



**HAWAII**

**OFFICIAL RULE BOOK**

**2025**

# NFL FLAG HAWAII Rules

October- 2024

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## AGE DIVISIONS

1. 4U (4 and under), 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, All Girls: 12U, 14U, 17U (Age cutoff is 1/1/25, playing age is the age they are on 1/1/25).

Note: Players may **play up** in Age divisions; but cannot play down in Age divisions. Players may not play on multiple teams in the **same** age division.

## PLAYERS

1. Home teams wear dark color jerseys; visiting teams wear light color jerseys (if using NFL reversible jerseys).
2. Teams consist of **5 players** on the field at a time.
3. Teams must start a game with a minimum of four players. A team with insufficient number of players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.

## COACHES

1. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their sidelines to include players, spectators, guests and their team staff.
2. **6U:** The **offense** may have one coach on the field .
3. **8U and up:** One **offensive coach** can come on the field, but must move toward the sideline before the snap (cannot stand behind QB).
4. **6U and up: Defensive coaches** must be off the field before the snap.
- 5..Game officials will strive to allow coaches to clear the field in an expeditious manner but must keep the game moving. Coaches may be called for Delay of Game if they can't clear the field promptly.

## EQUIPMENT

1. Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however, cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
2. Players must wear mouth guards at all times while on the field.
3. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
4. Players may wear soft shell helmets and sunglasses but they must be secured at ALL times while on the playing field. Soft shell helmets are recommended.
5. Shorts or pants that do not have pockets are required; however, shorts or pants with belt loops or pockets may be taped. Games will not be delayed for a player to tape up pockets.
6. Participants must bring their own official NFL FLAG belts, or approved belts. Extra belts may be available for purchase. 4U cannot use pop belts.
7. The flags must be on the player's hips and free from obstruction. Deliberately obstructed flags will be considered flag guarding. Flags should not be the same color as shorts.

Players' jerseys must be tucked into the pants if they hang below the belt line. The extra length of the flag belts must be taped or tucked in.

8. Teams may provide their own game ball but must meet these specifications and are subject to game official's inspection & discretion (Coed 17U: no smaller than Youth size; 14U, 12U, 10U, Girls 17U: no smaller than Junior size; 8U, 6U: no smaller than Pee wee size; 4U: no smaller than mini size).

## FIELD

1. The field dimensions are 30 yards by 50 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain.
2. Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone is 5 yards before midfield, and the other zone is 5 yards before the end zone).
3. Teams cannot run the ball in any fashion in the no-run zones. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
4. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.

## GAME

1. At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The **visiting team shall call the toss**.
2. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense and the loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown.
  - On fourth down coaches must decide if they want to "go for it" or "punt".
  - If they "go for it" and fail to achieve the line-to-gain, the opposing team takes the ball from where it became dead.
  - If they choose to "punt," a game official will move the ball to the opponent's 5-yard line, change of possession.
4. On interceptions, the opposing team takes the ball from where it became dead.
5. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

## TIMING

1. Games are played on a **48 minute** continuous clock with two 24 minute halves. The clock stops for halftime, injuries, and the official's discretion. 4U games will be 40 minutes with two 20 minute halves.
2. Halftime is two minutes long.

3. Each time the ball is spotted a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball (4U and 6U Age divisions have 40 seconds). Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has **one** 30-second time out per half (cannot carry over to second half). Team must stay on the field during time out).
5. Officials may stop the clock at their discretion. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
6. **Final minute of the game (if the score is within 8 points or less): Clock will stop for change of possession, incomplete pass, out of bounds, first downs, and defensive penalties.**
7. If the score is tied at the end of 48 minutes, the game will go into Overtime.
8. If a touchdown is scored as time expires, the extra point shall be attempted **if** it may affect the outcome of the game.

## **OVERTIME FORMAT**

1. If regulation time ends in a tie, teams will play a **one-play series** until there is a winner (if the game is still tied after **three** overtime series, the game will end in a tie).
2. Teams may elect to go for one point from the 5-yard line (pass play), two points from the 10-yard line (run or pass). 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.
3. Coin toss begins the overtime (home team calls the toss). In each successive overtime period teams will **alternate** who starts on offense.
4. Interceptions during overtime scoring attempts are dead balls and no points will be awarded.
5. All other regulation period rules and penalties are in effect.

## **SCORING**

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. PAT (Point After Touchdown) 1 point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line)
3. Safety: 2 points. A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs if the ball carrier drops the ball or the snap hits the ground or when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

**4U, 6U: There are no safeties: ball will come out to the five yard line and loss of down.**

4. An interception returned during a conversion is worth **2 points**.
5. Forfeits are scored 28-0 for the winning team.

## MERCY RULE

1. Mercy Rules will go into effect whenever a team is **35 points** ahead. (For Playoffs, mercy rule is 28 points, and the game will end).
2. When this occurs, the **final score will be recorded as the score at the time the mercy rule was invoked. No more score recording will be done.**
3. Losing team will decide if the game will end or continue as a “scrimmage” and a running clock will be used.
4. Team trailing will have possession at midfield and be given as many downs as it takes to score. Once the team scores, possession will go back to the other team and play will continue as normal (without keeping of score). When the trailing team takes possession again, they will start at midfield and be given as many downs as it takes to score again.
5. No pass rushing under Mercy Rules.

## 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. It is an automatic dead ball foul if any player on defense or offense enters the neutral zone. In regard to 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 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.
4. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
5. Play is ruled “dead” when:
  - a. The ball hits the ground. (If the ball hits the ground as the result 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

j. Ball carrier leaves their feet other than jump cuts, spinning, advancing the ball, or to avoid a downed player on the field of play.

**NOTE:** There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hit the ground at the time of the fumble. (If the ball is fumbled forwards then it will be spotted where the ball carrier lost possession).

6. If on a play, the offensive player crosses the line to gain (first down), but then incurs a penalty on that play that pushes him back behind the line to gain, it is **not a first down**.

7. If inadvertent whistle occurs the offense has two options:

A)...take the ball where the whistle blew and the down is consumed

B)...replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

If it occurs on the last play of the half or game, the offense will be awarded one untimed down and given those two options.

8. A team is allowed to use a timeout to question an official's rule interpretation. If the official's ruling is correct, the team will be charged a timeout. If the rule is interpreted incorrectly, the timeout will not be charged and the proper ruling will be enforced.

## **NO RUN ZONES**

1. No running plays are allowed in the "no run zones." Each offensive team approaches only TWO no-run zones in each drive (one zone is 5 yards before midfield, and the other zone is 5 yards before the end zone).

2. A **pass must be caught beyond the line of scrimmage** in the "no run zone." If the pass is not caught beyond the line of scrimmage, it will be considered a run play.

3. If a team is in the "no run zone" and the ball is handed off and then passed and caught beyond the line of scrimmage it will be considered a pass play.

4. If a team is in the "no run zone" and incurs a penalty that pushes them out of the "no run zone," they are now allowed to pass because they are no longer in the "no run zone."

5. **4U:** "No run zones" are eliminated.

## **RUNNING**

1. **The ball is spotted where the ball is when the flag is pulled.**

2. The quarterback cannot directly run with the ball. The quarterback does have the ability to scramble in the back field, but cannot advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage. The quarterback is the offensive player that receives the snap.

3. 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

4. Pitches and laterals are allowed behind the line of scrimmage only.

5. Once the ball has been handed off, pitched, or lateraled (behind the line of scrimmage), the 7 second passing clock is eliminated and all defensive players are eligible to rush.

6. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.

7. The QB is not allowed to handoff to the center on the first handoff of the play. "Center sneak" play is no longer allowed
8. No runs allowed in the "no run zones" (The "no run zones" are 5 yards before the end zone and 5 yards before midfield).
9. Diving, leaping, or jumping to avoid a flag pull is considered flag guarding.
10. **Spinning and jump cuts are allowed, Jumping and leaping when advancing the ball is not permitted. No diving with the ball.**
11. Runners may leave their feet to avoid collision with another player without a flag guarding penalty enforced.
12. 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.
13. No blocking or screening allowed.

## **PASSING**

1. All passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage.
2. A backwards pass may be caught behind the line of scrimmage and passed again.
3. The quarterback has a 7-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the 7 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.
4. 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).
5. If the quarterback throws the ball and then catches it, the play is dead and treated like an incomplete pass.
6. **Rusher may jump and try to block the pass; however, contact to the QB will result in a roughing the passer penalty.**
7. No intentional grounding rule..

## **RECEIVING**

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback, if the ball has been handed off, pitched, or thrown backward, behind the line of scrimmage). There may not be two forward passes.
2. **Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. No motion is permitted towards 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. A player who gains possession 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.



5. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, **possession is awarded to the offense.**
6. Interceptions are returnable. If returned for a score during regular game play the score will be worth 6 points, **2 points if returned during conversions.**

## **RUSHING THE PASSER**

### **8U, 10U, 12U, 14U, 17U:**

1. Rusher must start from at least **7 yards** from the line of scrimmage. Referee will mark the 7 yard spot. **Any number of players may rush provided they start from 7 yards back from the line of scrimmage.** If Rusher makes contact with the quarterback while the quarterback is attempting to pass, it will be a roughing the passer penalty and automatic first down.
2. Defense may not cross the line of scrimmage until ball is handed off, pitched, or passed; unless defender starts from 7 yards back from the line of scrimmage.
3. If the offense draws the rusher(s) to jump the 7-yard marker prior to the snap of the ball, that rusher(s) CANNOT rush during that play. However, any other defender that is seven yards back may rush instead. **Jumping the rush is not a penalty until the rusher crosses the line of scrimmage prior to the handoff or passed ball.**
4. **Offense has 7 seconds to pass, referee will blow the whistle at 7 seconds, and the play will be called dead.** (If the ball has been handed off, pitched, or thrown backward, behind the line of scrimmage; and then passed again, the passing clock will be turned off).
5. **Rusher may jump and try to block the pass; however, contact to the QB will result in a roughing the passer penalty.**
- 6.. The rusher has a clear and direct path to the quarterback if he is rushing **down the middle.** If the “path” 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.
7. 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 Safety is awarded if the sack takes place in the offensive team’s end zone.
8. A defensive player that does not start 7-yards back may not cross the line of scrimmage unless the ball is handed off, pitched, or lateraled (behind the line of scrimmage). Example: If the QB passes the ball and it is out of his hand, the defender may not cross the line of scrimmage—that is an illegal rush (defender would have to wait until the ball is caught).
9. **4U, 6U only:** If the QB rides the RB, the defense is allowed to rush.

### **4U, 6U**

1. There is no rushing the passer.
2. Defense may not cross the line of scrimmage until ball is handed off, pitched, or passed.

**3. Offense has 7 seconds to pass, referee will blow the whistle at 7 seconds, and the play will be called dead.** (If the ball has been handed off, pitched, or thrown backward, behind the line of scrimmage; and then passed again, the passing clock will be turned off).

## **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.
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 the play while that player has possession, the player is down immediately and the play ends.**
5. If a player who has one or no flags takes possession of the ball, the play is dead at that spot on the field.
6. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
7. 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, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags with the football jersey.

## **FORMATIONS**

- 1..Offense 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 as long as they are set for at least 1 second before the ball is snapped.
3. **Only one player is allowed in motion at a time.** Movement may not be made forward toward the line of scrimmage while in motion (false start).
4. A Division: The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield. **(4U , 6U, and Girls may center the ball from the side).**
5. If the ball hits the ground on the center exchange, the play is dead.

## **COACHES CHALLENGE**

Coach must have and use a time out. Challenge must be made before the ball becomes live on the play following the play to be reviewed.

Challenge **MUST** be a misapplication of a rule, **NOT** a judgement call.

Officials lead will be called to the field. Coach will convey what specific rule application was not applied properly.

Officials lead will then have a conference with all official assigned to that field.

Once a decision is made, officials lead will communicate outcome to both coaches.

If coach is found to be correct, they retain their time out. If incorrect, they lose their time out. In both instances, once the ball is signaled ready for play the game clock will start at the snap.

## **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!
2. Offensive or confrontational language is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will determine if a warning or immediate ejection is warranted.
3. Players may not physically or verbally abuse any opponent, coach or official.
4. Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.
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.

## **SPECIAL RULES FOR 4U**

**The following rules are added for 4U Division:**

1. Coach or player can be the QB
2. "Coach" can only do one fake and then the next movement is a pass or handoff (non-coach players may do as many fakes as they want). If riding the RB and "Coach" pulls ball out then that is considered a Fake.
3. Two coaches can be on the field for offense. One coach may be on the field for defense, but must stay 5 yards deeper than the defense at the snap.
4. No rushing. If QB rides the RB the defense may rush.
5. No run zones
6. There are no punts. If offense does not convert 4<sup>th</sup> down, possession will change, and the ball will be spotted at the opponent's 5 yard line,
7. Extra point rule: 3 yard line = 1 point; 5 yard line = 2 points
8. Overtime - same as 6U and up; (except 3 yard line =1 point, 5 yard line = 2 points)
9. Mercy rule - same as 6U and up
10. Center can snap ball from the side

## **PENALTIES**

### **i. General**

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 head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players may not question judgment 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.
8. Spot fouls in end zone: Defensive fouls: (Ball on one-yard line, first down). Offensive fouls: (Safety)

## 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, blocking or running with the ball	-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	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal rush	+5 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down
Illegal flag pull <small>(Before the receiver has the ball)</small>	+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	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal forward pass	-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 <small>(More than one person moving)</small>	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Delay of game	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Impeding the rusher	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Illegal Procedure	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down
Taunting	-5 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down