



YMCA OF AUSTIN YOUTH SPORTS PHILOSOPHY

Over the past few years, the YMCA has noticed some alarming trends in youth sports programs: the pressure for more rigorous competition and higher achievement. These trends come from adult-oriented attitudes and the misconception that youth sports programs are scaled-down versions of professional sports. This is not only false, but also dangerous.

The YMCA stresses child-oriented attitudes by keeping winning in perspective, having fun, improving physical fitness, and working with the whole child. The YMCA wants the quality of play to improve in order to meet the needs of all participants whatever their ability and skills.

The YMCA accomplishes this by training adult volunteers in clinics and workshops. **The YMCA believes that the child is first and winning is second.**

The YMCA does not encourage the elimination of competition or winning. Winning is essential to enjoyable competition. However, it is the "striving to win" that yields the joy of sports.

The key for parents and coaches is to keep winning in perspective. It is this key that holds the YMCA Youth Sports program together. Competition will happen in youth sports without any external pressures. **It is important to keep competition at a level appropriate for the athlete.**

The YMCA would not be whole without its commitment to a Christian emphasis. The goal of the Youth Sports program is to help the child grow to his/her fullest potential in mind, body, and spirit: activity helps the body grow; thinking advances the mind; and belief makes our spirit grow.



The Mission of the YMCA of Austin is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.



YMCA Flag Football Rules 8 and up

I. 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.
2. The visiting team shall call the toss.
3. The winner of the coin toss gets first offense possession. The loser of the coin toss chooses the end zone it would prefer to defend.
4. Teams may not choose to defer to second half choice.
5. 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; it has four (4) plays to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team takes over on its 5-yard line. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its 5-yard line.
6. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 5-yard line.
7. Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the loser of the coin toss.

II. Terminology

- **Boundary lines** – the outer perimeter lines around the field including the sidelines, and the rear end zone lines.
- **Line Of Scrimmage (LOS)** – an imaginary line running through point of football and across the width of the field.
- **Line-To-Gain** – the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- **Offense** – the squad with possession of the ball.
- **Defense** – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- **Passer** – the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the QB.
- **Downs (1-2-3-4 downs)** – the offensive squad has four attempts or "Downs" to advance the ball. They must cross the Line to Gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- **Live Ball** – the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regards to penalties, Live Ball Penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- **Dead Ball** – the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- **Inadvertent whistle** – an official's whistle that is performed in error.
- **Charging** – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, chest or forearm.
- **Flag Guarding** – An act by ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling ball carrier's flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow, or head and or by blocking access to the runner's flags with hand or arm.
- **Shovel Pass** – a legal pass attempted behind the line of scrimmage by throwing the ball underhand or pushing it towards a receiver in a shot put type manner.
- **Lateral** – a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – rude, confrontational or offensive behavior or language.

III. Equipment

1. The League provides each player with flag belts during games and will provide game balls. Teams can also provide their own ball for use.
2. Players must wear shoes. Cleats are allowed, however cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed.
3. Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
4. Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
5. Official YMCA jerseys must be worn during play.
6. Players' jerseys must be tucked into the shorts/pants if they hang below the belt line.



7. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.

IV. Field

1. Field size will be determined by available space at the branch.
2. No Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No Run Zones (a 5 yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams may not run the ball in any fashion. All plays, including those that begin with a handoff, must be pass plays.
3. Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
4. Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

V. Rosters

1. Games will be played 6 v. 6. Teams must field a minimum of five (5) players at all times.

VI. Timing and Overtime

1. Games will be made up of two 20 minute halves.
2. There will be a 3 minute long break at halftime.
3. Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
4. Each team has two 30-second time outs per half.
5. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
6. In the event of an injury the clock will stop and then restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
7. If the score is tied at the end of 40 minutes, the game should be determined a tie.

VII. Scoring and Downs

1. Teams will receive 6 points for a touchdown.
2. After the touchdown teams will attempt an extra point from the 5 yard line. If the attempt is successful they will receive 1 point.
3. The offensive team will have 4 plays to cross midfield for a first down and will have 4 plays once crossing midfield to score.
4. If a team fails to achieve a first down it will result in a turnover and the opposing team will start with the ball at the no run zone mark in front of their endzone.
- 5.

VIII. Coaches

1. Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game.
2. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
3. One coach may be on the field to line up the players before the snap of the ball but must be off the field by the time of the snap.
4. Coaches are expected to adhere to YMCA philosophies, coaching guidelines, and codes of conduct.

IX. 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.
 - a.) 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 regards to the neutral zone, the official may give both teams a "courtesy" neutral zone notification to allow their players to move back beyond the line.
2. A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play.
3. 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.
4. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.



5. Any official can whistle the play dead.
6. Play is ruled "dead" when:
 - a. The ball hits 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 7 second pass clock expires.
 - i. An inadvertent whistle is performed (at the spot where the ball was whistled dead).
7. In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options:
 - a. Take the ball where the whistle blew.
 - b. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.
8. *Note: There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.*
2nd Fumble Rule – if the center or QB fumble the initial exchange (i.e. snap) it is not a dead ball. Only the QB can pick up the ball. All fumbles between QB and runners are dead ball. QB cannot run with the ball but can scramble behind the line of scrimmage.

X. Running

1. The ball is spotted where the runner's hips are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier has the ball.
2. The quarterback cannot run unless a defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage.
3. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind once the ball is advanced past the line of scrimmage.
4. "No-Run Zones," 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 squad approaches only TWO No Run Zones in each drive - one 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, one 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD 5 yards).
 - a.) the "no run zones" will not apply in the 4-5 year old division.
5. Once the quarterback has handed the ball to any other player, all defensive players are then eligible to rush.
6. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping or jumping is considered flag guarding.
7. Spinning is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid a flag pull.
8. Runners may leave their feet only to avoid contact, ball carriers will be penalized for leaving their feet if the action is not made to avoid direct contact.
9. No blocking or "screening" is allowed at any time.
10. Offensive players must stop their motion once the ball has crossed the line of scrimmage. No downfield blocking will be permitted.
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.
12. Deliberately obstructed flags (tied flags, un-tucked shirts) will be considered flag guarding.

XI. Passing

1. All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.

XII. Receiving

1. All players are eligible receivers (including the quarterback and center).
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 towards the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
5. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point of interception. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that do not start on the 5-yard line.



6. Interceptions are returnable.

XIII. Rushing the Passer

1. Players must wait 5 seconds before rushing the quarterback, the referee will count out loud from the snap of the ball and once he/she reaches 5 seconds the defense may rush the passer. Once the defensive player has crossed the line of scrimmage the quarterback will be allowed to run.

XIV. 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 ball carrier when pulling flags.
3. It is illegal to attempt to strip or pull the ball or pull from the ball carrier's possession at any time.
4. If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
5. A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of 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 of head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering flags with the football or jersey.

XV. Formations

1. An offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (the Center) and up to four players on the line of scrimmage.

XVII. Penalties

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).
 - a. Only the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.
4. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines the penalty.
5. Penalties will be assessed half the distance to the goal yardage when the penalty yardage is more than half the distance to the goal.
6. All penalties will be 6 yard penalties; personal fouls will be 6 yards and a 5 minute removal of the game for the player committing the foul.

Penalties

Offensive illegal contact- Any intentional contact that is initiated by an offensive player; blocking is not allowed so contact should not occur in any intentional way.

Defensive illegal contact- Any intentional contact that is initiated by a defensive player; jamming and or redirecting receivers routes is not allowed so contact should not occur in any intentional way.

Personal Foul- A personal foul is any contact that is deemed extreme and outside the normal flow of play by the official or any unsportsmanlike behavior

Please Note: The YMCA reserves the right to change these

rules at any time during the season.

