

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA YOUTH FOOTBALL LEAGUE
FOURTH GRADE RULES AND REGULATIONS
(Adapted from USA Football Rookie Tackle)
2023 Season

PLAYING FIELD

1. The playing field is 40 x 35 1/3 yards.
 - a. Field set up can be from the 40 to the end zone.
 - b. Pee-wee size football
2. The sidelines extend between the **insides of the numbers** on a traditional football field and should be marked with cones every five yards. Use traditional pylons, if available, to mark the goal line and the back line of the end zone.
3. Additional cones can be placed between the five-yard stripes and in line with the inside of the numbers to further outline the playing surface if desired.
4. All possessions start at the 40-yard line going toward the end zone
 - a. Players not in the game stand on the traditional sidelines with one or more coach(es) to supervise.
5. First downs, down markers and the chain gang are administered in accordance with National Federation (NFHS) or local rules – starting from the 40-yard line.

GENERAL RULES

1. Because of the “all players, all positions, all skills philosophy,” there are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
 - a. All players should have at least one offensive and defensive line position as well as one offensive and one defensive backfield position to play each game.
 - b. In practice, players should learn all skills of all positions for developmental purposes in accordance with the Football Development Model principles.
2. All game action takes place in the play area, between the 40-yard lines going toward the end zones.
3. A turnover on downs brings the ball back to the 40-yard line, and the teams switch from offense to defense, defense to offense.
4. Turnovers on interceptions or turnovers on fumbles are blown dead immediately. No returns are allowed in order to protect players. Play restarts on the 40-yard line with the recovering/intercepting team now on offense. **There are no defensive touchdowns.**
 - a. Rule application: A fumble is not blown dead, only a turnover. A fumble is a live ball until it is recovered by a player, lands out of bounds or approaches the administrative zone and officials determine the play should be blown dead.
 - i. Defensive recoveries, as turnovers, are blown dead.
 - ii. An offensive player may recover and advance a fumble.
5. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. Hash marks are not used.
6. Because of the limited field size, all 15-yard penalties are enforced as 10-yard penalties.
7. No penalty on the offense can take the ball behind the 30-yard line (End Zone)
 - a. Rule application: A five-yard penalty called and accepted on the 42-yard line would result in a loss of two yards and the ball spotted on the 40-yard line.
8. Penalties on the offense called between the 40-yard lines and the end zone in which yardage is lost, even if limited in enforcement by the 40-yard line, are enforced as written in terms of down lost or replayed.
9. Penalties on the offense that are called and accepted on or behind the 40-yard line result in a loss of down. A penalty that would normally include a loss of down would not result in a second loss of down on the same play.
10. There are no defensive safeties. Tackles behind the 40-yard line are respootted at the 40-yard line with the offense still retaining the ball as long as a down remains.
11. All Personal Foul Penalties include an immediate required substitution from the field for a minimum of one play to allow coaches to address misconduct and promote good sportsmanship. A “cooling off period.”

SPECIAL TEAMS ADJUSTMENTS

1. There are no special teams.
 - a. There are no kickoffs or punts. Each possession starts with the ball on the 40-yard line, regardless of whether there is a score, turnover or turnover on downs.

OFFENSIVE ADJUSTMENTS

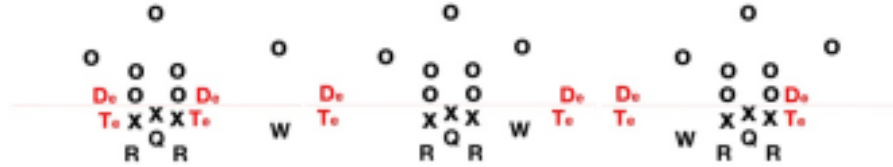
1. Each play must include three offensive linemen – a center and two guards, one on either side of the center. These players are ineligible for first touch as the receiver of a pass.
2. All players use a two-point stance, allowing player development, and a heads- up learning environment.
3. The center may only have a snapping hand down.
4. The distance between a center – guard may not exceed one yard, but may be closer.
5. The quarterback – center exchange can be direct, pistol or shotgun.
6. Quarterback sneaks are prohibited in all situations because the defense is not allowed to have players aligned over the center or in the center-guard A-gap.
7. The **offense must have five players on the line of scrimmage**. No more, no less. The fourth and fifth players can be tight ends, split ends or a combination of the two. Only the two end players on the line of scrimmage are eligible for first touching of a pass.
8. **There are no unbalanced lines**. The split ends/tight ends must be on opposite sides of the center.
9. The six offensive players who are not playing guard or center may be deployed in positions at the coach's discretion as long as two are on the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Multiple running backs, slot receivers, wing backs, etc., are allowed but also must be balanced.
10. No trips formations are allowed.
 - a. For purpose of Rookie Tackle, trips is defined as any three players outside the guard-to-guard box on the same side of the ball.
11. All blocks below the waist by any player anywhere on the field are illegal.
12. All offensive alignments must have at least 2 running backs in the backfield at all times, and a QB under center or in shotgun, pistol formation. Must be balanced. Split Backs/Pro, Straight I behind QB, or Wishbone are the only allowed backfields.
13. You may operate out of any or all the following formations:
 - a. Two TE's and a WG
 - b. Two TE's and a FLK
 - c. One TE and a Slot
 - d. Twins
 - e. Once a team has established a set formation you may not shift.
 - i. If a player is out of position, a coach may reset the player.
14. You may run any type of play you wish, MSHSL rules apply.
15. Weight Restrictions and "Bigs"
 - a. The second and third quarters are open to allow those outside of the weight restriction to be in a skilled position, "bigs"
 - i. This is a "Gentleman's agreement" - each down, set of downs, or whole quarter the offense must inform the referee and the opposing defensive coach that "bigs" will be in the skilled position or positions. Time must be allowed for the defense to adjust, if necessary.
 - ii. It is not a requirement to run your "bigs" during these quarters. But they are the only quarters they may have the opportunity to do so.
 - b. General weight restrictions:
 - i. 100 pounds or less for skilled positions.
 - ii. TE can be over the weight restriction, **if** they are used as blocking TE lined up within one yard of the guard. Any split TE must be at or under the weight restriction, unless following the "bigs" adjustment in quarter 2 and quarter 3.

DEFENSIVE ADJUSTMENTS

1. The defense will consist of a 4 -2 -3 defense.
2. Defensive linemen must be in a two-point stance.
3. Defensive linemen must be aligned on the guards and/or tight ends in a head up or outside

shoulder position.

4. Players in an outside shade must always have one foot aligned inside the stance of the opposing player.
5. If the offense aligns with split TE or WR, the defense must play their DE over the TE or WR on the line of scrimmage. Head up or outside shade is still enforced. IE:



6. Defensive line of scrimmage players may not penetrate the gaps on the snap of the ball. Contact with the hands must be made with the offensive line player before defeating the block into the gaps.
 - a. Rule enforcement: Deliberate stunting into the gaps is to be treated as an illegal procedure foul and enforced as a five-yard live ball penalty..
7. The defense must have one player at least 10 yards from the ball (Safety)
8. Linebackers must align behind defensive guards no closer than 3 yards to the line of scrimmage.
9. Cornerbacks must not be closer than 5 yards to the line of scrimmage
10. No blitzes are allowed. Players within the box at the snap can penetrate upon the snap. Linebackers, safeties and cornerbacks (both on the line and at depth) can flow to the ball naturally after a handoff is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
 - a. **The box includes offensive players who line up within two yards of the ball and on the line of scrimmage along with the defensive players lined up directly over them.**
 - i. Rule application: TE not split are considered within two yards of the ball.
 - ii. Rule application: The restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
 - iii. Rule enforcement: Illegal blitzes by a linebacker or defensive back shall be enforced as an illegal procedure foul and a five-yard live ball penalty. If continued blitzing is determined to be a product of coach encouragement, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty can occur.
 - b. On pass plays, anyone outside the box on the snap cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage. The pocket will be considered guard to guard. Once the QB is outside of guard area, it may be considered a run.
 - c. Coaches are encouraged to be creative with their formations but not use “the box” to delay defensive penetration.
11. If the ball is inside the four-yard line, the four non-linemen, non-deep players may align on the goal line.

GAMES

1. All games shall consist of four, ten-minute running time quarters. Clock will stop after a change of possession - turn over, score, punt, or injury.
2. Halftime will be 5 minutes long. You are allowed 1 timeout per half for 1 minute.
3. No scoreboard will be used and no scores reported. This time is to teach the kids the game, not who is superior on the field.
 - a. Coaching staff will be one head coach, and up to 3 assistant coaches
 - b. Coaches will be allowed on the field under the following:
 - c. One defensive coach when the defense is on the field.
 - d. One offensive coach when the offense is on the field.
 - e. The coach on the field can only give instruction in the huddle and before the offensive line comes to a set position.
 - i. **Coaches are asked to limit the time in the huddle ... “Practice & Teach plays during practice not in the huddle”. Officials are to warn coaches 1st. After which instruct time keepers to stop the clock after 25 seconds (2X). If continual the official will stop the clock and penalize the coach 5 yds. **
 - f. The coach must assume a position 5 yards behind the running backs and safety at which

time no further instruction may be given.

g. Any violation of the above will result in first a verbal warning and the followed by a 5 yd penalty for any violation thereafter.

4. Officials

a. Minimum of one official. Must have one adult official, the second can be younger.

5. Questioning of official Calls

a. Only the head coach may question the officials call or address the officials.

b. Coaches should conduct themselves in a manner that will set a good example for the players, coaches and fans. The object of Youth Football is to let the kids have fun. c. Fighting with or striking any player, coach, official or any participant will be grounds for immediate expulsion from the league.

d. If a player, coach or fan is removed from the game by an official; it will result in a minimum of a one game suspension, w/ further action to be determined by the Board Members.

e. Excessive disputing of official calls or profanity directed at a player, coach, official or any participant of Youth Football will be grounds for expulsion from the league. f. The Board of Members have the ultimate authority to determine disciplinary action in all cases