



**USA<sup>®</sup>**  
**FOOTBALL**



**ROOKIE TACKLE<sup>®</sup>**  
**7-PLAYER RULE BOOK**

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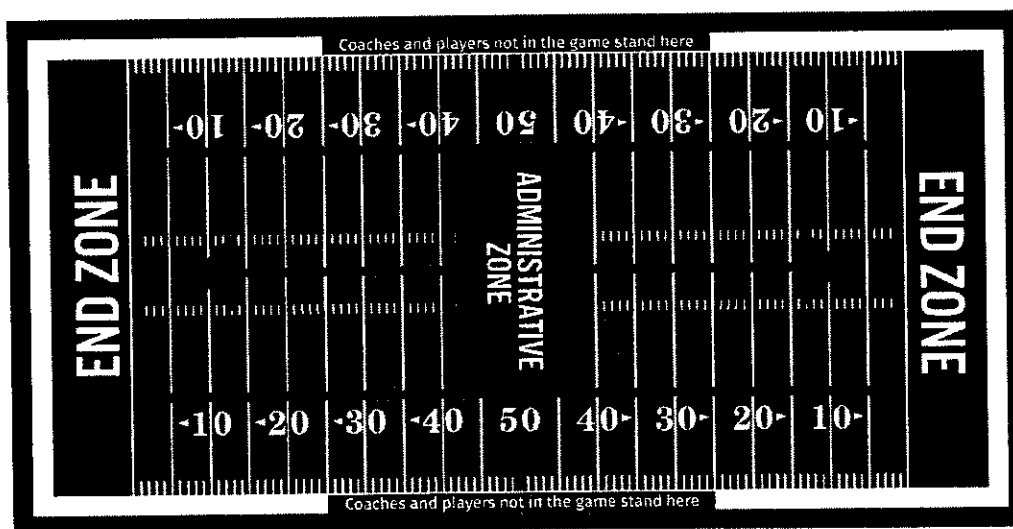
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# ROOKIE TACKLE® 7-PLAYER RULES

## Playing Field

1. The playing field is 40 x 35 1/3 yards, allowing for two fields to be created on a traditional 100-yard field at the same time.
2. The sidelines extend between the insides of the numbers on a traditional football field and should be marked with cones every five yards. Use traditional pylons, if available, to mark the goal line and the back line of the end zone.
3. Additional cones can be placed between the five-yard stripes and in line with the inside of the numbers to further outline the playing surface if desired.
4. All possessions start at the 40-yard line going toward the end zone.
  - a. This leaves a 20-yard buffer zone between the two game fields for game administration and safety purposes. Game officials, league personnel, athletic trainers and designated coaches are allowed in this space.
  - b. The offensive huddle may take place in the Administrative Zone.
  - c. Players not in the game stand on the traditional sidelines with one or more coach(es) to supervise.
  - d. The standard players' box should be used for sideline players. With the field split in two, this keeps players between the 25- and 40-yard line on each respective field and side.
5. First downs, down markers and the chain crew are administered in accordance with National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) or local rules – starting from the 40-yard line.



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## 7-Player Rules

Rookie Tackle uses the NFHS rule book as a base and employs the following adjustments for 7-player football.

1. Because of the “all players, all positions, all skills” philosophy, there are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
  - a. Not all players may play every position every game or even through the course of the entire season. All players should have at least one offensive and defensive line position, as well as one offensive and one defensive backfield position to play each game.
  - b. In practice, players should learn all skills of all positions for developmental purposes in accordance with the Football Development Model principles.
2. All game action takes place on one half of the field with all possessions starting on the 40-yard line going toward the end zone.
3. A turnover on downs brings the ball back to the 40-yard line, and the teams switch sides from offense to defense, defense to offense.
4. Turnovers on interceptions or turnovers on fumbles are blown dead immediately. No returns are allowed in order to protect players from running toward the 20-yard Administrative Zone between the two fields. Play restarts on the 40-yard line with the recovering/intercepting team now on offense. There are no defensive touchdowns.
  - a. Rule application: A fumble is not blown dead, only a turnover. A fumble is a live ball until it is recovered by a player, lands out of bounds or approaches the Administrative Zone and officials determine the play should be blown dead.
    - i. Defensive recoveries, as turnovers, are blown dead.
    - ii. An offensive player may recover and advance a fumble.
5. After each play, the ball is spotted in the middle of the field. Hash marks are not used.
6. Because of the limited field size, all 15-yard penalties are enforced as 10-yard penalties.
7. No penalty on the offense can take the ball beyond the 40-yard line to ensure the Administrative Zone is free.
  - a. Rule application: A five-yard penalty called and accepted on the 38-yard line would result in a loss of two yards and the ball spotted on the 40-yard line.

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8. Penalties on the offense called between the 40-yard line and the end zone in which yardage is lost, even if limited in enforcement by the 40-yard line, are enforced as written in terms of down lost or replayed.
  9. Penalties on the offense that are called and accepted on or behind the 40-yard line result in a loss of down. A penalty that would normally include a loss of down would not result in a second loss of down on the same play.
  10. There are no defensive safeties. Tackles behind the 40-yard line are respotted at the 40-yard line with the offense still retaining the ball as long as a down remains.
  11. All personal foul penalties include an immediate required substitution from the field for a minimum of one play to allow coaches to address misconduct and promote good sportsmanship. We call this a "cooling off period."
    - a. If a team does not have any substitutes for the game, coaches and officials should discuss during the pregame meeting how to apply league standards for this situation.
  12. All plays are blown dead and the ball is returned to the 40-yard line if an offensive ball-carrier or a fumbled ball crosses over midfield (50-yard line) or, at the official's discretion, if the action of the play penetrates too deeply into the Administrative Zone.

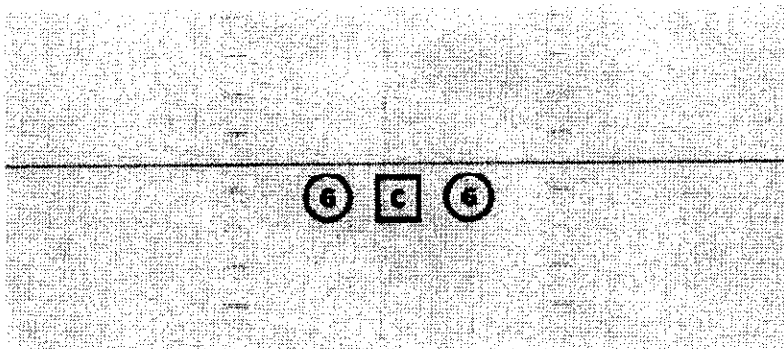
### **Special Teams Adjustments**

1. There are no special teams.
  - a. There are no kickoffs or punts. Each possession starts with the ball on the 40-yard line, regardless of whether there is a score, turnover or turnover on downs.
  - b. There are no extra points by a kick.
    - i. All PATs are attempted through a run or pass try. Coaches can choose to go for one point from the 3-yard line or two points from the 5-yard line.

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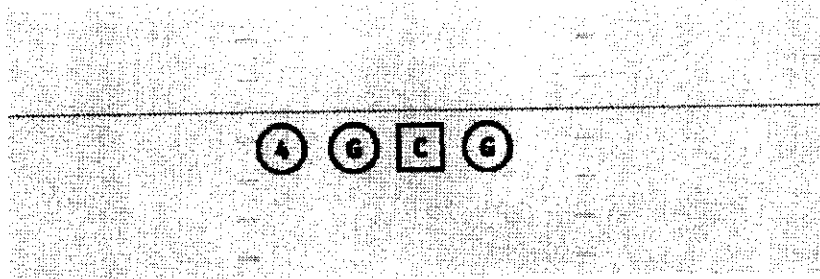
## Offensive Adjustments

1. Each play must include three offensive linemen – a center and two guards, one on either side of the center. These players are ineligible for first touch as the receiver of a pass regardless of the numbers on their jerseys and regardless if they are covered by an end.
  - a. Player rotations may result with traditional non-lineman numbers at these positions for the purpose of fundamental skill development.

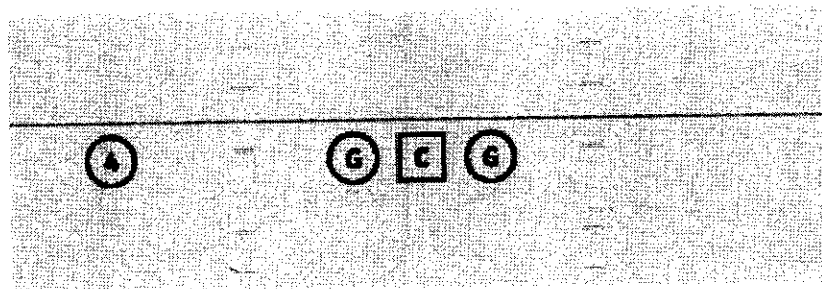


2. Guards are required to play from a two-point stance. There are no three-point stances.
3. The center may only have his or her snapping hand down on the ball.
4. The distance (split) between a guard and center may not exceed three feet (one yard) but may be closer.
5. Because of the “all players, all positions, all skills” philosophy, players should change positions during the game. Therefore:
  - a. The three offensive linemen must identify themselves on each play by raising their hands as they break the huddle and approach the line of scrimmage.
  - b. Once identified as an offensive lineman, players may not shift to another position.
6. The quarterback-center exchange may be direct, pistol or shotgun.
7. Quarterback sneaks are prohibited in all situations because the defense is not allowed to have players aligned over the center or in the center-guard A-gap.

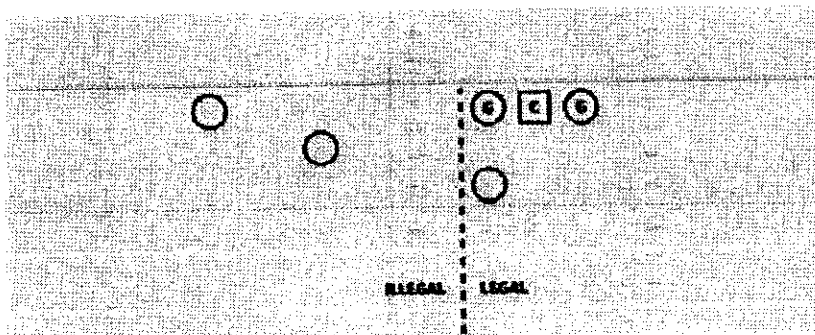
8. The offense must have four players on the line of scrimmage. No more, no less. The fourth player can be a tight end or split end. See figures below.



or



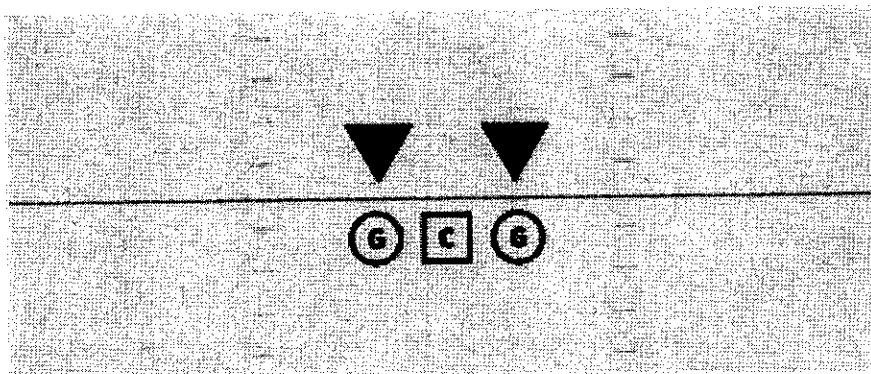
9. The four offensive players who are not playing guard or center may be deployed in positions at the coach's discretion as long as one is on the line of scrimmage.
10. No trips formations are allowed.
- a. For purpose of Rookie Tackle, trips is defined as any three players outside the guard-to-guard box on the same side of the ball.



11. Motion is allowed by a backfield player as long as it doesn't create an illegal trips formation.
12. All blocks below the waist, in any situation, are illegal.

## Defensive Adjustments

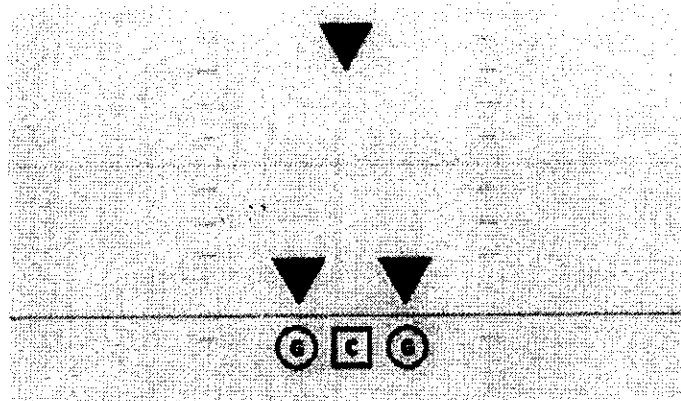
1. Defenses may only have two defensive linemen unless an offensive formation includes a tight end. In that case, a third defensive player may line up over the tight end.
  - a. A tight end is defined as a player on the line of scrimmage and within three feet (one-yard) of a guard.
2. Defensive linemen must be in a two-point stance.
3. Defensive linemen over guards must be aligned in a head up or outside shade position.
4. Players in an outside shade must always have one foot aligned inside the stance of the opposing player.



5. Defensive line of scrimmage players may not penetrate the A-gap on the snap of the ball. Contact with the hands must be made with the offensive line player before defeating the block into the A gap.
  - a. Rule enforcement: Deliberate stunting into the A-gap is to be treated as an illegal procedure foul and enforced as a five-yard live ball penalty.
6. If the offense aligns with no tight ends, the defense may still align with three players on the line of scrimmage (press corner), but the player must be positioned over the receiver he or she is covering.
  - a. With the exception of the players covering the guards, the defense is not required to have additional players on the line of scrimmage, but has the option to do so as long as they are covering an eligible receiver or tight end. If not aligned on the line of scrimmage, a player must be a minimum of four yards behind the line of scrimmage.

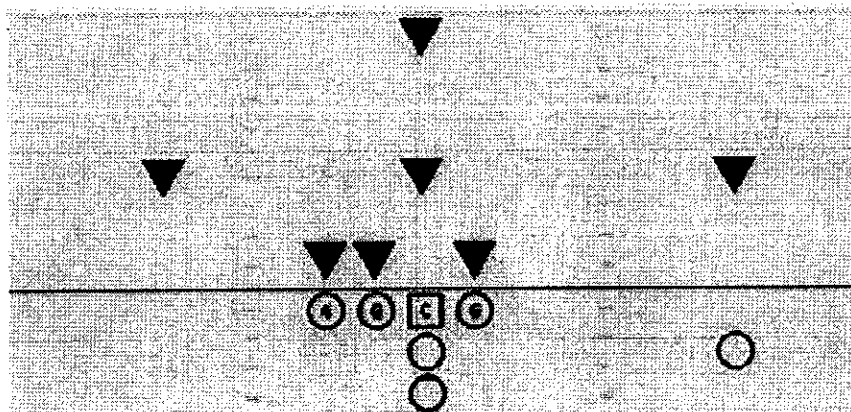


7. The defense must have one player at least 10 yards off the line of scrimmage.



8. The remaining four players can be deployed at the coach's discretion but must be four yards off the line of scrimmage unless covering a tight end or split end on the line of scrimmage.

- a. Example: If the offense aligns with its fourth line-of-scrimmage player as a tight end, then the defense may align a player directly over the tight end on the line of scrimmage to balance the running surface.



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9. No blitzes are allowed. Players within the box at the snap can penetrate upon the snap. Linebackers, safeties and cornerbacks (both on the line and at depth) can flow to the ball naturally after a handoff is made, but predetermining penetration to a specific gap is illegal.
    - a. The box includes offensive players who line up within two yards of the ball and on the line of scrimmage along with the defensive players lined up over them.
    - b. On pass plays, anyone outside the box on the snap cannot rush the quarterback and must remain behind the line of scrimmage in pass coverage.
      - i. Rule application: The restriction on blitzing is intended to encourage skill development within the passing game and allow young players to execute a successful handoff with limited penetration.
      - ii. Rule enforcement: Illegal blitzes by a linebacker or defensive back shall be enforced as an illegal procedure foul and a five-yard live ball penalty. If continued blitzing is determined to be a product of coach encouragement, a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty can occur.
    - c. Good coaches are encouraged to be creative with their formations, but should not use “the box” to delay defensive penetration.
  10. If the ball is inside the four-yard line, the four non-linemen, non-deep players may align on the goal line.

## **Scoring**

1. Offensive touchdowns are worth six points.
2. PATs are the coach’s choice to attempt a one-point try from the 3-yard line or a two-point try from the 5-yard line.
3. With no special teams, there are no field goal attempts.
4. There are no defensive touchdowns as all turnovers are blown dead immediately. No returns are allowed to limit play back in the direction of the Administrative Zone.
  - Fumbles are not turnovers. It is only a turnover if recovered by the defense as the offense is allowed to attempt to recover it.
5. There are no two-point defensive safeties. All tackles behind the 40-yard line result in a loss of down, but the offense retains the ball, and the ball is respotted at the 40-yard line to preserve the Administrative Zone.

# EXTENDED FIELD OPTION

An extended field option is available for Rookie Tackle that allows play in both directions. The chart below outlines the rule modifications for this extended field option.

RULE	ROOKIE TACKLE	EXTENDED FIELD OPTION
Field length	40-yards with one end zone (play goes one-direction)	60-yards with two end zones (play goes both directions)
Field width	Not to exceed 40-yards wide	Not to exceed 40-yards wide
Players per side	6, 7 or 8	6, 7 or 8
Possession starts on	40-yard line for all changes of possession	20-yard line after scores by either team or half for other reasons (play goes in either direction)
Coaches in huddle	Yes	Yes
Dead ball on turnover	Yes	No
Kickoffs/punts	No Special Teams	No Special Teams
Field goals/kicked extra points	None	None
Extra points	1 point from 3-yard line; 2 points from 3-yard line	1 point from 20-yard line; 2 points from 20-yard line
Hash marks	Not used	Not used
15-yard penalties	Marked as 10 yards	Marked as 10 yards
Safeties	Ball returns to 40-yard line	Ball returns to 40-yard line following a turnover
QB sneak into A gap	Not allowed	Not allowed
Blitzing	Not allowed	Not allowed
Defensive stunt or slant to A-gap	Not allowed	Not allowed
3-point stance	No	No
Offensive formations	No trips allowed	No trips allowed
Play clock	35 seconds from ready-to-play whistle	35 seconds from ready-to-play whistle
Blocking below the waist	Not allowed in any instance	Not allowed in any instance
Defense line up in A gap	Not allowed	Not allowed
A runner with the ball MUST make an evasive move if considered to be in the open field.	Yes	Yes

## 2018 MCYFA Rookie Tackle Rules Modifications

9/3/2018

As the season progresses we will make changes as needed to address situations that occur during games.

1. While it is not legal to run a quarterback sneak, we will allow a quarterback draw if the quarterback takes the snap from a shotgun formation at least three yards behind the center.
2. MCYFA rules have mandated for at least twenty years that the gaps between offensive lineman cannot exceed one yard. We will maintain that policy for rookie tackle. That means that the defensive players must shade to the outside of the offensive lineman. There should be a "three player gap" between them. The center and both offensive linemen would be that gap. Our definition of shade will be that the helmets cannot overlap of the outermost offensive lineman and the defensive lineman.
3. We will use the 40 second play clock as in the past. The clock will be started on the ready for play signal of the official.
4. All penalties shall be five yards or  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance if appropriate. Unsportsmanlike fouls on coaches or fans will be fifteen yards.
5. If a penalty would move the ball behind the 40-yard line the ball will be set on the 40.
6. If an overtime is played it will be played with the same rules as IHSAA overtimes, except for the ball being set on the 5-yard line to begin the overtime.

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2. MCYFA rules have mandated for at least twenty years that the gaps between offensive linemen cannot exceed one yard. We will maintain that policy for rookie tackle. That means that the defensive players should shade to the outside of the offensive lineman. **USA football definition of shade will be used beginning with week 3 of the season. The defensive lineman may line up either heads up or use the outside shade. What we are going to be looking for is for the defensive player to have his inside foot between the feet of the offensive guard. Remember the A gap cannot be attacked by the defensive lineman without first contact being by the hands of the defensive player.**
3. We will use the 40 second play clock as in the past. The clock will be started on the ready for play signal of the official.
4. All penalties shall be either **five or ten yards** or  $\frac{1}{2}$  the distance if appropriate. A penalty may not take the ball beyond the 40 yard line. As USA Football rookie tackle rules state, a penalty on the offense when they are on the 40 yard line will result in a loss of down. Unsportsmanlike fouls on coaches or fans will be fifteen yards.
5. If a penalty would move the ball behind the 40-yard line the ball will be set on the 40.
6. If an overtime is played it will be played with the same rules as IHSAA overtimes, except for the ball being set on the 5-yard line to begin the overtime.
7. Please be aware that only one coach is allowed on the field unless there is a time out. We are using the coaches box area as it is intended.
8. In the event a running clock is used in the second half due to a point differential, we will modify MCYFA rules with the following: 1. The ball will continue to be placed in the center of the field for each play, therefore there are no restrictions on the play direction. **When a team reaches a running clock advantage they must attempt a forward pass on either first or second down.** They may not run a reverse. When the lead reaches 24 points they must attempt to pass on first and second down. **At a 24 point lead the team ahead must begin to use different ball carriers. The officials have the right to require that a coach use different players.**
9. MCYFA will use the USA Football requirement of defensive players not on the line to be at least **four yards** behind the line of scrimmage. This is different from the NFL three

yards. **When the ball is placed inside of the 4-yard line, defensive players who would be forced into the endzone may play with their toes on the goal line, but they may not have any part of their foot over the goal line into the field of play.**