

Northern Indiana Youth Football League (NIYFL)
Rookie Tackle Level of Play
Adopted for 2020 & 2021

Section A: Basic Rules and Approach

1. This level of play will introduce seven (7) and eight (8) year olds to tackle football in a highly controlled player friendly environment.
2. This is a developmental league where all participants learn to play all positions and will learn all skills required by the game of football.
3. Coaches will strive to maximize player enjoyment and development.
4. Coaches will ensure all players have meaningful playing time and the opportunity for improvement and success.
5. Play will be conducted on a smaller field that is appropriately scaled to the age and skill level of the players involved.
6. The format will encourage a more fast-paced game with more plays, greater activity for all players, and promote enjoyment of the game for all players.
7. An emphasis will be placed on skill development by isolating situations for players to showcase their abilities via formation regulations and limited field size.
8. The smaller field size will allow host areas to conduct two (2) games at once on a single full-sized football field.
9. Limiting roster sizes will foster participation and provide more focused, individualized coaching attention during practice and on game day.
10. This should help develop cooperation amongst EVERYONE including officials, coaches, players, and parents in all areas of the game, especially sportsmanship.

Section B: Field Dimensions and Operation

1. Play will be conducted on a 40 yard by 35- $\frac{1}{3}$ yard field of play. The sidelines will be the sideline of the regulation field and the far hash mark; the "sideline" on the hash shall be marked by flat cones or similar flat markers at least every five (5) yards. Play will be conducted from the 40 yard line to the goal line between the sidelines as set forth previously. Pylons should be used to mark the end zone.
2. Possessions start at the 40 yard line going in towards the end zone.
 - a. This leaves a 20 yard buffer when an area is hosting two (2) games on the same field at once (one at each end).
 - i. This buffer zone will be referred to as the Administration Zone.
 - ii. The Administration Zone should be restricted to certified personnel and should be kept as clear as possible.
 - iii. It is suggested the Field Director for the host area observe games from the Administration Zone.
 - b. Each team may have no more than two (2) coaches on the field and in the huddle at the same time.
 - c. The four (4) coaches on the field shall act as the game officials. Each should have a whistle to indicate stoppage of play.

- d. Players not in the game will stand on opposite sidelines with a certified coach supervising them. On the change of possession all players on the sideline are required to be rotated into the game.
- e. Areas may choose to utilize officials other than their coaches.

Section C: Proper Equipment

Every player must be equipped with the following:

1. A football helmet with facemask which meets NOCSAE standards for compliance, reconditioning, time of use, and safety.
2. Gym shoes or shoes with rubber or plastic molded cleats. Screw in style football cleats and metal cleats of any kind are strictly forbidden.
3. Mouth guard attached the facemask. The only exception to not having the mouthguard attached to the facemask is a specialty mouthguard to protect dental and orthodontic appliances and fixtures. This should be discussed with the officials prior to the coin toss.
 - a. It is recommended players use a mouthpiece of contrasting color this is easily identified by game officials.
 - b. Do not let your players cut the straps from the mouthpiece.
4. Pants with knee, thigh, hip, and tailbone pads.
 - a. Any of these pads may be provided by a girdle worn under the pants.
5. Shoulder pads meeting NOCSAE standards.

Section D: Game Play

1. General Game Rules

Rookie Tackle uses the NFHS and IHSAA Football Rule Book as its base set of rules and implements the following adjustments.

1. Play is conducted with seven (7) players on offense and seven (7) players on defense.
2. There are no restrictions on jersey numbers or player positions.
3. All turnovers are considered dead balls but DO NOT result in a change of possession.
 - a. The coaches/officials should blow their whistles to indicate the play has ended.
 - b. The offense retains possession but returns to the 40 yard line.
4. After each play the officials shall spot the ball in the middle of the playing field.
5. Penalties
 - a. 15 yard infractions will be enforced as 10 yards due to the smaller field size.
 - b. No penalty against the offense may move the ball beyond the 40 yard line into the Administration Zone.
 - c. Penalties against the offense called between the 40 yard line and the end zone in which yardage is lost, even if limited in enforcement by the Administration Zone (above) are enforced as written in terms of down lost or replayed.

d. PERSONAL FOUL PENALTIES

- i. Coaches/officials should explain to the player what he did which resulted in the penalty.
 - ii. The offending player must be substituted for at least one play. During this “Cooling Off Period” coaches are encouraged to address the ideals of good sportsmanship and discourage misconduct.
6. There are no safeties. Tackles of a ball carrier made in the Administration Zone result in the ball being set for play on the 40 yard line.

2. Special Teams

1. There are no special teams.
2. There are no PATs following a touchdown.
3. Play always returns to the 40 yard line as set forth above.

3. Offense

1. Each play must begin with three (3) offensive linemen, a Center and two (2) Guards. The Guards must align one on each side of the Center on the line of scrimmage. None of the offensive linemen are eligible for a first touch as receiver of a pass.
2. **<Point of Emphasis for 2021>** All players MUST begin play from a two (2) point stance, Offensive Guards included. There are no exceptions to allow for a three (3) point stance.
3. The Center may only have his snapping hand or hands on the ball. A three (3) point stance is not allowed.
4. The distance between offensive linemen, or their splits, may not exceed one (1) yard (three (3) feet). Their splits may be closer, but not longer than one (1) yard.
5. To encourage players to learn all positions and skills, coaches should rotate players throughout the possession. Once the formation is set:
 - a. Offensive linemen may not shift to an eligible first touch position.
 - b. The offensive linemen may not be the first player to touch the ball from the quarterback. This includes a Guard who is uncovered.
6. The Center-Quarterback exchange may be direct from Center to QB between the Center’s legs. Shotgun or Pistol snaps are not allowed.
7. All plays are initiated by the Center-Quarterback exchange then...
 - a. The QB may run, handoff, or pass.
 - i. If the QB runs the ball it must be outside the Guard - there are no “QB sneaks” allowed.
 - ii. The handoff or pass may go to any player except the Center or Guards.
 - b. The Center and Guards are not considered eligible ball carriers or receivers.
8. There must be four (4) players on the line of scrimmage - no more, no less.
9. The four (4) non-offensive line players must be aligned according to these rules:

- a. One player must align as the Quarterback directly behind the Center and initiate the play as set forth above.
 - b. One player must be on the line of scrimmage as an End (Tight or Split). The End position is not required to abide by the "split" rules of the offensive linemen.
 - c. One player must align directly behind the quarterback in the I formation as a tailback or running back.
 - d. The 7th player must align off the line of scrimmage at the coach's discretion.
10. All blocks MUST occur in front and above the waist. Any block below the waist is illegal and will be penalized as a ten yard penalty.

4. Defense

1. Defenses may only utilize two (2) defensive linemen unless the offense aligns with a Tight End. In this case, the defense may utilize a third defensive linemen who must align head up over the Tight End.
2. **<Point of Emphasis for 2021>** All defensive players MUST begin play in a two (2) point stance. There are no exceptions.
3. No defensive linemen may align over the Center.
4. Defensive linemen not aligned over the Tight End must align head up to outside shade of the Guards and must keep their inside leg inside the stance of the opposing Guard.
5. One defensive player must be aligned no closer than 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. He may align anywhere in the field of play as long as he is at least 10 yards deep.
6. Any player not covering a Guard or Tight End must be four (4) yards off the line of scrimmage anywhere on the playing field at the coach's discretion.
 - a. This alignment is even required when the line of scrimmage is inside the four (4) yard line.
 - b. Defenses are not required to cover Tight Ends with a defensive lineman. They may play with two (2) defensive linemen versus a three (3) or four (4) player offensive front.
7. No blitzes are allowed.
 - a. This is a safety issue. 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.
 - b. It is not a blitz if the Quarterback rolls out or initiates play action.
 - c. It is not a blitz if the defensive linemen force the Quarterback out of the pocket in their pass rush.
 - d. It is a blitz if the Quarterback drops straight back to pass.

5. Time of Play

1. Each game is made up of four (4) 12 minutes quarters with a running clock.

2. There will be a two (2) minute break following the 1st and 3rd quarters to allow for instruction, rest, hydration, and to ensure proper rotation of players to different positions as the game progresses.
3. Halftime will be five minutes in duration.
4. Each team will get two (2) quarters on offense and two (2) quarters on defense.
 - a. The team winning the coin toss will elect offense or defense.
 - b. Then teams will rotate offense and defense each quarter.
 - c. EXAMPLE
 - i. Team A wins the coin toss and chooses offense
 - ii. Team A will play offense the entire 1st quarter and Team B will play defense the entire 1st quarter.
 - iii. Team B will play offense the entire 2nd quarter and Team A will be on defense the entire quarter.