route does not constitute blocking, as long as the receiver is legitimately going out for a pass and not intentionally impeding the defensive rusher's line to the quarterback.
8. If a defensive rusher crosses the rush line before the ball is snapped, he or she may reset behind the line and then legally rush the quarterback.
9. Once the ball is handed off or touched by a receiver behind the line of scrimmage, any and all defensive players are eligible to cross the line of scrimmage.
10. Defensive rushers are allowed to jump to block a pass that has left the quarterback's hand, as long as the rusher does not make contact with the quarterback.
11. Defensive rushers must go for the quarterback's flag, not his or her body.
12. Making contact with any part of the quarterback's body or the ball while he or she is dropping back or attempting to pass the ball will be called for a Roughing the Passer penalty.

## **12.4 – Pass Coverage**

1. Defense players cannot check, jam, bump, etc. the receiver as he or she is coming off the line of scrimmage.
2. Receivers cannot intentionally make contact with the defensive players as they are running their pass routes.
3. A defensive player can use their arm/hand to “find” or “guide” a receiver, but cannot make material contact with the receiver to impede his or her motion.
4. All passes are considered catchable, until they are caught, intercepted, go out of bounds, or land on the ground incomplete.
5. Once a pass is in the air, all offensive and defensive players on the field are considered eligible receiver. Any eligible receiver has a right to catch the ball.

## **12.5 – Pass Interference**

1. Pass interference occurs when a player interferes with an eligible receiver ability to catch a forward pass. Contact that occurs before the forward pass is thrown is not pass interference, but could be a different penalty.
2. Incidental contact and accidental entangling of the legs or feet are usually not considered pass interference. This is an official’s judgment call.
3. Contact away from the path of the pass is not pass interference. However, a different penalty could be called.
4. The catchability of the pass has no bearing on pass interference.
5. Examples of pass interference are:
  - A. A player pushing off on the opposing player to create separation.
  - B. A player grabbing the hips or torso of the opposing player and turning his or her body before the pass arrives.
  - C. Intentionally tripping a player to prevent him or her from catching a pass.
  - D. Restricting or grabbing the arms, body, and/or jersey of a player who is attempting to catch a pass.
  - E. Accidental or intentional contact with a player before the ball arrives.
  - F. Playing through the back of a receiver, physical contact must occur.
  - G. Intentionally cutting off the path of a receiver while the ball is in the air.
6. A player using his or her arms to block the receiver’s view of the football without turning his or her own head to look for the ball is not pass interference, if no physical contact is made with the opposing player. However, it is a separate penalty – Face Guarding.

## **12.6 – Interceptions**

1. If a defensive player cleanly intercepts the ball, he or she can return the interception until their flag is pulled, they run out of bounds, or they score a defensive touchdown (6 points).
2. An interception returned for a score on a PAT attempt is worth 2 points.
3. If a defensive player cleanly intercepts the ball, but does not score on the return, the defense is awarded possession of the ball and a first down.

4. If a defensive player commits a penalty before or during an interception, the pass will be ruled incomplete, the offense will retain possession of the football, and any penalty yardage will be assessed.
5. If the intercepting team commits a penalty after an interception, they will retain possession of the ball. However, the penalty yardage will be assessed either from the spot of the penalty or the end of the return, whichever is worse.

## **Article 13: Overtime**

1. At the end of regulation if the score is tied, the game will move into overtime.
2. U.S. Elite Flag Football's overtime is a one play, point conversion competition. Teams can choose:
  - A. A 1-point attempt from the 5-yard line. Since the play starts in the No-Run Zone, the play must start with a forward pass from the player receiving the snap from the center, except for in the AFC 5-6 age division.
  - B. A 2-point attempt from the 10-yard line. The play can be a run or a pass play.
  - C. A 3-point attempt from midfield. The play can be a run or a pass play.
3. The teams will take turns attempting 1, 2, or 3 point conversions. The team starting on defense will get an opportunity to match or beat the offenses point conversion.
4. In the AFC division, each team will have only one play to attempt a 1, 2, or 3 point conversion. If after each team has completed their point attempts and the score is still tied, the game will be ruled a tie. If after each team has completed their point attempts and there is a point differential, that team that is leading will be declared the winner.
5. In the NFC division, the teams will take turns attempting 1, 2, or 3 point conversions until a winner is determined.
6. The Home Team will start on offense on the first round of overtime play. After the Home Team's point attempt, the Visiting Team will have their offensive point attempt. If a second round of overtime is needed, the Visiting Team will be on offense first and the Home Team will be on offense second. In each necessary, subsequent overtime period, the teams will continue to alternate first offensive possession.
7. Overtime play will continue until there is a point differential at the end of an overtime period (NFC Division). The team leading at the end of an overtime period will be declared the winner.
8. During the overtime play, an interception can be returned for 2 points.
9. There are no timeouts in overtime play.
10. All normal penalties are still in effect in overtime play.
11. All normal game policies and regulations, like the 7-second pass clock and the 30-second play clock, are still in effect in overtime play.
12. If the offense commits a penalty on a point conversion attempt, the attempt will be rule no good.
13. If the defense commits a penalty on a point conversion attempt, the offense can retry the point conversion attempt with all penalty yardage applied, but cannot change the point choice. The offense can also choose to decline the penalty.



## **Article 14: Inadvertent Whistle**

1. If an official inadvertently blows his or her whistle, the ball will be declared dead at the spot where the ball was when the inadvertent whistle happened. If the ball was in the air, it will be returned to the original line of scrimmage.
2. In case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense will have two options:
  - A. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
  - B. Take the ball at the spot where the ball was when the inadvertent whistle happened.
3. If there is an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty during or immediately after a play that was whistled dead by an inadvertent whistle, the penalty yardage will be assessed after the inadvertent whistle ruling.

## **Article 15: Forfeits and No Shows**

1. If a team will not be able to field a team for a game, the team's coaching staff should contact U.S. Elite Flag Football as soon as the coaches know they will not have enough players to play, so we can let the other team know and plan accordingly.
2. If coaches from both teams agree, U.S. Elite Flag Football will make every possible attempt to reschedule the game. Therefore, the sooner coaches let U.S. Elite Flag Football know about the issue the better.
3. If U.S. Flag Football is unable to reschedule the game for whatever reason, the team that is short players will forfeit the game, and it will go as a loss on their season record.
4. If a team doesn't show up for a scheduled game and does not let U.S. Elite Flag Football know beforehand, the team will forfeit the game and the game will not be rescheduled.
5. If a team does not take the field within 10 minutes of the originally scheduled game start time, the team will forfeit the game and the game will not be rescheduled. Every effort must be made to keep Game Days on schedule.

## **Article 16: League Standings**

1. League standings are based solely on wins, losses, and ties in the AFC division, and wins and losses in the NFC division.
2. To discourage running up the score, point totals or point differentials do not play any role in the league standings.
3. If at the end of the season, if teams are tied in the league standings, U.S. Elite Flag Football will use other methods to determine tournament seeding or bowl placement, such as head-to-head record.

## **Article 17: Coach's Challenge**

1. **Only the team's head coach** can, in a polite manner, ask the officials about any rules clarifications, interpretations, or implementations. Coaches may not protest an official's discretionary calls.
2. If a coach believes a rule or game error has occurred, the coach can ask for a timeout to discuss (not argue) the issue.

3. If a coach attempts to challenge a call on a play other than the play that was just completed, a Delay of Game penalty will be called.
4. The challenge must be made prior to the next snap. Coaches are not allowed to challenge past plays, only the current play.
5. If both officials agree that an error has occurred, the error will be addressed and the timeout will not be charged.
6. If both officials disagree that an error has occurred, the team will be charged with a timeout.
7. If both officials disagree that an error has occurred and the challenging coach did not have a timeout, the team will be charged with a Delay of Game penalty. A second occurrence will result in an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
8. Official's judgment calls and what an official did or did not see cannot be challenged.

## **Article 18: Penalties**

### **18.1 – General**

1. The officials will call the penalties, not the coaches, players, spectators, or U.S. Elite Flag Football staff.
2. Live ball penalties will be assessed at the end of the play.
3. Dead ball penalties will be assessed prior to the snap of the ball.
4. The officials will determine incidental contact that may result from normal play.
5. The first half or the game cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense chooses to decline it.
6. Players may not question calls. If a player attempts to argue a call with the officials, the player will be called for an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty.
7. If there are offsetting penalties on a play (both the offense and defense are flagged for a penalty), the down will be replayed with all penalty yardages enforced.
8. If there are offsetting penalties but one of the penalties is an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty, the Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will take precedence and be the only penalty enforced. Poor behavior or poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated.
9. All offensive and defensive penalties can be declined, except Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalties.
10. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal line when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
11. Defensive Holding – If a defensive player accidentally grabs the ball carrier's jersey and/or shorts while attempting to pull the ball carrier's flag, the defensive player may complete the flag pull without penalty as long as the flag pull is one continuous action. If the defensive player doesn't have the flag in hand and continues to hold the ball carrier's jersey and/or shorts while trying to pull the flag, like with his or her other hand, a Defensive Holding penalty will be called.
12. All offensive penalties will result in penalty yardage and an automatic loss of down, except for the pre-snap penalties – Illegal Motion, False Start, and Illegal Hike.
13. An offensive penalty on fourth down results in a change of possession.

14. All offensive penalties will be whistled dead when they occur.
15. All defensive penalties will result in penalty yardage and automatic replay of the down, except Defensive Pass Interference which results in an automatic first down.

## **18.2 – General Penalties**

1. Penalty on offense = loss of down. Penalty on defense = replay the down.
2. Delay of Game – 5 yards from the original LOS.
3. Too Many Players on the Field – 5 yards from the original LOS.
4. Improper equipment (no mouth guard, jersey untucked, pants/shorts with pockets, missing or improperly placed flags, etc.) – 5 yards from the original LOS
5. Illegal Participation (play entering the field as the snap is occurring or during the play) – 5 yards from the original LOS.
6. Unsportsmanlike Conduct/Unnecessary Roughness – 10 yards from the end of the play.

Delay of Game	5 Yards from original LOS
Too Many Players	5 Yards from original LOS
Improper Equipment	5 Yards from original LOS
Illegal Participation	5 Yards from original LOS
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	10 Yards from the end of the play
Unnecessary Roughness	10 Yards from the end of the play

### 18.3 – Offensive Penalties

1. Illegal Motion – 5 yards from the original LOS, **no loss of down**.
2. False Start – 5 yards from the original LOS, **no loss of down**.
3. Illegal Hike – 5 yards from the original LOS, **no loss of down**.
4. Missed Snap – **Loss of down only**, ball returned to the original LOS.
5. 7-second Pass Clock Violation – **Loss of down only**, ball returned to the original LOS.
6. Center Sneak – 5 yards from the original LOS and loss of down.
7. Illegal Forward Pass – 5 yards from the original LOS and loss of down. If the illegal forward pass occurs downfield, 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
8. Illegal Run in the No-Run Zone – 5 yards from the original LOS and loss of down.
9. Offensive Pass Interference – 5 yards from the original LOS and loss of down.
10. Offensive Illegal Contact – 5 yards from the original LOS and loss of down.
11. Illegal Participation – 5 yards from the original LOS and loss of down.
12. Blocking – 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
13. Flag Guarding – 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
14. Illegal Ball Advancement (Diving or jumping to advance the ball) – 5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.

Illegal Motion	5 Yards from original LOS	No loss of down
False Start	5 Yards from original LOS	No loss of down
Illegal Hike	5 Yards from original LOS	No loss of down
Missed Snap	N/A	Loss of down only
7-Second Pass Clock	N/A	Loss of down only
Center Sneak	5 Yards from original LOS	Loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass	5 Yards from original LOS	Loss of down
Illegal Forward Pass Downfield	5 Yards from spot of foul	Loss of down
Illegal Run in the No-Run Zone	5 Yards from original LOS	Loss of down
Offensive Pass Interference	5 Yards from original LOS	Loss of down
Offensive Illegal Contact	5 Yards from original LOS	Loss of down
Illegal Participation	5 Yards from original LOS	Loss of down
Blocking	5 Yards from spot of foul	Loss of down
Flag Guarding	5 Yards from spot of foul	Loss of down
Illegal Ball Advancement	5 Yards from spot of foul	Loss of down

## 18.4 – Defensive Penalties

1. Offside or Illegal Rush – 5 yards from the original LOS and replay the down.
2. Illegal Flag Pull – 5 yards from the original LOS or the spot of the reception and replay the down.
3. Holding – 5 yards from the spot of the foul and replay the down.
4. Defensive Illegal Contact – 5 yards from the spot of the foul and replay the down.
5. Face Guarding – Ball placed at the spot of the foul and replay the down. If in the end zone, ball spotted at the 1-yard line.
6. Defensive Pass Interference – Ball placed at the spot of the foul and **automatic first down**.
  - A. If DPI occurs in the end zone, the ball will be spotted at the 1 yard line and **automatic first down**.
  - B. If DPI occurs on a 1, 2, or 3 point conversion, the ball will be spotted at the 1 yard line and a successful PAT attempt will result in the original point attempt.
7. Roughing the Passer – 10 yards from the end of the play and replay the down.

Offsides	5 Yards from original LOS	Replay down
Illegal Rush	5 Yards from original LOS	Replay down
Illegal Flag Pull	5 Yards from original LOS	Replay down
Holding	5 Yards from spot of foul	Replay down
Defensive Illegal Contact	5 Yards from spot of foul	Replay down
Face Guarding	Ball placed at spot of foul	Replay down
Defensive Pass Interference	Ball placed at spot of foul	Automatic first down
Roughing the Passer	10 Yards from end of play	Replay down