

2026
5th and 6th GRADE

TACKLE FOOTBALL RULES



**SUBURBAN YOUTH
FOOTBALL CONFERENCE**

Ohio High School Association {OHSAA) rules will govern play except where noted in the SYFC rules. All other rules used by programs/leagues/teams prior to joining the SYFC that conflict with OHSAA and/or SYFC rules are not enforceable.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Players, coaches and fans will be required to conduct themselves properly, during and after practices and games. Any conduct that is improper will result in disciplinary action to be determined by the SYFC and/or member league.
2. The referees are in control of the game! Taunting, baiting, disrespect, intimidation, etc... of the referees will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action to be determined by the SYFC and/or member league. Problems with officials should be brought to the attention of a league commissioner after the game and away from the players and/or fans.
3. Under no circumstances are coaches permitted on the field to discuss/argue a referee's decision.
4. Coaches are responsible for the actions of their players and fans (to the best of their ability). They are to assist in maintaining control of their sideline and to lead by positive example.
5. "Trash Talk" and/or taunting are poor sportsmanship and are strictly prohibited!
6. Players that receive an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty must be removed from the game for a minimum of 3 consecutive plays. A second such penalty will result in expulsion from the game and the player(s) must sit out the next game.
7. Any player ejected from a game must leave the playing area immediately, remain on the sideline without helmet and shoulder pads, and must sit the next game. A second ejection will result in expulsion from the remainder of the season.
8. National High School Federation Rules will govern play except where noted in the rules below.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY

1. Player's age eligibility will be determined by their Grade in the 2026/2027 school year.
2. Players who are in the 5th and 6th grade for the 2026/2027 school year are eligible to play at the SYFC Tackle level.
3. A valid birth certificate (original or notarized copy) for each player must be made available within a reasonable amount of time to the SYFC Commissioners IF requested.

4. Players who participate in a SYFC program and another football program (school, CYO, recreation, etc.) at the same time, may be in violation of eligibility rules for the latter program. The SYFC participating programs will forward any information to the outside program to assist them in ruling on the player's eligibility for their program should they make that request.
5. All SYFC players must play for the SYFC program in community where they are a resident. If the player has parents and/or guardians living in different SYFC communities that player can participate in either one of the participating programs.
6. If a player quits or is dismissed from a team once he/she has been placed on that team's roster for the upcoming season, he/she is ineligible to play for any other team that season.
7. Under no circumstance are players to be "cut", dropped, or forced from teams by coaches without the permission of the SYFC participating program. All programs reserve the right to move players to other teams if it's in the best interest of the child.
8. Any violation(s) of player eligibility will result in that player's team forfeiting all wins and championships that occurred while the ineligible player was on the team's roster. The eligible player will also be suspended from participating in SYFC contests for a period of 12-months from the date the violation(s) were discovered.

ROSTERS & WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

1. Players have no overall weight restrictions to participate.
2. Players who weigh 130lbs or less are permitted to be ball carriers.
3. Players above the "ball carrier" weight must play either offensive or defensive line (tackle to tackle), must be in a 3- or 4-point stance (offensive lineman are permitted to be in a 2-point stance), are not permitted to advance the ball by way of run or pass, and are required to have a conference approved decal visible on the back their helmet.
4. Weigh-ins must be performed within one hour before each game. Players must be weighed in with a coach or board representative from the opposing team present.
5. Coaches must use extreme caution when encouraging players to lose weight. Use of steam/sauna facilities by anyone other than the player's parent/guardian is strictly prohibited. Violation of this rule will result in the dismissal of the head coach.
6. A copy of each team's GAME DAY ROSTER must be exchanged by the coaches at weigh-ins prior to each game. Rosters must include the player's name, player's number and player's grade level. Teams will also identify starting QB, RB to opposing team.

EQUIPMENT

1. All players MUST provide and wear their own mouthpiece. Players are strictly prohibited from sharing mouthpieces.
2. Boys in the SYFC tackle leagues must wear athletic supporters and cups.
3. Tennis shoes are not recommended. Molded rubber cleat spikes (not in excess of 1/2 inch in length) are preferable. Metal spikes are strictly prohibited.
4. Tackle players MUST wear all equipment issued. Different and/or extra protective gear must be approved by the league director. The SYFC may reject equipment which may be unsafe to use. Helmets must only have decals that are provided by the league or head coach. (see OHSAA Rules for restricted equipment)
5. Gloves may be worn as long as they have an interior label securely attached or an exterior stamp (NFL/NCAA Specifications) indicating voluntary compliance with test specification on file with the Sports Goods Manufacturers Association.
6. Tape, badges, or support wraps are permitted to protect from an existing injury, providing a pregame inspection by the referees.
7. No jewelry is to be worn by any player.
8. All teams will play with Wilson TDJ, Nike Vapor Strike Junior or any equivalent junior size ball.

PRACTICE SESSIONS

1. Teams will be permitted to practice 5 times per week before school starts and only 3 times per week once school starts. Practices are defined as any time the coach meets with at least half of the team.
2. Practices are not to exceed 120 minutes in length and should not go past 8pm or darkness (whichever comes first) on school nights.
3. Players may not participate in a scheduled game without at least 3 practices.
Violation of this rule will result in the dismissal of the head coach.

GAME RULES

1. Ohio High School Athletic Association Rules will govern play except where otherwise noted in the SYFC Tackle rules.
2. There will be 4 quarters, 9 minutes each with a 1-minute break between quarters.
There will be a 10-minute break for halftime.
3. The clock will run according to Ohio High School Rules.
4. Each team is permitted 3 time-outs per half.
5. Each uninjured player must play a minimum of 12 plays per game.
 - a. A 1-game suspension can be enforced for coaches that fail to comply.
 - b. A coach's decision to bench a player for disciplinary reasons must be brought to the attention of a league official before the start of a game.
6. Each team must have at least 11 eligible players in order to start a game. Any number less than 11 will result in a forfeit.
7. The coin toss will occur before the game begins. The visiting team will call the coin and the winner will have the following options:
 - start on offense,
 - start on defense or
 - defer to second half.

The ball will be placed on the 35-yard line to start each half.

8. No kick-offs, ball placed on 35-yard line after scores.
9. On 4th down, teams' must declare within 10 seconds if they will punt or "go for it".

10. PUNTING

- a. Punts are not a live play, no rushing the punter, no fake punts.
- b. The Offence will have 2 players on the field – Long Snapper and Punter
- c. The Punter must be a minimum of 7 yards behind the line of scrimmage.
- d. The Defense will have 2 returners on the field, aligned to field the punt.
- e. If the punt is caught in the air, the ball will be spotted 5 yards ahead of where it was received, and the clock stops on change of possession.
- f. If the ball is not caught in the air, it is spotted where it is whistled dead (stops moving), and the clock stops on change of possession.

11. Any defensive formation is permitted except for the following restrictions:
 - a. Any player that is within 3 yards of the line of scrimmage and is in the tackle-to-tackle box must be down in a 3- or 4-point stance. Violations of this rule will result in a 5-yard penalty and an automatic 1st down.
 - b. There are no restrictions on stance or alignment for a goal line defense (defending from the 10-yard line or within).
 - c. Must have 1 Safety a minimum of 10-yards away from the line of scrimmage.
12. Overtime will occur if a game is tied at the end of regulation play. The ball will be placed at the 10-yard line. In the first series, a team that scores will have the opportunity to choose the extra point option. If the game is tied after 1 series, teams must go for a 2-point conversion. If the game is tied after 2 series, the game will be considered a tie. Playoff and championship games will continue (after the second series) alternating 2 point conversions, until a winner occurs.
13. Fumbles and interceptions are live ball situations and can be advanced by any one regardless of weight. (No fumble rooskie or purposely getting a lineman the ball)
14. When a team scores a safety, they will be awarded possession of the ball on the 50-yard line.
15. After a touchdown, an extra point try will be attempted. At this time, a coach can choose to attempt 1 of 3 options:
 - a. 2.5-yard line = 1 point for a run
 - b. 2.5-yard line = 2 points for a Forward Pass
 - c. Extra-point kicks may be attempted. The ball will be placed on the 2.5 yard line and be worth 1 point. A kicked extra point is NOT a live play. You may not rush the kicker and are no fake kicks. The holder must be a minimum of 7-yards back and if the holder has to leave his stance to retrieve the snap, the play is dead, and the extra point attempt is no good.
16. Game balls will be provided by the Home Team. The Visiting Team can choose to use their own ball as long as it is a regulation ball for the division/teams playing the game. The Head referee will make the final judgment if the game ball is questioned.

17. Playoffs or a knock-down format will be held at the end of the season. For the purpose of playoffs and knockdowns, teams will be ranked based on season records. In the event of a tie, the following tie-breaker rules will be utilized.

- a. Head-to-head record
- b. Record against common opponents
- c. Fewest points allowed
- d. Points scored
- e. Coin toss

*Tie-Breaker rules reset after each seed is determined.

2026 Post season will consist of 8 Playoff teams. The TOP 4 teams from each conference. The 1st and 2nd seeds from each conference will host a playoff game, and the next 2 best teams from each conference will be Wild Card teams, playing across conference (1 v 4 and 2 v 3). Semifinals will be based on seed across conference (Highest seed plays lowest seed, highest seed hosts)

17. A "mercy rule" is in effect if a team takes a lead of 18 points.

- a. Play will continue and the leading team must remove the starting backfield on offence and defense must play a second safety back 10-yards off the line of scrimmage.
- b. The leading team may retain the starting quarterback providing he does not advance the ball by run or pass. A 5-yard penalty will be called for violation of this rule.
- c. If the other team scores and reduces the lead to less than 18 points, the starting line-up may return.
- d. Once a 30 point or more lead is achieved the game clock will run continuous. If the other team scores and reduces the lead to less than 30 points, the game clock will resume running at standard time.

18. Volunteer Down marker Officials will be recruited by the home team and they will remain on the home team's side of play for the entire game.