

The rules unique to St. Luke Upward Flag Football program are designed to provide the best sports experience for every child.

### Field Diagram and Rules

- The offensive team is awarded a first down when it crosses the midfield line. Based on the field size, one first down is sufficient to advance the football for a score.
- The lines 5 yards from each end zone and on both sides of the midfield line are no-run zones. No-run zones do not apply to the K5 division. The no run zones are designed to take away power-running plays. If an offensive team picks up a first down but is then pushed back into the no-run zone, the no-run rule will not apply, as the offensive team cannot pick up another first down.
- The offensive team begins the game and second half by taking possession of the ball at its 5-yard line. With the no contact rule, this also means no blocking in Upward Flag Football. With kick-offs, the goal is to block and clear the way for the return, which is not a part of Upward Flag Football.



### Down Format

#### K5 and 1st-3rd Grades

- The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown.
- If the team fails to cross midfield in four downs or score a touchdown, the other team takes possession on its own 5-yard line. There will be no punts for this division. All four downs will be used without the concern of giving up field position.

#### 4th-7th Grades

- The offensive team has four plays to gain a first down by crossing midfield. Once a team crosses midfield, it has four plays to score a touchdown.
- On fourth down, a team has two options.
  - A team may attempt to gain a first down or a touchdown. If a team fails to convert on fourth down, either by scoring or picking up a first down, the ball changes possession at the no-run zone going into the first down.
  - A team may “punt” as its fourth-down play by notifying the referee. In this case, the ball will be placed on the opposing team’s 5-yard line, and there will be a change of possession. For the older divisions, defensive stands will be awarded. This also teaches the field possession aspect of football.

Offensive starting points  
(K5-3rd grade)

SITUATION	STARTING FIELD POSITION AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION
After a touchdown and extra point attempt	Offense's 5-Yard Line
After a turnover on downs	Offense's 5-Yard Line
After an interception	At the spot of the interception

(4th-7th grades)

SITUATION	STARTING FIELD POSITION AFTER CHANGE OF POSSESSION
After a touchdown and extra point attempt	Offense's 5-Yard Line
After a "punt"	Offense's 5-Yard Line
After a turnover on downs	The no-run zone going into the first down (midfield line)
After an interception	At the spot of the interception

**Clock Format**

- Games consist of four 9-minute quarters with an 8-minute halftime.
- The game clock stops briefly at the end of every quarter for predetermined substitutions.
- Each team has one 30-second timeout per half. Unused timeouts do not carry over to the second half. The clock will stop during the timeout.
- A 30-second play clock begins after the referee spots the ball as ready for play.
- The clock will stop in the final minute of the first half and in the final minute of the game for the following situations:
  - After an incomplete pass
  - After the ball carrier goes out of bounds
  - After a touchdown
  - During an extra-point attempt
  - For an official's timeout
  - After an interception
  - During a called timeout until the ball is snapped
  - On a change of possession

## Game Format

Upward Flag Football leagues feature a unique game format.

- Referees lead both teams in prayer at midfield before every game. This is a good time to give reminders about the game and to check that flags are on hips, jerseys are tucked in, jewelry has been removed, and coaches have their substitution cards prepared.
- The visiting team (wearing the lighter-colored jerseys) calls the coin toss. The team that wins the coin toss may choose to play offense or defense first or choose which goal to defend. The other team has the choice (possession or end to defend) not made by the team winning the toss. The team that plays defense first will play offense first to start the second half.
- Because the end of a quarter does not signal a change of possession, the team with possession at the end of the quarter will retain possession after substitutions take place.
- Teams will switch ends of the field at the half, not after each quarter.
- Score will not be kept in the K5 or 1st-2nd grade divisions.
- Standings are not kept in any division. Such standings add unnecessary pressure and intensity. In Upward Flag Football, there will not be a playoff system, championship tournament or a division champion thus eliminating the need for any standings.
- Each team will have six players on the field at a time. This equips the offense with an appropriate amount of players without crowding the field.
- Coaches are allowed to walk the sidelines and encourage their players without stepping in the playing area.
- In the 3rd-6th grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle for the first two games of the season. In the K5 and 1st-2nd grade divisions, each team can put one coach in the huddle throughout the season.
- Teams will use substitution rules, as detailed on the next page.

## Scoring

- Touchdown: 6 points
- Extra point: 1 point (played from the 5-yard line with a pass) or 2 points (played from the 10-yard line with a run or pass) The 5-yard attempt is from the no-run zone.
- Safety: 2 points. The scoring team will also receive possession on its own 5-yard line. No physical kicks will occur in Upward Flag Football.

## **Offensive Basics**

- A minimum of three players must be on the line of scrimmage at every snap. This mirrors traditional football format which requires seven players on the line of scrimmage at the snap of the ball. The three players on the line for Upward Flag Football will consist of a center and then at least two receivers positioned anywhere along the line of scrimmage. This adds some structure to offensive sets.
- Only one player can be in motion when the ball is snapped. This is in place to keep the integrity of the game of football.
- In the 3rd-6th grade division, the ball must be snapped between the legs to begin play. K5 and 1st-2nd grade players may use the side snap. The traditional snap can be difficult for the younger players with small hands.
- Before handing off or passing, the quarterback must have complete possession of the ball. This helps clarify the center sneak play. A possession change between the center and quarterback must occur in order to run the play.
- A low-profile field cone or beanbag may be used to mark the line of scrimmage.

## **Running the Football**

- The quarterback cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage. This is in place to include others in each offensive play. Without this rule, a quarterback could dominate each play by advancing the football.
- The person who receives the snap from the center (under-center or shot-gun) is considered the quarterback and cannot run the ball across the line of scrimmage.
- A pitch from the quarterback can be executed immediately after the snap or on a delay (similar to an option play without the quarterback being able to advance the football).
- The quarterback is the only player who can make the pitch. The pitch can occur at anytime while behind the line of scrimmage.
- Once the pitch is received, the ball carrier can run the ball, hand-off the ball or pass the ball.
- Direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are legal. Multiple handoffs may be used. After the ball crosses the line of scrimmage, handoffs and laterals are not permitted. This rule exists for safety reasons and to discourage the multiple laterals that would occur to avoid a flag pull.
- The 5 yards leading toward the goal line and the 5 yards leading to the midfield first-down line are no-run zones. The no-run zones do not apply to the K5 division. Plays beginning in the no-run zones must have a forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage.
- A player receiving a handoff or immediate pitch can pass the ball (halfback pass) from behind the line of scrimmage.
- A ball carrier may not dive. A dive will result in a penalty. This is for safety and abides with the no contact rule. Diving for advancement of the football can bring on injury or contact.
- The ball carrier's feet determine the spot of the football when a flag is pulled, not the location of the football. This is to discourage a dive for advancement.

## **Receiving the Football**

- All six players are eligible to receive passes. (The quarterback becomes eligible after a handoff or immediate pitch.) With the no contact rule, no blockers can be used thus allowing all offensive players to be eligible.
- A completion consists of a receiver gaining control of the football while having at least one foot in bounds. This rule is to keep the integrity of the game.
- If a player catches a pass with his knee(s) on the ground, the play is dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the completion. This rule helps to keep the no contact rule intact.

## **Passing the Football**

- All forward passes can be completed behind or beyond the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass can be completed per play. However, while in the no-run zones, all forward passes must be completed beyond the line of scrimmage. Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the defender can make a play on the ball. The defender must avoid contact with the receiver.
- The quarterback has 7 seconds to throw a pass. If a pass is not thrown within 7 seconds, it is treated as an incomplete pass (loss of down). A handoff or pitch will end the 7-second pass count. This rule keeps a scrambling quarterback from taking too much time with each possession.

## **Dead Balls**

Play is ruled dead when one of the following occurs:

- The ball carrier's flag is pulled or falls out.
- The ball carrier steps out of bounds.
- The ball carrier's knee hits the ground.
- A touchdown or safety is scored.
- A pass falls incomplete.
- At the point of an interception.
- The ball hits the ground as a fumble. The ball will be spotted at the point of the fumble. One exception to this rule is with the center/quarterback exchange. If a snap is mishandled, the quarterback and only the quarterback may pick up the ball and continue play. If a defender gets to the ball before the quarterback, the play is ruled dead and the ball is spotted at the point of the fumble (treated like a sack).

## **Defensive Basics**

- Teams may run man-to-man, zone defenses or a combination of both. This rule allows for defensive schemes and helps equal ability match-ups. Players can have an easier time covering a zone vs. a receiver man-to-man in the open field.
- Interceptions may not be returned. Change of possession will be awarded at the point of the interception. This rule will force a substitution so players will not sit out more than one possession at a time.
- Interceptions made in the end zone will result in a touchback and the ball will be spotted at the 5-yard line. Interceptions cannot be returned, so the touchback is used for all endzone picks.

## **Rushing the Passer**

- All players who are rushing the quarterback must begin 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Before each snap, the referee will designate the 7-yard rush line. With no blocking allowed, this gives the quarterback enough time to make a play or escape a rush.
- With the 3rd through 6th grade division, any number of players may rush the quarterback. The 1st and 2nd grade division may only rush one defender.
- Defenders not rushing the quarterback may line up on or off the line of scrimmage. In the K5 division, three defenders must line up 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Having three players line-up 7 yards from the line of scrimmage for the K5 group keeps the congestion from forming along the line of scrimmage. This is key since majority of K5 plays are running plays. This also helps the defense disguise the rush, since it could be anyone of the three players lined up at the rush line.
- Once the ball leaves the quarterback's hand, the 7-yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may cross the line of scrimmage to pursue the ball carrier. This allows the defense to react quickly to a play behind the line of scrimmage.