

**AUBURN YOUTH TACKLE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
2026 TACKLE FOOTBALL RULES**

1. Conduct

- A. In the event a player is removed from a game by an official because of unsportsmanlike acts on the field, that player will be suspended for one game. If that player is removed from a game for a second time, he will be banned from further participation in tackle football.
- B. Should spectators, parents, or coaches display conduct unbecoming or detrimental to the league, the official shall have the responsibility of informing the coaches that should this conduct continue, he would penalize the team whose conduct is in question. Should this misconduct continue at future games by the same persons, they will be barred from attending league games.

2. Equipment

Players without the proper equipment will not be able to participate in practice or a game. Officials will be watching closely to make sure that every player is properly equipped. Coaches are responsible for monitoring the practices. Please take this rule seriously.

Required Equipment:

- A. Helmet with face guard (must be NOCSAE certified)
- B. Mouth piece
- C. Shoulder pads
- D. Football pants & pant pads
- E. Cleats

3. Weight Restriction

Unrestricted players will be numbered 1-20. Restricted players will be numbered 50-59.

Weight Limits / Restrictions:

SEC: 8 & 9 year olds 105 pounds max to carry ball. 106 and above *restricted* and must play on line tackle to tackle. For the purpose of this rule, tackle to tackle is considered to be defined as the positions in a traditional formation. No weight limits on participation.

NFL: 10 & 11 year olds 130 pounds max to carry ball. 131 pounds and above *restricted* and must play on line tackle to tackle. For the purpose of this rule, tackle to tackle is considered to be defined as the positions in a traditional formation. No weight limits on participation.

12 year olds 110 pounds max to carry ball. 111 pounds and above and in the 6th grade *restricted* and must play on line tackle to tackle. For the purpose of this rule, tackle to tackle is considered to be defined as the positions in a traditional formation.

- A. Playing weight will be based on players' weight at the time of the physical. This weight will be used throughout the season.
- B. Intentionally allowing a restricted player to carry the ball will result in a 10 yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty and the head coach could be subject to disciplinary action.
- C. Restricted players cannot advance the ball (offensively or defensively) under any circumstance. If a restricted player recovers a fumble, intercepts a pass, etc. the ball will be dead at the spot where the restricted player gained possession of the ball.

4. Field Size

The official field size for both leagues will be 40 yards x 80 yards.

5. Starting Game / Periods

- A. A team must have at least nine players to play an official game.

- B. If a team does not have a full team, the opposing team must match the same number of players
- C. The game officials shall toss a coin in the presence of the two field captains. The winner of the coin toss shall choose one of the following options: 1) To play defense, 2) To play offense, or 3) To defend either goal line. The losing captain of the toss shall make a choice from the remaining options. These privileges shall be reversed at the start of the second half.
- **** The teams will not exchange goals before the start of the second and fourth quarters. Goals will only be changed at half time.
- D. No kickoffs. Each half shall start with the ball put in play on the offensive team's 25-yard line.
- E. After a safety, the ball will be placed at offensive team's 35-yard line.

6. Official Game Clock

SEC: Each game will consist of four 8 minute quarters.

NFL: Each game will consist of four 9 minute quarters.

The clock will run in accordance with the Alabama High School Athletic Association Rules. Meaning it shall stop for timeouts, penalties, injuries, scores, the ball being carried out of bounds, and change of possession. The only exception shall be that it shall not stop on incomplete passes. In the last 2 minutes of the second and fourth quarters, the clock will run as in a regular football game. There will be a 2 minute break between quarters and a 5 minute break at halftime.

7. Time Outs

- A. Each team is allowed two time outs per half.
- B. After a team's second time out has been exhausted, requests for time outs may be allowed only for benefit of an injured player who must leave the field for one play.
- C. During a charged time out to either team, coaches may come on the field to talk with the players; however, coaches may not call the players over to the sidelines.

8. Heat Time Outs

- A. Officials will mandate that heat time outs are called during the first dead ball period after the half way mark (4 ½ minutes for NFL, 4 minutes for SEC) for each of the four quarters.
- B. Heat time outs will be used at least during the first three weeks of the season.

9. Coaches Regulations

- A. One coach is allowed on the field to set the offense or defense but each coach must be off the field prior to the snap of the ball. The coach is only on the field to call plays for his team. At no point shall he address an official or anyone else. Once the team breaks the huddle, the coach is to return to the sideline. If the referee rules that the coach did not leave the field prior to the snap of the ball then the opposing coach shall have the choice of accepting the play or taking a 5 yard delay of game penalty. No penalty shall be called if the coach is within 5 yards of the sideline and moving in the direction of the sideline. **Exception: SEC may have one coach on the field through the duration of the play for the first two games of the season.**
- B. At the conclusion of each play, the coach shall not be near the pile or help pick players up from the pile.
- C. The head coach is the only coach that may speak with the officials before, during, or after a game. If the head coach would like to talk with an official about a call/rule, it can only be with the head official and it may only be done between quarters, during a

team called timeout, or during a change of possession. This discussion needs to take place away from all players and coaches.

- D. If a player is injured, the trainer on site must evaluate the injury before the player can return to the field. If a player is on the ground because of any injury, do not touch him or move him at any time. He must be evaluated by the trainer and the trainer must ask for your assistance if it is needed.

10. Scrimmage

- A. SEC & NFL: All plays from scrimmage must be started by a legal snap from a point between the inbound lines. The snap must change hands
Offense: Seven players must be on the line of scrimmage.
There must be a minimum of a quarterback and one running back in the backfield at all times. For the purpose of this rule, the backfield is defined as being between the guards. The quarterback and the running back must be in this position once they break the huddle until the ball is snapped. Neither of these players may motion out of or into the backfield at any time before the snap.
- B. Defense: There must be 3 or 4 linemen inside the tackle box lined head up on an offensive lineman. The defensive line is not restricted as to where they can go once the ball is snapped. No defensive lineman can line up on the center.
DEFINITION: The tackle box is defined as tackle-to-tackle in traditional splits, arm's length apart. A defensive team can have up to six defenders on the line of scrimmage with three or four inside the tackle box, defense may position in any manner but can only have 6 total on the line. All others must be 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage. Linebackers aligned inside of the tackle box must be at least 5 yards away from the line of scrimmage. Linebackers are not restricted as to where they can go once the ball is snapped.
- C. All linemen in the tackle box must play from a stance with 1 or 2 hands on the ground.
- D. Offense: Players not assigned to the line must be at least one yard behind their line of scrimmage with the exception of one player who may be less than one yard behind the line, if his hands are in position to take a hand to hand snap from between the center's legs. Each offensive play must begin with no less than 5 linemen located within the tackle box as defined in 10(B) above.
- E. No offensive player, while on the line of scrimmage, may take a direct snap from center.
- F. The center, after assuming his position, may adjust the long axis of the ball at right angle to his scrimmage line.
- G. Only one tight end may line up on each side of the formation.
- H. No player, of either team, shall encroach upon the neutral zone after it has been established.
- I. No player shall interlock their legs.
- J. No offensive player shall make a false start, including a false movement or variation in signals to cause opponents to encroach.
- K. When the ball is snapped, one offensive player may be in motion, excluding one running back and quarterback. (See Rule 10.A)
- L. No player of the offensive team shall assume a position near the sidelines which in any manner resembles a sleeper play (5 yard penalty).
- M. Inside the 5 yard line there are no restrictions on alignment other than there can be no one directly over the center ***nor can players line up in the gaps on the line of scrimmage from tackle to tackle.*** Restricted players are still required to play on the line, tackle to tackle.

The LBs may line up in gaps closer than 5 yards but not on the actual line of scrimmage. They have to be at least behind the feet of the defensive linemen.

11. Snap Count / Downs

- A. **Snap Count** – Can only be: Down, Set, Hut. Teams may snap the ball on the first, second or third sound in the snap count order. If the ball is not snapped on Hut, a 5-yard snap infraction penalty will be called on the offense. This penalty will still be issued on the offense even if the defense jumps off sides after Hut and the ball is still not snapped.
- B. A down is a unit of the game which starts with a legal snap or free kick, and ends when the ball becomes dead. Between downs is any period when the ball is dead.
- C. A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance 10 yards. Any down may be repeated if provided for by the rules.

12. Ball In Play Becomes Dead Ball

- A. A live ball becomes dead as provided by the rules or when an official blows his/her whistle (even though inadvertently) or otherwise declares the ball dead.
 - 1. When it goes out of bounds or when it touches the goal line (vertical plane) of the ball carrier's opponents.
 - 2. When any part of the ball carrier, other than his hand or foot, touches the ground.
 - 3. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or extra point is attempted.
 - 4. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by the opposing players.
 - 5. When a ball carrier is tackled or stopped and whistle is blown.
 - 6. QB may clap in the cadence but still has to snap on either down, set or hut-added

13. Ball Carrier Maneuvers

- A. The ball carrier may not use a stiff arm to the face or head of the defensive player in any manner (10 yard penalty) – , Decided that rule #14 would stand as it points out the excessive force, specifically to the head. Rule # 13 HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT

14. Unnecessary Contact

- A. Targeting, defined as an act of taking aim and initiating contact to an opponent above the shoulders with the helmet, forearm, hand, fist, elbow, or shoulders; which goes beyond making a legal tackle, a legal block, or playing the ball, is prohibited (10 yard penalty).
- B. No player shall make any contact with an opponent, including a defenseless player, which is deemed unnecessary or excessive and which incites roughness (10 yard penalty).

15. Blocking

- A. Blocking shall be done by use of arms, body, and hands. The blocking must be construed to be checking with the body in any upright position. No part of the blocker's body, excluding feet, shall be in contact with the ground during the block.
- B. Defensive players may only use their hands to the body and shoulders of offensive blockers.
- C. There shall be NO rolling blocks. Illegal blocking shall result in a penalty of 10 yards.
- D. Double team blocking is permitted.
- E. Knee blocking or tripping is not permitted. (10 yard penalty).

16. Punts

- A. There are no punts in either league. When a team is in a punt situation and elects to punt, the kicking team must announce it to the referee, who will then mark off the yardage.
- B. SEC: A punt is a 25 yard mark off and cannot go inside the opponents 20 yard line.
- C. NFL: A punt is a 30 yard mark off and cannot go inside the opponent's 20 yard line.

17. Extra Points

- A. There are no field goal extra points. All point after touchdowns will be done by running or passing the ball.
- B. 1 point conversion if team scores from the 2 ½ yard line.
- C. 2 point conversion if team scores from the 5 yard line.
- D. Once a team has declared which conversion they are attempting, they may not change which conversion they are attempting at any time.

18. Fumbles

- A. A live ball and can only be advanced by a non-restricted player.
- B. A fumblerooski is not permitted.

19. Backward Pass

- A. A ball carrier may hand or pass backwards at any time.
- B. A backward pass that is intercepted may be advanced and a backward pass that hits the ground is declared a fumble and can be advanced.

20. Forward Pass

- A. The team putting the ball in play by scrimmage is entitled to throw a pass beyond the line of scrimmage, providing the pass is thrown from a point behind the scrimmage line.
- B. Four backfield players and two ends are the maximum number of possible eligible pass receivers.
- C. An eligible pass receiver who leaves the field of play loses his eligibility. If the defense blocks or pushes the receiver out of bounds, he retains his eligibility.
- D. If a legal forward pass is caught simultaneously by eligible receivers of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team which put the ball in play. Exception: If such play was fourth down and the line to gain was not reached.
- E. Defensive pass interference occurs when a receiver is contacted before he touches the ball, unless the defender is playing the ball. If the receiver makes the catch, the receiving team has the option of taking the ball where the receiver caught the pass, or taking a 10 yard penalty from the previous spot
- F. Offensive pass interference is screening of defenders by offensive players or illegal contact before the pass has been touched. The defensive team may take the ball where they intercepted or penalize the offensive team, 10 yards and a loss of down, from the previous spot.

21. Substitutions/ Playing Time

- A. A legal substitution is the replacement of a player or player vacancy by an eligible substitute.
- B. Incoming substitutions and replaced players must observe the following restrictions:
 - 1. No incoming substitute and replaced player shall be on the field simultaneously while the ball is in play.
 - 2. A player who leaves the field between downs shall not return until the end of succeeding play.
 - 3. Players must wear their own jerseys, no switching of numbers.
- C. **EACH PLAYER MUST START THE GAME AS A STARTING DEFENSIVE OR OFFENSIVE PLAYER. ANY PLAYER CAN SUBSTITUTE FOR ANY OTHER**

PLAYER WHO IS PLAYING BOTH WAYS BUT ANY PLAYER STARTING ONLY ON OFFENSE OR DEFENSE CANNOT BE SUBSTITUTED FOR UNLESS HE IS INJURED.

22. Delay of Game

- A. SEC will have 40 seconds to snap the ball from when the official blows his whistle to start the next play.
- B. NFL will have 40 seconds to snap the ball from when the official blows his whistle to start the next play.
- * Some cushion may be given by the officials, if the team is already set up or about to set up for the play. It's recommended that only a 5 second cushion be given.

23. Penalties

- A. Major distance (10 yards)
 - 1. Unsportsmanlike conduct
 - 2. Personal foul
 - 3. Pass interference
 - 4. Illegal use of hands
 - 5. Illegal participation
 - 6. Clipping
 - 7. Tripping
 - 8. Targeting
- B. Minor distance (5 yards)
 - 1. Delay of game
 - 2. Holding
 - 3. Offside
 - 4. Illegal motion
 - 5. Illegal substitution
 - 6. Illegal forward pass by offense (loss of down)
 - 7. Illegal shift
 - 8. Illegally handing ball forward
 - 9. Illegal formation
 - (i) 8 & 9 Year Olds: Less than 6 people on line of scrimmage.
 - (ii) 10, 11, & 12 Year Olds: Less than 6 people on line of scrimmage.

23. Overtime Procedure

- A. There will be a total of 2 overtime periods.
- B. SEC: Each team will have the ball on the 5-yard line. They will be given four downs to try to score. If a team scores in the first overtime period they can try either of the extra point opportunities. If both teams score the same amount of points in the first overtime a second overtime period will be played. Either team scoring a touchdown during the second overtime must attempt a two point conversion. If the score is tied after the second overtime then the game is declared a tie.
- C. NFL: Each team will have the ball on the 10-yard line. They will be given four downs to try to score. If a team scores in the first overtime period they can try either of the extra point opportunities. If both teams score the same amount of points in the first overtime a second overtime period will be played. Either team scoring a touchdown during the second overtime must attempt a two point conversion. If the score is tied after the second overtime then the game is declared a tie.

IF RULES ARE NOT LISTED ON THIS SHEET, HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL RULES WILL BE USED WHERE APPLICABLE.