

HCM Flag Football Tournament Rules 2025

Roster Size

1. A team must field seven players (maximum roster size = 13)
2. 7 people begin on the field at the start of each game.

Timing and Overtime

1. Games are played on a 48-minute continuous clock with two 24-minute halves, unless one team gains a 35-point advantage which will end the game. The clock stops for halftime, injuries and the Officials' discretion.
2. Halftime is 2 minutes.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 25 seconds to snap the ball.
4. Each team has one 60-second timeout per half. They do not carry over.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury, the clock will stop then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. 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:
 - a. Home team calls the toss to determine the team that chooses to be on offense or defense first. If a second round of overtime must be played, the team that lost the coin toss will get to choose offense or defense for the start of the second round of overtime. This process continues with teams alternating who gets to choose to be on offense or defense to start out during every round of overtime. The referee will determine which end of the field the overtime will take place on.
 - b. Each team will take turns getting one (1) 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.



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8. Example: Team A starts on offense and chooses to go for one point from the 5-yard line and is successful. Team B is then on offense and can choose to either go for one point from the 5-yard line to tie and force a second round of overtime or to go for two points from the 10-yard line for the win. ii. If the second team on offense in an overtime round fails to beat or match the team that went first, the team that went first wins.
 - a. Starting with the 2nd overtime, both teams must "go for two" from the 10-yard line.
 - b. Starting with the 3rd overtime, each team will get 1 play from the 5-yard line going out from the endzone. The team with the most yards will be the winner. The team with the most yards will be awarded 1 point added to their final score.
 - c. Final Score will be recorded to include all points scored for each team.
 - d. All regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.
 - e. There are no timeouts.
 - f. Interceptions are returnable in OT, and worth 2 points.
9. Interceptions returned for a score in the first or second overtime period, the game is over.
 - i. Interceptions advanced in the third overtime period; the game is over. h. Each team has one rules challenge for the entire overtime session.

Scoring

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. PAT (point after touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
 - a. **Note:** 1 point PAT is pass only; 2-point PAT can be run or pass.
3. Safety: 2 points
 - a. 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.
4. A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2-point conversion (from the 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.



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Live Ball/Dead Ball

1. The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
2. The official will indicate the neutral zone and line of scrimmage.
 - a. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. Regarding 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.
3. A player who gains possession of the ball in the air is considered in bounds as long as the first foot or other body part contacts the ground in the field of play with possession.
4. 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.
5. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
6. Any official can whistle the play dead.
7. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. The ball hits the ground. i. If the ball hits the ground because of a bad snap, the ball is then placed where the ball hit the ground.
 - b. The ball-carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - c. The ball-carrier steps out of bounds.
 - d. A touchdown, PAT or safety is scored.
 - e. The ball-carrier’s knee or arm hits the ground.
 - f. The ball-carrier’s flag falls out.
 - g. The receiver catches the ball while in possession of one or no flag(s).
 - h. The 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle
 - i. **NOTE:** 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.



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Running

1. The ball is spotted at the location when the flag was pulled.
2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback is the offensive player who receives the snap.
3. 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.
 - a. “Center sneak” play is no longer allowed. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play.
5. Absolutely NO pitches or laterals of any kind. Definition of a “Legal Handoff” - Total loss of possession directly from 1 offensive play to another.
6. No-run Zones are located 5 yards before each end zone and 5 yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations. Teams are not allowed to run in these zones if the subsequent line is LIVE. (Reminder: Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive – one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down and one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).
7. Runners are not permitted to dive or hurdle any player while advancing the ball.
8. Ballcarriers 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 and the play will continue without stoppage. However, if while leaving the ground, contact is made unnecessary roughness penalty may be enforced by the official.
9. No blocking or “screening” is allowed at any time.
10. Offensive players in proximity of the ball-carrier must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No running with the ball-carrier.



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11. 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

1. 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.
 - a. There is no intentional grounding.
 - b. All passes that do not cross the line of scrimmage, whether received or not, are illegal forward passes, unless touched by a defender.
 - c. The quarterback may throw the ball away to avoid a sack. Pass must go beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. 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. a. 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).
4. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
5. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage.
6. A player must have at least one foot or other body part in bounds, contacting the ground first with possession.
7. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
8. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play, the score will be worth six points, two points if returned during conversions and/or overtime.



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9. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.

Receiving

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

Rushing the Passer

1. 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.
2. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-yard rule no longer is in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage.
3. 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.
 - a. A legal rush is:
 - i. Any rush from a point 7-yards from the defensive line of scrimmage.
 - ii. A rush from anywhere on the field AFTER the ball has been handed off by the quarterback.



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- b. A penalty may be called if:
 - i. 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).
 - ii. Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped – offsides (5-yards from line of scrimmage and first down).
 - iii. 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).
 - c. Special circumstances:
 - i. Teams are not required to rush the quarterback with the seven second clock in effect. ii. Teams are not required to identify their rusher before the play.
- 4. Players rushing the quarterback may attempt to block a pass; however, contact to the QB, unless ruled incidental by the official, would result in a roughing the passer penalty.
 - 5. The offense cannot impede the rusher in any way. The rusher has the right to a clear 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 QB. 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.
 - 6. 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.
 - a. A Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.

Flag Pulling

- 1. A legal flag pull takes place when the ball-carrier is in full possession of the ball.
- 2. Defenders can dive to pull flags but cannot tackle, hold or run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags.



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3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball from the ball-carrier's possession at any time.
4. 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.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off a player who is not in possession of the ball.
6. 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

1. 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.
2. Teams may shift formations prior to the snap if they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
3. One player at a time may go in motion at least 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage.
4. 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.
5. 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.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. If the field monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped, and the player will be ejected from the game. The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. FOUL PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!



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2. Offensive or confrontational language is NOT allowed. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the officials will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent or official.
4. Ball-carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
5. Defenders must give free releases off the line of scrimmage to offensive players and are not allowed to run through the ball-carrier when pulling flags. **ROUGH PLAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**
6. Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties:
 - i. Defense + 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
 - ii. Offense - 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

Penalties

1. The referee will call all penalties.
2. Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play.
3. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except as noted. (Spot fouls)
4. Only the team captain or head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question calls.
5. Games or halves may not end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.
6. Penalties are assessed live ball then dead ball. Live ball penalties must be assessed before play is considered complete.
7. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.



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HCM FLAG FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT FOULS/PENALTIES BREAKDOWN

ii. Defensive spot fouls

Defensive pass interference	Automatic first down
Holding	+5 yards and automatic first down
Stripping	+5 yards and automatic first down

iii. Offensive spot fouls

Screening or blocking	-5 yards and loss of down
Charging	-5 yards and loss of down
Flag guarding	-5 yards and loss of down

iv. Defensive penalties

Defensive unnecessary roughness	+10 yards and automatic first down
Defensive unsportsmanlike conduct	+10 yards and automatic first down
Offside / illegal substitution	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush (Starting rush from inside 7-yard marker)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull (Before the receiver has the ball)	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Roughing the passer	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Taunting	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

v. Offensive penalties

Offensive unnecessary roughness	-10 yards and loss of down
Offensive unsportsmanlike conduct	-10 yards and loss of down
Offside / false start / illegal substitution	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass (Any pass received or lands behind the line of scrimmage or throwing a pass after crossing the line of scrimmage)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Offensive pass interference	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal motion (More than one person moving)	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

