

YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL RULES & REGULATIONS

The Athletics Division of the Onslow County Parks & Recreation Department provides a platform for physical activity focused on ethical behavior, social responsibility, community engagement, and competitive effort that encourages leadership and individual growth.

ACCEPTANCE: Participation and play, including district officers, coaches, volunteers, and players, in any Onslow County Parks and Recreation Department athletic program implies full acceptance of all rules governing play, including the playing rules, by-laws, policies and procedures, and “Code of Conduct.”

PHYSICAL HEALTH VERIFICATION: It is the parent’s responsibility to see that their child is in sound physical condition. It is recommended that a player have a thorough physical examination prior to participating in the program.

CONDUCT: All players, spectators, parents, and coaches will be expected to adhere to the OCPR Athletics Code of Conduct that is provided in the OCPR Athletics Handbook. Any conduct that does not align with the expectations of our recreational league will be addressed by OCPR directly with consequences assigned.

PLAYING RULES & REGULATIONS: The current NFL Flag Official Playing rules will govern play, except as superseded by OCPR rules below.

AGE GROUPS

Participants shall be rostered by age according to the following:

6 & Under – Must not turn 7 prior to the cut-off date

8 & Under - Must not turn 9 prior to the cut-off date; Must be 7 by the cut-off date

11 & Under - Must not turn 12 prior to the cut-off date

Cut-off date: November 1st

TEAM UNIT:

- Each team shall have a maximum of 10 players per roster.
- Registration for all districts must be completed before the start of the first scheduled practice. A player cannot begin practice with a team until he/she has registered and has been placed on a team by the specified district.
- No coach shall allow any player to practice with his or her team who is not listed on the team roster.
- The minimum number of players required to begin a game is five. A ten-minute grace period from the start time of the scheduled game is provided before forfeiture is determined.
- Ineligible Players: Playing ineligible players who are not registered with the OCPR league, have been suspended from league play, or are not assigned to the roster of that team will result in forfeiture of all games in which the player participated. In addition, the head coach will be suspended for the next game for the first offense and will be suspended for the remainder of the season following a second offense.

COACHES

- All coaches must be approved by OCPR and receive a badge prior to coaching the first practice session.
- A coaching staff cannot exceed three coaches: one head coach and two assistant coaches. One additional coach will be permitted for the 6U & 8U divisions.
- Coaches must wear the OCPR badge during all practices and games.

EQUIPMENT

- All players must wear OCPR provided belts and flags.
- All players must wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.
- Game balls that are age specific will be provided by OCPR.

- Players must wear shoes that are appropriate for physical activity. Cleats are not required but are suggested. Metal cleats will not be permitted for any age division. Crocs may not be worn during practices or games.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands, and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and knee pads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
- Players must remove all jewelry and hard billed hats.
- Players may wear soft shell helmets and sunglasses but they must be secured at ALL times while on the field.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked into shorts or pants if they hang below the belt line.
- Shorts or pants must not have pockets. If clothing with pockets or belt loops is worn, belt loops or pockets must be taped prior to a game beginning.
- Players must bring their own mouth guard to the field.

FIELD

- Field Dimensions: 25 yards by 64 yards long; two seven-yard endzones
- No Run Zones are located five yards prior to the midfield line to gain and five yards prior to the endzone in the offense's direction. (*No Run Zones are eliminated for 6U and 8U divisions*)
 - No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the no-run zones, teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
 - Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive.
- Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

PRACTICE PROCEDURES

- All practices must be held at the sites and times assigned by OCPR. No other sites or times may be used.
- Pre-Season: No more than 3 days per week. No practices will be scheduled on Sundays.
- During Season: No more than 2 days per week. No practices will be scheduled on Sundays.
- No practices will last longer than 90 minutes.
- No practices can be held unless an OCPR Athletic Coordinator and OCPR approved coach is present.

GAME PROCEDURES

- Game Schedule: All games will be scheduled by OCPR.
- Warm Up: Teams will be permitted a five-minute warm up period prior to the game on the field. Both teams will warm up at the same time on opposite ends of the designated field.
- Scorebook: All players' names and numbers should be included in the game book roster at least five minutes prior to the start of the game.
- Bench: Only those coaches and players listed on the team's roster shall be allowed in the team's designated bench area.
- Ejections: All ejected players, coaches, and spectators will be required to leave the premises.
- Protests: Protests on judgment calls made by the officials will not be considered.
- Forfeitures: A 10-minute grace period from the scheduled game time will be permitted before declaring forfeiture. A minimum of 5 players are required to begin a game.

PLAYING TIME: During the regular season games, all players must play at least 15 total minutes in each game. All players must meet the playing time requirement before substitutions utilizing a player who has already met the playing time requirement can occur. Once the playing time requirement for each player is fulfilled, playing time for the participants is at the discretion of the Head Coach.

- If a player becomes injured or ill during a game, the coach should immediately notify the scorebook attendee for documentation in the scorebook. The opposing coach should also be notified.
- If a player is not able to play due to illness or injury, it must be noted in the official scorebook and the opposing coach should be notified before the game begins.

- All reports of lack of adherence to this rule must be made to the on-site OCPR Athletic Coordinator. Failure to adhere to the playing time requirement will result in a next game suspension for the head coach. If the infraction occurs again in the same season, the head coach will be suspended for the remainder of the season.
- All infractions related to playing time shall be reported to the OCPR Athletic Coordinator on site.

TIMING & OVERTIME

- Game Time: Regular season games are played on a 40-minute continuous clock, with two 20-minute halves, unless one team gains a 35-point advantage which will end the game. If both teams agree to continue without changing the score, the game may continue through conclusion of the standard game time. The clock stops for halftime, injuries, ejections, etc.
- Halftime: Halftime will be three minutes total in length.
- Snapping: Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball.
- Timeouts: Each team will be allowed two 60 second timeouts per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over between halves or to overtime periods.
- Overtime: If the score is tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime period will be used to determine a winner. Overtime format, when applicable, is as follows:
 - All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - There are no timeouts.
 - The referee will determine which half of the field the overtime will take place on.
 - Home team calls the toss to determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first. If a second round of overtime is necessary, the team that lost the overtime coin toss will choose offense or defense for the start of the second overtime round. The process continues to alternate for every overtime round needed.
 - Each team will take turns getting one play from the defense's 5-yard line for one point or the defense's 10-yard line for two points. Whether to go for one or two points is up to the offensive team. Whether or not the team that begins on offense converts, the team that started on defense gets a chance on offense to win or tie by converting a one- or two-point play of their own.
 - Starting with the 2nd overtime, both teams must "go for two" from the 10-yard line.
 - Interceptions are returnable in OT, and worth 2 points.
 - If an interception is returned for a score in the overtime period, the game is over.
 - Final score will be recorded to include all points scored for each team.

GAME PLAY

- At the start of each game, captains from both teams meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who starts with the ball. The visiting team calls the toss.
- The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Possession changes to start the second half to the team that started the game on defense.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5 yard line and has four (4) downs to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three (3) downs to score a touchdown.
 - If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, on 3 downs, and elects to "punt" on 4th down, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5 yard line. If the offensive team goes for it on 4th down and does not cross field, the opposing team will start its possession from the spot.
 - Offensive teams must declare the 4th down intent; "play or punt", when asked by the referee and prior to the "ready for play."
 - Teams may use a timeout only to change the declaration of "play" at any time prior to the expiration of the play clock.
 - If the declaration is "punt" the ball changes possession and will be placed at the opposing team's 5 yard line, 1st down, with no option to change the declaration.
 - If the offense fails to score, after crossing midfield the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts at its 5 yard line.
- Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

SCORING

- Touchdown: 6 points
- PAT (point after touchdown): 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - 1 point- pass only
 - 2 points- run or pass
 - A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (5-yard line) or 2-point conversion (10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged timeout. A decision cannot be changed after a penalty.
- Safety: 2 points
 - A safety occurs when the ball-carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. Runners can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, a flag falls out, they step out of bounds, their knee or arm touches the ground, a fumble occurs in the end zone, or if a snapped ball lands in or beyond the end zone.
- After one team is winning by 35 points or more, the game is over. Teams may elect to continue but no additional points scored will be added.
- Forfeits are scored 35-0 for the winning team.

LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a “courtesy” neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or a body part other than the hand contacts the ground in the field of play with possession.
- The defense may not mimic the offensive team signals by trying to confuse the offensive players, while the quarterback is calling out signals to start the play. This will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - The ball hits the ground. (If the ball hits the ground as the result of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.)
 - The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - A touchdown, PAT, or safety is scored.
 - The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - An inadvertent whistle occurs.
 - Ball-carrier leaves their feet diving or to hurdle a player.
- There are no fumbles (ground contact does not have to be made). If the ball is fumbled forwards, then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession. Loss of possession is a dead ball.
- If inadvertent whistle occurs, the offense has two options:
 - Take the ball where the whistle blew, and the down is consumed.
 - Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
 - If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.

RUNNING

- The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.

- The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
- Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted. Handoffs may be in front, behind, or to the side of the offensive player but must be behind the line of scrimmage. The offense may use multiple handoffs.
 - “Center sneak” play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
 - Any player who receives a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
 - Once the ball has been handed off, in front, behind, or to the side of the quarterback, the seven-second passing clock is eliminated, and all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Legal Handoff: total loss of possession directly from one offensive player to another
- NO pitches or laterals of any kind are permitted.
- No Run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield. The No Run Zones are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE.
- Runners are not permitted to dive or hurdle any player while advancing the ball.
- Ball-carriers may leave their feet and the play will continue for spinning, jump cuts, QB’s passing progression, or if there is a clear indication that he/she has done so to avoid a collision with another player. The play will continue without stoppage. If while leaving the ground contact is made, an unnecessary roughness penalty may be enforced by the official.
- No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
- Offensive players in close proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.
- Flag obstruction- All jerseys must be tucked in before play begins. The flags must be on the player’s hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding.

PASSING

- All passes must be thrown with one hand from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward, and ball out of hand prior to breaching the line of scrimmage.
- There is no intentional grounding.
- All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
- The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- The quarterback has a seven-second “pass clock.” If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, the play is dead, the down is consumed, and the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage. Once the ball is handed off, the 7-second rule is no longer in effect.
 - If the QB is standing in the end zone at the end of the 7-second clock, the ball is returned to the line of scrimmage (LOS).
 - If the QB throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

RECEIVING

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be lateral to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
- A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
- In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points. Two points will be awarded if returned during conversions and/or overtime.

RUSHING THE PASSER

- All players who rush the passer must be a minimum of seven yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback can defend on the line of scrimmage.
 - 6U/8U Divisions: Defenders may not rush the passer.
- Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer applies and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
- A special marker, or the referee will designate a rush line seven yards from the line of scrimmage. Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official on every play.
- Legal Rush: Any rush from a point 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
- A penalty may be called if:
 - The rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass (Illegal Rush: 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped (Offsides: 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down).
 - Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off (Illegal Rush: 5 yards from the line of scrimmage and first down)
 - If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the seven-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) cannot rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.
- Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven-second clock in effect.
- Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the quarterback, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
- The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to clear a path to the quarterback, regardless of where they line up prior to the snap. The path is set pre-snap from the rusher or rushers directly to the quarterback. The path does not move once the quarterback moves. If the path or line is occupied by a moving offensive player, then it is the offense's responsibility to avoid the rusher. Any disruption to the rusher's path and/or contact will result in an impeding the rusher penalty. If the offensive player does not move after the snap, then it is the rusher's responsibility to go around the offensive player and to avoid contact.
- A sack occurs if the quarterback's flags are pulled behind the line of scrimmage. The ball will be spotted where possession of the ball is once the flag is pulled.

FLAG PULLING

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.
- It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during a play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends. The ball is placed where the flag lands.
- If a player who has one or no flags in their belt takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball-carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, ball, arm, or shoulder or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

FORMATIONS

- Offenses must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage. The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
 - Teams may shift formations prior to the snap as long as they are set for at least one second before the ball is snapped.

- One player at a time may go in motion at least one yard behind the line of scrimmage.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

PENALTIES

- The referee will call all penalties.
- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (spot fouls)
- Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
- Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
- Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
- Penalties are assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
- Spot fouls in end zone: Defensive (ball on one-yard line, first down)/Offensive (safety)

	FOUL	PENALTY
Defensive Spot Fouls	Defensive Pass Interference	Automatic first down
	Holding	+5 yards and automatic first down
	Stripping	
Offensive Spot Fouls	Screening or Blocking	-5 yards and loss of down
	Charging	
	Flag Guarding	
Defensive Penalties	Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
	Defensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	
	Offside/Illegal Substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
	Illegal Rush	
	Illegal Flag Pull	
	Roughing the Passer	
	Taunting	
Offensive Penalties	Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
	Offensive Unsportsmanlike Conduct	
	Offside/False Start/Illegal Substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
	Illegal Forward Pass	
	Offensive Pass Interference	
	Illegal Motion	
	Delay of Game	
	Impeding the Rusher	
	Illegal Procedure	

AGE DIVISION RULE MODIFICATIONS

8U

- No Run Zones are eliminated. Teams may run anywhere on the field.
- Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield.
- One coach for each team is permitted on the field pre-snap to help their players, but MUST be off the field prior to the snap of the ball.

6U

- No Run Zones are eliminated. Teams may run the ball anywhere on the field.
- Defenders may NOT rush the passer unless there is a legal handoff executed in the backfield.
- One coach for each team is permitted on the field pre and post snap to help their players, but post snap at a safe distance to plays completion.
- If the ball falls to, or touches the ground during the initial center to quarterback exchange, the play is ruled a “Do Over” with no loss of down, once per down. On a second consecutive occurrence, the down is consumed.
- Defenders MUST line up at least five yards from the line of scrimmage prior to the snap.