

Gladiator Flag Rules

FALL 2026



GLADIATOR FLAG FOOTBALL

OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

1. EQUIPMENT

1.1 Equipment Supplied

Each player will be provided with:

- Jersey with an assigned number
- Set of flags
- Age-appropriate football
- Shorts

1.2 Equipment Required

Players must have:

- **Mouthguard — mandatory**
- **Protective Headgear — mandatory**
- Cleats are preferred; **metal cleats are prohibited**
- Running shoes are permitted
- Receiver gloves are permitted but not required

1.3 Prohibited Equipment

- Jewelry is not permitted while playing.
 - Any item located in the flag area that could interfere with flag pulling may be considered an additional flag.
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2. GAME FORMAT

2.1 Starting the Game

A coin toss will determine which team receives the first possession.

2.2 Game Length

- The game consists of **two 22-minute halves**.
- The clock runs continuously during each half.
- Each half ends with **five total untimed plays**.
- A punt counts as one of the five untimed plays.
- An extra-point attempt does **not** count as one of the five untimed plays.

2.3 Timeouts

Each team receives **two timeouts per game**.

2.4 Starting Possession

To begin the game and after a touchdown each possession begins at the **5-yard line**

3. DOWNS AND FIRST DOWNS

- Teams have **four downs to gain 10 yards** for a new first down.
- If the team fails to gain the required yardage after four downs, possession changes.

- On fourth down, the offense may either attempt to gain the first down or punt.
- A punt counts as a play in the final 5 plays of each half.

4. BALL RETRIEVAL AND SPOTTING

4.1 Ball Retrieval

The offense is responsible for retrieving its own ball following a play and bringing it to the huddle. Do not hand it to the refs.

4.2 Spot of the Ball

The ball is spotted based on the **location of the ball**, not the location of the player's flags.

4.3 Reaching

A ball carrier may reach for additional yardage.

However:

- Jumping for additional yardage is prohibited.
 - Lunging forward for additional yardage is prohibited.
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5. PASSING AND RUNNING

5.1 Forward Passes

A forward pass may be completed according to the rules governing the line of scrimmage and laterals.

A completed forward pass behind the line of scrimmage is **not considered a running play**, even if the receiver subsequently runs beyond the line of scrimmage.

5.2 Running Plays

A running play is permitted only following a **handoff or lateral**.

The quarterback—the player who receives the snap—may not run directly with the ball unless the ball is subsequently returned to that player by:

- A handoff; or
- A lateral.

5.3 Consecutive Runs

- A team may not run on back-to-back plays.
- A team may not run on three consecutive plays, including when an illegal-run penalty has occurred.
- A team may run on a 2 point conversion (extra points aren't considered as plays)

5.4 Red-Zone Running Restriction

Running plays are prohibited within **5 yards of the goal line**.

For the Division 5–6 age group, the no-running area begins at the **3-yard line**.

The red-zone running restriction also applies to extra-point attempts.

6. LATERALS AND HANDOFFS

6.1 Behind the Line of Scrimmage

Behind the line of scrimmage:

- Unlimited handoffs are permitted in any direction.
- A forward handoff is **not** considered a forward pass.
- Unlimited backward passes (laterals) are permitted.
- A forward pass may be thrown after a backward pass or handoff.

The defense may intercept any lateral pass.

6.2 After a Completed Forward Pass

After a completed forward pass:

- The offense is permitted **one lateral per play**.
 - A handoff after a completed forward pass is permitted, but the handoff must be made **behind the ball carrier**.
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7. THE RUSHER

7.1 Rusher Declaration

The rusher **must declare their intention to rush by raising their hand**.

- The rusher is not required to rush after declaring.
- A player may not rush unless the intention to rush was declared before the snap.

7.2 Rusher Distance

The designated rusher begins the play **7 yards from the line of scrimmage**.

7.3 First Player Across the Line

The declared rusher must be the **first defensive player to cross the line of scrimmage unless there was a completed pass (forward or backward) or handoff**.

Once the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage, other defensive players may cross.

7.4 Rusher Immunity

The declared rusher receives immunity from offensive blocking when lined up:

- One yard to the left of the rush bag; or
- One yard to the right of the rush bag.

If the rusher:

- Lines up more than one yard to either side of the rush bag; or
- Lines up directly in front of the snapper,

The rusher loses immunity. No rusher-interference penalty will be called in these circumstances.

In a double-rush situation, both must be behind the 7 yard marker and **only the declared rusher receives immunity**.

7.5 Rusher Movement

If the rusher stutters, stops, or changes direction during the rush because of an offensive player, a penalty will be called.

If the quarterback rolls out, offensive players must get out of the rusher's way. They may not interfere with the rusher's path to the quarterback.

7.6 Restrictions on Players Within Seven Yards

A defensive player who is fewer than 7 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped may not cross the line of scrimmage until one of the following occurs:

1. The declared rusher crosses the line of scrimmage;
2. The ball is handed off; or
3. A forward or backward pass is caught behind the line of scrimmage.

7.7 Rusher Offside

The rusher is offside **only if**:

1. The rusher jumps before the snap; **and**
2. The rusher crosses the line of scrimmage.

If the rusher jumps but returns behind the rush bag before crossing the line of scrimmage:

- No offside penalty is called.
- The rusher may resume the rush.
- The rusher may also choose not to rush.

7.8 Rusher Contact

The rusher may attempt to block a pass but **may not contact any part of the quarterback.**

Zero-contact tolerance applies to the quarterback.

The rusher must maintain control of their body throughout the rush.

8. OFFENSIVE MOVEMENT AND BLOCKING

8.1 Freeze Requirement

Once a player catches a forward pass or begins running with the ball, their teammates are expected to **freeze and remain motionless until the play ends.**

A teammate who runs alongside the ball carrier downfield may be flagged for **illegal blocking.**

8.2 Developing Running Plays

If a potential running play is developing, an offensive player may continue running their route until the runner crosses the line of scrimmage.

Doing so is not considered blocking.

8.3 Avoiding the Rusher

If the quarterback rolls out or changes position, offensive players including the snapper, must move out of the rusher's path and may not interfere with the rusher.

9. FORMATIONS AND MOTION

9.1 Offensive Formation

There is **no minimum number of offensive players required to be on the line of scrimmage.**

9.2 Motion

Motion is permitted provided the player moves:

- Laterally; or
- Backward.

A player may not motion toward the line of scrimmage.

Only **one player may be in motion at a time.**

9.3 Changing the Play

An exception is permitted when the play is changed.

Following a play change:

- All players must become set.
- Players must remain set for at least **one second** before motion begins.

10. DEFENSIVE ALIGNMENT

10.1 Neutral Zone

The defense must respect a **1-yard neutral zone.**

10.2 Defender in Front of the Snapper

The defender aligned directly in front of the snapper must be:

- At least **3 yards back**, or
 - **1 yard to the left or right** of the snapper.
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11. CATCHES AND INBOUNDS

11.1 Completed Catch

A receiver must have **one foot in bounds** for a catch to be completed.

11.2 Force-Out

If a receiver is pushed or forced out of bounds by a defender and, in the official's judgment, the receiver would otherwise have completed the catch in bounds, the offense will be awarded the catch.

12. BAD SNAPS, DROPS, FUMBLES AND LATERALS

12.1 Bad Snap or Quarterback Drop

If the ball touches the ground because of:

- A bad snap; or
- A dropped ball by the quarterback,

the ball returns to the **original line of scrimmage**.

The next play is a **loss of down**.

If this occurs on fourth down:

- The ball returns to the original line of scrimmage; and
- It is a **turnover on downs**.

12.2 Fumbles and Laterals

On a lateral or fumble, the ball is spotted where it **first lands**. The defense may not recover a fumble. The play ends automatically.

If the ball first lands in the offensive team's end zone, it results in a **safety**.

13. PUNTING

13.1 Fourth Down Options

On fourth down, the offense may:

- Attempt to gain the required yardage; or
- Punt.

13.2 Punt Result

A punt places the ball at the opposing team's **5-yard line**.

13.3 Untimed Plays

A punt counts as one of the five untimed plays at the end of each half.

14. SCORING

14.1 Touchdown — 6 Points

A touchdown is scored when **any part of the ball crosses the goal line**.

14.2 Awarded Touchdown

If the ball carrier is illegally interfered with by the last defender between the ball carrier and the goal line, and the official determines that the ball carrier clearly would have scored without the interference, the touchdown will be awarded.

In the event of a dual foul, a touchdown cannot be awarded. The fouls will be administered at the appropriate spot.

15. EXTRA-POINT ATTEMPTS

15.1 Available Options

After a touchdown, the scoring team may attempt:

- 1 point from the 5-yard line
- 2 points from the 10-yard line

15.2 Untimed Plays

Extra-point attempts do **not** count as one of the five untimed plays at the end of a half.

Therefore, if a team scores a touchdown on a running play, it may run on a 2-point conversion even though the preceding play was a run.

15.3 Red-Zone Running Rules

The no-running rules for the red zone apply to extra-point attempts.

15.4 Interceptions on Converts

Extra-point attempts may be intercepted.

An interception returned by the defense is worth **2 points**, regardless of whether the offense was attempting a 1-point or 2-point conversion.

15.5 Changing the Point Option

Once the offense has declared its point option and the markers have been set, the team must use a timeout if it wishes to change its selection.

15.6 Conceding the Convert

The non-scoring team may concede the extra-point attempt.

If the defense chooses to concede, the offense is awarded a **2-point conversion**.

This may be used as a strategy to return possession to the defense quickly and avoid spending time on the extra-point attempt.

The scoring team may also decline the extra-point attempt for the same strategic purpose.

16. SAFETY

A safety is worth **2 points**.

A safety occurs when:

- A ball carrier runs into their own end zone to avoid a defender and is deflagged.
- A fumble or lateral first lands in the offensive team's end zone.

16.1 Interception Momentum

If a player intercepts the ball and is carried into the end zone by their momentum before being deflagged, the result is a **touchback**, not a safety.

Possession begins at the 5-yard line.

16.2 Bad Snap in the End Zone

On a bad snap in the end zone:

- The ball returns to the original line of scrimmage.
- A loss of down is assessed.
- If the play occurred on fourth down, possession changes.

17. FLAG PULLING

17.1 Legal Flag Pull

A defender may pull the flag of a player who is in possession of the ball.

17.2 Illegal Flag Pulling

A defender may not intentionally pull the flags of a player who does not possess the ball.

A defender may not hold the ball carrier in any way to slow the player down while attempting to pull the flag.

A player who holds the:

- Flag belt
- Arm
- Body
- Jersey
- Shorts
- Pants
- Or other part of the ball carrier

will be assessed a **holding penalty**.

17.3 Incidental Jersey or Shorts Contact

A quick tug and immediate release of a jersey or shorts will not be considered holding.

17.4 Lost Flag

If an offensive player loses a flag during a play, the defense only needs to **touch the player** to end the play.

18. EXTRA FLAGS AND CLOTHING

Players may wear permitted "swag," such as a towel tucked into their pants.

However, any item located in the flag area will be considered an **extra flag**.

The same rule applies to a quarterback who removes the throwing-hand glove and tucks it into their shorts. The glove will count as an additional flag.

19. FLAG GUARDING

19.1 General Rule

A ball carrier may not intentionally prevent a defender from pulling their flag.

Flag guarding includes using:

- Hands
- Arms
- Elbows
- The football
- Clothing
- Or any other part of the body

as a shield to prevent a defender from making a flag pull.

19.2 Examples of Flag Guarding

The following actions may result in a flag-guarding penalty:

- Stiff-arming a defender
- Swatting a defender's hand away
- Using the ball to shield the flag
- Placing the ball near the flags and having the defender's attempt to pull the flag contact the ball instead

19.3 Jersey Interference

A jersey that prevents or significantly hinders a defender's attempt to pull the flag may result in a **flag-guarding penalty**.

Officials should attempt to prevent this situation when possible. However, if the offensive player gains an advantage, the action will be penalized as flag guarding.

20. TIES AND PLAYOFFS

20.1 Regular Season

There are **no tie-breakers during the regular season**.

A regular-season game may end in a tie.

20.2 Playoffs

Playoff games that are tied will be decided using **extra points in an ABBA format**.

21. OFFICIATING PRINCIPLES

Officials will enforce these rules with particular emphasis on:

1. **Player safety**
2. **Zero-contact protection of the quarterback**
3. **Preventing illegal blocking**
4. **Maintaining the required neutral zone and rushing restrictions**
5. **Accurate ball spotting**
6. **Preventing flag guarding and illegal flag pulling**
7. **Maintaining fair and consistent enforcement of the rules**

Where a rule requires an official's judgment—such as determining whether a receiver was forced out, whether a touchdown would have occurred without illegal interference, or whether an advantage was gained—the official's judgment will determine the ruling.

OFFICIAL INTERPRETATION

These rules are intended to provide a safe, competitive, and consistent flag-football environment. Officials have authority to interpret situations not explicitly addressed in this rulebook in a manner consistent with the intent and principles of these rules, with **player safety and competitive fairness taking priority**.

Penalties

Offense			
	Yardage	From	Down
Offsides	5	LOS	Repeat
False Start	5	LOS	Repeat
Illegal Run	5	LOS	Repeat
Illegal Pass	5	LOS	Loss
Rusher Interfer.	5	LOS	Loss
Pass Interfer.	10	LOS	Loss
Illegal lateral	5	Spot	Loss
Illegal Motion	5	LOS	Repeat
Flag Guard	10	Spot	Loss
Blocking	10	Spot	Loss
Roughness	10	Spot	Loss
Unsportsmanlike	10	LOS	Loss
Defense			
	Yardage	From	Down
Offsides	5	LOS	Repeat
Illegal Rush	5	LOS	Repeat
Holding	Spot	Spot	1st
Pass interfer.	Spot	Spot	1st
QB Contact	10	LOS	1st
Roughness	10	Spot	1st
Unsportsmanlike	10	LOS	1st