



Bethel Recreation Association

3rd- 6th Grade Flag Football

RULES updated 8/11/25

This program will follow the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) football rules with the exception of Bethel Recreation's Flag Football rules as outlined below.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAM

The 3rd-6th Grade Flag Football Program is an instructional league designed to teach the proper fundamentals of football in a fun-filled atmosphere. Teamwork, dedication and good-sportsmanship is strongly encouraged.

TEAMS

1. Co-ed teams are divided into three (3) separate leagues: 3rd Grade, 4th Grade & 5th/6th Grade.
2. Nine (9) to fourteen (14) players will be assigned to each roster. (Exceptions can be made).

THE FIELD

1. The approximate length of the field will be eighty (80) yards; which includes two (2) ten (10), yard end zones. The width of the field will be approximately forty (40) yards.
2. Teams and their spectators will be positioned on the same side of the field. Spectators must be 8 feet back from the field of play to allow the coaches and players to move along the sideline.
3. ***Spectators/teams are not allowed to stand or sit behind the end zones.***

PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

1. Ball Size: 3rd & 4th grade -Junior (Size #3) football 5th/6th Grade- Intermediate/Youth (Size #4) football
2. Teams must field a maximum of seven (7) players and a minimum of six (6) players. A team can start with six (6) players. A ten-minute (10) grace period from the scheduled start time will be granted prior to the game being forfeited. If the grace period is used the game time will be reduced to 15-minute halves.
3. Every member of a team must wear flag belts provided. Belts and flags must be exposed and worn around player's waist with individual flags around the sides and back.
4. All players must wear a mouth guard.
5. Players may not have on the same color shorts as their flags.
6. Tennis shoes or rubber cleats permitted. ***No metal cleats are allowed.***
7. **Shirts must be tucked in.** A shirt hanging over a flag belt will be called for a flag-guarding penalty (**official's discretion**).
8. **Jewelry is prohibited. This includes earrings (taping jewelry is NOT acceptable).** Religious and medical-alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert medal must be taped and may be visible. No metal or plastic hair barrettes or headbands are allowed. They must be of a soft or pliable material if worn in the hair.
9. A player shall not wear anything that may be dangerous to other players or themselves. This includes casts/splints, plastic face shields, etc. No player wearing a cast or splint shall be permitted to play.

SUPERVISION/OFFICIALS

1. There will be a Field Supervisor at each game site to answer questions and provide assistance.
2. Each game is controlled by 2-3 officials and/or a supervisor who has full authority to enforce the rules of the game.
3. *All decisions of officials on all matters are not subject to protest.*

DURATION OF THE GAME

1. Games will consist of two (2) twenty five (25) minute halves. Time will be a running clock.
2. Half time will be ten (10) minutes.
3. Cheer squads (if present) will conduct a short half-time performance on the field during half time. Football teams are not allowed on the field at half time during cheer performances.
4. If the game ends in a tie there will be one 5-minute running clock overtime period. Overtime rules:
 - A. Running Clock except; clock stops on out of bounds and incomplete passes
 - B. Coin flip determines which team gets possession (home team call the flip).
 - C. Team who wins coin flip starts on their own 15-yard line.
 - D. Each team gets one (1) time-out.
 - E. If after the end of five (5) minutes the game is still tied- the game will be recorded as a tie.

SUBSTITUTIONS & TIME-OUTS

1. Each team will be allowed two (2) time-outs per half. The time-out period will be one (1) minute or less. The clock will continue except during time-outs and half time.

2. Unlimited Substitutions can be made on any dead ball ***including between plays.***

GAME GUIDELINES

1. Score and standings will be kept and it is the coach's responsibility to update their scores on the website.
2. It is the responsibility of the coach to make sure players are played an equal amount of time and have the opportunity to play both offense and defense. (Some players only want to play certain positions and this is permitted).
3. Coaches must remain on the sideline during a play. **For the 3rd & 4th grade leagues only, one (1) coach is allowed on the field to set up their offense or defense and then they must return to the sideline.** Coaches must never interfere with any play being made. A delay of game will be called if coaches are not off the field when play starts.
4. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team, as listed on the game schedule, calls the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss has the choice to take the ball first, or defer to the second half.
5. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone to start play.
6. Each play will start and stop with the official blowing the whistle.
7. **Five (5) second rush rule-** Once play has started, the quarterback has five (5) seconds to pass the ball before the defense can rush. The official will raise one arm up and count out loud 1001, 1002, etc. to time the start of the play. Once five (5) seconds is up the official will drop their arm to allow defense to rush. **Exceptions: See Defense Rule #7**

OFFENSE

1. **Formations:**
 - The offense must consist of a minimum of three (3) and a maximum of six (6) man line. A guard must line up on both sides of the center (there cannot be more than a two (2) foot gap between the guard and center).
 - Linebackers and safeties must be at least three (3) yards behind the line of scrimmage if there is no one to match up to on the line. Once the offensive interior linemen have become set, only one offensive player can be in motion at a time.
 - Any player lined up outside of the three (3) interior lineman or not in the backfield will be considered on the line of scrimmage. If a defensive player is lined up with an offensive player, they can either be on or off the line of scrimmage.
 - The maximum number of players that you can have outside of the guards on a particular side is two (2), that includes players that go in motion.
2. The snap from the center to the quarter back must be made between the legs.
3. The center is **NOT** allowed to run the ball.
4. Teams will have four (4) downs to gain ten (10) yards for a first down.
5. The offensive team must huddle before each play and all players must be in the huddle.
6. Teams will have 30 seconds to start a play once the ball is spotted/whistle is blown. Failure to do so will result in a delay of game/loss of down. Two delays in a row in the last (5) minutes of the game will result in a loss of possession.
7. Only one (1) offensive player may be in motion at one time.
8. Quarterbacks can start in the "shot gun" position or start from the line of scrimmage.
9. Once play has started, the quarterback has five (5) seconds to pass the ball before the defense can rush.
10. Each member of the offensive team is eligible to receive a pass.
11. Reverses, screen passes, counters and other offensive plays are allowed.
12. Quarterbacks may run the football but **quarterback sneaks are NOT allowed. (official discretion)**

DEFENSE:

1. Tackling or pushing players out of bounds is not allowed.
2. The defensive line must line up man-to-man to the offense.
3. There is no lining up in the gap. At least half of the defensive players body must be in front of the offensive player.
4. ***A defensive player over the center is prohibited.***

Defense		
X		X
G	C	G
Offense		

5. The defense must line up at least one (1) yard from the line of scrimmage. ***(There must be at least one (1) yard between the heads of the interior linemen).***
6. The defense can drop back into a zone, once the ball has been snapped.

7. If an offensive player goes in motion the defensive player must follow the offensive player or drop back 3 yards off the line of scrimmage. The only exception is if the offensive player starts in the backfield.
8. Once play has started, the quarterback has five (5) seconds to pass the ball before the defense can rush.
9. Once the ball has been passed, handed off **or the motion to hand off has been made (i.e. fake hand off)**, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
10. On a roll out pass, once the quarterback is considered to be outside the tackle position on either side of the line, the defense may then rush the passer regardless of the five (5) second count.
11. A defensive player cannot hold the receiver or leave their feet and dive in order to pull the flag.
12. Defense can score a touchdown if the pass is intercepted and returned to the end zone without their flag being pulled.
13. **Slapping, striking, stripping the ball and pushing a player to the ground or out of bounds are NOT allowed and a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be called. (The goal of the game is to pull the flag!)**

SCORING

1. Six (6) points shall be awarded for a touchdown.
2. After a touchdown is made, the team will be allowed one (1) down for an extra-point attempt. An extra-point conversion may be attempted from the five (5) yard line. Two (2) points will be awarded for an extra point attempt that is a pass play and one (1) point will be rewarded for a run play.
3. Two (2) points shall be awarded if the defense intercepts the pass on an extra point conversion and runs it back for a touchdown.
4. Two (2) points are scored on a safety. A safety is scored when the team defending the goal causes a live ball to go back over the goal line or when an offensive player flag is pulled inside their own end zone. After a safety, **the team will punt from their ten (10) yard line.**
5. Forward motion of the ball carrier into the end zone after the flag has been pulled will not count as a touchdown. The ball is down at the point where the flag was pulled free.

KICK-OFFS

1. There will be **NO** kick-offs in this league.
2. Teams will start at their own fifteen (15) yard line to start the game, 2nd half, and after scoring plays.

PUNTS

1. There is no rushing a punt.
2. If a punt is to be made, the offensive team must announce its intentions before the ball is snapped. All players must stay on the line of scrimmage and in their positions until the ball is kicked.
3. On a punt, if the ball hits the ground on the snap, the punter may pick up the ball but will have two (2) steps to kick the ball. ***They may not run or throw the ball they must kick it.***
4. On a punt, the receiving team can have up to 2 returners back off the line of scrimmage to return the ball. The remaining players must be lined up on the line of scrimmage.
5. If a punted ball that is not caught or touched, hits the ground, the ball is still live and the returner can pick up the ball and run.

RUNNING AND RECEIVING

1. The receiver/ball carrier cannot slap at the defenders hands, fan or guard the flags, stiff-arm or hurdle a defender. He will be called down where the infraction occurs.
2. Once the ball carrier has the ball in his possession he is not permitted to run through a defensive player. He must attempt to avoid the defender.
3. Spinning is allowed but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a defensive player (no jumping over players or diving ahead). The first infraction will result in a warning. After that any infractions will result in a five (5) yard penalty and a loss of down. **This is enforced for player safety!**
4. The player must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
5. If a player catches the ball or is in possession of the ball and loses his flags inadvertently, play will continue with **one hand touch.**
6. If the ball carrier's knee hits the ground, play is blown dead with the ball marked at the spot the knee hit the ground.

BLOCKING

1. Hand blocking should be employed with arms extended. Players may use hands to the chest and shoulder area in a blocking motion.
2. Emphasis should be on player safety. No hard shoving or pushing.
3. **No blocking from behind or pushing players to the ground. No hands to the head. No stiff-arming by the ball carrier or any other player is allowed. No use of elbows, tripping or grabbing is allowed. Any of these actions will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.**

DEAD BALLS

Play is ruled "dead" when:

- A. Offensive player flag is pulled.

- B. Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- C. A touchdown is scored.
- D. The official blows their whistle.
- E. The player with the ball knee hits the ground.
- F. A snap from the center hits the ground.
- G. The ball hits the ground **(there are no fumbles)**. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground. The ball remains in possession of the team that fumbled.

PENALTIES

1. The Officials will call all penalties.
2. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
3. Officials will determine incidental contact, which may result from normal run of play.
4. Only team captains and head coaches may ask the official questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players and coaches can't question judgment calls.
5. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty. (time will be put back on clock).
6. Fighting and contact too severe will result in player ejection **(official's discretion)**.
7. **Defensive Penalties:**
 - A. Offside, includes rushing passer before five (5) seconds= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - B. Pass Interference= 10 yards & automatic 1st down.
 - C. Illegal Contact (holding, etc.) = 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - D. Illegal Flag Pulling (before receiver has the ball or holding the receiver to pull flag)= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - E. Illegal Motion= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - F. All personal fouls or unsportsmanlike conduct penalties= 10 yards & automatic 1st down.
8. **Offensive Penalties:**
 - A. False Start= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - B. Illegal Forward Pass (pass thrown beyond line of scrimmage)= 5 yards and loss of down.
 - C. Pass Interference= 10 yards and loss of down.
 - D. Illegal Contact (holding, clipping etc.)= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - E. Flag Guarding= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - F. Illegal Action (diving ahead or jumping to avoid defender)= 5 yards & repeat the down.
 - G. All personal fouls or unsportsmanlike conduct penalties= 10 yards & loss of down.

**All penalties will be marked off from the original spot of the ball.*

**Players or coaches receiving two (2) unsportsmanlike conduct penalties will be ejected from the game and will have a one (1) game suspension for the next scheduled game.*

BETHEL RECREATION CODE OF CONDUCT

1) Coaches, players, and spectators:

- **MUST follow all BSD rules and regulations including: Alcohol, intoxicants, tobacco products, marijuana, weapons & drones are PROHIBITED.**
- **NO animals are allowed (including DOGS)** on BSD property.
- May not disrespectfully address or yell at an official, other coaches, players, parents or spectators.
- May not attempt to influence an official's decision.
- May not use profane or inappropriate language or obscene gestures.
- May not disrespectfully address, bait, or taunt an opponent.
- May not confront officials before, during or after a game.
- May not make a threat of physical harm or use physical force towards an official, supervisor, staff, or other coaches or players.

2) The head coach is responsible for the conduct and behavior of their team players, bench personnel and spectators.

3) All children/siblings must be supervised and all garbage (including water bottles) needs to be picked up.

4) If coaches or spectators have questions regarding particular calls, rules, or a referee, or wish to give feedback please contact:

During Games: Supervisor

Before or After Games: BR Director

PENALTY:

Any coach, player or spectator who fails to comply with the above rules will be subject to Code of Conduct disciplinary action. Depending on the severity of the violation, supervisors and officials have the authority to remove individuals.