

Components of Good Officiating - 2019

This section are highlights taken from the 'Officials Training Manual' S.O.T.F.O.A. 2007

The Psychology behind football is one of deep intensity for many players and coaches. This holds true at any level with the possible exception of tykes. Competitive coaches and players may not take kindly to unprofessional behavior from an official. Players expect you to take the game seriously and come prepared. You do not want to hear something like "Get your head in the game ref!" An official who is too friendly or chatty, or who jokes too much, conveys an unprofessional attitude. An uncaring attitude is also likely to be criticized and challenged. The more elite officials do not allow sub-standard behaviours to become ingrained as routine. They are always in an attitude of learning and improvement. Adhering to the helpful tips that follow will set you apart as an official who is well respected and admired by all. Even a rookie can quickly climb the 'Ranks of Respect' from fellow officials, players, coaches and spectators with; hustle, and crisp clear correct play calls.

On the next page is a list of Official's duties. Following that is a compilation of highlights from the Training Manual that will focus on the best qualities of a top notch official. These highlights point out what the Professional Official should or should not act like. Every official has a different personality, so we can't all be 'Cookie Cutter Clones'. However the following is a list of ideals for the model official, which we can all learn from and attempt to emulate.

A poorly trained or incompetent official can create tensions and generate frustrations amongst players, coaches and spectators, sometimes with serious consequences. An official's poor actions or calls can provoke antagonism and mistrust. *Page 5*

Remember to play with a spirit of preventing rule infractions before they occur. i.e. As far as it depends on you, offer up warnings to prevent off sides. Of course if the player does not get on side by the sap you must throw the flag. Also, help to diffuse tense and potentially escalating situations by speaking to the parties involved and telling them what is expected.

Two important ways an official can establish influence is by proper positioning and reacting immediately to rule infractions. Infractions must be unhesitatingly enforced.

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Referee Duties:

1. Signal the down, whistle the play in and begin the rough 30 second huddle count.
2. Count offensive players, note yardage for 1st down, mid field or TD.
3. Position yourself on the LOS, look for offside, and offside pass.
4. Check positioning of the rusher to bag, look for obstruction of rusher.
5. Watch for interference between receivers and defenders in target area.
6. Look for flagging of the QB or roughing the QB when ball is being thrown.
7. Follow the play to assist in the call, watching for out of bounds on your side.
8. When play is dead either retrieve bags or spot the ball. *Page 28-29*

Umpire Duties:

1. Verify the down, count defensive players, note yardage for mid field or TD.
2. Take the opposite side of the Referee (10 yards from LOS or deepest defender).
3. Watch for interference between receivers and defenders (you should mainly focus on the players), but have peripheral or side glances on the ball to note when it is released.
4. Be alert to call a flag pull and mark the spot, remember no laterals.
5. When play is dead either retrieve bags or spot the ball.
6. On plays near the goal line or for a convert, start at the goal line and move to cover dead ball line.
7. Look for players running out of bounds and returning to the field of play. *Page 29*

Linesman duties:

Most flag games require only two officials. During playoffs a third official may be required to perform linesman duties. The linesman is responsible to;

1. Cover any Out of Bounds along the full length of their side of the field.
2. Spot the ball from the sideline to assist the umpire in placing the bag marker.
3. Assist with the flow of the play to call any de-flagging or penalties that you see.
4. Look for players running out of bounds and returning to the field of play.

The TOP TEN TIPS every great official should know; (Alphabetical order)

1/ Appearance – An official who looks sharp and is wearing clean official referee clothing inspires the confidence of players coaches and fellow officials. The official who chooses not to, starts the game at a disadvantage, and may subconsciously open themselves up to disdain and criticism from players and coaches. *Page 17* (Wear black turtlenecks or black insulating gear in colder weather under your referee stripes.)

2/ Boldness – A resonant strong voice is an asset and commands authority. A whistle should be blown to produce a sharp, staccato sound, not a feeble wheeze. *Pg 12*. When you are sure of a call, a strong whistle, and a clear infraction call, generates authority.

3/ Crisp Signal Calls – Make decisions clearly *Page 10*. Sharp signal calls & body motions communicates to the other official clearly. But perhaps on a subconscious level, players and coaches take notice. It sends a clear message that you know your stuff, you are engaged in the game, you take officiating seriously, and are not be trifled with.

4/ Calmness (Confidence and Poise) – Athletic contests are exciting and can frequently arouse the emotions of participants and fans. Contests can get out of hand when emotions run high. Calmness and Confidence are the basic components needed by an official. An official who lacks confidence or is easily excitable only adds to the existing tension by overreacting in pressurized moments. The calm and poised official contributes to a controlled atmosphere. During tense moments the official acts deliberately and slowly whenever possible. Most outstanding officials have developed the habit of acting calmly, when in fact, they are very excited. *Page 12* When an unsportsmanlike act occurs, it should be penalized immediately, in as calm a manner as possible. Unsportsmanlike acts usually create excitement and emotional reactions by players, coaches and fans. (If allowed to continue, unchecked, bitterness will escalate and tempers will flare up.) What is especially needed is not a reaction of anger by the official, but an accurate penalty call, enforced confidently and calmly. Be pleasant but firm, calm but fearless. *Page 9*

5/ Competence (good judgment) – There is no substitute for **Knowing the Rules!** It is by far the number one most important part of officiating, and is clearly outlined in the **Guidance notes**. It is essential to comprehend that making the right call (i.e. learning and knowing the rules) is paramount. It does not matter how impeccable you look or how loud you blow your whistle, a bad call, a no call, or an unsure call, opens you up to challenge and increases doubt in your ability as a competent official. Good judgment calls come with a little experience, but knowing the rules is the critical foundation.

6/ Decisiveness – means ‘*Quick Reaction Time*’. Assuming that judgement is correct, decisions which are made quickly, almost simultaneous with the infraction, have a greater chance of being accepted without question. An official with slow reaction time, for a flag or a call, is open to question and doubt. *Page 11* Be decisive and consistent. Those who hesitate, lose control of the game. *Page 13* All officials should make decisions on any play which they see anywhere, except in situations where specific jurisdiction is given by the rules to one particular official. *Page 20* However, while officials tend to focus their attention on specific phases of play, it does not mean that they should be oblivious to what the other players are doing. Although particular assignments are laid out for officials, they should still keep the total field of play within their vision, as much as possible. They should make decisions on any situation that comes to their attention. Your fellow official may be momentarily blocked from seeing what you saw. *Page 20* The decisive official converts a controversial decision into an accepted ruling merely by their decisiveness. i.e an umpire official should signal immediately if a TD is scored, or a player steps out of bounds. When there is a hesitant, indecisive, delayed decision, players are almost sure to believe the decision was incorrect and open for challenge and discussion. *Page 14* Something may happen directly in front of an official and they may miss the event entirely because at that moment they were focused on another phase of the play, or their vision was blocked by a player. *Page 19* Each official should be ready to cover the play for the other when one is caught out of position. *Page 22* If you become uncertain of a call, admit it to the referee. Remember, the referee can simply, ‘wash out’ the penalty flag. *Page 23* All officials have equal jurisdiction in calling penalties. *Page 25*

Note: A TD should be called immediately. However, there are certain conditions that require hesitation for the correct call. For example, a ball carrier may be threading the corner sideline in player traffic near the end zone. The competent official will make sure the player did not step out of bounds, and was not flagged before they ‘scored the TD’. To raise your hands, blow the whistle and call a TD is embarrassing, if a defender is holding their flag one yard outside the end zone. The best practice is that once you have fully assessed the situation, make the call. Flag an infraction without hesitation whenever you see it. Do not hesitate or try to second guess whether it is your jurisdiction or not. Remember, the Referee has the final say anyways. Most Umpire flags should be discussed with the head referee as to whether the call will stand, be declined, or be modified. Better two flags for the same infraction than no flag at all. Players appreciate both referees ‘on the ball’ on an obvious call. As well, if you see a possible infraction and do not flag it, it is then not open for discussion. You cannot talk to the referee about a flag not thrown. You need to wait until halftime or end of game.

7/ Hustle – With the possible exception of competence and good judgement, no quality commands more respect than hustle. It is defined broadly to include attributes like alertness, physical effort, dedication and enthusiasm. *Page 13* An official must show respect for the players, if they wish to gain respect. Hustle and enthusiasm increases players respect. *Page 9* An official who appears uninterested or distracted increases frustration in players. This can lead to potential disrespect, scorn and challenge. Be engaged in the game. This is especially true near the end of the game where time is of the essence. Place the ball, or mark off the bags, quickly.

8/ Impartiality (Consistency and Integrity) – The capable official wants to see the game progress correctly, without bias or inconsistency. A potentially outstanding official can rise or fall according to the integrity they demonstrate. *Page 8* Inconsistency in calls is the most frequently criticized and most upsetting to coaches and players. Coaches and players expect the rules to apply equally to both teams. Simply apply the correct rule interpretation to each separate act. *Page 12* The less than great official, without realizing it, is tempted to “help” the weaker team or player. *Page 15*. Once your impartiality is compromised, you appear to show favoritism. Your integrity suffers, and you now violate the rules of a fair game that you represent. Side note, a good practice is to keep your role from start to finish. Switching roles at half time may present some problems in consistency. Players may complain that the QB pass clock is not consistent with the first half referee.

9/ Relationship with Players – Coaches and fans can easily sense the quality of the player-official relationship, and their judgement of the official is influenced by what they sense. Officials should neither be overly friendly or aloof when dealing with players. Players tend to mistrust an official who tries to be popular with both teams. They expect an official to act like they have an important job to do. *Page 9*

As well, it is good to remember that, the official who uses “Protection of the players” as their guide will be amazed at its effectiveness. *Page 10* Those calls are rarely challenged.

Professional conduct can only be maintained by being courteous, but not too friendly towards the coaches and their staff. *Page 31* For example, if a player or coach asks for the score, or the time left in the game, make the courteous effort to tell them promptly before the start of the play. Or politely tell them to hold on until after the play.

10/ Teamwork – Relationship with officials: Domination by one official may cause a poorly administered game. You should welcome the assistance and support of the other official, rather than resent them for making a decision which you feel is your responsibility. Your position, even though close to the play, may not have been advantageous. Always be ready to cover plays for the other official who may be momentarily caught out of position. *Page 9* If a conference is required, the Referee may call a time out. *Page 25*

As well, you may find that a Referee may make the right call, but the wrong penalty administration. Or the wrong call altogether. Some seasoned flag Referees also Referee touch and tackle football. The danger is that they could unintentionally transpose over some rules since all three games have very different rules. Add to that, some leagues have slight changes to the rules as well. If you notice a wrong penalty administration, wave your arms and run towards the Referee to discuss privately. Do not yell out “Wait, that’s wrong!” Let the referee make the final decision, in most cases, as time permits, the referee will explain why. You can also discuss the call with them and other referees at half time or the end of the game.

Remember that a judgement call is not subject to formal protest.

I trust these updated Guidance notes will help you become a better Official.

Guidance Notes for Flag Football – 2019

This document has been drawn from, *“Playing rules from the Canadian Rule Book for Flag Football 2015”*. This will fast track you into becoming a top notch official with full competence. These flag rules are presented in a much clearer assembly of knowledge. It will prove to be an invaluable resource that you will continually refer back to. These are the Canadian **Flag** Football rules, and are only superseded by game league specifics.

The official’s overriding goal is to cause the game to progress with as little interference as possible on their part. This is not to say that rule enforcement should be neglected. The competent official should not only be concerned about penalizing rule infractions, but also preventing rule infractions before they occur. [Page 6](#)

First Down



One arm forward
(finger extended)

Second Down



Hands upright at
shoulder level

Third Down



Arms crossed at
chest level

Fourth Down



A fisted arm bent at
elbow, to one side.

Touchdown or 2 Pt. Convert



Both arms extended
above head

Single Point



One arm extended
above head

Safety Touch



Hands together
above head

Team Time Out



'T' sign with hands

- Teams have (2) – 60 second **Time Outs** per half. A **T.O.** can't be carried over to 2nd half or overtime. *Pg 16 sec 5.1*
- Teams will be told when 10 seconds remain in the **T.O.** Teams may shorten the length of the **T.O.** *Page 16 sec 5.2*
- **T.O.** can only be called when ball is dead. *Pg 16 sec 5.3*
- The clock will stop for the length of the **T.O.** *Pg 16 sec 5.5*

Official's Time Out



Both hands on chest

- A Referee may call an **Officials Time Out** so an attendant can care for an injured player. If the referee calls the **T.O.** the injured player must be removed from the field for at least one play, unless team calls **T.O.** *Pg 16 sec 7.1*
- The Official may stop the clock at any time to call an **Officials Time Out** to warn or explain, or to discuss a call made with the coaches, players or the other official.

Clock Starts



Full arm circles to simulate clock

Clock Stops



Hands criss-crossed above head

When the Referee starts the clock, (especially at the start of a game or half), the signal for starting the clock must be given first. When Referee stops the clock, the clock stops first, then the signal. The clock runs continuously and is only stopped for Time Outs, and injuries. When the clock has been stopped it starts again on the snap.

Page 16 sec 2.2, 3.1, 3.2

Note: In some game league specifics, the last two minutes of each half are **Stop Time**. The clock should still keep running at the end of a run or a completed pass. The clock stops for: a Penalty, an Incomplete pass, out of bounds, change of possession, for a TD right through to after the extra point. In these cases clock starts on the snap. Clock will also stop to set bags on a 1st down, but then the clock starts after bags are set.

Offensive Penalties: Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, Replay Down, Subject to Options.

Offside



Hands on hips

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down**, subject to options.

Def'n – Offside: breaking the plane of the LOS before the snap. All players must be behind their side of the LOS (neutral zone) at the snap, except the center. *Page 6, Page 24 sec 1.2*

Subject to Options i.e.

- a) Defense can decline penalty if no gain = loss of down
- b) Defence can decline if they intercept = change of possession.
- c) Defence can accept penalty if the offense gained many yards.

i.e. – “Defensive Captains – Offense was offside, you can accept the play, or move them back 5 yards and replay the down.”

Illegal Motion



Horizontal arc with either hand

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down**, subject to options.

Def'n – Illegal Motion: Any number of players can be in motion when the ball is snapped, only the center must be on the LOS. Note: 5v5 states one player can be in motion but not towards the LOS. *Page 24 sec 1.3* This penalty is only called when league specific rules say ‘x’ number of players are allowed in motion, and more than that number go in motion.

Illegal Formation



Hands rotated in forward motion

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down** subject to options.

Def'n – Illegal Formation: i.e more than 3 players on LOS when league specific rules specify only 3.

Illegal Procedure



Hands rotated in forward motion

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down** subject to options.

Def'n – Illegal Procedure: QB using tactics or shouting terms, or a player moving to draw opponents offside. *Page 23 sec 1.7*

- Shifting in a way that simulates the start of a play or other unfair tactics to draw the opponents offside. *Page 33 sec 1.2*
- Center cannot take a handoff, i.e. center sneak. *Pg 23 sec 1.1*
- The offense must hold a huddle after a time out, half time, or a change of possession. A huddle is not mandatory in other cases. A huddle infraction is an Illegal procedure penalty. *Page 4 Page 22 sec 1, Page 16 sec 5.4*

Offensive Penalties: Whistle/Flag, from LOS, Loss of Down, No options.

Offside Pass



Horizontal arc with either hand

Whistle/Flag, from LOS Loss of Down, No options *Page 27 sec 3.2*

Def'n – Offside pass (or illegal forward pass):

- QB cannot run with the ball past the LOS, unless the ball has been handed, tossed or pitched to another player and then returned. *Page 17 sec 2.8* (i.e. a backward lateral behind LOS.)
- All passes must be over the LOS. QB cannot throw a forward pass that's caught behind LOS i.e no screen passes. Running plays are considered to be; hand offs (backward and lateral), tosses, sweeps, reverse. Forward shovel passes are allowed but must originate from behind the LOS and be completed over the LOS. *Page 17 sec 2.11, Page 23 sec 1.5, Page 28 sec 1.5*
- The player who takes the handoff, toss or pitch can throw the ball from behind the LOS. *Page 23 sec 1.6*
- QB has a 7 second 'pass clock' to throw or hand off the ball. If a pass is not thrown, play is whistled dead, and a loss of down. (there is no 5 yard penalty) *Page 28 sec 1.1*
Whistle immediately, it is dead ball, illegal play, even if touched by an opponent first. *Page 27 sec 3.3*
- When QB steps over line, **FLAG (no whistle)**. It is a dead ball and loss of down at LOS. **Interception counts as a turnover.**
- A handoff in a forward direction is an offside pass.
- An illegal forward pass is a second forward pass, or a forward pass after the ball has crossed the LOS. *Pg 36 sec 3.9*
- If a rusher blocks or deflects a forward pass, and that pass is caught by the QB, the offense cannot throw a second forward pass. *Page 29 sec 7*
- Once a ball carrier crosses the LOS, or catches a ball past the LOS, they are no longer allowed to lateral, hand off, toss, pitch, or pass the ball forward. *Page 17 sec 2.9, Page 28 sec 1.6*

Bad Snap

Whistle, from LOS, Loss of Down, No options

Def'n – Bad Snap: The center QB exchange at the snap is fumbled and hits the ground. The play shall be whistled dead, the result is loss of down on LOS. As well, in regular play, there are no fumbles. The ball is whistled dead and marked at the spot in which the ball hit the ground. *Page 19 sec 1.5*

Offensive Penalties: Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, Loss of Down, subject to options.

Obstruction



Arm extended and grasp wrist

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, Loss of Down, options. *Page 36 sec 3.12*
Def'n – Obstruction (or Rusher Interference):

- When a player impedes (or takes away) a rusher's direct path to the QB, with or without contacting the opponent. *Page 34 sec 2.1*
- A player may assume a stationary position if the obvious intent is to avoid obstructing an opponent. A player may cut across the path of an opponent if their progress is not impeded or redirected. *Page 34 sec 2.2*
- If a rusher has to side step a moving opponent, they are being impeded. However, watch for a rusher drawing a unfair penalty when they deliberately go off path to run into a receiver, especially if they leave early.
- Once the ball is handed off, tossed, a fake handoff, or run, all defenders may cross the LOS. *Page 25 sec 1*

i.e. – “Defensive Captains – We have Obstruction of the Rusher by the offense. You can accept the play, or you can move them back 5 yards and a loss of down.”

Offensive Pass Interference



Pushing forward from shoulders

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, Loss of Down, Subject to options

Def'n – Pass Interference:

- All players are eligible receivers and have an equal right to a direct path to the arrival point of the ball. However, a player in an unfavourable position cannot commit bodily contact with an opponent to reach the ball, even if the ball was eventually touched by that player. *Page 31 sec 3.1*
- That particularly includes 'pushing off' by the offense.
- For full definition, see Defensive Pass interference.

Delay of Game



Circular motion arm

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, Loss of Down, No Options *Pg 36 sec 3.2*

Def'n – Delay of game or Time Count Violation: The official will give a reasonable period of time for the teams to regroup, then will whistle in the 30 second huddle count. *Page 22 sec 1.2*

Unnecessary delay in removing an injured player. *Page 16 sec 7.2*

This should be especially enforced when a team has a slight lead and is deliberately wasting time, or taking too long in the huddle to run out the clock. Clock to start on the snap. Delay of Game Penalty can stop the clock at the referee's discretion.

Offensive Penalty: Whistle/Flag, 5 yards, Point of Infraction, Loss of Down, No options

Illegal Block



Grab below wrist and push out arm

Whistle/Flag, 5 yards, Point of infraction, **Loss of Down**, No options.

Def'n – Blocking: Generally by the offense during the run. An offensive player cannot deliberately prevent a defensive player from pursuing another offensive player (ball carrier), by impeding or hindering that defensive player's direct path to the teammate. *Page 31 sec 4.1* Can be with or without contact. *Pg 1*

- When a ball carrier uses stationary teammates as a means of blocking the opponents, they are not to be penalized unless they move from their spot.

Flag Guarding



Waving straight arm at your side.

Whistle/Flag, 5 yards, Point of infraction, **Loss of Down**, No options *Page 36 sec 3.1*

Def'n – Flag Guarding: any action by the ball carrier to interfere with a defender's attempt at flag removal. Must be '**contact**'.

- Using arms or ball to obstruct a defender's attempt.
- Pushing away a defender, or blocking their arms.
- Lowering a shoulder to obstruct a defender's attempt.
- Running with fist swings to contact a defender's attempt.

Jumping/Diving

Whistle/Flag, 5 yards, Point of infraction, **Loss of Down**, No options *Page 36 sec 3.7*

Def'n – Jumping/Diving: Attempting to jump (leaving both feet), or to dive (deliberate lunge forward) to gain extra yards or to avoid being flagged. *Page 2*

No Belt Flag

Whistle/Flag, Point of infraction, **Loss of Down**, No options

Def'n – No Belt Flag. If a ball carrier's flag falls off, the play is whistled dead, and ball is spotted where flag fell off. If a player catches the ball missing a flag, they are 'unable to advance,' the play is whistled dead where catch was made. *Page 19 sec 1.4* Players winding flags on belts will be warned the first time. Then they are to be removed from game. *Page 26 sec 1.4*

Intentional Grounding



Downward motion

Whistle/Flag, Point of infraction, **Loss of Down**, No options

Def'n – Intentional Grounding: When the passer deliberately throws the ball out of bounds, or to an area with no receivers, in an obvious attempt to avoid losing yards. Penalty is called on **Full Field Only**. *Page 2, Page 29 sec 8.1*

Defensive Penalties: 5 yards and Replay Down

Encroachment



Hands rotated in forward motion

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down**, Subject to options

Def'n – Encroachment: When a defensive player lines up too close to the LOS. Defender must be at least 1 yard from LOS.

Page 17 sec 2.2 Any defender must be at least 3 yards from the center at the time of the snap if assuming a stationary position. Defenders can be 1 yard from the center at the time of snap within the no run zone. *Pg 33 sec 1.4 Pg 36 sec 2.1* (Some leagues require anyone lining up over the center to be at least 3 yards back.)

Illegal Rush

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down**, Subject to options.

Def'n – Illegal rush: violation of rusher rules i.e rushing before the snap, or starting past the rushing line bag. **Rusher Rules:**

- All players who rush the QB must be 7 yards from the LOS when the ball is snapped. (5 yards for 7v7) or as marked by the official based on league rules. Any number of players can rush the QB from behind the marker. *Page 25 sec 1.1*
- The rusher must line up within two yards (side to side) of the yard rush marker, to be entitled to a free rush at the QB, without obstruction. If the rusher is lined up outside the 2 yards (side to side) they are not entitled to a free rush and can be interfered or obstructed without penalty. *Pg 25 sec 1.2*
- Proximity to bean bag is what matters not raising the hand.
- All defensive players can rush and go over the LOS, once a ball is; handed off, tossed back, reverse, double pass, or play action pass (fake handoff). i.e. anything other than a QB forward pass. *Page 23 sec 1.8, Page 36 sec 2.5, Page 25 sec 1*
- **Note:** If a rusher leaves early, but then goes back to the bag marker and rushes, then no flag. If rusher leaves early, but does not go over LOS, then no flag. Flag should only be thrown at the time the rusher goes over the LOS illegally.

Disconcerting Signal

Flag/Whistle, 5 yards, from LOS, **Replay Down** *Page 36 sec 2.3*

Def'n – Disconcerting signals: signals to disrupt distract or simulate offensive signal or calls prior to snap to confuse offense and draw them offside. *Page 23 sec 1.7*

Batting the Ball

Flag/Whistle, from point of reception, **Replay Down.**

Def'n – Batting the ball: Batting or stripping the ball out of a ball carriers hands is not allowed. It is an Automatic reception.

Defensive Penalties: 5 - 15 yards, and *Automatic first Down*

Holding



Grasp wrist in pull down motion

Flag, 5 yards, *Point of infraction, Automatic first Down, Pg 36 sec 2.7*

Def'n – Holding: grasping a player's person/clothing and impeding that player's progress, whether the flag has been pulled or not. This is illegal contact by the defense. Standing directly in the path of the ball carrier and creating contact in an attempt at flag removal, thereby impeding that player's progress. Holding a player to slow them down before flagging. **i.e. – "Offensive Captains –** We have Holding on the defense. You will move up 5 yards from the point of infraction with an Automatic First Down." (no whistle – may gain more yards)

Illegal flag pull

Flag, 5 yards, *Point of catch/LOS, Automatic first Down Pg 36 sec 2.8*

Def'n – Illegal Flag Pull: Deflagging a player 'not in possession' (or before player has ball) is a penalty with an automatic first down. If pass is completed, 5 yards from *Point of Catch*. If play is incomplete, 5 yards from *LOS*. *Page 26 sec 1.2*

Tackling, Tripping, or Screening

Flag, 5 yard penalty, *Point of infraction, Automatic first Down*, Subject to options. **Def'n:**

Tackling: Grasping the ball carrier's person/clothing and causing that player to fall.

Tripping: A player is not allowed to trip an opponent using the arm, lower leg or foot. *Page 33 sec 2.2*

Screening: A player must be facing the ball as it arrives to be considered playing the ball. *Page 32 sec 6.1*

A player not playing the ball, extending an arm or waving a hand in an attempt to distract a receiver or block their view of the ball. If ball hits the 'screener', the play is treated as target area pass interference. *Page 9, Page 32 sec 7.1*

Roughing the Passer



Arm raised in a passing motion

Flag, 15 yard penalty, *from LOS, Automatic first Down*,

Def'n – Roughing the passer: Contact with the QB should only be to reach for the flag. It is okay for a rusher to jump up to try and block a pass, but no contact can be made with the QB. Any contact with the body, or arm (or even ball while in the hands) of the QB is a penalty. There is no batting the ball out of the hands, it could injure the wrist. A player is not allowed to contact the passer's arm or body while in the throwing motion using bodily contact. *Page 33 sec 2.5*

Defensive Penalties: 5 yards *Point of infraction*, and *Automatic first Down*

Defensive Pass Interference



Pushing forward from shoulders

Flag, 5 yard penalty, *Point of infraction*, *Automatic first Down*, Subject to options. *Page 36 sec 3.10*

Def'n – Pass Interference:

- Occurs when a player takes away an opponent's 'Positional Advantage'. *Page 31 sec 1.1* can be with or without contact.
- All players are eligible receivers with an equal right to the arrival point of the ball. A player in an unfavourable position cannot use bodily contact with an opponent to reach the ball, even if the ball was touched by that player. *Page 31 sec 3.1*
- Any interference made by a player against an eligible receiver before an eligible receiver catches the ball. *Page 7*
- A player who is taking a path or a position on the field in order to catch a pass, has a right to that spot unless an opponent has already taken it. An 'out of position' player who takes an opponent's established spot using contact is guilty of **P.I.** *Pg 31 sec 3.3*
- A deliberate attempt to block the opponent from reaching the arrival point of the ball is pass interference. *Page 32 sec 3.6* Stepping into a player's declared or intended path.
- A player is not allowed to use bodily contact on a pass receiver before or after the ball is touched, *Page 33 sec 2.6* causing a player to slow down, go off stride, change course.
- If Pass Interference occurs in end zone, ball will be placed at the **1 yd line**.
- Non-Pass Interference: Contact between opponents is legal provided that the contact results from a simultaneous and legitimate attempt to play the ball and occurs at the arrival point of the pass. This contact is legal only when each player is intent on playing the ball and both are in an equally favourable position to do so. *Page 31 sec 2.1*
- A defensive player maintaining a stationary position shall not be penalized for Pass interference (**P.I.**) if run into by an opponent. *Page 32 sec 5.1*
- A player is not guilty of **P.I.** if contact was caused by a sudden stop or change in direction by the opponent. *Page 33 sec 2.7* It can simply be an unintentional collision.
- Players may touch an opponent to feel their relative position, as long as they do not impede or redirect that opponent. *Page 34 sec 1.3*
- When contact is made without moving the opponent off stride, or away from their intended direction, path or position, pass interference has not occurred. This is incidental contact. *Page 31 sec 2.2*
- When opponents get their feet tangled up while running their respective paths, causing one player to lose balance, pass interference is not automatic. The relevant positions & intended paths of the players must be taken into account. *Page 31 sec 3.5*
- When an official considers a pass an 'uncatchable pass', one that cannot be caught even with extraordinary effort, no pass interference shall be assessed even when pass interference occurs by either team. *Pg 32 sec 8.1*

Individual Penalties on Offense or Defense 5 yards from LOS

Illegal Use of Hands



Grasping wrist at chest level

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Loss of Down** (if off), **Repeat Down** (if def)
Def'n – Illegal Use of Hands: Players cannot use their arms or hands to detain, impede, redirect or push off an opponent from playing their desired position, except when an opponent blocks their direct path to the ball carrier. *Page 4, Page 34 sec 1.1*
Players may touch the goalpost, but cannot use the goal post to push off or change direction. *Page 34 sec 1.3*

Illegal Re-entry



Extend arms sideways

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Loss of Down** (if off), **Repeat Down** (if def)
Def'n – Illegal Re-entry: A player who steps out of bounds, without interference, during the play cannot re-enter the field to play the ball, pursue a ball carrier or an intended receiver. A player who is pushed out of bounds by an opponent or goes out of bounds as a result of a slippery field is not considered to have gone out of bounds unless that player makes no immediate effort to get back in bounds. *Page 4, Pg 24 sec 1.4, Page 34 sec 3.1*

Illegal Substitution



Hand patting head

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Loss of Down** (if off), **Repeat Down** (if def)
Def'n – Illegal Substitution: Substitute players may enter the field only when the ball is dead, and not once the offense breaks the huddle. A player who enters the field to communicate a play must remain on the field for that play. *Page 15 sec 2.1* And not from the opposite sideline, to deceive opponents. A player leaving the field must go to the team bench. *Page 15 sec 2.2* Too many players on the field will be penalized for **Illegal Substitution** or **Too Many Players on the field**. *Page 4, Page 36, sec 2.2 & 3.3*

Illegal Participation



Both Hands patting head

Flag, 5 yards, from LOS, **Loss of Down** (if off), **Repeat Down** (if def)
Def'n – Illegal Participation: Once the ball is snapped, a player cannot leave the bench area to enter the field and play the ball, pursue a ball carrier, pursue an intended receiver or obstruct a player, or in any way interfere with the game. *Pg 4, Page 34 sec 4.1*
If a spectator interferes during the play, the official will evaluate the impact of the interference & act accordingly. i.e. if it is obvious that a touchdown would have been scored without the spectators interference, the official will allow the TD. If the impact is not clear, the down will be repeated at the LOS or distance gained at point of interference. *Page 12 sec 1.6* Any spectator that interferes with the game will be ejected from the field area. The local organization should ensure the spectator complies. *Page 12 sec 1.5*

**Conduct Penalties: 5 yards, *Automatic first Down* (against defense),
Loss of Down (against offense), (Possible ejection)**

**Objectionable
Conduct**



Waving hand behind
back

Flag, 5 yards, *Point ball ruled dead*, *Automatic first Down*, (on def), **Loss of down** (on off), (Possible ejection).

Def'n – Objectionable Conduct:

- The use of intimidating, profane, obscene, insulting language, verbal threats, or gestures. Threatening to strike; an opponent, official, or spectator or any player or occupant of a team bench. Prolonged arguments with the official. *Page 6, Page 35 sec 3.1a*
- Throwing a ball at an opponent, official, or occupant of the team bench. *Page 35 sec 3.1b*
- Any action deemed to be inappropriate, derogatory or demeaning (i.e. making fun of).
- Tactics by players, which delay or hinder the smooth operation of the game. These tactics include spiking the ball, & or deliberately throwing or kicking the ball away after it has been whistled dead. *Page 35 sec 3.1c*
- Once a defender has removed the flag, they are to remain in place and hold up the flag for the referee to confirm the play has stopped. They are then to return the flag to the ball carrier. If a defender tosses the flag to the ground, the official will issue a warning to the captains of the team at fault. If the situation repeats itself, no matter what player is involved, it is Objectionable Conduct. *Page 26 sec 1.1*
- Faking an injury to delay the game, or faking losing balance in an obvious attempt to draw a penalty. *Page 35 sec 3.1d*
- Team members must stay in the team bench unless they are on the field. *Page 12 sec 1.4*
- While on the field during an injury situation, a coach, a manager, or an assistant is not allowed to coach the players. *Page 15 sec 5.1*
- If the foul is of a serious nature, the player on the field or bench may be disqualified with no distance penalty. *Page 35 sec 3.1e*

Conduct Penalties: 15 yards, *Automatic first Down* (against defense), **Loss of Down** (against offense), (Possible ejection)

Unnecessary Roughness

Flag, 15 yards, *Point of infraction*, *Automatic first Down* (on def) **Loss of Down** (on off), (possible ejection) *Page 35 sec 1.2 or 2.2*

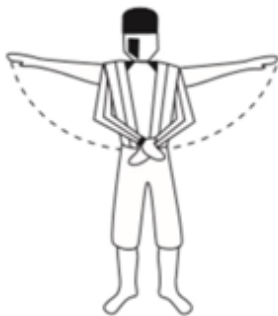


Chopping wrist

Def'n – Unnecessary Roughness:

- It is up to the ball carrier to avoid contact with the defender. *Page 23 sec 1.10*
- After the whistle is blown to indicate end of play, a player is not allowed to run into, throw the body against or deliberately fall upon an opponent. *Page 33 sec 2.3*
- The ball carrier is not allowed to elbow, shoulder, or throw the body into an opponent or attempt to jump through defenders blocking the path. *Page 33 sec 2.4* i.e. Charging into or running through a defensive player is a penalty.
- The deliberate charging into an opposing player in such a way as to cause calculated injury. The striking of an opponent with a fist, heel of hand, knee, shoulder, elbow, or kicking an opponent. *Page 35 sec 1.1*
- Personal foul and Major foul have been removed or not mentioned in the 2015 rule book – these fouls are under the umbrella of Unnecessary Roughness.
- **i.e.** – “We have **Unnecessary Roughness** on the defense. That’s a 15 yard penalty, Automatic first down.”

Incomplete Pass



Shifting arms in horizontal plane

Penalty Declined



Shifting arms at knee level

Incomplete pass signal should be called immediately. Rarely will you need clarify that it is a reception unless there is a difference of ruling opinion on the call.

Penalty Declined is called when a team declines a penalty, when a play is wiped out with offsetting, or when an official’s call is overruled.

Conduct Penalties: 15 yards, *Automatic first Down* (against defense), **Loss of Down** (against offense), (Possible ejection)

Unsportsmanlike conduct



Arms outstretched

Flag, 15 yards, *Automatic first Down* (against defence), **Loss of Down** (against offense), No option (Possible ejection) Only one warning, then eject from the game.

Def'n – Unsportsmanlike conduct: It is unsporting behaviour, bad or poor sportsmanship. It is a penalty that is called that violates the generally accepted rules of sportsmanship and participant conduct.

Def'n – Trash Talk/Taunting: Talk that may be offensive to officials, opposing players, or spectators. If it occurs the Referee will give an **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** penalty. If it continues the player or players will be ejected from the game

Page 33 sec 1.1

Ejection



Saluting motion

Flag,

Def'n – Ejection Procedure: An ejected player may stay on the bench at the discretion of the Referee. *Page 35 sec 4.1*

They must refrain from berating players, officials or fans. If they will not comply, they must be asked to leave the park.

Page 35 sec 4.1

If a disqualified/ejected player does not leave the park within 3 minutes or returns to the park during the game, the referee may award the game to the opponents. *Page 35 sec 4.2*

The Referee will take an Officials Time Out during these procedures. *Page 35 sec 4.3*

If the referee witnesses any acts of flagrant contact, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be ejected from the game. *Page 33 sec 2.1, Page 36 sec 4.2*

Officials are to exercise no leniency in penalizing the infractions described in the rules and regulations, for to refrain from doing so would serve to condone dangerous play. *Page VI.*

The Mechanics of Flag Football

Critical fine points of inconsistency will be addressed here to help reduce speculation.

Adjusted Penalties: This happens when an infraction is committed by both teams on the same play ('Dual Foul'). One infraction is for longer yardage which results in a net gain for the team which incurred the less severe penalty. As opposed to 'Offsetting Penalties' when both penalties are equal in value, resulting in no net gain for either team. This results in the play being 'wiped out' and restarted at LOS. *Page 1, 6*

Ball spotted: where the ball carrier's hips are when flagged, not where the ball is. The ball cannot be extended forward to gain yards. *Page 23 sec 1.11* For a TD, the play is considered a score when at least one hip of the ball carrier is on or over the end zone. *Page 18 sec 3.2*

Complete Pass: When a receiver is in possession of the ball. *Page 29 sec 1.1*

- All players are eligible to receive passes including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off or tossed behind the line of scrimmage. *Page 24 sec 1.1*
- When the receiver has control of the ball even for an instant, (no bobbling), then loses control because of the **ground**, (ball jarred loose) or **bodily contact** caused by an opponent, the receiver will be awarded a complete pass. *Page 29 sec 1.3*
- 'Control of the ball' is defined as when a player has the ball firmly held in one or both hands, arms, legs, or under the body without having the ball touch the ground. The grip must be firm enough to stop the rotation and exhibit influence over its direction. *Page 1, Page 21 sec 1.1*
- A receiver needs only one foot in bounds for a pass completion *Page 20 sec 1* (First foot to land must be in bounds.)
- When an opponent causes the receiver to land out of bounds and, in the judgement of the officials, would have landed in bounds without the opponent's actions, the receiver will be considered to have landed in bounds. *Page 29 sec 1.2*
- A pass is ruled complete to a receiver when an opponent is penalized for pass interference in the target area, even if the pass is incomplete. *Page 29 sec 1.4*
- Tipped passes: caught by a teammate are a completed pass and awarded to the player catching the pass. *Page 29 sec 1.5* as long as it was tipped backwards the ball can be advanced when caught. (Only on full field where laterals are ok.)
- Tipped pass in forward direction: If the ball is tipped forward and caught by a teammate it should be whistled dead at the original tip point. If the tip is caught by the defense it's live to the defense. (In smaller fields a tip is treated like a lateral i.e. not allowed. If tip is caught by the offense it is a dead ball at the tip point.)

Coin Toss: A coin toss determines first possession. The winner of the coin toss starts with possession of the football, while the loser of the toss has choice of end zone to defend. The team that loses the coin toss gets possession at the beginning of the second half. *Page 17 sec 1.3-4* (If the winner of coin toss chooses to 'Defer' then the opponent starts with ball, and the winner of the coin toss chooses what end zone to defend.)

Double Foul: When one team commits two or more infractions on the same play. *Page 2*
Note: Only one penalty can be applied unless it is objectionable conduct which is an add on in most cases. Tip: Upon completion of any play, check for flags thrown by the other official. Do not remove bean bag markers until this is done.

Extending the ball – is not a penalty unless someone is hit by the ball. Ball is marked by the location of the hips not the location of the ball.

Inadvertent Whistle: The play shall stand, unless the Referee decides the whistle affected the result of the play. The team adversely affected by the whistle, may choose to let the play stand, or replay the down. If the referee can't decide then repeat down. Fouls occurring during the play will stand and be administered. *Page 19 sec 1.7-9*

Interceptions: can be returned by the defense unless specified otherwise by league rules. *Page 28 sec 1.7* On interceptions that occur and remain in the end zone, the ball is whistled dead and turned over to the intercepting team at its 5 yard line. (7v7 to the 10 yard line). *Page 28 sec 1.8* Should an interception occur in the end zone and the ball carrier leave the end zone, the ball will belong to the intercepting team at the spot the ball becomes dead. However should the ball carrier return to the end zone and get flagged or step out of bounds, it is a safety for the other team, and change of possession again at the 5 yard. *Page 28 sec 1.9* (Note: Interceptions are live in some leagues, whistled dead in others.) Penalties after an interception shall be assessed after the return is over and the play is blown dead. *Page 36 sec 1.6*

Last play: Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the penalty is declined by the offense. *Page 36 sec 1.5* i.e. "Last play of the game, barring a defensive penalty".

No Run Zones: Usually marked off 5 yards before the end zone, and 5 yards before mid-field. A run play inside the No-Run zone is a **Loss of Down** from LOS. *Page 36 Sec 3.11*

Out of Bounds: When a player or ball touches the inside edge of the boundary line, or the ground beyond the boundary lines, they are out of bounds. If a player touches any object on or beyond these lines, including an official, player or substitute that is out of bounds, it is whistled dead. *Page 20 sec 2*

Possession changes: All possession changes except for interceptions, start on the offensive 5 yard line. *Page 17 sec 2.5* (League rules may vary.)

Safety: is two points. It is awarded when; a player is flagged in their own end zone, steps out of bounds, or ball is ruled dead in the end zone. A safety touch is not awarded when a player's momentum, while intercepting a pass, causes the ball to be brought into the end zone. *Page 9, Page 43 sec 3* A safety is an automatic turnover. Whoever is awarded the 2 points for a safety also gets possession starting at their own 5 yard line.

Short Handed: If a team is short one player at game time they can still field their team. The opposing coach can choose to field a full squad or play one person short. There is no rule to restrict the team with a full squad of players.

Simultaneous Possession: A pass caught simultaneously by opposing players is awarded to the offense. *Page 29 sec 2.1*

Simultaneous flagging: Tie goes to the QB if pass thrown the same time as being flagged.

Two minute warning: When the referee blows the whistle 2 times in succession indicating to both teams that 2 minutes remain in the half or game. *Page 10*

Game League Specifics (Best Practice):

League rules vary considerably, and dictate the fine points of the game. You must know the Canadian Flag Football Rules as your foundation, but use a cheat sheet for the various leagues that you need to officiate. Carry the league rules with you on a card, or inside your score card, for pre-game study and easy reference.

Game basics summary:

The game of touch football is usually divided into two 20 minutes halves. The offensive team has three downs to get to half field, and another three downs to score. If a team does not get to half field or score, the ball is turned over to the opposition who starts on their own 5 yard line. There is usually a 'no run zone' 5 yards from mid field and 5 yard from the end zone. There are no kickoffs, no punting, no field goals and the QB cannot run. Touchdowns are 6 points and converts can be for 1 or 2 points.