

Greater Austin YMCA

Flag-Football Rules & Guidelines

The Greater Austin YMCA has a responsibility to our community to serve youth and their families through positive experiences that teach them the value of community togetherness.

Greater Austin YMCA youth sports will focus on the development of the whole child through age-appropriate & character-based curriculum, delivered in a judgment free environment that allows participants to learn, develop, and be filled with joy.

These recreational youth development programs will produce memorable experiences.

Through purposeful training of staff and volunteers, targeted marketing, and clear communication, the Greater Austin YMCA can fill the gap in our community and provide youth sports leagues, so that young people may:

- Develop youth sports skills & grow into well-rounded athletes and people and realize their potential as active, engaged, and thriving global thinkers.
- Engage in youth sports for multiple seasons as well as other Y youth programs (camp, swim lessons, afterschool, etc).

Table of Contents

1)	<u>Preseason Clinic</u>	<u>Page 3</u>
2)	<u>Playerspace.....</u>	<u>Page 3</u>
3)	<u>Sportsmanship.....</u>	<u>Page 4</u>
4)	<u>Player Safety.....</u>	<u>Page 4</u>
5)	<u>Guidelines:</u>	<u>Page 5-7</u>
6)	<u>Game Rules.....</u>	<u>Pages 8-12</u>

PRE-SEASON CLINICS:

This event will help your child prepare for the upcoming season through skills and drills. While your children participate in the clinic, we invite parents to attend a brief Youth Sports Announcement. You'll receive important season information, learn about your child's team assignment, and grab their jersey!

Playerspace

We will be using PLAYERSPACE as our communication system for youth sports. You will be able to easily access practice and game schedules, rosters, coaches information, and other helpful information for your season. Please download the Playerspace app for more convenient access.

App Download:

- Download the Playerspace app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store (blue star icon).
- For web access, visit: playerspace.com.

Logging In: Use your sign-up email to log into your account and access your "Team page".

Team Schedule:

- Find it under the "Schedule" tab; customize view with "List" or "Calendar".
- **Note:** Avoid printing schedules; stay updated via Email and Playerspace for changes.

Help Resources: Visit the Parent Help Site on Playerspace.net for tips.

SPORTSMANSHIP:

1. The Greater Austin YMCA does not keep official game scores or records. However, the score is documented during the game to promote a learning environment.
2. Unsportsmanlike conduct of the players or coaches is not tolerated. If the behavior persists, the individual will be asked to leave the facility or game location.
3. If the atmosphere of the game feels unsafe or the Greater Austin YMCAs Values are not being adhered to, the referee or YMCA staff member can end the game.
4. If a team has less than the number of required players, the opposing team will be asked to share players in order to provide competition. We make every effort to play each scheduled game.
5. Coaches are expected to adhere to the Greater Austin YMCA Code of Conduct and are responsible for team actions. This includes parents and players.

PLAYER SAFETY:

1. To protect the safety of all players in the program, any participant wearing a cast will prohibit them from participating in YMCA games or practices. Exceptions can be made with approval from the Sports Director and documented approval from a physician.
2. Soft casts will be permitted if approved by officials.
3. All types of jewelry (earrings, bracelets, necklaces, etc.) must be removed before the game.
4. Adaptive aids are approved on a case by case basis.

YOUTH SPORTS PLEDGE

At the start of each game, all players, coaches, and referees will meet at the center circle to recite the Youth Sports Pledge and address any rule clarifications.

YOUTH SPORTS PLEDGE

**I PLEDGE TO PLAY THE GAME,
THE BEST THAT I CAN,
TO BE A TEAM PLAYER,
TO RESPECT MY OPPONENTS,
THE RULES AND OFFICIALS,
AND IMPROVE MYSELF IN MIND,
BODY, AND SPIRIT.**

Guidelines:

EQUIPMENT

1. Flags - The YMCA furnished flags must be used. Three flags will be worn (one on each hip and one in the back) or two flags will be worn if the belt only has two flags (Both flags will be on the hip). Both teams in play will be wearing the same flag belts with the same flag amounts. Flags may not be wrapped, tied, or tucked around the flag belt and must be in clear view of the defending player. Excess belt material must be wrapped around the belt or tucked in the waistband so as not to have the appearance of a flag.
2. Football Size
 - a. 6-7yr old = Pee Wee
 - b. 8-9yr old= Junior
3. Mouthpieces are required.
4. Any medical Braces such as knee or ankle braces must be inspected and approved by the game official prior to the game to confirm the brace does not have any sharp metal pieces to ensure player safety.
5. Each player must wear their YMCA issued jersey. The jersey must be tucked into the player's shorts or pants. The player's shorts or pants cannot have pockets. Hats may not be worn. Additionally, only rubber-soled/cleated shoes may be worn. Metal cleats and Bulldog cleats (cleat on the front of the shoe) are not permitted.

GAME FIELD

1. All age groups will play 6-on-6 unless adjusted based on team sizes
2. The field length is 70 yards including the endzones. (30 yards wide - field size can vary based on facilities).
3. Field size may need to be modified depending on space at various YMCA's and outside facilities.
4. The field will be divided into two 25 yard zones and one 5 yard zone. The offense will have 4 plays to advance the ball into the next zone to get a first down. Before the first down marker, there is a 5 yard "No Run" zone and if the ball is spotted inside that 5 yard zone, the offense cannot run the ball to gain a first down. If a team does not make it

past the first down marker in their first 3 plays, they may elect to "Punt" on fourth down which would give the opposing team the ball starting on their own 10 yard line going out.

5. After a first down is gained, teams will have four (4) downs to score a touchdown.
6. All drives start at the offensive team's 10 yard line going out.

COACHES

1. Maximum of three (3) coaches. One (1) head coach and two (2) assistant coaches.
2. One coach is allowed on the field for offense only. Defensive coaches must remain on the sideline during play
3. Players and coaches are the only individuals permitted on the sideline during the game.
4. Players and coaches are to be on one side of the field and spectators and parents on the other side. There will be no coaching from the spectator area.

GENERAL RULES

Each YMCA Flag Football game will consist of two 20 min halves. This is a continuous running clock unless there is a timeout or an injury. Each game's halftime will be 5 minutes long. Additionally, two 1 minute timeouts will be awarded per half.

1. SCORING

- Player's hips with both flags attached must cross the goal line or the ball must cross the goal line while the offensive player retains possession.
- Touchdown = 6 points Safety= 2 points
- Point(s) after Touchdowns can be for one or two points. If a team elects to go for one point, it is a pass only zone from the 5 yard line. If the team elects to go for two, they can run or pass on the conversion but the ball will start at the 7 yard line

2. STARTING THE GAME

- Each team will provide a team captain.

- Team captains will play rock paper scissors to determine who receives their choice in starting the game and select offense, defense, or differ. If a team selects to defend, they will receive the ball to start the second half, and vice versa.
- The ball will be given to the team that chooses to play offense.
- Play will start on the 10 yard line going in.

3. AVOIDING CONTACT

It is the defensive player's responsibility to avoid contact with the offensive player on routes. The ball carrier may not be pushed or shoved out of bounds. If any intentional or unintentional contact is made while the ball is still held by the quarterback or in the air, this will result in an automatic first down from the spot of the foul for pass interference or illegal contact

4. STRIPPING THE BALL

Players may not intentionally strip the ball from the ball carrier's arm — personal foul assessed from the spot of the foul and an automatic first down

5. LUNGING/DIVING FOR FLAG

The player's feet leaving the ground by lunging or diving for the flag is illegal- assessed from the spot of the foul, automatic first down

6. TRIPPING

Tripping or using the leg to stop an offensive player is illegal — personal foul assessed from the spot and an automatic first down

7. DE-FLAGGING

- It is illegal to prematurely pull a player's flag — personal foul (10 Yard Penalty.)
- A ball carrier will be down where their flag drops.
- Flag guarding, pushing a defender's hands away, stiff-arming, or covering flags is illegal. (5 Yards Penalty)
- Penalties will be assessed from the spot of the foul — personal foul.

- Jumping or diving while running with the ball to avoid being stopped by a defensive player or to cross the goal line will be considered flag guarding.
- Jumping to avoid physical contact with other players is flag guarding, and will be assessed from the spot of the foul. (5 Yard Penalty)

8. BLOCKING IS NOT ALLOWED FROM OFFENSIVE PLAYERS

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

DEFENSE

- A. The defensive line of scrimmage is one yard in front of the ball.
- B. No defensive player may line up directly across from the center (no nose guard).
- C. All other defensive players may line up no closer than one yard from the defensive line of scrimmage.
- D. The rusher may not run over the center or a receiver. - personal foul of 10 yards and automatic first down
- E. The player who rushes the passer must be a minimum of seven (7) yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Only one player may rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend on the line of scrimmage.
- F. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- G. A unique marker, or the referee, will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage.
- H. A legal rush is any rush from a point that is seven (7) yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.
 - If a rusher leaves the rush line early (breaks the 7-yard area), it will

result in a 5 yard penalty and a replay of the down.

OFFENSE

- A. Any Snap or fumble that hits the ground will be considered dead. The following play will be marked at that spot.
- B. The offensive team has 25 seconds to snap the ball into play after the referee marks the ball ready for play. (6-7 year old will not have a play clock)
Once the ball is snapped, the play is LIVE. All offensive players are eligible ball carriers and receivers.
- C. There will be NO swinging gate formations.
- D. The ball may be snapped by either: an under center snap, or a shotgun snap. At least (3) players must line up on the line of scrimmage.
- E. Only one player may be in motion when the ball is snapped. All other players must be set for one second prior to the snap of the ball. There will be a 5-yard penalty if there is more than one player in motion.
- F. All passes must be forward and past the line of scrimmage (no pitches, laterals, screens, or backwards passes will be permitted) and passes not thrown back to the original line of scrimmage will result in a 5 yard penalty and replay of down
- G. Once the ball has been given to another player by way of handoff or pass, all non ball carrying players must not block or interfere with a defender's path to the ball carrier. Any screens or picks will result in a 5 yard penalty from the original spot and replay of down. All non ball carriers on the offensive side of the ball must stand still after a handoff or a completion
- H. In the case of a fumble, the ball will be marked dead and considered a down of play at the spot where the ball touches the ground.
- I. The quarterback cannot do direct runs up the middle. Qb's can run outside the pocket when the defense sends a rusher only but cannot pass the line of scrimmage with the ball.
- J. If the defense does not send a rusher, the QB will have 5 seconds to get rid of the ball.

Defensive Penalties:

- A. (assessed from the Line of Scrimmage(LoS))
- B. a. Offside: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
- C. i. Player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped
- D. b. Illegal Rush: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
- E. i. Rusher is not lined up at least seven yards off the line of scrimmage
- F. c. Illegal Flag Pull: +5 yards and Automatic First Down
- G. i. Player pulls the flag off an opponent before they have full possession of the ball
- H. d. Roughing the Passer: +10 yards and Automatic First Down
- I. i. Player makes contact with the passer after they've thrown a forward pass
- J. e. Taunting: 10 yards and Automatic First Down
- K. I. Type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams
- L. f. Unnecessary Roughness: +10 yards and Automatic First Down
 - i. Using methods beyond what is necessary to pull the flag off the opponent

Offensive Penalties (assessed from the Line of Scrimmage (LoS))

- M. a. Offside/False start: -5 yards and Replay of Down
- N. i. Players charges or moved in a way that indicates the start of the play before the ball is snapped
- O. b. Illegal Forward Pass: -5 yards and Loss of Down
- P. i. Player throws the ball forward once they are past the line of scrimmage c.
- Q. Pass Interference: -5 yards and Replay of Down
- R. i. Eligible receiver significantly hinders the defensive player's opportunity to intercept the ball
- S. d. Illegal Motion: -5 yards and Replay of Down

- T. i. Players shifting and not coming to a complete stop before the ball is snapped
- U. e. Delay of Game: -5 yards and Replay of Down
- V. i. Team fails to snap the ball and put it in play before the 25 second clock ends

Offensive Penalties continued

- f. Impeding the rusher: - 5 yards and replay of Down
- W. i. Rusher's path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player
- X. g. Illegal Formation: - 5 yards and replay of Down
- Y. I. Not enough offensive players on the line of scrimmage or a swinging gate formation
- Z. h. Taunting: -5 yards and replay of Down
- AA. I. Type of unsportsmanlike conduct where the player purposely creates ill will between teams
- BB. i. Unsportsmanlike Conduct: -10 yards and Loss of Down
- CC. i. Examples include excessive celebration, using abusive language, punching or kicking a player

REFEREES

- The referee shall be the sole judge on the field of play.
- The referee can ask coaches, parents, players, and spectators to leave the field of play or the facilities to maintain a pleasant atmosphere, and control of the game.
- If a coach, player, or spectator, is ejected from a game, that person(s) is automatically removed from the next game and will be reviewed by the Sports Director and Executive Director. Should another incident occur within the same season, the coach, spectator, or player may be ejected from the league permanently.
- The referee may stop, suspend, or terminate the game because of the elements of interference.

- **SUBSTITUTIONS**

The goal of the YMCA is to provide all children with equal playing time. All players must play a minimum of 50% of the game or be given the opportunity to play their equal playing time.