



Approved: 7/20/26

PLAYING RULES

4th GRADE

Playing Rules: 11-Man Football
Field Length: 100 yds x Min. 50 yds wide
Ball Size: Pee Wee

All rules not modified below will follow the National Federation of High School Rules.

DEFENSE

1. Defensive front is a 4-3 defense with 2 cornerbacks and 2 safeties.
2. Initially the Defensive Lineman must be in a 3 or 4 pt stance and head up with the Offensive guards, and the defensive ends would be head up or outside shade of where tight ends would align next to the tackles. If there are no tight ends the defensive end can stay in place, reduce to outside shade of the tackle or move outside head up with the tight end (receiver).
3. Teams can split out their tight ends or receivers per regular football rules. If tight end splits out know that it possibly leaves the defensive end uncovered and is an advantage to the defense.
4. The middle linebacker must line up over the center and at least 3 yards back off the line.
5. Outside linebackers must be at least 3 yards off the line and outside shade of the offensive tackles but not stacked behind the defensive ends.
6. The cornerbacks need to be at least 4 yards outside the defensive ends and 1 yard off the line of scrimmage.
7. The Safeties must be at least 1 yard behind the linebackers as the last line of defense. Safeties are players free to adjust to all receiver formations. All other positions must align as indicated above.
8. When a team splits out receivers the safeties are free to move to coverage anywhere on the field just so they remain at least 1 yd behind the linebackers. The cornerbacks can be head up on any receiver at least 4 yds outside the defensive ends.
9. Blitzing by any linebackers, cornerbacks or safeties is strictly prohibited. Blitzing is not allowed. Linebackers must, at the snap, be at least three (3) yards off the line of scrimmage, and corners must, at the snap, be at least one (1) yard off the line of scrimmage and be at least four (4) yards outside the "box", which is defined as at least four yards outside the normal alignment of the defensive end. In all circumstances other than goal line situations.
10. There must be at least (2) players lined up in a "safety type" position. These restrictions do not apply to goal line situations. Inside linebackers, corners, and safeties may not begin to cross the neutral zone until after the quarterback attempts to hand off the ball or after the quarterback leaves the box, which is defined as the area between the normal alignments of the defensive ends.
11. Inside the five-yard line any defense is allowed, but only players on the line of scrimmage can rush the ball. Blitzing is still not allowed if a player is not on the line of scrimmage.
12. One coach can be on the field to assist in aligning the players the first two games of the season.
13. Coaches must be at least five yards behind the play and must be silent as soon as the quarterback is under the center or setup if using a shotgun/pistol formation. Once play begins normal coaching is allowed on the field. After two games no coaches will be allowed on the field except for timeouts.



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OFFENSE

1. Offense is required to have 7 players on the line of scrimmage with 3 players on each side of the center: Center, 2 Guards, 2 Tackles, 2 Ends on each side of the line. No unbalanced lines as 7 players always be on the line of scrimmage. The ends can be anywhere on the line of scrimmage and do not have to be right next to the tackles. However, the end on the line is eligible to catch a pass, but if there is more than one receiver on the line only the outside receiver is an eligible pass catcher.
2. Line splits are no more than arm to shoulder width apart from lineman to lineman. Lineman are defined as center, guard, and tackle. A tight end is not considered a lineman, but at least one on each side must line up on the line of scrimmage. It is to the offense advantage to have a tight end lined up on the line as the defensive end will be lined up across from where the tight end normally lines up next to the tackles.
3. All QB, running back and receiver alignments are allowed per football rules.
4. One coach can be on the field and in the huddle to assist in aligning the players the first two games of the season. Coaches must be at least five yards behind the play and must be silent as soon as the quarterback is under center. Once play begins normal coaching is allowed on the field.
5. After two games no coaches will be allowed on the field except for timeouts. During timeout coaches are allowed on the field.

WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

1. A 4th grade player weighing over 105 pounds must have a red stripe affixed to their helmet and cannot carry the ball.
2. Red Stripe players may not line up in the offensive backfield or at wide receiver. They may line up at tight end, but under no circumstances may run the ball or receive a pass.
3. Red Stripe players may only run the ball if they are involved in a direct fumble recovery or a pass

WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

1. No Kickoffs – to begin each half and after a score, teams will begin at their 25-yard line (20 on a smaller field).
2. No punts – teams declare a punt, move the ball forward 25 yards (20 on a smaller field), unless you are inside the opponent's 50-yard line (40-yd line on a smaller field). Now, it would be half the distance to the goal line. Example: If you are on the 20-yd line, you would move ball to the 10.
3. Exception—When the mercy rule is in effect during the second half, the declared punt will no longer use the standard walk-off distance.

Instead, possession will be awarded at the same yard line used following a score play. **4th Grade—25 yard line**



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GAME ADMINISTRATION RULES

1. Team benches and team fans will be on the same side of their portion of the field. Team/Coaching Box from 15 yd line to 15 yd line and 3 yds deep. No fans should be inside this area.
2. The game clock will be kept officially by referees or scoreboard if available using modified HS timing of 4 quarters of 10 minutes per quarter, two 1-minute timeouts per half and a 5-minute break at half time. Each game quarter will be National Federation book rule stop time, with the following exceptions:
 - a. After a change of possession, the game clock starts when chains are set, and the ball is spotted ready for play.
 - b. In the event if one team is seventeen (17) or more points ahead at any time in the fourth quarter, the clock shall continue to run in all circumstances except time outs and injuries.

This modification shall continue until the team behind cuts the deficit to less than seventeen (17) points. At half time, in the event one team is twenty-eight (28) or more points ahead teams can agree to use running time for the 2nd half, the clock shall continue to run in all circumstances except team time outs and officials time outs.
 - c. Officials will use reason and common sense for the play clock, 35-second play clock will be enforced after the ball is spotted for play.
 - d. During regular play clock stops on plays out of bounds, incomplete passes and on called timeouts. Clock begins again on snap of the ball.
3. Teams will switch ends at all quarter breaks.
4. Extra points are 1 for a run, 2 for a pass or kick. Field goals are worth 3 points.
5. One overtime will be played to determine the final score. Each team will have an offensive possession (four downs) from the 10-yard line. Extra points will be attempted also. If the score remains tied after one overtime in the regular season the game will be declared a tie.



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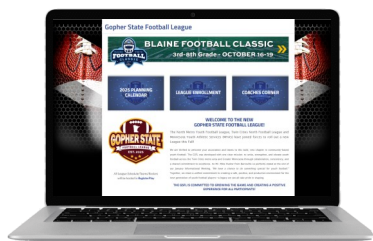
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GAME EJECTIONS

1. Any player, coach, or spectator ejected from the game for any reason will be asked to leave the bench/playing area if a player or coach and the facility if a spectator.
Anyone ejected from a game will also be suspended for the next game with no exceptions. The referees' judgement is final and there is no appeal.
2. All ejections are reported in the form of a game report by the ejecting referee and the association involved leadership is contacted and must supply a representative to attend the next game, if possible, to ensure that the game suspension is in place.
3. A second suspension of the season is grounds for removal from the league for the remainder of the season after review with the associations involved.

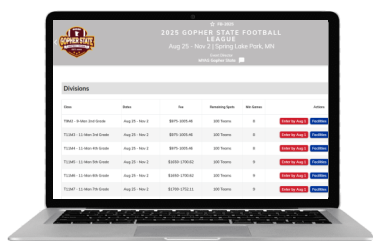
GAME MANAGEMENT

1. Please have teams ready for play at game time when there is a previous game on same field.
2. Home team as noted on the schedule must provide the chain crew. Please have the crew ready to go at least 10 minutes before game time and please make sure the crew are adults or teenagers.
3. The chain crew is a part of the referees' crew so must be impartial during the game. No coaching, cheering or comments are allowed by the chain crew at any time, or they may be removed.
4. The winning team reports the final score on the GSFL website within 24 hours of completion.



[Gopher State Football League - Website](#)

- Coaches Corner
- GSFL Handbook
- GSFL Rules
- GSFL Calendar



[Gopher State Football League - RegisterPlay](#)

- Game Schedule
- Score Reporting
- Standings
- Divisions