



**COMOX VALLEY**  
SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

# **FLAG FOOTBALL LEAGUE RULES**

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## **SECTION 1 – SPORTSMANSHIP AND SPIRIT SCORES**

### **Sportsmanship and the CVSSC:**

The CVSSC endeavours to make all games as safe and fun as possible, emphasizing the 'Spirit of the Game' no matter the sport or level of play. All players are expected to play with an overriding emphasis on sportsmanship, fair play and a fun-first approach. Players, or teams, that do not play by these values may receive discipline, including suspension or expulsion from the leagues.

### **Spirit Scores Explained:**

To help ensure that teams adopt a sportsmanlike manner in games, the CVSSC collects post-game sportsmanship ratings known as 'spirit scores' from team captains in most leagues. In these 'spirit scores,' team captains are grading their opponents on a 0-5 scale on how fair and fun they were to play. These scores are kept private until the end of the regular season, but are used for the following purposes: (1) The first tie-breaker in the standings, thereby rewarding the more sportsmanlike team in the event of a tie; (2) Identifying whether a team may need to be addressed in regards to their behaviour, rules knowledge, or for safety concerns during the season; (3) Putting together an objective, peer-sourced review of each team to help support any decisions by the league to reward the most sportsmanlike teams in the CVSSC and/or discipline the least sportsmanlike teams.

### **Reporting Scores and Spirit Scores:**

Captains can report the spirit score and game score to the CVSSC coordinator after the game, where possible. If there is no CVSSC representative, or that rep is unavailable, please send the information to Scott Petersen (Director, CVSSC) at [scott@comoxvalleysports.ca](mailto:scott@comoxvalleysports.ca) within 24 hours of your game. If you do not report these scores within 24 hours, whatever game score is submitted will be used by default and the opponent will receive an automatic 5 for spirit score.

### **Reporting Sportsmanship Concerns:**

Captains are encouraged to communicate with each other before games, and during stoppages in play, if any issues need to be resolved. If not sufficiently resolved by the opposing team, please contact the CVSSC coordinator at an appropriate time for help, when possible. If you deem the issue requires further action, please send a summary of the incident to the league at the email address above.

## SECTION 2 – WEATHER AND CANCELLATION POLICY

### Indoor Sports Weather Policy:

The CVSSC is unlikely to cancel indoor games due to weather conditions, unless they result in the facility being closed or otherwise inaccessible. Teams will be contacted via the 'cancellation call' protocol below when that is the case.

### Outdoor Sports Weather Policy:

While spring and summer in the Comox Valley can be absolutely stunning, these seasons can also be full of erratic weather, with conditions differing wildly from one part of the valley to another. The CVSSC will cancel and re-schedule games when it's believed the weather or field conditions may compromise safety or playing experience. However, since field space and available game nights are at a premium, players should expect to play through some wind/rain during an outdoor sports season for most sports.

- **Weekday Sports** – The initial decision on whether to play or cancel the games will take place by 4 p.m. on game nights. Unless notified of a cancellation via the 'cancellation call' protocol below, please proceed to your game as scheduled. The field coordinator and team captains can consult with each other on whether to delay the start time and/or cancel the games if the weather or field conditions have worsened.
- **Weekend Sports** – Unless otherwise notified before game time via the 'cancellation call' procedures below, teams should show up to the field for their game times regardless of weather. A call on whether to postpone start time, play or cancel, will be made by the team captains (in conjunction with the coordinator, when applicable).

### Cancellation Call:

When games are cancelled, the CVSSC will notify its players via the following methods:

- **Facebook Posting** – When games are cancelled, a notice will be posted on the CVSSC Facebook Page at [www.facebook.com/ComoxValleySports/](http://www.facebook.com/ComoxValleySports/) for all players to see. Typically, weather cancellations will be posted around 4 p.m.
- **Captains Email** – Once games have been cancelled (weather, gym closure, field closure, etc...), the CVSSC will send out an email to team captains and singles teams. This is typically only possible if the decision is received/made by 4 p.m.
- **Coordinator Phone/Text** – When cancellations are last-minute, or that decision is reached at the field/ beach courts, we will attempt to contact team captains and singles via phone call or text. Beach volleyball is a bit more weather dependant than most sports and more likely to have the info delivered this route.

## SECTION 3 – EQUIPMENT, SET-UP AND CLEAN-UP

### Equipment:

- **CVSSC Equipment:** The CVSSC's bags of footballs, boundary cones, inflation equipment and flag belts will be brought to the games by a league coordinator. Flags are to be positioned on the hips at the start of each play.
- **Players' Equipment:** Please bring a pair of cleats (no metal cleats allowed) to the games for proper traction on the field. Players may use their own footballs, as long as both teams agree on its use before the game and both teams have access to play with it. Teams may inform the CVSSC of a team shirt colour in their registration form, but are requested to have a back-up team colour available at each game just in case. A list of team colours, and each team's priority over that colour, is available on the first page of the league schedule – with the priority of wearing that colour determined by order of registration each season. Please look at your opponents' colour each week to help avoid confusion at the games. Shirts need to be tucked under the flag belts and the each flag must be fully and clearly visible.

### Field Set-Up:

- Please arrive at least 15 minutes early to help set-up the fields and warm up so that games can start as close to the start time as possible.
- Field dimensions for our flag football leagues will vary slightly depending on available field space at each location, but will run approximately 86-90 meters long by 31 meters wide. Boundary markings are typically identified via pre-measured and maintained red 'X' markings to signify where field cones and end zone cones will be placed for game play.
- Any spots on the field deemed dangerous should be noted to the coordinator and reported to the CVSSC to have it dealt with by the city/school district. Teams can get cones to visibly mark any holes/field issues during games.

### Field Clean-Up:

- At the end of the games, please help collect the boundary cones, footballs and flag belts and return to the coordinator's gear station. Many hands make quick work of these tasks.
- Please make sure to clean up after yourselves and your team. This includes any garbage, water bottles and clothing. The CVSSC is not responsible for any clothing, water bottles or valuables left behind at any sports or events.

## SECTION 4 – ROSTERS, SUBS AND DEFAULTS

### Rosters:

- There is no maximum number of players that can be on a roster, but teams are advised to include all players they expect will play on their roster when registering. Most flag football rosters tend to have about 8 players on them.
- A registered team can bring in additional players that are not on their roster during the season. They must fill out a waiver prior to playing.
- In the spirit of sportsmanship, players are expected to have played with the team during the regular season to be able to play with them in the playoffs.
- In the playoffs, teams that are playing for a chance at first place (typically the top 4 teams) can only field players that have played at least 1 regular season game for them. Teams outside the top 4 may bring in subs via the usual sub rules.
- Individual team rosters and league information will be emailed out at least 48 hours before first scheduled game.

### Subs:

- The CVSSC will attempt to post a publicly available 'Subs List' within the first 2-3 weeks of the regular season starting. The subs list can be accessed via a link on each sport's individual page on the website at [www.comoxvalleysports.ca](http://www.comoxvalleysports.ca).
- Teams may also contact Scott at the CVSSC for a list of potential subs at [scott@comoxvalleysports.ca](mailto:scott@comoxvalleysports.ca).
- Teams may bring in subs whenever they are short players. Those subs must fill out a waiver prior to playing.
- In the spirit of sportsmanship, teams are expected to bring in subs of a similar skill level to those missing. Bringing in 'ringers' for games is heavily discouraged.
- Team captains are asked to run any subs past their opponents before the game, for their approval. This is designed to give a team a say in which player(s) they get to play and avoid the possibility of a ringer swinging the game result.
- Teams may borrow player(s) from another team (such as a team in a previous time slot or on bye week), as long as said player(s) are needed to make a game happen, and meet the subbing requirements (similar skill level of player(s) replacing, and agreed upon by opposing team).

### Defaults and Co-Ed Ratio:

- If a team can't field a female player to start the game, they play with a max of four players and start down by a touchdown (six points). If a female player joins

the team after the game has started, she can immediately join play at the next stoppage, but the 6-point penalty remains.

- If a team is unable to field the minimum number of players (3 players) within 15 minutes of the scheduled game time, the result will go down as a 28-0 victory for their opponent.
- Any team that defaults more than once in a season can face further league discipline, including potentially being removed from the league.
- Because the leagues are about playing, and having fun, an opponent may waive their right to a default victory before the game and choose to play. They may even loan players to make it happen. But both teams must agree before the game whether the result will count in the standings. That decision cannot be reversed after the fact.

\*If a game is a default, please split up players and play for fun. The idea is to have as good of a time as possible, each time out. Ask the coordinator for ideas or help to make it work if you need it.

## SECTION 5 – MATCH PLAY AND FORMAT

### Game Format:

- Each game will last approximately 90 minutes (two 40 minute halves and a short halftime). This is a guideline and teams are expected to start and stop their own games using that general timeframe.
- After the first 30 minutes of a half, teams should discuss how many offensive possessions remain per team. Each team should get at least one more full possession at this point (though teams can agree to adjust this if their half is going long). The team that starts a half receiving the ball and being on offence will be on defence for the final possession of each half to ensure an equal number of offensive opportunities for each team.
- Once teams have decided on the 'one full possession each,' the full possession is defined as each team starting at least one play where they were designated to have the ball in an offensive position. This can include a kick/punt return or at least one set play from the line of scrimmage. If the defence returns an interception for a touchdown without starting a play from a line of scrimmage, it doesn't count as a full possession. And if they haven't yet had their full possession, the other team still must kick to them for their possession.
- **Playoff Shootout/Tie-Breaker Procedure:** In the regular season, games can end in ties. In the playoffs, if the game is tied at the end of regulation, teams will line the scrimmage cone up with the quarter-field cones and take turns trying to score with a single down in a sudden-death shootout: (a) Captains should do RPS to determine who gets to be on offence/defence first and rotate turns; (b) If both teams get the same result (a TD, or a defensive stop), they keep taking turns until one team scores and the other doesn't; (c) There are no extra point conversions on the scores, just touchdowns.
- Games are played 5-on-5, with at least one female player on the field at all times.
- All games are self-officiated, with players calling their own fouls. Team captains are responsible for making sure their teams know/follow the rules, make the correct calls, and should always address any issue(s) with the other team's captain first, and then the CVSSC coordinator if further help is needed.
- Both teams should keep score and double-check with each other over any discrepancies as the game goes on and at half-time.

**Mercy Rule:** If a game hits a score differential of 28 points at any point (ie. 28-0, 44-16, or 60-32), that is considered the final score, scorekeeping is stopped and teams are encouraged to play on for fun. This is to discourage stronger teams from running up the score in a mismatch, as there is no benefit in the standings.

## SECTION 6 – GENERAL RULES

### Starting the Game and Scorekeeping:

- During warm-up, team captains should meet to discuss any issues, decide who gets first ball or choice of side with a game of RPS (rock, paper, scissors) and get their game started promptly. After halftime, first possession of the second half flips to the other team. And in case there is a competitive advantage to being on one side of the field (sun, wind, field conditions, etc...) teams will switch sides at half if either team requests it.
- A kick-off will start play for each half, and also be used to transfer possession after a team has completed its convert attempt on a touchdown. All kicks are done via the punt technique
- Before starting the game, both teams should make sure the playing surface is free of any garbage, bags, water bottles, soccer goals or other obstacles that could affect play and/or safety.
- **Touchdowns:** A team scores a touchdown when they successfully advance the ball into the opposition's end zone. A touchdown is worth six points and is followed by either a 1-point or 2-point convert attempt.
- **1-Point Convert:** The scoring team has one play to add a single point to their total by attempting to score from a line of scrimmage that measures 10 yards (about 10 paces) out from the front of the end zone.
- **2-Point Convert:** The scoring team has one play to add two points to their total by attempting to score from a line of scrimmage starting at the quarter cone (approximately 17 yards).
- **Interception Returns for Scores:** The value of an interception return for a score is the same as what the value of a score would have been for the offence on the play. To clarify, if the offence could have scored 6 points on the play, an interception return for a score would be worth 6 points. If the offence was attempting a 1 or 2 point convert, than an interception return for a score would be the same number of points as the convert attempt. (However, if the defence doesn't score on the interception, that play is considered dead and the ball is put back into play with the ensuing kick-off.)
- **Fumbles:** There are no fumbles in the CVSSC. A fumble is simply a dead ball. If an offensive player fumbles the ball forward, the ball is dead at the place they lost control. If a player fumbles the ball backwards (or misses a lateral), it is a dead ball at the place the ball contacted the ground. There is no need to try and force a fumble by the opposing team, or dive for a loose ball on the ground.
- **Laterals:** Lateral passes are allowed and can be thrown overhand or underhand, though teams are asked to ensure that all laterals go backwards and not just

sideways. A lateral attempt is a live ball the defence can attempt to intercept while in the air, but it becomes a dead ball once it contacts the ground.

- **Scoring Rules:** Players are not allowed to dive into the end zone to score unless it is within the act of catching a ball or simply losing balance on their way in. At least one foot must touch down on, or inside, the end zone with possession of the ball for the score to count – it is not enough for the ball to simply break the plane of the end zone. If a player purposefully dives into the end zone, the play is dead where they started their dive.
- Captains should double-check the score with each other at half-time and throughout the game to ensure accuracy.

### **General Game Play Rules:**

- On offence, a team consists of 1 quarterback and 4 receivers. There are no running backs or linemen.
- On defence, a team consists of 5 defenders and can choose how to allocate them. But any player rushing the quarterback has to first audibly count the 5 steamboats.
- The offence has 4 downs from the line of scrimmage to score a touchdown. They may choose to punt the ball away on 4<sup>th</sup> down, but must notify the receiving team and wait until they're ready.
- The offence is to mark the line of scrimmage (scrimmage cone provided) on each play. Each play from scrimmage must start from the middle of the field.
- **Play Clock:** The offence should generally be ready to put the ball in play within 30 seconds of starting their huddle. If a team is taking too long to break the huddle, the opponent can politely remind them of the play clock. There is no penalty assessed, but opposing teams can certainly dock spirit points if the offending team doesn't speed up their play.
- **Time Outs:** Each team is allowed to call a 1-minute timeout per half.
- **Blocking:** All CVSSC leagues are non-contact and blocking is not allowed. If a player is not involved in the play, they can choose to: (a) Stay where they are; (b) Get out of the way of the play; (c) Attempt to get in position for a lateral. If a block takes place, the play is dead at that point.

### **Kicking/Kick-Returning Rules:**

- There are two types of kicking plays: (a) kick-offs; and (b) punts. Both plays use the punt technique (kicking a dropped ball). There are no trick plays on either kick and the kicking team must ensure the receiving team is ready to begin the play before kicking the ball.

- On all kicking plays, members of the kicking team must be even with, or behind, the ball when it's kicked.
- **Kick-Offs:** Each half is started by a kick-off, where one team punts the ball to the other to start play. All players on both teams must start behind their respective quarter-cone markings until the ball is kicked.
- **Punts:** Teams are allowed to punt the ball away to the other team on 4<sup>th</sup> down. They must notify the other team of their choice and allow them time to get set. The receiving team has to be at least 10 yards from the ball and cannot interfere with the kick, but can otherwise situate themselves where they want.
- **Turnovers:** The kicking team can only regain possession of the ball on a kick-off by intercepting a lateral attempt by the offence on the return. There are no on-side kicks, no fumbles and no other ways the kicking team can regain possession.
- **Downing the Ball:** The kicking team can 'down' the ball and end the play by possessing a loose ball on a kicking play. The play is considered dead once the kicking team has control and the line of scrimmage is placed at that spot. Even if the receiving team has touched the ball first and it is loose, the kicking team can only down the ball with possession. There are no fumbles.
- **Kick Returns:** If a player on the receiving team touches the ball but fails to possess it, that player may still attempt to control and advance the ball on the return. In this scenario, no other teammates on the receiving team are able to control and advance the ball until the original player has done so first.
- **Kicks and Sidelines:** If a kick travels out of bounds on the sidelines without being touched or first touching in bounds, the receiving team has the option of asking for a re-kick or taking possession from where it first crossed out of bounds. If the ball touches in-bounds before going out of bounds, the line of scrimmage is set where the ball crossed out of bounds.
- **Kicks and End Zones:** On any play that results in a touch back, the receiving team gets the ball at the quarter cone marker. A touch back occurs when: (a) A kick travels out the back of the end zone without first being touched by the receiving team in the field of play between the end zones; (b) The kicking team possesses and downs the ball in the end zone before the receiving team touches it; (c) A member of the receiving team first touches the ball in the end zone and either kneels or is flagged still in the end zone.
- If a member of the receiving team touches the ball before it enters the end zone, the touch back rule is negated. If the ball subsequently goes out of bounds through the end zone, is downed by the kicking team in the end zone, or the receiving team cannot advance the ball out of the end zone before being flagged, the line of scrimmage is set at the 1-yard line.

## The Quarterback, Passing and Steamboats:

- The quarterback can either have a teammate snap the ball to them to start play, or simply start the play themselves.
- All four teammates on the field are eligible receivers. The quarterback must have at least part of his/her body behind the line of scrimmage when making a throw.
- Only one forward pass may be thrown on each play. The offensive team can perform 1-or-more laterals behind the line of scrimmage before making that forward pass. The defending team still has to count five steamboats before crossing the line of scrimmage.
- **Rushing Plays:** The offensive team can only run the ball across the line of scrimmage if a member of the defence has crossed the line of scrimmage after counting the 5 steamboats. Otherwise, the ball has to be passed forward across the line of scrimmage.
- **Interceptions:** If the defence intercepts the ball, they can attempt to score. If they get flagged or otherwise 'downed' before reaching the opposition's end zone, they make that point their initial line of scrimmage. If the defence intercepts the ball in the end zone and doesn't take it out of the end zone, it's a touch back and they get possession of the ball starting at the quarter cone.
- **Steamboats:** Any player wanting to cross the line of scrimmage and rush the quarterback must first count 5 steamboats (5 full seconds) clearly and audibly and cannot cross the line until finished saying saying steamboat the fifth time. Rushers are asked to ensure they enunciate the 5 steamboats with proper cadence and not speed through the count. The quarterback can call a 'fast count' on the defence if he/she feels the steamboats were too quick, or the defender crossed the line before finished counting. This results in a repeat of the down on first offence and repeat of down and and 5-yard penalty on subsequent offences.
- **Pick Plays:** A play where an offensive player runs interference on a defensive player and obstructs their ability to cover another receiver is unsafe and illegal. A pick play occurs when a defender: (a) Has to avoid a collision with another member of the offence while attempting to cover a receiver; or (b) Is involved in a collision with another member of the offence in the course of trying to cover a receiver. Crossing plays are certainly allowed in the league, but receivers should attempt to put at least a couple yards of depth between each other in their crossing routes to avoid possible collisions and pick plays.

## Defence, Flagging and 'Downing' a Player:

- The play is dead and a ball carrier is considered 'down' when they have lost one or more flags, gone out of bounds, or have gone to the ground and been tagged by a defender while still contacting ground with their knee, elbow, bum or back.

- If a ball-carrier slips and goes down or dives to make a catch, they can get up and continue to play until properly downed. However, the defence just has to tag them while they are still contacting ground with their knee, elbow, bum or back.
- If a player loses a flag or is missing a flag and catches the ball, the catch counts and he/she is down at the point of catch.
- If a player inadvertently loses a flag while running with the ball, the play is dead where they lost the flag.
- A receiver only has to get his/her first planted foot in bounds after gaining control of the ball for it to be a legal catch. They are considered down where they left the field of play.
- A receiver is considered down if they leave the field of play. Receivers cannot go out of bounds and come back in to catch a ball.
- If a player is “downed” in their own endzone, the down is complete, the offense maintains possession of the ball, and the next play takes place on the one-yard-line, and there are no points awarded (ie. a safety) to the defense.
- All defending attempts are to be made at the ball carrier’s flags, not the body.
- Defenders have the right to their path and space, but are not allowed to otherwise interfere with a receiver’s route.
- The premise of ‘face-guarding’ (a defender putting their hands up to deflect the ball without turning to face the ball) is allowed. However, players should not be trying to solely block the receiver’s vision or put their hands in their face.

### **Ball-Carrier Rules:**

- The ball-carrier cannot do a 360-degree spin while moving forwards. They can turn left or right or run in a circle, but a 360 spin to make the flags impossible to grab is not allowed. If it happens, the play is dead there.
- The ball-carrier cannot straight-arm an opponent, protect their flag with their arm, block, or hide their flag – even when it’s unintentional. The play is considered down at the point where it obstructed with a flagging attempt.
- A receiver may jump or dive to catch a ball. But once in possession of the ball, a player cannot purposely jump or leave their feet. If this rule is broken, the play is dead at the place of the infraction.

### **Penalties:**

- Infractions on the Offense are punished by a return to the line of scrimmage and a loss of down.
- Infractions on the Defense are punished by a 10-yard advancement of the line of scrimmage (up to the goal line) and a replay of down.
- If teams cannot agree on a foul and play is stalled, just replay the down.

## SECTION 7 – SCORES, STANDINGS, SCHEDULES AND PLAYOFFS

### **Schedules:**

Schedules will be posted online and accessible via the 'Schedule' link on each sport's page online at least 48 hours before the first game, with team captains and singles registrants all notified via email. Each subsequent schedule update will follow the same protocol. Please double-check your schedule online before each game and notify the CVSSC of any issues or discrepancies at [scott@comoxvalleysports.ca](mailto:scott@comoxvalleysports.ca).

### **Scores:**

Game Scores and Spirit Scores should be submitted to the CVSSC rep by both teams at the end of the game. If a CVSSC rep is not available, both teams should email the info to [scott@comoxvalleysports.ca](mailto:scott@comoxvalleysports.ca) within 24 hours. If only one team submits a score, that score will be used in updating the standings.

### **Standings:**

The Standings Page of the CVSSC will be updated on a weekly basis (typically by Friday mornings) and can be viewed online at: [www.comoxvalleysports.ca/league-standings.php](http://www.comoxvalleysports.ca/league-standings.php). Players can click their team name to review game scores, while the standings page also has filters to allow players the ability to search the results for various seasons and years.

- **Final standings** – Are determined by number of points (two for a win; one for a tie; zero for a loss).
- **Tie-breakers** – (1) Spirit points totals (in all leagues that collect spirit points); (2) Most wins; (3) Points differential; (4) Head-to-head result; (5) Coin flip or RPS.

### **Playoffs:**

Playoffs will be scheduled to take up anywhere from 1-3 weeks of the scheduled season. All teams make the playoffs, but typically only the top four seeds have a shot at finishing in first place to allow for closer games and hopefully allow for as much fun as possible. Playoff matches will be set by the CVSSC based on the standings at the end of the regular season and teams will be notified via the 'schedule' protocols listed above.

\*The CVSSC reserves the right to alter the schedule and adjust match-ups, tiers, and tweak the final standings in order to make sure everyone is playing at the level most suitable to them, and to maximize safety and fun.

## **SECTION 8 – WAIVERS, FIELDS AND FACILITIES**

### **Waivers:**

All players must sign a waiver, which outlines the CVSSC's liability and sportsmanship policies (among other things), before playing a game. Players need only sign a CVSSC waiver once since 2014 to be allowed to play, regardless of the number of sports or seasons they are participating in. Captains must make sure any new players and subs have signed a waiver before playing. Coordinators will typically have access to waivers they can sign.

### **Field and Facilities:**

The CVSSC rents playing fields and facilities from various providers throughout the Comox Valley. Please be exceptionally respectful of each location, whether indoors or outdoors, to ensure the CVSSC maintains a great reputation and can continue booking many of the best fields and facilities available and offer these recreational sports leagues. Here are some important things expected from our players:

- **Smoking/Drinking:** Please follow proper protocol on smoking. And unless otherwise specified, the CVSSC establishments are alcohol free.
- **Garbage:** Please clean up after yourself before leaving – including water bottles.
- **Damages:** You will be held responsible for any damages you cause. Please be respectful of the facilities and fields we rent.
- **Footwear:** Bring clean, non-marking shoes for indoors. No metal cleats allowed for outdoors.
- **Changing and Warm-Up:** Please arrive 15 minutes early to get changed and warm up. But make sure your warm-up doesn't affect games in progress, and for indoor sports, please don't play with balls in the halls. It is disruptive and can cause damage.

### **Alcohol Policy:**

The CVSSC rents public facilities for all its leagues and tournaments. These facilities, unless otherwise stated, are unlicensed. As such, the consumption of alcohol during CVSSC league games and tournaments (unless in a licensed area) is not legal and prohibited.

### **Sponsor Bars:**

If players would like to socialize over some food or drink, the CVSSC sets up Sponsor Bar deals at various locations. Check out the details online at:

<http://www.comoxvalleysports.ca/sponsors.php>.