



# Princeton Junior Football League

## Rules (Updated March 2021)

### Section 1 General

- I. Princeton Junior Football League (PJFL) Football games are played between two teams of seven players. Each team must have a minimum of 6 players to start a game. Each team must have a minimum of 6 eligible players on the field, or the game results in a forfeit. A team may play with a maximum of 7 players on the field at any time.
  - a. **Juniors:** will play two (2) 25 minute halves with a running time clock. The clock stops after touchdowns and doesn't restart until the ball is placed for the other team to begin their possession. The clock also stops during the last 2 minutes of each half for out of bounds and incomplete passes
    - i. First downs are every cone (not midfield cone)
    - ii. Defensive players can rush after referee gives a 4-Mississippi count: (ex. One-Mississippi, Two-Mississippi, Three-Mississippi, Four-Mississippi, Go)
    - iii. There is no motion in the Junior Division.

Each team gets one (1) time out per half.

**Scoring:** Touchdown = 6 points, safety 2 points, extra points:

- 1 point attempt will be executed from the 4 yard line (Run or Pass)
- 2 point attempt will be executed from the 10 yard line (Run or Pass)

**Note:** Games can end in a tie (unless it's a playoff game)

- b. **Seniors:** will play two (2) 30 minute halves with running time clock. The clock stops after touchdowns and doesn't restart until teams are lined up for kick-off. The clock also stops during the last 2 minutes of each half for out of bounds and incomplete passes.
  - i. First downs are every cone (not midfield cone)
  - ii. Punt from the Line of Scrimmage (LOS) with 2 players deep to receive and no running downfield until ball is kicked
  - iii. You can only block at LOS, catch it and run
  - iv. If the ball touches the ground it is blown dead and marked at the spot it lands (no roll)
  - v. **Kick-off from tee from the 40 yard line, same blocking rules as punts**
  - vi. 3 players deep to receive, if the ball touches the ground it is dead
  - vii. Defensive players can rush after a 3-Mississippi count: (ex. One-Mississippi, Two-Mississippi, Three-Mississippi, Go)
  - viii. The Defense can rush as soon as the ball leaves pocket
  - ix. Extra points pass or run plays, from the:
    1. 4 yard line option for 1 point
    2. 10 yard line option for 2 points
  - x. The Defense must rush a minimum of 2 linemen on each play
  - xi. Motion is allowed in the Senior Division, players may shift after their initial set, and only one player may be in motion as the ball is snapped. The motion cannot be forward (towards the line of scrimmage).

Each team gets two (2) time outs per half.



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**Scoring:** Touchdown = 6 points, safety 2 points,

Extra point:

- 1 point attempt will be executed from the 4 yard line (Run or Pass)
- 2 point attempt will be executed from the 10 yard line (Run or Pass)

*\*The referee will ask the scoring team's Head Coach about which extra point they would like to attempt. The decision cannot be changed once the ball is spotted by the referee.*

***All other rules apply.***

- II. A crew of officials (Referees) administers the game. Officials' jurisdiction begins with the scheduled coin toss of the game (or the first game if multiple games are scheduled). The Referees have authority to rule promptly, in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in these rules. All players, coaches, non-players, parents, and others authorized to be within the team area are subject to these rules and are governed by the decisions of the officials.

### **Section 2 The Field and Markings**

- I. The field will be rectangular with the preferred dimensions of 60 yards by 30 yards for the Junior division and 60 yards by 35 for the Seniors (plus two end zones of 7 yards deep), although facility limitations may cause the field dimensions to be modified. The sidelines and end lines are the boundary of the football field. These lines demark out-of-bounds; measurements will be from the inside edges of these lines. Each goal line is entirely in its end zone so that the edge toward the field of play and its vertical plane is the actual goal line. Each sideline is entirely out-of-bounds. The inside edge of the end line is the outer limit of each end zone. End zones and in-bounds lines will be marked with brightly colored, flexible cones and/or pylons. These cones will be placed on the out-of-bounds and end zone lines.

### **Section 3 Game Equipment**

- I. Teams will provide their own footballs. The Referee will decide whether the ball meets the specifications. If the field is wet, the Referee may order the ball changed between downs. A down indicator will mark the spot from where the ball is to be snapped. The down marker and the referee will be used to mark the ball's spot and the rush zone line.
- II. The coach for each team will confer with officials. A Coach's first choice of any offered decision is final. Decisions involving penalties will be made before any charged time-out is granted to either team.
- III. Players on each team must wear team uniforms that are provided by PJFL, this includes jerseys and pants. The jersey's must be tucked into the pants and may not hang over the player's flags. Every player must wear flags, cleats (sneakers are allowable if game is being played on artificial turf) and a mouthpiece for each game. The flags shall be freely removable.
- IV. Baseball caps and visors with hard bills & sunglasses are prohibited.
- V. Prior to the game, the Team's Coach will verify that all his players are properly equipped. The Referee will determine any questions concerning equipment. Each player must properly wear the required equipment while the ball is in play. A player with missing equipment must correct the deficiency before further



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participation. An official's time-out may be declared to permit repair of equipment that is missing and / or defective through use.

### Section 4 Ball – Status and Catching and Touching

- I. A live ball is a ball in play while a down is in progress. A dead ball is ball not in play and indicates that the game is between downs. A grounded loose ball is one that has touched the ground and stops play. A dropped pass, fumbled handoff, fumble running or otherwise not in player possession, automatically stops play and ends the down.
  - a. A fumbled snap is left to the discretion of the referee. The QB should make an attempt to pick it up quickly and continue with the play. If the ball is on the ground too long or gets too far from the QB, the referee will blow the play dead. It results in a loss of down but the ball is placed back at the original line of scrimmage.
- II. A loose ball that has not yet touched the ground is in flight. Any loose ball continues to be a loose ball until a player catches it and secures possession or the ball becomes grounded or dead to end the down.
- III. A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight. A catch of an opponent's pass is an interception. If a player attempts to catch or intercept a loose ball while he is in the air, the ball must be in his possession (A player is in possession when he is in-bounds and has a firm grip and control of the ball with his hands or arms.) when he returns to the ground in-bounds (at least one foot must touch the ground in-bounds) prior to touching out-of-bounds.

*EXCEPTION: If a player catches a pass and is pushed out-of-bounds, the pass is considered complete if the referee determines that the player would have caught the ball in-bounds except for the pushing.*

### Section 5 Blocking, Rushing, and De-flagging

- I. Blocking is legally obstructing an opponent via contact with hands. Blockers must be on their feet before, during and after contact is made with an opponent. A blocker is allowed to contact only that portion of the opponent's body between the waist and shoulders and the blocker's hands must be in front of the player being blocked.
- II. This initial point of contact against an opponent must be with open hands and with palms contacting an opponent. In any block, the hands or arms may not be swinging forward faster than the blocker's body. Hands must always be in advance of the elbows and the arms must be flexed at the elbows. Players must block with hands and elbows tucked to the frame of their body. Players are not allowed to cross their arms and thrust forward in the manner of a battering ram. Blocking below the waist is making illegal contact below the waist of an opponent.
- III. Pass rushing is the act of crossing the line of scrimmage in an attempt to interfere with a passing play and/or de-flag the passer. A pass rusher must avoid charging into any opposing player. When encountering a blocker from the opposing team, a pass rusher must (a) move around the blocker or (b) shed the blocker by one of the following techniques swim, spin or rip in an effort to pass the blocker. In any case, the pass rusher may block or contact the blocker using only the techniques described. Any defensive player may only pass rush after the three (3) or four (4) Mississippi count (depending on division) from any position on the field.



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- IV. De-flagging is removing the runner's flags. Flag guarding is intentionally slapping or striking, with hand, or arm to obstruct the free action of an opponent's hand during a de-flagging attempt. The runner's hand may not be moving faster than his body nor shall be below his waist when initial contact with an opponent is made. The runner is prohibited from flag guarding (stiff-arm) or arranging their flags in a way so that it is hard to see or grab at them.
- V. The runner is considered "tackled" when a player removes the runner's flags. The spot of the ball is determined at the point where the flag is detached, not where the flag falls or the ball is located. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag. It is best for the defensive player to attempt to grab only one flag at a time. Attempting to grab more than one flag at the same time may be considered illegal blocking if it appears that the de-flagger is attempting to obstruct the forward progress of the runner.

### Section 6 Motion, Down, Series and Lines

#### Motion (and Shifting)

- I. Motion is only allowed in the Senior Division. Multiple players may shift from where they originally lined up, but only one player may be in motion (not towards the line of scrimmage) as the ball is snapped. A shift is the action of any offensive player(s) who, after a huddle or after taking set positions, move to a new set position before the ensuing snap.
- II. When using motion, there must be at least 5 players on the line of scrimmage, only 1 player positioned off the line (at least 1 yard back) may go into motion. The Center and both Guards on either side of the Center are never eligible to be in motion or eligible to catch a pass. They also cannot block downfield until a pass has been thrown. If any of the players are not properly set for one second prior to the snap, they will be called for illegal motion and this will result in a penalty.

#### Down and Series

- III. A down is a unit of the game which starts with a snap after the ball is declared ready-for-play and which ends when the ball becomes dead. Loss of a down is the loss of the right to repeat a down. A series of downs (series) is a set of four downs, numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4, that is awarded to a team. No series can ever start on a down other than first.

#### Lines

- IV. Offensive players are on their line of scrimmage when they face their opponent's goal line. Offensive players must be within one yard of the line of scrimmage to be on the line. They may stand in a 2 or 3 point stance. All offensive players must be behind the line of scrimmage at the snap. All 3 defensive linemen must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap. At least two defensive linemen must stay on the line of scrimmage (1 yard of the scrimmage) and one can drop into short coverage. All defensive players must be beyond the line of scrimmage at the snap.



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### Rookies Quick Card:

Players should arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled game time

Rookie games are not played with Referees

Warm up- 5 minute together

Break out into four to six teams and prep your team for the game

- o The games will run for 45 minutes
- o 6 on 6 would be the largest game
- o You will have two games going on at once (heading in different directions)
- o Two 20 minute halves with a running time clock.
- o There will be a 5 minute half time break

### Offensive Set-up

- I. Coaches will play quarterback (QB) and control huddles.
  - o The coach will use a snapper
  - o The Coach/QB will wear Flags
  - o Games are played across the field and the ball starts approximately 25 to 30 yards out

### Note:

During the season we would like to give the kids an opportunity to play QB. If players show capability to QB during practice let them try it.

- II. You get 4 plays to score as many Touchdowns as you can
  - o Then the opponent switches to offense
  - o Each team should line up 2 or 3 linemen
  - o Each team should have 2 or 3 receivers max with a running back. (or 2 rec. & 2 RB's)
  - o No limit on the amount of plays that are running plays

### Defensive Set-up

- I. Coach sets up Defense and referees with whistle.
  - o mark the ball on the LOS
  - o Defensive coach counts to 4-Mississippi then says. GO! At that point the defensive line can rush
  - o Defensive linemen are in a two point stance lined up across from offensive linemen in a 2 point stance
  - o There should be three (3) coverage players playing man to man with a linebacker or safety shadowing the running back



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### Juniors Quick Card:

Players should arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled game time

Pre-game warm-up with individual teams

Captains do coin toss (select new weekly until each player has had a chance to represent the team). The away team captains get to call the coin toss before the flip. The coin toss winner elects to receive the kickoff or defer it to receive it in the second half. The coin toss loser picks which goal they will defend for the first half (they will automatically defend the other goal in the second half).

Play starts at the 10 yard line (top of #), 4 downs to score or get a first down (passed each of the 3 field markers). No kickoff actually takes place.

### Offensive Set-up

Quarterback controls the huddle (with 1 coach on the field)

- o 3 Receivers maximum or
- o 2 Running backs
- o 3 Linemen must be lined up on line of scrimmage, a center with a guard on either side
- o 2 running plays are allowed per series (new set of downs)
- o QB may only run one of the allotted running plays
- o **Any ball thrown overhand or underhand in a forward motion will be considered a pass, only if it passes the LOS. Any ball thrown sideways or backward is not considered a pass**
- o Motion is not allowed on offensive plays, players may shift before the snap but be set during it
- o PUNT (No Kicking) is placed 25 yards down field or no deeper than the 8 yard line
- o You get a set of 4 downs (series), numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4 to:
  - To get a first down
  - Score a touchdown or
  - Punt on 4<sup>th</sup> down
- o Touchdown is 6 points, safety 2 points
- o Extra point:
  - 1 point attempt will be executed from the 4 yard line (Run or Pass)
  - 2 point attempt will be executed from the 10 yard line (Run or Pass)

### Defensive Set-up

Linebacker controls the huddle (with 1 coach on the field)

- o Three defensive linemen must be lined up across from an offensive linemen in a two-point stance
  - Linemen can rush after the Referee's 4-Mississippi count
  - Two linemen must stay within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage
  - One linemen can drop into short coverage
- o Once the ball leaves the pocket or the ball leaves the hands of the quarterback, rush is immediate
- o If player has no flags they will be down on contact (tagged by 1 hand)
- o There is no change of possession due to a fumble
  - A fumble is a dead ball at the spot where the player lost control of the ball
- o Turnovers are limited to interceptions



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### Seniors Quick Card

Players should arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled game time

15 minute warm up with individual teams

Captains do coin toss (select new ones weekly until each player has had a chance to represent the team). The away team captains get to call the coin toss before the flip. The coin toss winner elects to receive the kickoff or defer it to receive it in the second half. The coin toss loser picks which goal they will defend for the first half (they will automatically defend the other goal in the second half).

**Kick-off = Kick from tee from the 40 yard line**, same blocking rules as regular punt. Play starts at the 10 yard line (top of #), 4 downs to score or get a first down (passed each of the 3 field markers).

### Offensive Set-up

Quarterback controls the huddle

- o 3 Receivers maximum or
- o 2 Running backs
- o 3 Linemen must be lined up on line of scrimmage (Center with Guards on either side)
- o 2 running plays are allowed per series (new set of downs)
- o QB may only run one of the allotted running plays
- o Any ball thrown overhand in a forward motion will be considered a pass if the receiver is past the LOS, anything thrown sideways or backward is a lateral and not a pass
- o Motion is allowed on offensive plays by a single player on a given play
- o You get a set of 4 downs (series), numbered 1, 2, 3 or 4 to:
  - To get a first down
  - Score a touchdown or
  - Punt on 4<sup>th</sup> down
- o **Kick-off from tee from the 40 yard line, same blocking rules as punts**
- o 3 players deep to receive, if the ball touches the ground it is dead.
- o Touchdown is 6 points, safety 2 points
- o Extra point is
  - 1 point attempt will be executed from the 4 yard line (Run or Pass)
  - 2 point attempt will be executed from the 10 yard line (Run or Pass)
- o First downs are every cone (not midfield cone)
- o Punt from the LOS, 2 players deep to receive, no running down field until ball is kicked
- o You can only block at LOS, catch it and run
- o If the ball touches the ground it is blown dead and marked at the spot it lands. (no roll)

### Defensive Set-up

Linebacker controls the huddle

- o Three defensive linemen must be lined up across from an offensive linemen in a two-point stance
  - Linemen can rush after the player's 3-Mississippi rush count
  - Two linemen must stay within 1 yard of the line of scrimmage
  - One linemen can drop into short coverage



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- o Once the ball leaves the pocket or the ball leaves the hands of the quarterback, rush is immediate
- o If player has no flags they will be down on contact
- o There is no change of possession due to a fumble
  - A fumble is a dead ball at the spot where the player lost control of the ball
- o No defensive player should make an attempt to cause a fumble
- o Turnovers are limited to interceptions

### Infractions:

- o **Offensive Holding** -- 5 yards and replay the down
- o **Defensive Holding** -- 5 yards and replay the down
- o **Offsides** (early pass rush) -- 3 yards and replay the down
  - o do not stop the play for offsides, the offense has the choice to keep the result of the play
- o **Pass interference** -- 10 yards or if committed in the end zone the ball is to be spotted on the 2 yard line
- o **False start** (offensive player movement before the snap) -- 3 yards
- o **Illegal motion** (ineligible player in motion or motion towards the line of scrimmage) -- 3 yards
- o **Flag guarding, holding flags on** -- Blow play dead at the spot of the foul
- o Ball carrier jumping for the purpose of moving their flags away from the hands of a defender -- Blow play dead at the spot of the foul
- o Flag(s) off coming prior to the play or coming off on its own during the play -- ball carrier must be tagged (one hand) by a defender
- o When referee marks ball you have 40 seconds to start the next play
- o **Delay of game** -- 3 yards
- o **Unnecessary roughness** – 10 yard penalty and on defense replay the down, if on offense, loss of down -- Purposely running into people, hands to the face, shoulder blocks, stiff arms, tackling a player without going for their flags
  - o 2 of these on the same player results in their removal from the game
- o **Personal fouls** -- 10 yard penalty, remove player from game – Referee Discretion

**\*Head Coach of the team that was infringed upon can decline the underlined infractions above**

### Referee Philosophy

While we have many rules with explicit descriptions and penalties for breaking them, we do not wish to over officiate the games. Please use your discretion and give the players more leeway at the beginning of the season when a significant amount of learning (coaches included) is still taking place. Similarly, please give the Juniors more leeway than the Seniors. We expect more from our older players, and they have had more time to learn.

The reality is you could probably call a penalty on nearly every play. Let's try to correct observable pre-snap errors by warning the players. We want them to learn the game. Infractions that lead to dangerous situations or unfair advantages are the ones we want called. It's a very tough job to officiate a game.