



## RULES – UNIFIED FLAG FOOTBALL

### ➤ **Clothing, Equipment and Playing Field**

- ❖ Special Olympics Oklahoma Flag Football will be offered as a Unified Sport, and is a non-contact sport. Coaches should use the proper equipment and teach the athletes to use and perform all activities the “right” way the first time and every time. For safety’s sake, coaches should keep the instructional and playing areas clear of clutter and debris. Coaches should be aware of equipment problems and hazardous areas so as to correct or avoid them. In addition, coaches should perform periodic safety inspections & preventative maintenance on all equipment & playing field areas.

### ➤ **Footballs**

- ❖ A YOUTH size football is approved for use in all divisions of SOOK flag football. Leather or synthetic leather footballs are appropriate for use in training and competition. The ball should be properly inflated and inspected periodically for defects or damage.
- ❖ Nerf® footballs may be used only in training, but cannot be used in competition.

### ➤ **Shoes**

- ❖ Athletes should wear proper fitting tennis/athletic shoes or rubber-cleated athletic shoes. Shoes with metal or hard spikes are prohibited for safety reasons. NO BOOTS OR STREET SHOES. Flag football is played in all weather conditions (rain, snow, mud, etc.); therefore, proper shoes become an important part of the uniform.

### ➤ **Uniforms**

- ❖ Players should wear matching shirts (short or long-sleeved) with numbers on the back. Numbers may be 1 or 2 digits and may be any number. They must be tucked in at the waist. Athletic shorts or sweat pants are appropriate. Stocking caps and football-approved gloves are acceptable in cold weather. NO JEANS.
- ❖ Teams must provide **RED** terry cloth wristbands (2 each) for Partners to wear during competition.

### ➤ **Mouthpiece**

- ❖ All players must wear a protective mouthpiece during training and competition. Mouthpieces can be found in most athletic supply stores.

### ➤ **Eye Gear**

- ❖ We highly recommend that all players who wear glasses wear protective sport glasses during training and competition. A strap or gator MUST be worn to hold the glasses on during play.
- ❖ Sport glasses are available free-of-charge to athletes at the Summer Games Opening Eyes each May.

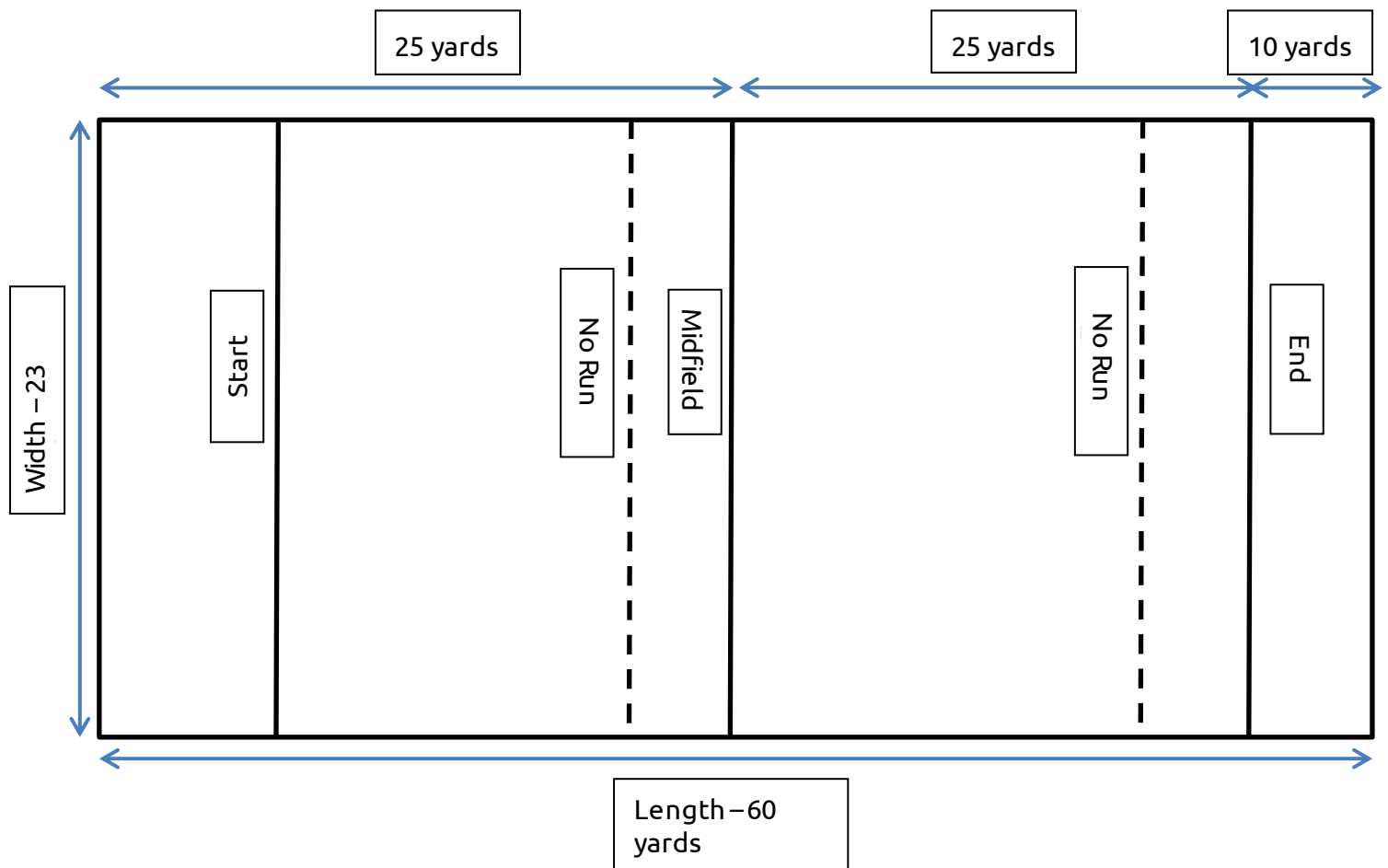
### ➤ **Flags**

- ❖ A one-piece, three-flag belt is the required flag belt for competition. Other styles of belts (velcro or two-flag) may be used in training, but cannot be used in competition. SOOK will provide belts & flags for competition.

### ➤ **Playing Field**

- ❖ The SOOK playing field will be 50 yards long (not including the end zones) and 25 yards wide. A space of at least 5 yards around the field must be free and clear of obstructions. The field will be marked with traffic/sport cones.

# SOOK UNIFIED FLAG FOOTBALL FIELD DIAGRAM



## SOOK UNIFIED FLAG FOOTBALL – IN A NUTSHELL

- **Begin play on the Start Line.**
- **In 4 downs, Team must go 20 yards – to or across Midfield – for 1<sup>st</sup> down to retain possession.**
- **From the Midfield or beyond, Team must make it into the End zone in 4 downs – or lose possession.**
- **Any ball snapped anywhere in the 5 yard No Run Zones must be passed.**

## SOOK Flag Football Rules

The official Special Olympics Sports Rules shall govern all tournament play. In cases not covered by these rules, the National Football League's Air it Out flag football rules will govern play.

### General Rules

1. Special Olympics Flag Football is a non-contact sport. In all aspects of SOOK Flag Football, rulings shall be made with player safety as the primary consideration.
2. The team roster may contain a maximum of 10 players – 6 Athletes & 4 Partners.
3. Teams shall field 5 players to start the game (required). Teams may continue with a minimum of 4 players, if necessary due to disqualification or injury.
4. Teams will be grouped in age & ability divisions for competition. All Teams will be guaranteed at least 2 games.
5. The Team on the field will consist of 3 Athletes and 2 Partners for competition.
6. Age Divisions – Jr. – 12 to 15; Sr. – 16 to 29; Master – 30+. The oldest player will determine the age of the Team.
7. Gender Divisions – Open.
8. Ability Divisions – Intermediate and Advanced. Determined by the skill level of the majority of the Team.

### Unified Sports® Teams

1. The roster shall contain 10 Athletes & Partners – 6 Athletes & 4 Partners.
2. During competition, the line-up shall never exceed 3 Athletes and 2 Partners at any time. Failure to adhere to the required ratio results in a forfeit.
3. Each team shall have an adult, non-playing coach responsible for the line-up and conduct of the team during competition.
4. If a four person team, must have at one Partner and three Athletes. (*see # 3 above*)

### Uniform Specifications

All participants must have a playing uniform consisting of matching shirts or pennies with numbers on the back which can be tucked in at the waist. No jewelry may be worn (rings, bracelets, necklaces, earrings, etc.). No blue jeans will be allowed. Players must wear rubber-cleated or flat-soled athletic shoes. Metal cleats, spikes, hiking boots or other equipment deemed dangerous by officials will not be allowed.

### Equipment

1. A Youth size football will be used in all divisions.
2. A protective mouthpiece **must** be worn at all times.
3. A one-piece three flag belt will be worn during the game.
4. Sport glasses (if available) and gator to hold glasses in place.

### Points of Emphasis

1. No team shall repeatedly commit fouls which halve the distance to the goal line.
2. Neither team shall commit any act which, in the opinion of the referee, tends to make a travesty of the game. This includes intentionally committing fouls to gain an advantage.
3. The referee will enforce any penalty he/she considers equitable, including the award of a score for an unfair act.
4. Dominant play will not be allowed – either by an Athlete or Partner. This is a Team sport.

### Scoring:

1. Touchdown: 6 points
2. Extra Point: 1 point (from the 5 yard line), 2 points (from the 10 yard line)
3. Safety: 2 points
4. No Kicking

**Timing:**

1. The game shall consist of two 20-minute halves (running time).
2. Officials can stop the clock at their discretion (injuries, delays).
3. There will be 25 seconds maximum allowed between plays – once the official has spotted the ball.
4. Each team receives one 60 second time-out per half. An unused time-out in the first half does not carry over to the second half. Only the Captain or Coach can call the times outs.
5. There shall be a 5-minute break at halftime.

**Coin Toss:**

1. A coin toss determines first possession.
2. Each team will provide two captains.
3. The officials and team captains will meet 3 minutes prior to the start of the contest to conduct the coin toss.
4. The winner of the coin toss will choose offense or defense. The team winning the coin toss may defer its choice to the second half.

**Possessions:**

1. All possessions, except following an interception, start at the offensive team's 5-yard line.
2. The offense has 4 plays to cross mid-field.
3. Once the offense crosses mid-field, they have 4 additional plays to score a touchdown.
4. If the offensive team fails to cross mid-field or score a touchdown in the prescribed number of plays, possession of the ball changes and the opposite team starts at their 5-yard line.
5. Interceptions change possession of the ball at the spot of the interception. A ball intercepted in the end zone is spotted at the 5 yard line.
6. Each time the ball is spotted (marked ready for play by the official) the team has 25 seconds to snap the ball.

**Positions / Snap:**

1. The ball must be snapped between the legs to start each play.
2. No minimum number of players is required to line up on the line of scrimmage.

**Rushing The QB:**

1. All players that rush the Quarterback must be a minimum of 5 yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. Officials will designate the spot 5 yards from the line of scrimmage.
2. Players not rushing the Quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
3. Once the Quarterback hands off the ball, the 5-yard zone no longer exists, and all defenders are eligible to rush.

**Running:**

1. The Quarterback (player receiving the snap) CANNOT run the ball. The QB may pass the ball, lateral, pitch or handoff.
2. Direct hand-offs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Laterals or Pitches (side or behind) are allowed behind or past the line of scrimmage.
3. Forward laterals or pitches are designated as an illegal pass and are not allowed past the line of scrimmage.
4. The player who takes a hand-off can pass the ball, as long as he/she does not pass the line of scrimmage.
5. "No Running Zones" are located 5 yards before the mid-field line and goal line. Any ball snapped from these zones must be passed. The purpose of "No Running Zones" is to avoid short yardage power running situations.
6. The ball carrier may NOT spin, dive, hurdle or use either arm to shield a defender from grasping his/her flag.

7. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's belt is when the flag is pulled.

### **Passing And Receiving:**

1. All passes must be forward/lateral.
2. All positions are eligible to receive a forward pass, including the quarterback.
  - a. In Unified Sports®, if a Partner throws a pass, only Athletes are eligible receivers. Partners can't throw to each other. Athletes can throw to both Partners and Athletes.
3. Only one offensive player is allowed in motion at the snap & may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage.
4. A player must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch.
5. Interceptions change possession of the ball at the point of the interception. (Exception: A ball intercepted in the end zone is spotted at the 5-yard line).

### **Dead Balls / Fumbles:**

1. Fumbles are not recoverable. The ball is dead and spotted where it hits the ground.
2. Play is ruled dead when:
  - The ball carrier's flag is pulled
  - The ball carrier loses his/her flag
  - The ball carrier steps out of bounds
  - The ball carrier's knee or hand touches the ground
  - A touchdown, extra point, or safety is scored
  - When during a try-for-point the defense obtains possession of the ball
  - When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players (the offense retains possession)
  - A pass is intercepted (Interceptions may not be returned)
  - A receiver catches a ball without his/her flags attached
  - A snapped ball touches the ground
  - When there is an inadvertent whistle

### **Penalties:**

1. All penalties are assessed from the line of scrimmage.
2. No penalty may take the ball more than half the distance to the offender's goal line.
3. All penalties are automatically accepted. (no declination)
4. Sportsmanship / Roughing: The officials will disqualify any player who participates in rough or unsportsmanlike play.  
No warning is required.

**Offense:** 10 yards from line of scrimmage and loss of down

- Illegal motion (more than 1 player moving at snap, moving forward at snap)
- Offside (in neutral zone at snap, false start)
- Illegal forward pass (not beyond line of scrimmage or Partner to Partner pass)
- Pass Interference (picking or pushing defender)
- Illegal Contact (holding, blocking, bumping)
- Flag Guarding (diving, spinning, warding off)
- Delay of Game (failing to snap within 25 seconds of ready)

**Defense:** 10 yards from line of scrimmage and automatic first down

- Offside (in or beyond neutral zone at snap)
- Pass Interference
- Illegal Contact (holding, blocking, bumping)
- Illegal Flag Pull (before receiver has ball)

- Illegal Rushing (rushing quarterback inside 5 yard limit)

**Overtime:** If the score is tied at the end of regulation play:

1. A coin toss is held to determine first possession.
2. Each team receives two plays from its own 5-yard line.
3. The team gaining the most yards is awarded 1 extra point and wins the game.

### Supplement to the Rules

1. **Delay of the Game:** The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or lack of action by either team that tends to prevent this is considered a delay of the game. This includes:
  - Interrupting the 25 second count for any reason except for a granted time-out
  - Consuming more than 25 seconds to snap the ball after it is ready for play
  - Failing to remove an injured player for whose benefit an excess time-out has been granted
  - Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.
2. **Diving:** A defensive or offensive player may dive to catch a pass, however, diving is illegal when used to down a player or advance a ball. A player cannot dive in an attempt to gain extra yardage. The team will be penalized accordingly.
3. **Eligible Receiver:** All offensive players are eligible to receive a pass, except in Unified Sports® where Partners are ineligible when Partners are throwing the pass. Unified Sports® teams are expected to comply with this rule without intervention by officials. Failure to “self-patrol” will be considered unsportsmanlike, and will be penalized accordingly.
4. **False Start:** No member of the offensive team may simulate the start of the play before the ball is snapped.
5. **Handing the Ball:** Handing the ball is transferring player possession from one teammate to another without throwing or kicking it. A ball carrier may hand the ball backward at any time. No forward hand-offs are allowed. (Illegal pass)
6. **Hurdling:** Jumping over or attempting to jump over a player, by the ball carrier, to prevent from being downed or to gain additional yardage is illegal. (Note: Jumping over a player who is on the ground to avoid injury, by official’s judgment, is legal.)
7. **Inadvertent Whistle:** In case of an inadvertent whistle the team in possession of the ball may choose to accept the result of the play at the point where the play was blown dead or choose to re-play the down.
8. **Line of Scrimmage:** The line of scrimmage for each team is a vertical plane through the point of the ball nearest the team’s goal line. Each player on a team must be on its side of the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
9. **Motion:** Only one player of the offensive team may be in motion at the snap. This player must be behind the quarterback and not moving toward his/her goal line at the time the ball is snapped. If the player comes to a stop he/she must be set for one second.

### 10. Screen Blocking:

- Legally obstructing an opponent without contacting him/her with any part of the screen blocker's body. The screen blocker shall have his/her arms fully extended to the ground (below the waist) either at his/her side, in front, or behind his/her back.
- Any use of arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during the screen block is illegal. A player must be on his/her feet before, during and after screen blocking.
- Screen blocking is the only form of legal blocking that can be used by any player at any time.
- The screen blocker must give an opponent at least one step if opponent has his/her back to blocker.
- The screen blocker must not initiate contact with opponent
- The screen blocker may not take a position so close to a moving opponent that this opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing directions
- After a screen blocker has taken his/her legal screening position, the blocker may move laterally or backward to maintain the block

**Note:** If any of the above provisions are violated, and contact results, the screener has committed an illegal block.

11. **Shielding** (Flag Guarding): Runners shall not flag-guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for opponent to pull or remove their flag belt. This includes:

- Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt
- Lowering the shoulders or arm over the flag belt

12. **Shift:** A shift is the action of one or more offensive players who after taking set positions move to a new position prior to the snap. A player who shifts must reset for one second prior to the snap.

13. **Snap:** A snap is the legal act of passing the ball through the legs from the ground to the quarterback to start a play. A snap may be directly hand-to-hand or shotgun formation.

14. **Substitution:** Any player on the roster may enter upon the completion of a play (when the ball is dead). Each substitute must play at least one down prior to being replaced. A replaced player must leave the field immediately. Athletes sub for Athletes; Partners sub for Partners.