

CIF State Rule Interpretations, Girls Flag Football

This document is intended to provide direction to official associations for the enforcement of penalties.

All questions regarding rule interpretations should be directed to the local area officiating associations or CIF Section for clarification.

- **CIF will use field diagram #1 with a total field size of 120' X 300' (which includes two 10-yard endzones)**
 - Where permanent lines exist that are not more than 130 feet wide, they may be used for sidelines.
 - Lacrosse lines that mark the Midfield Area are 120' apart.
 - Hash Marks, which are 23' apart, will be used when spotting the ball. Where "permanent" hash marks do not exist or are too wide, pylons will be set at the end (outside of) each end zone that are 23' apart.
 - Officials will use the Hash, Center, and Hash to spot the ball.
- **Restricted area**
 - A restricted area, no less than 6', will be marked with lines or disk cones around the entire field.
 - This line is called "Restraining Line."
- **Team Box**
 - A team box will be marked with lines or disk cones that are behind the restricted area, between the 20-yard lines, on each side of the field.
 - The team boxes may be on the same side of the field when they meet the requirements in 1.2.3.e
- **2-4 officials will officiate the game**
 - The number of game officials used will be determined by each CIF section and local officiating organization.
 - All officials will be CIF certified.
 - The game officials will assume authority 30 minutes prior to the contest. (Rule 1.1.7)

- The ball used in each contest will meet the requirements outlined in rule 1.3.1
 - Each separate CIF Section will determine the “official” ball used for postseason play.
 - Each team will supply 1 legal game ball for play.
 - It is recommended that teams begin to use “ball personnel” and multiple legal game balls to speed up gameplay on incomplete passes.
 - Ball personnel will never enter the field of play during “live ball” situations.
- A “Down Marker” will be used to mark the Line of Scrimmage.
 - It is STRONGLY recommended that an adult operate this down marker
 - The down marker will show the line of scrimmage, the current down, and be at least 3’ off the sideline opposite the press box
- Game officials may use radios for quicker on-field communication.
- Replay equipment will NEVER be used.
- All uniforms will meet the requirements outlined in 1.5.1 (exceptions will be given in this document)
- Each CIF Section will authorize the use of a commemorative/memorial patch.
- CIF will use TWO (2) flags, on the outside of each hip
- Flag belts will be a single piece and worn **SNUGLY** at the waist (not the hips)
 - When a player’s belt shifts during gameplay, that player will be removed from the game until the belt is tightened (so as not to shift) and worn at the waist.
 - The belt will always be visible to the game officials. Clothing may never cover the belt or flags. If it does, a “flag guarding” penalty will be enforced.

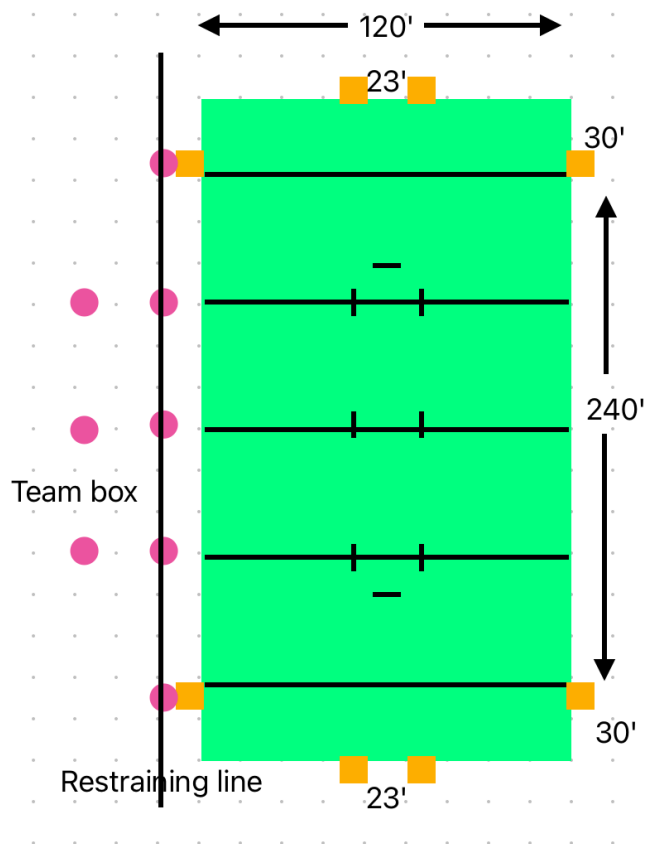
- Flags will always be removable from the belt
 - Pop-style flags are legal as long as the manufacturer does not designate them as “adult.”
 - Velcro flags must be worn with the Velcro on the outside of the belt
 - Each flag must be on the outside of each hip
- Flag size
 - No less than 1.5” X 14” : No more than 2’ X 16”
 - Flags may be “cut” or altered to meet the size requirements, as long as it does not: **FUNDAMENTALLY ALTER the flag, the attachment, or the defender’s ability to pull the flag.**
 - Game officials will have the FINAL SAY on the legality of all flags in any contest.
- Flag Color
 - Flags may have logos or other markings
 - Flags do not have to be a single color
 - The flag’s primary (base) color MUST contrast with the primary (base) uniform shorts and the area where the flag hangs.
 - Definition of contrast - a thing having qualities noticeably different from another
 - A “primarily” dark bottom will have a “primarily” light colored flag and vice versa.
 - We should encourage schools to adopt a more contrasting approach to avoid issues; however, if officials can differentiate, then teams can as well.
 - In this example, to contrast with this short, the flag would need to be any light color that is not yellow.
 - Schools will use shorts like this to attempt to “gain an advantage”. They mustn’t be allowed to do so.
 - We never use equipment that doesn’t meet CIF or NFHS guidelines. (Uniforms are part of the player’s equipment)



For example, these uniform shorts would only allow the use of flags that are any contrasting color to yellow or navy.

- Game officials will make the final determination on the legality of flags for each contest.
 - Coaches need to understand that “the officials last week allowed this” will not be a free pass to use flags that a game officials determine to be illegal.
 - Help the officials by having a clearly contrasting flag.
 - Teams will not be allowed to play if officials determine that their uniforms or flags are not in compliance with the rules.
- All players will be “legally equipped” prior to the snap. Failure to be legally equipped will result in a penalty.
 - Officials will not allow the snap of the ball until all players are legal
 - When the ball is snapped before all players are legal

- Play will be stopped
- A penalty on the offending team will be enforced (Dead ball, Delay of Game, 5 yards from the previous spot)
- Items on the flag belt.
 - The rule book says that “nothing can be on the belt other than flags.”
 - Should players put anything on the belt (play card, towel, etc.) and that item is pulled during a play, the ball carrier will be down immediately, and no penalty will be enforced. The item does not need to “come off” for the player to be considered down.
 - This does not mean they can put items on; it is clarification for the rare occurrence that play is allowed and items are on the belt.
 - The player must remove the item before being allowed to return to the game. **The player is removed from the game for one play.**
- Drums for rhythmic cadence for the deaf or partially deaf teams may be used
- Hash Marks will be used to spot the ball
 - Hash Marks will be no less than 23’ apart. (A variance of up to 8% is allowed, i.e. 23’ - 23.5’)
 - This width is the same as the goal posts on NFHS regulation football fields.
 - When the field is centered for width, the goal posts may be used by the officials to spot the ball on all plays ending outside of the hash marks
 - When the field is pushed to a “permanent sideline”, pylons will be placed 23’ apart outside of the endline at each end of the field.



The pink circles indicate disk cones used to mark the restraining line and team box. This must be on both sides of the field.

- Sections and Leagues have the authority to establish whether overtime will be played, or games will end in a tie.
- Should overtime be required, the procedure will remain the same as outlined in the CIF 2024 rulebook.
 - Both teams are granted a series from the 20-yard line
 - Point after score will be the choice of the team until the overtime, when teams must go for two from the 10-yard line.
- All games will be played for the entire 48 minutes of the game clock
 - Should the point differential be 28 points or greater at any point in the 4th quarter, the game clock will only stop for team and officials' timeouts

- Games that are stopped for any reason will be resumed from the point of interruption with all effects of the match continuing (i.e., UNS fouls)
 - Sections have the authority to alter this ruling for non-varsity contests when 3 full quarters of play have been completed
- The halftime intermission will be 5:00 minutes
 - Any CIF section may alter this time, but it must be at least 5:00 minutes.
 - This time may be extended in certain circumstances when authorized by any CIF Section (i.e., Homecoming)
 - This time may never be shortened
- The coin toss will be held 4:00 minutes before kick-off
 - All players will be “legally equipped” for the coin toss
 - Immediately following the coin toss, officials may elect to do a quick equipment check
- The individual CIF Sections will authorize all TV and Radio timeouts
- CIF will NOT USE place kicking
 - Try for 1 will be a scrimmage play from the 3-yard line
 - Try for 2 will be a scrimmage play from the 10-yard line
 - The ball will be placed at the 14-yard line to begin each half of play and following each score (unless moved by penalty)
- CIF will not use Field Goals or Kick Offs for the 2025 season
- All Jewelry must be removed (may not be taped over)
 - Unless allowable medallions are TAPED TO THE SKIN, UNDER THE CLOTHING
 - Silicone plugs to fill nose or earring holes are allowed. They must be silicone and, in the judgment of the official, not sharp or able to puncture skin.
- The ball will be TAN & properly inflated.
 - School should be ready to provide officials with measuring devices, should the Referee need to legalize a ball

- All Restraining lines and Team Boxes will be marked with lines or disk cones.
- **Officials on the field will be the final say in the legality of all equipment.**
- Uniform requirements
 - If a uniform top or bottom is impeding the defender's ability to grasp a flag, **a flag-guarding penalty will be enforced.**
 - It is recommended that players wear properly fitted tops and bottoms to prevent what is described above.
 - It is recommended that players wear "compression shorts", leggings, or other types of covering undergarments underneath their uniform. We often see uniform bottoms being pulled "off" when players are being de-flagged.
- Eye black - Single stripe with no Logos, numbers, or symbols (1.6.3.4)
- The regulation on "sunglasses" will be the same as in 2024 in CIF. No sunglasses. Prescription glasses with tint are okay.
- Teeth and Mouth protectors – all components of the protective device must serve the purpose of protecting the mouth.
- Hair will be tied up so as not to pass the shoulder blades or mid-back.

- Should a player elect not to tie up their hair and it infringes on a defender's ability to grasp a flag, a flag guarding penalty will be enforced.
- Fouls for "illegal contact" (or such) will never be called when a player elects to leave their hair hanging past the shoulder blades and the hair is grabbed or pulled.
- 1.5.1d (p. 16) Uniform shorts do not have to be a single solid color. (Flags must contrast)
- We understand that budgets are limited. If your current uniforms do not meet NFHS or CIF guidelines, please contact your local CIF office to request an exemption. (i.e., size of numbers on the uniform top, logo size, etc.) Schools will not be given an exemption on flags (contrasting color or size)
- We will all work to be NFHS compliant by 2026.

Rule 2 –

- A legal scrimmage formation requires a snapper on the LOS and a player set 2 yards off the LOS to receive the snap.
 - These are the ONLY formation requirements.
 - The CIF interpretation of "2 yards" in this ruling is the feet of the person receiving the snap.
 - Officials will not "be using a measuring stick" to guarantee 2 yards.
 - **This rule intends to prevent crowding the snapper with multiple players in an attempt to deceive who will receive the snap, not to stop players from taking "snaps under center."**

- Forward handing of the ball may only happen behind the LOS
- Team A (offence) LOS is the forward-most point of the ball
 - It is a vertical “plane of glass”
- Team B (defense) LOS is 1 yard beyond Team A’s LOS
 - All Encroachment fouls will be dead-ball fouls.
 - It is a vertical “plane of glass”
- A passer is a player who throws a legal forward pass. They hold all the protections of a passer, regardless of whether they were the player to receive the snap.
 - Any player throwing a legal forward pass will be protected against “roughing the passer.”
 - A passer attempting to throw a legal forward pass will be protected against defenders moving into the space needed to follow through.
 - We often see defenders heading straight to the body of the passer and attempting to grab both flags. This is usually a foul as it does not allow the passer space to follow through.
- Please pay special attention to the items that were in previous CIF Flag Football rulebooks that are not part of the NFHS rule code.
 - Spinning
 - Jumping
 - Diving
 - No-Run-Zones
 - QB runs
 - ETC.

- The “ready for play” will be a visual signal and/or a short, sharp whistle
 - Determined by the officiating crew
 - Any play by either A or B prior to the ready for play will be an immediate dead ball, a delay of game foul

- Snap -
 - Quick and Continuous
 - Backward
 - There are no regulations that the snap “goes between the legs
 - 2.34.1 - “...on the ground and ahead of the snapper’s body”
 - The snapper’s body MUST BE behind the ball
 - 7.1.1 - “The snapper may be over the ball...” – is interpreted as head and hands/arms may be over the ball, given the wording in 2.34.1

Timing -

Period 1 - 12:00

Intermission - 1:00

(switch ends of the field)

Period 2 - 12:00

(2:00 minute warning = 30-second officials TO)

HALFTIME 5:00

Period 3 - 12:00

Intermission - 1:00

(switch ends of the field)

Period 4 - 12:00

(2:00 minute warning = 30-second officials TO)

Each team will have 2 TO per half (no carry over)

- **The ball will change ends of the field between the 1st & 2nd and 3rd & 4th periods (direction of play and team endzones will flip)**

Coin Toss -

Once the winner is determined, the winner is offered their choice (of three): defer, receive/kick, or choose a goal to defend. If the option is to defer, the Referee immediately faces the press box, taps the shoulder of the deferring captain, and signals the declaration. The remaining choices are then presented to the other captain, and the deferring captain makes the final selection.

- All changes to the timing procedures to accommodate tournament play must be sanctioned by the local CIF Section office.
- The local CIF Section office must sanction all changes to the Field Size to accommodate tournament play.
 - Changes to field size - the field may be shortened, but it must never be less than 120' wide
- All other rules must be followed, unless sanctioned by CIF.

Ready For Play and Delay of Game

- The play clock will always be :25 seconds once the ball has been indicated "ready for play."
- The play clock will not be adjusted for players who are not legally equipped.
 - When A snaps the ball without all the team A players being legally equipped, a delay of the game foul will be enforced
 - When a play is allowed to go without all Team A players legally equipped, and an "illegally equipped" player possesses the ball, the play will be ruled dead at the spot where the player possessed the ball.
 - If this player does not have their flags in a legal position, the officiating crew has the option to enforce a flag guarding penalty.
 - That player must leave the game for one down.
- Officials can and should send all players who are illegally equipped off the field of play. That player may not return for at least one down.

- The “line to gain” is a fixed line on the field.
- When a penalty or play moves the ball behind a previously established line to gain, the line to gain remains the same fixed line that it was previously.
- Each line to gain and the goal line are vertical “planes of glass”, that when broken by any part of the ball, are achieved.

Kicking –

- CIF will have no “place kicks.”
- Punting and Scrimmage Kicks are the same thing
- All punts must be declared PRIOR TO THE BALL BEING MADE READY FOR PLAY!
 - If a punt is declared, Team A must kick the ball
 - B will be given adequate time to substitute, and the play clock will not be adjusted to save A from a delay-of-the-game foul.
- A may change their declaration after
 - An official’s timeout
 - A charged team timeout
 - The end of a period
 - A penalty is enforced
- CIF will use “far catch” signals that are commonly used in other football rulebooks.
 - While we believe most will not use “fair catch” since K cannot cross the LOS until after the ball is kicked, CIF feels they want to give this option to R

- A Fair Catch is an unhindered catch of an airborne scrimmage kick that has crossed the line of scrimmage.
- A fair catch signal is a signal given by a player receiving a scrimmage kick, indicating they will not attempt to advance the ball after catching it. This signal is provided by waving one hand above the head while the ball is in the air.
 - The ball is dead at the spot. R possesses the ball if a fair catch signal is given
- 6.3.1b - K may never obstruct R's path to the ball (in flight or on the ground)
- Regulations on K during the Scrimmage Kick
 - K must kick the ball from at least 2-yards behind the LOS
 - K may not cross the LOS until the ball is kicked
 - The ball must be legally snapped during a declared scrimmage kick
 - If any K player is moving at the time of the kick, it is a "false start" (7.1.9)
 - K may catch, touch or possess a scrimmage kick that has crossed the LOS. This is called "first touching".
 - We ignore "first touching" when K is blocked into the ball
 - I.e., K is blocked into the ball at R25. R then picks up the ball and advances it to the R32. The next play from scrimmage would be R 1st & 8 at the R 32 (unless moved by foul)
 - If the block that caused K to touch the ball at the R25 is a blocking foul -

- The enforcement spot is the R25 (spot of the foul) 10.4.2 exc.
- K may possess a scrimmage kick under rule 6.1.6
- 6.1.5 When a punt, that has crossed the neutral zone, touches a player from either team, and then touches the ground, it is dead.
- Regulations on R during a Scrimmage Kick
 - R may not cross R's LOS until the ball is kicked
 - R may "block" a scrimmage kick. The touching of a kick is ignored if it is in or behind the 1-yard neutral zone. (6.1.8)
 - If a blocked kick crosses the Neutral Zone, it may still be possessed and returned by any R player.
 - If the ball doesn't cross the Neutral Zone, it is dead and becomes R's ball at that spot.
 - R and the officials need to be aware that the R LOS is a "plane of glass."
 - R may field a grounded punt and return it.
 - Any R player may recover and return a scrimmage kick
 - When any scrimmage kick that any player has touched touches the ground, it is dead at that spot.
 - R may "muff" the catch of a punt, but should that ball touch the ground, it will be ruled dead at the spot.
 - Any Scrimmage Kick that crosses the plane of the goal line is a touchback.

- 6.1.5 When a punt, that has crossed the neutral zone, touches a player from either team, and then touches the ground, it is dead.
- The snapper now has the exact requirements as a snapper in tackle football
 - Please read 7.1.3 thoroughly
- The snapper must be “behind the ball.”
- 7.1.2 ...may lift for lateral rotation but may not rotate end-for-end, or change the location, or fail to keep the long axis of the ball at right angles to the LOS.
- Snap infractions are dead-ball fouls.
- The snapper may put both hands on the ball and remove one hand after, but not remove both hands
- Encroachment is a Dead-Ball Foul
- One player in motion at the time of the snap
 - There is no requirement to be any distance away from the LOS
 - The motion must be “not toward the opponent’s goal line”
- Shifts are legal, but all must come set for 1 full second
- False Start is a dead-ball foul
- Illegal Motion, Illegal Formation are Live Ball fouls
- 7.3.1 - Any player may hand the ball backward at any time
- 7.3.2 & 3 - Forward handing of the ball may only be done behind the LOS and with other regulations
- A fumble or a backward pass caught by any player may be advanced

- A legal forward pass must be from behind the Neutral Zone
 - The passers must be CLEARLY beyond the LOS with all or most of their body
- 7.5.2d - Intentional Grounding
 - The pass may not be intentionally thrown to an area not occupied by a receiver.
 - To conserve yardage
 - To conserve time
 - An exception is given to a pass thrown directly into the ground immediately after receiving the snap to stop the clock
- Fouls by B on successful scoring plays will be assessed on the PAT or the next play from scrimmage.
- Fouls by B on a successful PAT will be assessed on the next play from scrimmage.
- All turnovers on PATs are dead balls and cannot be returned for a score
- Fouls by B on an unsuccessful PAT - A may change their declaration of 1 or 2 before enforcing the penalty

Blocking and Screen Blocking

NFHS - 2.3.1

Blocking is obstructing an opponent by contacting them with any part of the blocker's body.

NFHS 2.3.2

Screen Blocking is taking a position to obstruct the path of an opponent without contacting the opponent with any part of the blocker's body.

Contact -

... is touching an opponent with **impact** (effect on the play or player). Touching with no impact (effect on the play or player) is not a foul.

Right of place is given to any stationary player who maintains normal player posture and makes no movements in any horizontal direction to change their position. Right of place supersedes right of way when determining who is guilty of a foul.

Right of way is given to a player who has regularly established a direction of movement and does not alter that direction. A player with the right of way has higher privilege when determining who is guilty of a foul than all other players, except those who have established a right of place.

NFHS 9.3.1

Blocking by any player is illegal unless it is a screen block.

The screen blocker is allowed to move along a “line” until the defender has crossed that line without contacting the screen blocker. This does not have to be a straight line (i.e., a curved line to move the rusher around the backside of the passer).

- Right of Place always supersedes Right of Way.
- **The right-of-way of the defender always supersedes the right-of-way of the blocker.**

The screen blocker (seen primarily on action downfield) must establish Right of Place (i.e., remain stationary) to move a defender off their Right of Way line to the ball carrier.

Most attempts to “screen block” downfield will result in fouls on the blocker, unless the blocker is stationary and establishes Right of Place.