



Special Olympics *Florida*

Unified Flag Football Rules Overview



OUR MISSION

Special Olympics Florida provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for all children and adults with intellectual disabilities who wish to participate, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in sharing of gifts, skills, and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.



Special Olympics
Florida

UNIFIED SPORTS

- Combines equal numbers of Special Olympic Athletes with non-intellectually disabled peer (Partners) of similar age and ability level, on sports teams for training and competition.

Goals For Unified Sports

- Integrate athletes
- Prepare athletes for non-SO sport programs
- Increase public awareness
- Enable SO family members
- Build friendships and understanding

OFFICIAL RULES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Field Official (2)

- Adhere to the SOFL Flag Football rules
- Player safety
- Correct and fair play between teams
- Effectively communicate with players and coaches
- Smile and have fun!

Score Table Official (1)

- Score keep
- Watch for partner domination
- Communicate any issues with Competition Director
 - Rules interpretation
 - Protests
 - Athlete, partner, or coach misconduct

OFFICIAL EXPECTATIONS

General

- Respect
- Positive Attitude
- Communicate

Attire

- Black shorts
- Football stripes
- Penalty flags (if you own them)
- Whistle
- Black or white hat (optional)

GENERAL GAME INFO



- 5 players to start
- Touchdown = 6 points
- Extra Points:
 - 1 point @ 5-yard line
 - 2 points @ 10-yard line
- Safety = 2 points
- 1 timeout per half (don't carry over)

GENERAL GAME INFO

- Coin toss 3 minutes before game.
- All possessions start @ 5-yard line
 - Exception: interception
- Offense has 4 plays to cross mid-field
 - If crossed: 4 additional plays to score TD
 - If they fail: possession change, and the ball starts at their 5-yard line
- The ball should be marked at the position of where the ball was when flag was pulled.



GENERAL GAME INFO



- 30 second play clock
- Two 20 minute halves
 - Running clock until last minute of each half
- Ball must be snapped between legs.
- No player minimum at line of scrimmage.

PLAYER EQUIPMENT

- Unified Partners: odd numbers
- Athletes: even numbers
- ALL players must wear a mouth guard
- No jewelry (medical exceptions)
- Athletic shorts with NO pockets
 - Taped pockets = no play
 - Inside out with “bunny ears” = no play
- Rubber cleats or flat athletic shoes



RULES: RUSHING THE QB

- Players rushing the QB shall be a minimum of 7-yards behind line of scrimmage.
 - The 7-yards will be marked by official using a cone/puck.
- Non-rushing players can defend at the line of scrimmage.
- If the QB makes a hand-off, any player is eligible to rush.
 - Exception: if partner hands off to partner



RULES: RUNNING

- QB CANNOT advance the ball beyond line of scrimmage
- Laterals or pitches are not allowed
 - Only direct hand-offs behind the line of scrimmage are legal
 - A partner can hand-off to another partner (unified) but they must pass the ball
- If an athlete hands the ball off to a partner or athlete behind the line of scrimmage, that player may run OR pass.
- No Run Zones
 - 5-yards before mid-field and goal line
 - Must pass the ball in these zones

RULES: PASSING & RECEIVING

- All passes must be forward and received past the line of scrimmage.
- All players are eligible to receive the pass
 - Exception: partner to partner passes are not legal (unified)
- Only 1 player may be in motion at the snap
 - Only parallel to the line of scrimmage
- One foot is required for a complete pass
- Interception occurs
 - Change of possession at the spot of catch
 - Ball is marked dead once the interception is completed



RULES: DEAD BALL

- Ball hits ground after fumble
- Flag is pulled
- Ball carrier loses flag
- Out of bounds
- Knee or hand touches ground
- Extra point, safety, or TD is scored
- Interception on extra point
- Forward pass strikes the ground
- Simultaneous catch
 - Offense retains possession
- Interception
- Receiver catches ball without their flags attached or flags fall off without being pulled
- Snapped ball touches the ground
- Inadvertent whistle

RULES: SPORTSMANSHIP

- Officials may disqualify any player if their behavior is deemed unsportsmanlike.
 - No warning is required
- If coaches, volunteers, spectators display misconduct, the appropriate staff shall be contacted to handle the situation.



PENALTIES: OFFENSE

- Offensive penalties = 10-yards from line of scrimmage & loss of down
 - **Illegal Motion:** more than 1 player in motion at snap, moving forward at snap
 - **Offside:** in neutral zone, false start
 - **Illegal Forward Pass:** partner to partner, not beyond line of scrimmage



PENALTIES: OFFENSE

- **Pass Interference:** kicking or pushing defender
- **Illegal Contact:** holding, blocking, bumping, stiff arm, etc...
- **Flag Guarding:** any form of shielding the defense from pulling their flag
- **Delay of Game:** failing to snap within 30 seconds of ready whistle



PENALTIES: DEFENSE

- Defensive Penalties = 10-yards from line of scrimmage & automatic first down
 - **Offside:** in or beyond neutral zone
 - **Pass Interference:** kicking or pushing offensive player
 - **Illegal Contact:** holding, blocking, bumping, etc...
 - **Illegal Flag Pull:** before receiver has the ball
 - **Illegal Rushing:** inside 5-yard line



OVERTIME

- Coin toss
- 2 plays for each team
 - Start @ mid-field
- Most points or most yards gained wins
 - Exception: interception; intercepting team wins
- If 1st team scores on first play, then the opposing team must do so as well
- Both teams score
 - Start the process over until 1 team wins

