



American Youth Football & Cheer Inspiration Division
FLAG AND TOUCH FOOTBALL RULES
CHEER RULES

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INSPIRATION DIVISION MISSION

AMERICAN YOUTH FOOTBALL is proud to support teams with special needs

“We find a way for every body to play”

American Youth Football is an all inclusive program developed to foster a confidence and sense of self-worth that extends beyond the gridiron and into the school, family and community. “Youth with cognitive and physical disabilities are given the opportunity to transform their disabilities into **abilities** and **achievements**. Players learn about the health benefits and the value of regular exercise in order to become stronger and healthier. Children build a network of friends, support, and trust. No scores will be kept, however it is still a fun competitive environment.”

ABOUT THE INSPIRATION PROGRAM

Special Needs is defined as any child whose intellectual or physical disability has impaired their skills and overall intelligence in areas such as language, cognition, social skills and motor skills. The purpose of this program is to offer the opportunity for youth with disabilities to learn the meaning of hard work, sportsmanship, teamwork and leadership. AYF believes strongly to help promote lifelong habits of wholesome exercise in order to keep our youth healthy. Ultimately, these teams are developed to Have Fun! NO scores will be recorded, it is non competitive with no winners and no losers.

The following guidelines will be in place for the AYF season for any league wishing to implement a special needs team.

- A group may only be in existence if it promotes healthy values, good sportsmanship, and is conducive to growth.
- Participants interested in the Inspiration League may only be recommended by the individual's parent or guardian.
- Participants in the Inspiration Football and Cheer programs are placed by skill based teams and not age based. This should be at the discretion of the parent or guardian and the head coach.

- Inspiration divisions may request to AYF National Staff to be invited to National Tournament/ highlights game.

FOOTBALL AND CHEER: PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

I. INSURANCE:

All insurance policies are the same as for any other AYF football and AYC cheer program as found in the Official Rule books (AYF and AYC). Teams must be insured prior to play. All teams must furnish proof of General Liability and Accident Insurance. The required coverage's can be seen at www.myayf.com/tos.pdf . Additionally American Youth Football, Inc. must be named as an additional insured. All members, not covered under the AYF endorsed insurance policy are required to deliver to AYF a certificate of insurance prior to conducting any games or practices. For more information on the AYF endorsed insurance plan visit the member's only section on www.MyAYF.com

II. WAIVER/RELEASE:

Parents or legal guardians are required to furnish to local Associations a signed Waiver/ Release of Liability Agreement. These documents can be found online under the MyAYF control panel under "Forms." Teams, leagues and associations should consult with local legal counsel to determine if these sample forms meet their individual needs.

****NOTE:** For children with Down Syndrome or other disabilities causing low muscle tone: Please be aware that low muscle tone can produce risk with strength of the neck. Ensure that neck muscles are fused properly. Parents/ Guardians and coaches should be aware of their condition and give consent to play. **

III. EMERGENCY INFORMATION/ CONSENT TO TREAT:

This document must contain emergency medical information, emergency contacts and consent to treat in the event of a medical emergency. This form must be in the possession of the team at all times in the event an injury occurs.

IV. MEDICAL CLEARANCE

All AYF participants must deliver to their local Association proof of a Medical Clearance before participating in AYF programs. This includes but is not limited to Preseason Practice. The Medical Clearance must attest to, or contain the statement: "I, hereby my signature below, do certify that I am licensed by the state and am qualified in determining that: (Childs Name:) _____ is

physically fit and I have found no medical or observable conditions which would contra-indicate him/her from participating in youth flag football, tackle football, cheer or dance athletic activities. I am therefore clearing this individual for athletic participation without limitation.” This document will be good for 1 year from the date it was signed. A sample copy of an acceptable document can be found online under the MyAYF control panel under “Forms.”

V. VOLUNTEERS/COACHES:

This is an important process to find a group of trustworthy and honorable volunteers to help the group of INSPIRATION participants.

CHEER OFFICIAL RULES

American Youth Cheer is proud to offer a Special Needs Division. AYC believes that belonging to a team, enjoying friendships and having responsibility is important to every child. Participating in a sport not only improves their skills physically, but socially and emotionally.

This is a subdivision of the Official AYC rulebook. All cheer rules should be followed from the official rulebook.

Special Needs	5 (as if July 31 st) and older	5-36 cheerleaders
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- **Staff Ratio** - It is recommended that there be 2 (two) adult coaches and 1 (one) student coach for every 8 (eight) participants on the team. There is no special background needed, but experience with special needs is recommended.
- **Releases** - Coaches must obtain all the same releases required by the league. Parents must supply in writing any specific issues relating to the participant.
- **Practice** - is recommended to be held for one or two nights per week for no longer than 1 ½ - 2 hours.
- **Routines** - are limited to 2 ½ minutes. AYC National guidelines apply. Dance and cheers are encouraged. Tumbling and stunting are allowed according to the abilities of the participants.
- **Demonstrator** - A demonstrator will be allowed to assist special needs athletes during competition.
- **Sideline Coach** - Sideline coaching will be allowed in special needs division.

FOOTBALL OFFICIAL RULES

I. ABOUT:

Inspiration Football will mimic the American Youth Football Flag and Touch football programs. It will be non competitive, however many of the rules will remain the same. Flag Football is an alternative to tackle football with its own rules and regulations. Flag football is played by people of all ages and genders and is often a part of many organizations and leagues that use flag and touch football as a teaching tool for their younger players just starting to play the game. AYF has many programs that operate exclusively as flag and touch football programs. AYF Flag programs can be played in the Spring and Fall.

- AYF flag and touch teams will not interact in any circumstances. Inspiration teams will not play touch teams.

Inspiration divisions may request to be invited to National Tournament exhibition games.

II. FORMATION OF TEAM:

- Any programs wishing to charter flag and touch football with AYF will be welcome. Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, Recreation Departments, PALs and other relative type organizations find that flag and touch football is a great addition to their programs.
- Inspiration teams can be created as part of an already existing AYF league/ conference as another division in an American Youth Football group. Challenger teams can be created as a separate organization if no AYF team already exists.
- AYF flag and touch football are for both boys and girls. Teams may be coed, all boys' teams or all girls' teams.
- The formation of teams is done on a first come, first serve participation policy. AYF does allow registration/sign-up for "veteran (returning) players" prior to "open" registration/sign-up. Each child must be afforded the opportunity to be taught the game of football regardless of their ability, AYF does not form "Select" teams, in other words you can not select or recruit only the best athletes for your team. Tryouts of any kind can only be done to determine what team level the participant will be placed on and to ensure that all teams are created equally and have similarly competitive skill levels. Cutting of players is not allowed in AYF, however, there are certain guidelines that should be met if it becomes necessary to not assign a player to a team. AYF strongly recommends that the coaching staff work closely with these players before the extreme measure of dropping a player takes place. AYF believes that the game of football may just be a saving grace for this type of participant.

III. PARTICIPANTS:

- **Parents/ Guardians:** Participants interested in the INSPIRATION League must be recommended by a parent or guardian.
- **Height/ Weight:** There are no height or weight restrictions in AYF flag and touch football.
- **Age:** Youth 5 - 17 may be considered for inclusion in the Inspiration Division. Coaches and parents discretion based on **SKILL BASED QUALIFICATIONS.**
- **The Volunteers:**
 - a. The volunteer helping on the field must be at least thirteen years old.
 - b. The volunteers helping may not impede another player, block, hurt, hit, or get in the way of another player.
 - c. The volunteer helping must understand the rules of play and on field duties
 - d. The choice of volunteer is under the jurisdiction of the parents or guardians.

FOOTBALL SECTION I: AGE CLASSES OF PLAY

I. AGES:

Inspiration Flag Football teams are skill based and not age based.
Age 5 (AS OF JULY 31ST) to Age 17 (up to maximum 25 participants per team)

II. PROOF OF AGE:

Ages will be determined by original birth certificate or a certified copy or a notarized photocopy of an original record of birth. These documents can be a Certificate from the State, County or City Bureau of Vital Statistics, Department of Health, Hospital Certificates, or Record of Notification of Birth Registration by the Bureau of Census of the U.S Department of Commerce. Passports are also acceptable.

Note: Falsifying birth or any other documents to make a participant eligible is grounds for forfeiture of all games in which they have participated and permanent suspension of the adult(s) and or organization responsible for the act and all evidence will be turned over to the local authorities for any criminal prosecution that may be relevant.

FOOTBALL SECTION II: AYF REGULATIONS

RULE I. THE GAME, FIELD, PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

Section 1. General Provisions

Article 1. The Game -

will be played between two teams of a minimum of five players. There can be up to eleven players per team on the field at one time.

The game is played on a rectangle field with an official football suited to the age of the players involved in the game. This may be a soft ball to prevent any injuries.

- Inspiration teams may permit helpers/ volunteers on the field with the disabled athletes to help assist them while playing if they need it.
- Players in wheelchairs are allowed on the field with assistance.

Article 2. On-Site medical requirements: at game

- Medical Requirements:

AYF requires the home team or hosting organization to provide medical coverage at each game. In the absence of a physician and or ambulance on site, the minimum requirement will be the presence of an individual who is EMT qualified or is currently certified in Red Cross Community First Aid and Safety or its equivalent. Therefore no game shall start without this requirement being met. Coaches are required to maintain in their possession at all times the teams Emergency Medical Release Forms and Parent/Guardian Emergency Numbers.

Article 3. Goal Lines - for each team shall be established at opposite ends of the field, and each team shall be allowed the opportunity to advance the ball across their opponent's goal line by running or passing.

Article 4. SCORING/ WINNING - No scores will be recorded during the game. There are no winners or losers in this game. Every child is allowed to score a touchdown during the game. Coaches are encouraged to give all participants the chance to score.

Article 5. Game Officials. The game shall be played under the supervision of at least two officials.

Article 6. Team Captain(s). The coach will designate to the referee, the team captain(s). If more than one is designated, a speaking captain must be selected.

Article 7. Subject to the Rules. All participants are subject to rules of the game and shall be governed by the decisions of the game officials.

Article 8: Mandatory Play Rule: All players will receive equal play time.

Section 2. THE FIELD

Article 1. Zone Markings.

- The field shall be marked in 20-yard zones from goal line to goal line.
- There shall be one inbound hash mark dividing the field into halves. This hash mark shall run parallel with each sideline.

Article 2. Inbounds/Out-of Bounds. The lines bounding the sidelines and end zones are out-of bounds in their entirety. The inbounds area is also bound by the lines. The end zone is part of the width of the field.

Article 3. Size of Fields. AYF Flag and Touch fields shall be either 80 x 40 yards or the regulation 100-yard field. When only a 100-yard field is available, soft, flexible pylons can be placed within the field to make it conform to the 80 x 40 field.

Article 4. Down Marker. A down marker shall be used to indicate the number of the down and where the ball is placed on the field.

Section 3. THE BALL

Article 1. Specifications. The official ball will be: determined by each Inspiration team.

- It may be a WILSON AYF ball
- Soft/ Nerf Inspiration ball

Article 2. Use of Ball. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball at his discretion. During the game, each team may use its own ball as long as it meets the legal class standard.

Section 4. EQUIPMENT

Article 1. Legal Equipment. Players of opposing teams must wear contrasting colored jerseys with numbers front and rear. The pants must be a different color than the flags. The visiting team is responsible for changes that are required.

Article 2. (Flag Football) - No jersey or pants may cover any portion of a player's flag.

Article 3. (Flag Football) - Each player on the field must wear a one piece belt with two or three flags. Whatever is declared standard in the league. Flags will be permanently attached. One flag will hang down on each side and one at the center of the back.

The flag shall be 2 inches wide and a minimum of 14 inches long. The flags will be one of contrasting colors to their opponent's flags.

Article 4. Additional Allowable Equipment. Shoes will be soccer style, non-detachable rubber cleats. Sneakers may also be worn.

Article 5. Illegal Equipment. The use of headgear of any nature, body pads, shoulder pads, shoes with removable cleats are prohibited. EXCEPTION: Hard head gear may only be used if required as a result of a participant's disability.

RULE 2. PLAYERS

Section 1. ROSTERS

Article 1. AYF Flag and Touch teams shall have a roster minimum of 10 and a maximum of 28 players per team.

Article 2. Official Rosters must be submitted to AYF Headquarters before the playing season begins.

Article 3. Players who play tackle football are ineligible for AYF Flag and Touch teams during the same season.

Article 4. Players may be added to the Official Roster if:

- A. The Official Roster is in danger of falling below the minimum.
- B. There is still room to bring the roster to maximum size.

Article 5. Players may not be added to the Official Roster after September 30.

Section 2. 8 PLAY RULE

Article 1. AYF players are guaranteed a minimum of 8 plays per game. Only plays from the line of scrimmage are considered legitimate plays. Extra point tries do not count as plays.

Article 2. Each team shall furnish a monitor to record the 8 play rule.

Section 3. PLAYERS - GENERAL

Article 1. AYF Flag and Touch football is 8-man football. Everybody is eligible to catch forward passes.

Article 2. Volunteers and helpers are also eligible to pass and receive

Article 3. There will be free substitution. All substitutes must report to the huddle.

RULE 3. LENGTH OF GAMES

Section 1. TIME SEGMENTS

Article 1. AYF Flag and Touch games will consist of two halves of 20 minutes each.

Article 2. There will be three time outs per half unless it is an officials time out.

Article 3. The 8-Play Rule goes into effect at the two minute warning. The clock will be stopped until the required substitutions take place.

Article 4. There will be a maximum of 15 minutes allowed for halftime.

FOOTBALL SECTION III: PLAYING SPECIFICATIONS

RULE 1. STARTING THE GAME

Article 1. Coin Toss - at the beginning of a game, a coin is tossed by the referee and the winner gets possession of the ball. The loser has the option of which goal to defend. These choices will be reversed for the second half.

Article 2. Ball is placed in the center of the field each time.

RULE 2. DOWNS

Article 1. The team will be allowed four downs to advance the ball into the next zones.

Article 2. Zone lines are marked every 20 yards. The zone is reached when the forward part of the ball touches, or is advanced through, the zone line.

Article 3. The next zone line will be the line to gain for another first down.

RULE 3. GIVING UP THE BALL

Article 1. When a play is done, the referee places the ball back in the center of the field to remain fair.

Article 2. The defensive team goes on offense from the placement of the ball with first and zone to go.

RULE 4. DE-FLAGGING

Article 1. The ball carrier is downed when his flag has been detached from his belt or if either knee touches the ground.

Article 2. The defensive player holds the flag over his head and stops at the point of de-flagging.

Article 3. Only the ball carrier's flag can be removed. Removing flags of other players is illegal.

Article 4. The defensive player cannot grab or hold the ball carrier in order to de-flag him.

Article 5. The defensive player must go for a passer's flag and not his arm.

RULE 5. TOUCHING (TOUCH FOOTBALL)

Article 1. AYF rules state that touch football will be with two hands.

Article 2. The defensive player must touch the ball carrier between the shoulder and the knees.

RULE 6. BLOCKING

Article 1. Blocking is done between the shoulder and waist only. There is no blocking below the waist.

Article 2. There will be no body, butt or roll blocking.

Article 3. Blockers will not use their hands to grab or hold a defensive player.

Article 4. Blockers will remain on their feet at all times.

Article 5. There will be no down field blocking.

RULE 7. BALL CARRIERS

Article 1. The ball carrier must not deliberately run or drive into a defensive player.

Article 2. The ball carrier will not protect his flags by using his hands, arm or head.

RULE 8. CENTER SNAP

Article 1. A center snap must be between the centers legs.

RULE 9. FUMBLE RULE

Article 1. A fumble at anytime will be declared a dead ball and belongs to the team last in possession and at the spot where it hits the ground.

Article 2. A ball that is fumbled and goes beyond the line to gain will be brought back and marked at the point of the fumble.

RULE 10. DEAD BALL

Article 1. When a ball touches the ground at anytime, the ball will be declared dead.

Dead Ball Situations:

- A. In Flag Football: when a player's flag is pulled. Touch Football: when a player has been tagged.
- B. In Flag Football: any time a runner or pass receiver's flag is missing.
- C. When a ball touches the ground by reason of a Fumble or center snap.
- D. If a ball goes out of bounds for any reason.
- E. An incomplete pass.
- F. After a touchdown, safety or touchback.
- G. Change of possession.

RULE 11. PASSING

Article 1. Passing is done from behind the line of scrimmage.

Article 2. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage is an eligible passer.
Helpers/ Volunteers are eligible to pass

Article 3. Double passing is permitted as long as the first pass is completed behind the line of scrimmage and the second pass is thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. This includes the lateral pass.

RULE 12. RECEIVING

Article 1. All players are eligible pass receivers.
Helpers/ Volunteers are eligible to receive and give to their player they are helping

Article 2. Receivers may catch the ball even if they go out of bounds, or the end zone, as long as one foot is in bounds when they come down with the ball.

Article 3. If the receiver's feet come down simultaneously with one foot in and one foot out of bounds, the pass will be ruled incomplete.

Article 4. Two or more offensive players may touch a passed ball in succession resulting in a completion.

RULE 13. TOURNAMENTS

Article 1. An official AYF tournament will consist of 4 or more teams.

Article 2. All tournament teams must have an Official AYF Roster on file with National Headquarters. Only players listed on the rosters will be allowed to play.

Article 3. All tournament teams must be official members of AYF.

Article 4. There are no winners or losers-- it is instructional and experiential only.

Article 5. Size of fields will be decided by the Tournament Director and the host site.

Article 6. Trophies or certificates will be awarded to all teams.

Article 7. Host site will be responsible for game officials, housing (if needed), awards and footballs.

RULE 14. PENALTIES

PENALTIES will help keep fair play. ONLY **MAJOR PENALTIES** will have consequences. **NO MINOR PENALTIES** will be counted.

Article 1. Penalties are determined according to the size of the field. Penalties for the 100-yard field will be the standard 15, 10 and 5 yards. Penalties for the 80-yard field will be 10 and 5 yards.

Article 2. Major penalties (15 or 10 yards) are:

Tackling

- A. Fighting (also ejection if official deems it to be serious enough).
- B. Ball carrier illegally using his hands to protect his flags.
- C. Offensive holding.
- D. Leaving feet to block.
- E. Grabbing or holding a ball carrier.
- F. Illegal blocking (body, butt, roll below the waist downfield).
- G. Unnecessary roughness.
- H. Pulling flags of players other than ball carrier.
- I. Offensive pass interference.
- J. Defensive pass interference.
- K. Defensive player pushing ball carrier out of bounds.
- L. Illegal use of hands by blocker.
- M. Disqualified players re-entering the game.
- N. Unsportsmanlike conduct on players and bench area.

Article 3. Minor Penalties (5 yards) are: **THESE WILL NOT HAVE CONSEQUENCES:**
INSTRUCTIONAL ONLY

- A. All offside plays.
- B. Illegal motion.
- C. Delay of game.
- D. Wearing flags illegally.
- E. Recovering a fumble.
- F. Illegal substitution.
- G. Illegal use of hands on defense.
- H. Defensive holding, illegal snap.

RULE 15. COACHES & PRACTICE STAFF

Article 1- selection

Coaches are to be selected by methods approved by League rules and/or by-laws.

Head coach should be selected very carefully. Preferably, one who has knowledge of both football and athletes with disabilities. The coach must understand the purpose of the challenger league, to offer fun enjoyable play.

Article 2- Responsibility

A Inspiration team's coaching staff is in charge of the team during practice, on the field, or during the transportation as a group to and from practice sessions and games, or for any team function, such as a banquet. The coaching staff is under the direction of the Head Coach; other coaches are called Assistant Coaches. The Head Inspiration Coach is held responsible for his/her actions, those of his/her assistant coaches, players, staff and parents.

At least one coach must be present during every practice.

Article 3- Certification:

Each and every coach must have a background check preformed and reviewed/approved by the process established by the Association/Conference.

There shall be at least one person holding a Red Cross Card, or of similar equivalency, present at all practices. This can be a coach or any volunteer approved by the Association. Conferences are required to enforce these "Staff Requirements" with its member Associations.

Article 4- Ages

- ... A head coach must be 21 years old
- ... Assistant coaches must be at least 18 years old
- ... Team helpers- must be 13 years old