



DENVER YOUTH SPORTS FALL FLAG FOOTBALL RULES SPRING 2026

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. All head coaches must be at least 18 years of age by the first scheduled game unless approved by Youth Sports. Failure to comply or falsification will result in the expulsion of the coach from the league. All volunteer coaches must complete volunteer application and pass an annual background check before coaching or assisting.
- B. Parents will be required to sign Parents Code of Ethics prior to the first game of the season.
- C. Team Roster/Paperwork - Paperwork will include a complete team roster, Coaches', Parents', and Players' NAYS Code of Ethics forms, and valid proof of age for each participating player. Recreation Centers will be responsible for providing required paperwork if requested by Youth Sports within 24 hours of the request. Player additions to teams may be made up to **April 26, 2026**. The official rosters will be produced through ActiveNet by the Youth Sports or Rec Center Team. A PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH ABOVE OR FALSIFICATION WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION TO THE COACH AND CENTER.

II. SAFETY RULES

- A. Sportsmanship and Conduct
 - 1. Managers, coaches, players, parents, and spectators will not attempt to instruct, taunt, threaten or in any way verbally or physically abuse a Referee/Official, Site Supervisor, coach, player, or member of the Youth Sports team before, during, or after any game.
 - 2. Any unsportsmanlike conduct by players, coaches, and/or spectators is not allowed before, during or after any game. Failure to comply may result in immediate removal from the game, as directed by the official or DPR Staff.
 - 3. Ejection from a game for any rule infraction may result in immediate removal from the facility, as directed by the official or DPR Staff.
 - 4. Ejection from a game for any rule infraction will result in suspension from the team's next scheduled game and may result in suspension from practice or attending other DPR facilities or activities at the discretion of DPR Staff.
 - 5. Failure to comply with the departmental policies and Code of Ethics may result in probation/termination.
 - 6. If a player, manager, coach, or assistant coach is ejected from any two (2) games during the season, s/he will be terminated from their position with the Youth Sports program. If the coach is a full-time employee, they will be reported to their immediate supervisor, as well as the Directors of Recreation.
- B. After each game, each team is responsible for removing their trash (water bottles, cans, etc.).
- C. No drugs, alcohol, or tobacco (including vapor pens) should be used in or near the field of play or within indoor facilities. Also, any spectators under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be asked to leave the premises.
- D. In the event of an injury which requires medical assistance, call 911. The Site Supervisor, manager, or coach will remain in charge of emergency treatment until proper authorities arrive. If injury dictates that the injured player is not to be moved, game play will be delayed as necessary.
- E. It will be the Youth Sports team's responsibility to decide to make up games cancelled because of inclement weather.
- F. A player who is bleeding must come out of the game until the bleeding has stopped. If blood is on a game jersey, the blood must be removed prior to re-entering the game.
- G. No casts, hard or soft, are allowed during league play.
- H. **Jewelry is prohibited.** This includes but is not limited to watches, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, or other piercings (taping over is not allowed), and acrylic nails. Hair adornments (hair beads, hard head

bands, hair bobby pins, hard hair clips) may be worn in the hair if they are secured close to the head and do not present a risk of injury to the player, teammates, or opponents (at the discretion of Site Supervisors and Officials). Religious and medical-alert medals are not considered jewelry. A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical-alert medal must be taped and may be visible.

III. AGE DIVISIONS

1. 5-6 age classification: any player turning 7 years of age before April 19, 2026 is ineligible.
2. 7-8 age classification: any player turning 9 years of age before April 19, 2026 is ineligible.
3. 9-10 age classification: any player turning 11 years of age before April 19, 2026 is ineligible.
4. 11-12 age classification: any player turning 13 years of age before April 19, 2026 is ineligible.
5. 13-14 age classification: any player turning 15 years of age before April 19, 2026 is ineligible.
6. Any player not listed on the team roster may not play in the league.
7. Age overrides are permitted one week after registration opens, if roster spots are available, only for players who are one year younger than that age group (e.g., a 10-year-old can play in the 11-12 age group).
8. Age overrides are not permitted for the ages 5-6 division.
9. In the case of needing to fill the **minimum** number of participants for a team's game, the coach will be allowed to move up no more than **three** rostered players, if they meet all requirements. The participant(s) must be:
 - a. On an ActiveNet roster for the same sport/recreation center.
 - b. Only one year younger than that age group (e.g., a 10-year-old playing for the 11-12 age group).
 - c. Coaches must notify Youth Sports or Rec Center Staff at least one hour prior to game time to move a player up.

IV. SPORT-SPECIFIC RULES - DENVER PARKS AND RECREATION MODIFICATIONS

1. Roster minimum is 5 players, maximum 10 players.
2. A maximum of 5 players per team on the field at one time. A team may start and finish with 4 players for all age divisions.
3. Teams are allowed a **maximum** of 3 total players from **the same** outside team.
4. Players will only be allowed to be on **one** team/roster per sport-specific age group.
5. All players in attendance must play at least 20 minutes of the game (in other words, half of the game). Exceptions to this rule include late arrival, injury/illness, and/or disciplinary reasons. This needs to be noted to the league supervisor, officials, and opposing coach before the start of the match.
6. A 5-minute grace period applies to all games during league play. **Teams are highly encouraged to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to game time.**
7. Teams will be allowed five minutes of warm-up time. This will not apply if the 5-minute grace period is in effect.
8. Athletic shoes and shorts or athletic pants/sweatpants must be worn during all games.
9. Team must wear current DPR jersey to be able to participate in game. No modifications can be made. (No printed numbers or last name, cutting, etc.)
10. Team benches must be on opposite sidelines for all games.
11. All spectators must sit in the designated spectator area. Coaches and Site Supervisors will be responsible for directing parents to the designated area (a minimum of 5 yards away from sidelines).
12. Coaches are responsible for refereeing all games. One coach from each team must be on the field with a whistle to officiate.
13. All rule infractions will be briefly explained to the offending player, and coaches should work collaboratively to foster an educational and instructional environment.
14. A coin toss determines first possession.
15. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three downs (four downs for the 5-6 & 7-8 divisions) to cross midfield. If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.
16. Once a team crosses midfield, it has three downs (four downs for the 5-6 & 7-8 divisions) to score a touchdown. If the offense fails to score, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from its own 5-yard line.

17. Each time the ball is spotted, the team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay of game penalty is enforced.
18. Each team will be allowed one (2) 30-second timeouts per half (ages 9+). Timeouts do not carry over.
19. All interceptions (except on an extra point) can be advanced. All other possession changes start on the offense's 5-yard line.
20. Teams change sides to begin the second half. Possession changes to loser of the coin toss.
21. Only the head coach/team captain may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players, coaches, and spectators cannot question judgment calls.
22. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.

V. DIVISION: 5-6 & 7-8 YEAR-OLDS

1. Games will consist of two 20-minute halves and a 3-minute halftime. Score will not be kept.
2. One coach per team must be on the field with a whistle to officiate and coach during play.
3. An offensive coach serves as the quarterback in the 5-6 age division. Coaches are not allowed to screen players.
4. The 5-6 age division will use a Pee-Wee (soft touch) size football. The 7-8 age division will use a Pee-Wee (synthetic) size football.
5. There are no official timeouts, coaches may work together for any breaks in the game.
6. All age divisions are coed.
7. **No rushing is allowed, defense must start 5 yards off the ball and can only cross the line of scrimmage after a handoff from QB to RB, pass, or lateral.**

VI. DIVISION: 9-10, 11-12 & 13-14 YEAR-OLDS

1. Games will consist of two 20-minute halves and a 3-minute halftime. Score will be kept for gameplay purposes, but will not be recorded.
2. One coach per team must be on the field with a whistle to officiate and coach during play.
3. The 9-10 & 11-12 divisions will use a TDJ / Junior size football. The 13-14 division will use a TDY / Youth size football.
4. All age divisions are coed.
5. Rushing is allowed. ***See Rushing Description**

Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
 - Entire body must cross goal line. (Players cannot reach ball across goal line to score.)
- Extra point: 1 point (played from 5-yard line) must be a pass
- Extra point: 2 points (played from 12-yard line) pass or run
- Safety: 2 points
- Mercy Rule: If a team is losing by 24 or more points, they will keep possession of the ball at midfield until they are within 18 points. The coach of said team has the option of declining the "Mercy Rule" at any time.
- Running up the score intentionally will result in disciplinary action for the coach/team.

Running

- The quarterback cannot run past the line of scrimmage with the ball.
- All handoffs must be a clear exchange behind the line of scrimmage.
- Offense may use multiple handoffs behind line of scrimmage only. If two players are holding the ball and the defense pulls the flag of either player, the play is dead.
- "No-run zones" located five yards from each end zone and five yards on either side of midfield are designed to avoid short-yardage power-running situations.
- Laterals or pitches of any kind are only allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who takes a handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
- All players must face forward when lined up on offense.
- Once the quarterback exchanges the ball, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
- Spinning is allowed, but players cannot jump to avoid a defensive player. A spin or juke where both feet are off the ground for a split second is not a jump. Jumping is defined as an actual jump or leap. No diving.

- The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is. This also applies to the goal line; players cannot reach the ball over the goal line to score a touchdown.
- A pass can be made off a lateral or pitch. Second pass or pitch must be from behind the line of scrimmage. ***See Double Passes description under Passing.**
- The center position is not eligible to receive a handoff.

Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
- Only one player is allowed in motion at a time (no forward motion allowed).
- A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.

Passing

- Shovel passes are allowed.
- Double passes are allowed. Receiver of the first pass must be behind the passer. Second pass or pitch must be from behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass is allowed.
- The quarterback has a seven-second "pass clock." If a pass is not thrown within the seven seconds, play is dead and loss of down. Once the ball is handed off, the seven-second rule no longer is in effect.

Dead Balls

- The ball can be snapped between the legs or off to one side, to start play.
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball until the ball is spotted.
- Play is ruled "dead" when:
 1. Ball carrier's flag is pulled
 2. Ball carrier steps out of bounds
 3. Touchdown or safety is scored
 4. Ball carrier's knee or elbow hits the ground
 5. The ball hits the ground at any point
 - There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground.
 6. Ball carrier's flag falls OFF. If the receiver's flag falls off prior to a reception the ball is dead once the ball is caught by that receiver.
 7. The referee whistles to stop play due to penalty

Rushing

- All defensive players must start at least 1 yard from the line of scrimmage.
- Pass rushing is allowed if rushing player(s) starts at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage.
- Players starting 1-6 yards from the line of scrimmage must wait for a quarterback exchange before crossing the line of scrimmage.
- All defensive players may rush immediately after a pass, lateral, or handoff from QB to RB.

Penalties

Defense:

- **Offsides** – 5 yards and automatic first down
- **Pass Interference or Tackling** – Ball will be spotted at spot of the foul, automatic first down. If penalty occurs in the endzone, the ball will be placed half the distance to the goal.
- **Illegal contact** (holding, blocking, diving, etc.) – 5 yards and automatic first down
- **Illegal FLAG pull** (before receiver has ball) – 5 yards and automatic first down
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – 10 yards and automatic first down
- **Illegal rushing** – 5 yards and automatic first down
 - **Fake handoffs where the running back touches the ball for a moment is not a handoff and the defensive player comes across the line of scrimmage to pull flags** – 5 yards and automatic first down
- **Declining Defensive Penalties** - The offense may decline defensive penalties, accepting the result of the play instead.

Offense:

All offensive penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage

- **Illegal motion** (more than one person moving, false start, etc.) – 5 yards repeat the down
- **Illegal forward pass** (pass thrown from the beyond line of scrimmage) – 5 yards repeat the down
- **Offensive pass interference** (illegal pick play, pushing off/away defender) – 5 yards repeat the down
- **Player interference / downfield blocking** (preventing defense from making a play on the ball carrier) – 5 yards repeat the down, this includes offensive player running with ball carrier down the field.
- **Flag guarding** – 5 yards repeat the down
- **Unsportsmanlike Conduct** – 10 yards and loss of down
- **All players are eligible to receive a pass beyond the line of scrimmage. Players whose flags fall off before they catch the ball are down at the spot of the catch.**
- **Delay of game** – Clock stops, 5 yards repeat the down
- **Center handoff** (The center position is not eligible to receive a handoff, only a pass) – 5 yards and repeat the down
- **Declining Offensive Penalties** - Procedural penalties (false start, illegal motion, etc.) cannot be declined. The defense may decline other offensive penalties, accepting the result of the play instead.
- **Penalties in “No Run Zone”** – Once a team reaches a “No Run Zone” they must remain in pass-only offense, even if a penalty moves them outside the “No Run Zone.”

*When a penalty enforcement would put the ball closer than half the distance to the goal, the ball penalty is enforced half the distance.

Field Setup

