

Description: Girls' Flag Football is a high-paced game that highlights the major athletic and football skills of running, throwing, catching, and snapping the football. The game is conducive to scoring and is played with, save a few exceptions, a running clock. The game is different than traditional tackle football. The rules of the game do not allow for contact, so flag football officials have different responsibilities and things to look for than tackle football officials. In girls' flag football, teams have four (4) downs to advance the ball 20 yards for a first down, and the field is divided into various zones to identify first down, no rush, and scoring zones. Officiating crews for girls' flag football can be either two, three, or four-persons.

Synopsis of key flag football components (the Basics)

NOTE: the descriptions of the game below are NOT intended to replace knowing the entire rules code, which will be available for the 2024 season soon. The descriptions are intended to provide an over-view of the game's key components for those who are not familiar with how the game is played.

1. The flag football field is generally the same dimensions as the traditional tackle football field, although the field does not have to have all the same markings as the tack football field.
2. The ball used in flag football is a youth (size 7) football. In the IHSA state series, the Wilson TDY ball will be the required ball. In non-state series games, any youth football can be used.
3. In girls' flag football in Illinois, players will wear belts with two, not three, flags.
4. The equipment worn by players is not as extensive as in tackle football, which reinforces that the game is played without contact.
5. Teams are comprised of seven (7) players, although a team can finish a game with six (6) players if one player is injured or ejected.
6. The game is played in two (2) halves with a running clock. There are only a few instances when the clock stops. Games generally take an hour to play.
7. There is a 25-second play clock on each play. The Referee is responsible for tracking that during the game.
8. The ball is snapped on each play by a center to the quarterback in a manner identical to tackle football.
9. All offensive players are eligible receivers in flag football.
10. While running plays are allowed in flag football, there are locations on the field when they are prohibited.
11. On each play, the quarterback has seven (7) seconds to either pass the ball, hand it off, or run the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. If none of those occur with the allotted time, the ball is dead, the play is over, and the ball is spotted in the center of the field.
12. In flag football, the offensive team is allowed to only make one forward pass on any given play. There are some limited restrictions on pitches, laterals, and shovel passes.
13. On defense, only players lined up at least seven (7) yards beyond the line of scrimmage can rush the quarterback. Any player who rushes – and multiple players can rush on a given play – must immediately begin her/their rush on the snap of the ball. Players lined up within seven (7) yards

of the line of scrimmage may not rush but can pass the line of scrimmage and attempt to make a play once the quarterback passes the ball, hands it off, or runs past the line of scrimmage.

14. When a flag is captured, the defender holds it up immediately, and the offensive team plays its next play from that yard location.
15. On each play, the ball is placed in the center of the field. Hash marks are not used in placing the ball.
16. The only kick in flag football is a punt, punts must be announced in advance, and must occur within five (5) seconds of the snap.
17. Touchdowns count as six (6) points in flag football. After each touchdown, a team has a choice if its extra point attempt will be for one or two points.
18. Safeties count as two (2) points in flag football.
19. The only turnovers in flag football occur when the offense either fails to advance the ball the necessary yardage in four plays for a first down, or a ball is caught in the air by the defense/punting team.
20. In any overtime game, teams are given one play to score. Teams can choose on which yard-line to place the ball, and more points are scored the farther the ball is spotted from the goal line.

As mentioned, the flag football rules code explains the game in greater detail and provides officials with areas of coverage, mechanics, and other elements necessary to officiate the game. While flag football has some similarities to tackle football, it is a different game that requires officials to use skills and knowledge specific to the game. Officials who are licensed in tackle football should not treat the game as a watered-down version of tackle football.