

SFFA 8-on-8 League Rules

*Amended: July 2022 (Stephen Gonzalez)
2 September 2022 (Joel Quah)*

1. Overview

- a. 8 players per side, less than 6 would result in a forfeit. You may start with 6 players.
- b. First downs are achieved when crossing the 20-40-20 yard lines.
- c. The Association may suspend any player for unsportsmanlike conduct - this includes (but is not limited to) arguing with the referees.
- d. Any challenge to the referee's call can only be brought by a team captain. If the team captain is not on the field at the time of the call, it can be brought by a designated Offensive or Defensive squad leader. The Head Referee may overturn calls made by the other officials.
 - i. Unless otherwise communicated to the Captains before the game, the Head Referee shall be the referee lined up in the Offensive backfield.
- e. Please remember that this is a recreational football league/tournament. The referees and organizers will give all their effort to provide your team with comparable competition. Most importantly, have fun.

2. Equipment & Uniforms

- a. No metal cleats.
- b. No pockets or belt loops on shorts. If your shorts have open pockets, they must be taped shut.
- c. Teams must have similarly colored jerseys.
- d. Each team may supply their own ball.
- e. Offensive players must keep their shirts tucked into their pants, otherwise the referee can rule you down.
- f. No arm pads, hands or wrist pads. Soft knee pads may be worn on the knee.
- g. Baseball, football or golf gloves may be worn. Caps with extended bills can be worn.
- h. Flags must be worn facing down and with the angle of the flag facing outward.

3. Field Size

- a. The total field is 40 yards wide by 100 yards long.
 - i. Field of play = 80 x 40 yards.
 - ii. End Zones = 10 x 40 yards each.

4. Time Management

- a. The game consists of two 25-minute halves.
- b. Halftime is 5 minutes.

- c. The play clock is 30 seconds. The play clock starts on the spot of the ball.
 - i. The Offense is responsible for retrieving the ball after an incomplete pass. The referee may elect to start the play clock before the ball is spotted if the ball is not retrieved in a timely manner.
- d. Each team is allowed 2 timeouts per half (30 seconds each). The game clock will stop and start on the snap, or when 30 seconds pass, whichever comes first.
- e. The clock will run continuously, and will be stopped only:
 - i. After scoring plays (all extra points are untimed)
 - ii. During timeouts and 2-minute warnings
 - iii. During referee huddles
 - 1. During referee huddles, the game clock stops and will start on the snap or when the referee whistles for clock to recommence.
 - iv. In the following situations in the last 2 minutes of second half:
 - 1. Incomplete passes
 - 2. Plays where the ball carrier goes out of bounds
 - 3. Defensive penalties
- f. If there is an inadvertent whistle blown, the play is blown dead. The ball will be placed at the spot of the ball carrier when the whistle was blown.

5. Contact / Blocking

- a. Only Open Hands Blocking is allowed. What is Open Hands Blocking?
 - i. Open hands must be extended from the elbow, no loaded-up from the sides.
 - ii. Contact may be made with open hands above the waist, and below the throat. Any other contact (i.e. leading with the head or below-the-waist) is not allowed.
 - iii. Blocks must be initiated from the front of the Defender being blocked unless the Defender gives the Blocker his back.
 - iv. A Blocker may not attempt to impede the progress of a Defender by grabbing with hands, tackling, pulling to the ground, or hooking.
 - v. Any block not considered an Open Hands Block is a penalty (Penalty: Illegal Blocking).
 - vi. An illegal block that occurs in the end zone results in a safety.
- b. Blocking down field is allowed.
- c. The defender cannot use contact to break up a pass (Penalty: Illegal Contact)
 - i. Any appearance of intent by the defender will result in immediate ejection of the offending player.
- d. Bump/chuck is allowed and it must be within 5 yards of the line of scrimmage.
- e. Defenders must not make contact with the passer above his waist under ANY circumstance (Penalty: Personal Foul - Unnecessary Roughness)

6. Offensive Rules

Offensive Line

- a. The Offense must have a minimum of 3 players on the line of scrimmage.
- b. The Offensive Line must be balanced (Tackle-Center-Tackle).
- c. There is no maximum number of players on the line.

- d. Any stance can be used by the Offensive Linemen.
- e. Offensive linemen are ineligible receivers.

Ball Carrier

- f. The ball carrier is marked down once their flags are pulled, they are touched with one hand after losing a flag inadvertently, or once their knee or elbow touches the ground.
 - i. It is a penalty for an offensive player other than an ineligible receiver to start the play without a belt (Penalty: No Flags)
- g. The ball will always be spotted at the front hip of the ball carrier.
- h. The ball is dead when it hits the ground (no ground fumbles).
- i. Receivers must have 1 foot in bounds and cannot advance the ball after diving for a catch.
- j. Ball carriers may not dive (under any circumstances), hurdle over, or jump at an opposing player. (Penalty: Hurdling)
- k. The ball carrier shall not use their hands, arms, or the ball to obstruct a deflagging attempt. (Penalty: Flag Guarding). Flag guarding includes:
 - i. Swinging the hand/arm over the belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
 - ii. Placing the ball over the belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
 - iii. Lowering the shoulders such that the defender is shielded from the flag.
 - iv. Holding the flag belt with the off hand.
 - v. Stiff arming or running directly into a defender that has both feet on the floor and is set.

7. Extra Points

- a. The Offense can elect to take a 1-point or 2-point Extra Point after scoring a touchdown.
 - i. 1-Point: The ball will be placed at the 3-yard line
 - ii. 2-Point: The ball will be placed at the 7-yard line
- b. The Extra Point is an untimed play under all circumstances.
- c. The captain must tell the referee which extra point option is desired.
- d. The Defense can return an interception on any extra point for 2 points.

8. Defensive Rules

Defensive Line

- a. There is no limit to the number of Defensive Linemen that can be lined up.
- b. Defensive linemen can line up anywhere behind the neutral zone (the length of the football).
- c. Any stance can be used by the Defensive Linemen.

General

- d. Any defensive player can blitz.
- e. Stripping the ball is not allowed (Penalty: Personal Foul - Unnecessary Roughness).
- f. No tackling (Penalty: Tackling).
- g. No pushing ball carrier out of bounds (Penalty: Roughing).

- h. A Defender must hand the flag back to the opponent. (Penalty: Personal Foul - Unsportsmanlike Conduct).

9. Special Teams

- a. There are no kickoffs.
- b. All punts must be declared. It is a free kick; no fake punts.
- c. Punter must be at least 3 yards behind the center.
- d. Both Offense and Defense must have 4 players on the line, lined up as linemen. No one but the kicker may move until the ball is kicked.
- e. All punts are dead once the ball touches the ground; there are no fumbles.

10. Tie Breaking (for championship games)

- a. Both teams will be awarded one offensive play, which will be either a 1 or 2 point Extra Point attempt.
- b. The tie-breaker rounds will continue until one team prevails.

11. Penalties

OFFENSIVE	YARDS	SPOT	DOWN
No Flags* <i>Ball carrier starts a play without a belt or without at least one flag.</i>	0	Previous	Loss of Down
Delay of Game* <i>Play clock expires before the snap.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
False Start* <i>Offensive player moves before the snap (except motion).</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
Illegal Motion <i>Multiple Offensive players in motion simultaneously or player in motion is moving towards the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
Illegal Forward Pass <i>Pass is made beyond the line of scrimmage or is caught by an ineligible receiver.</i>	5	Previous	Loss of Down
Offensive Holding <i>Grabbing or holding on to a Defensive player (includes tackling, pulling to the ground, and hooking, jerking, or turning with your arm).</i>	10	Previous	Repeat Down
Flag Guarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Swinging the hand/arm over the belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging</i> • <i>Placing the ball over the belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging</i> • <i>Lowering the shoulders such that the defender is shielded from the flag</i> • <i>Holding the flag belt with the off hand</i> 	5	Spot of Foul	Loss of Down

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stiff arming or running directly into a defender that has both feet on the floor and is set. <p>[Note: If an offensive player gains sufficient yards for a first down, but a flag guarding penalty brings the ball back behind the first down marker, the first down will still be awarded.]</p>			
Hurdling (Diving) <i>Ball carrier dives (under any circumstances), hurdles over, or jumps at an opposing player.</i>	10	Spot of Foul	Loss of Down
Illegal Blocking <i>Any block that is not an Open Hands Block executed on the front of the Defender. If the penalty occurs in the end zone, this results in a safety.</i>	10	Previous	Repeat Down (Safety)
Offensive Pass Interference <i>A receiving player makes contact with a defender, not allowing them to fairly defend an incoming pass that is deemed catchable by the referee. This includes illegal pick plays.</i>	10	Previous	Loss of Down
Offside* <i>Offensive player is lined up beyond the line of scrimmage or in the neutral zone.</i>			
Personal Foul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unnecessary Roughness (Late Hits, any other action that the referee deems unsafe) • Unsportsmanlike Conduct (taunting, punching, kicking, verbal abuse) • Arguing with a Referee 	15	Previous	Repeat Down

DEFENSIVE	YARDS	SPOT	DOWN
Encroachment* <i>Defensive player touches an Offensive player before the snap.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
Offsides <i>Player is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. This includes lining up in the neutral zone.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
Neutral Zone Infraction* <i>Defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the snap and causes an Offensive player to move.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
Defensive Holding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any holding of an offensive player that occurs either before the ball is thrown (to a targeted receiver) or anytime (to a non-targeted receiver). Grabbing or holding on to an Offensive player either before the ball is throw (to a targeted receiver) or anytime (to a non-targeted receiver). Holding includes tackling, pulling to the ground, and hooking, jerking, or turning with your arm. • Holding a targeted receiver after the ball is thrown is considered Defensive Pass Interference. 	5	Previous	First Down
Illegal Contact <i>Defensive player initiates contact with a receiver who is attempting to evade the defensive player beyond 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.</i>	5	Previous	First Down
Tackling* <i>Tackling the ball carrier to the ground without pulling their flag. If the penalty occurs by a defender who is considered the "last defender" on the ball carrier's path to the</i>	10	Spot of Foul	Repeat Down (Touchdo

<i>endzone, the result is a Touchdown.</i>			wn)
Roughing (Pushing)* <i>Pushing the ball carrier out of bounds. If the penalty occurs by a defender who is considered the "last defender" on the ball carrier's path to the endzone, the result is a Touchdown.</i>	5	Spot of Foul	First Down (Touchdown)
Defensive Pass Interference <i>A Defensive player makes contact with a receiver, not allowing them to fairly receive an incoming pass that is deemed catchable by the referee. If this occurs in the end zone, the ball is placed at the 1-yard line.</i>	Spot foul	Spot	First Down
Personal Foul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Unnecessary Roughness (Roughing The Passer, Late Hits, stripping the ball, any other action that the referee deems unsafe)</i> • <i>Unsportsmanlike Conduct (taunting, punching, kicking, verbal abuse)</i> • <i>Arguing with a Referee</i> 	15	Previous	First Down

SPECIAL TEAMS	YARDS	SPOT	DOWN
Delay of Game* <i>Play clock expires before the snap.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down
Illegal Formation <i>Less than four players lined up on the line of scrimmage as Linemen. This applies to both the Kicking & Receiving teams.</i>	5	Previous	Repeat Down

*Ref Note: Dead ball fouls

- a. In situations where the number of penalty yards would cause a team to enter the endzone, the assessed penalty yardage shall be half the distance to the endzone.

12. Serious Penalties

- a. Any intentional unsportsmanlike conduct/unnecessary roughness acts will result in immediate ejection from the game. A second infraction during the season can result in ejection from the season at the discretion of the Head of League Operations.
- b. Verbal abuse of the referees will result in an immediate ejection. If conduct persists from the same team, the referee has the right to declare a forfeit.
- c. If any player/coach intentionally bumps/assaults a referee, that team will forfeit the game.
- d. Fighting will not be tolerated. If a player from your team is involved in a fight, they will be ejected from the game. If 2 or more players get into a fight, THE ENTIRE TEAM will be ejected, and a forfeit will be declared. If any player/coach bumps/assaults a referee, that team will forfeit the game.
- e. Trash talking, racial or religious remarks will result in an immediate ejection.