

COACHING 8U NFL FLAG

8U NFL FLAG is built for learning. In league games, kids can run anywhere. Nobody rushes the passer until a handoff. You can help line players up before the snap. Teach the flag pull, 3 routes and a clean handoff. Get every player the ball.

You don't need to know football. Most new coaches are parents who said yes. This guide gets you through your first practice and your first game.

WHO

Coaches of NFL FLAG 8U (2nd and 3rd grade) teams.

AGES

Ages 7 and 8

LEVEL

8U, 2nd and 3rd grade

FORMAT

5v5

YOUR FIRST PRACTICE: 60 MINUTES

0:00

10 min

Warm-up: Warm-up

A relay and a mirror drill, so the warm-up is already flag pulling practice.

Drills: Flag relay, Mirror drill

10:00

20 min

Skill stations: Skill stations

Two stations, 10 minutes each. Station one is routes, station two is the snap and the throw.

Drills: Route tree walk-through, One-knee throws, Shotgun snap target

30:00

10 min

Team period: Team period

Install one play and review one. Offense against air, then against a walking defense.

40:00

15 min

Scrimmage: Scrimmage

Controlled scrimmage, offense against defense, rotating positions every series.

55:00

5 min

Cooldown: Cooldown

Stretch, water, and one sentence on what to work on at home.

Full plan with coaching points: breakawaydata.com/coaching-flag-football/practice-plans/7-8-year-olds/


Game day:

stat it free in the BreakAway app

Scan, or visit breakawaydata.com/stats

POSITIONS IN 5V5

Carry 7 to 10 players so everyone rests and everyone plays. Rotate quarterback and center in practice: every player should know both.

OFFENSE

Center

Snap the ball to the quarterback, then releases into a short route. In most 5v5 rulebooks the center is an eligible receiver, so they are your safety valve.

Quarterback

Calls the play, takes the snap and either hands off, pitches or throws. Teach a quick read and a quick release: the rush is coming.

Running back

Lines up beside or behind the quarterback, takes handoffs and pitches, and runs a short route on pass plays.

Wide receivers (2)

Line up wide, run the deeper routes and stretch the defense. One usually runs a go or post to pull the safety away.

DEFENSE

Rusher

In league games, she waits until the ball is handed off behind the line. Then she runs at the ball carrier and reaches for the flag. In tournaments, she rushes from the 7-yard line.

Cornerbacks (2)

Cover the wide receivers. Stay between her and the end zone. Pull the flag the moment she catches it.

Linebacker

Plays the middle: watches the center and running back, takes away short throws and fills fast on runs.

Safety

The last line. Stays deep, keeps everything in front of her and is the one who must not miss a flag pull.

WHAT TO TEACH FIRST

1. Flag pulling

Break down two steps before the ball carrier: get low, shorten your steps, then pull. Running past her is a missed flag.

2. Route basics

Go, slant and out. Run each one to the same depth every time so the quarterback knows where to throw.

3. Snap and handoff

Same snap every play. The quarterback calls a word, the center snaps, the handoff goes to the belly with two hands.

4. No-contact habits

Runners keep hands off their flags and run around defenders, not into them. Defenders go for the flag, never the body.



10 RULES THAT CHANGE HOW YOU COACH (1 OF 2)

In our words, with the rulebook section to check. Your league can change some of these, so confirm before the first game.

1. Run anywhere in league play

League games drop the no-run zones for 8U, so your handoff plays work all over the field. Tournaments put them back, so practice one pass play near the goal line anyway.

NFL FLAG §IV.1, 3; §X.5; §XVIII; NFL FLAG §XVIII.a



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-rush

2. No rush until a handoff, in league play

Defenders wait unless the ball is handed off behind the line. Your quarterback has time: use it to teach her to look at a receiver before she throws. Tournament 8U rushes from the 7-yard line, so drill that before a tournament.

NFL FLAG §XIII; §XI.3; NFL FLAG changes #2, #3; NFL FLAG §XIII.1; NFL FLAG §XVIII.a



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-sack

3. One coach on the field, until the snap

In league games, you can stand with your team to line them up. Step off the field before the snap. At tournaments you stay on the sideline. So practice lining up without you.

NFL FLAG §XVIII.a



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-flag-pull

4. Your quarterback does not run

The rule: Handoffs, pitches and laterals only behind the line. One forward pass. It must start behind the line and cross it. The quarterback can't run with the snap. No center sneak.

Practice handoffs every week. The quarterback can't run the ball past the line herself. Every run starts with a handoff or pitch behind the line. You get 1 forward pass a play, thrown from behind the line. On game day, a dropped handoff costs you the play.

NFL FLAG §X.2-3; §XI.1-2



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-rush

5. Four downs to midfield, three to score

The rule: 4 downs to cross midfield. Then 3 downs to score. Midfield is the first down. Past it, the offense has three tries to reach the end zone. Call plays by series, and save your best play for the down you cannot waste.

NFL FLAG §I.3



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/move-the-ball

6. Punts are declared, not kicked

The rule: No kicking. On 4th down (or 3rd) the coach calls punt or play. A punt gives the other team the ball at its own 5.

On the last down before midfield, you choose. Run a play, or give the other team the ball at its own 5. Decide before the game when you will punt.

NFL FLAG §I.3; NFL FLAG changes #5



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/4th-down-punt



10 RULES THAT CHANGE HOW YOU COACH (2 OF 2)

7. Flag guarding costs a down

The rule: It means blocking a flag pull. That covers a stiff arm, or dropping your shoulder, arm, hand, head or the ball in the way. A jersey over the flags counts too. Penalty: 5 yards and the down.

Teach ball carriers to run with arms free and shirts tucked. Stiff arms are a foul. So is dropping a shoulder or covering a flag. On game day, it costs 5 yards and a down.

NFL FLAG §XIV.7; §XVII.iii



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-penalty

8. Nobody blocks, nobody screens

The rule: No blocking or screening. No holding the ball carrier or running through them.

Receivers clear space with routes, not bodies. Teach them to run past defenders, never to set up in a defender's path.

NFL FLAG §X.8; §XIV.2



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-penalty

9. Ball carriers keep their feet

The rule: No jumping, leaping or hurdling. The ball is spotted where you left the ground. Spins and jump cuts are fine. Defenders may dive to pull a flag or make a catch.

No jumping or hurdling to avoid a pull; spins and jump cuts are fine. Defenders may dive, but at youth ages we still coach them to stay up and pull.

NFL FLAG §IX.6j; §X.6-7; §XIV.2



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-flag-pull

10. Pick the try before you snap it

The rule: Touchdown: 6. The try after it: 1 point from the 5 (pass only) or 2 from the 10 (run or pass). You call your choice. Changing it costs a timeout.

1 point from the 5 must be a pass. 2 points from the 10 can be a run or a pass. Have one play ready for each, and know which you want before the touchdown happens.

NFL FLAG §VII.1, 2, 5



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-an-extra-point-plus-1-or-plus-2-xp-attempt-after-td



GAME-DAY CHECKLIST

- ☐ A flag belt and flags for every player, plus spares, in a color that does not match anyone's shorts.
- ☐ Mouth guards, water and a first aid kit.
- ☐ Game balls in the size your ruleset sets for this age.
- ☐ Your roster with jersey numbers, and who starts at quarterback and center.
- ☐ A short play sheet: three or four plays, one for the goal line, one for the try.
- ☐ A quick word with the other coach and the official on the rules you are playing.
- ☐ Someone to stat the game in the BreakAway app. Families follow along, and every player gets a stat card.
- ☐ Two plays every player knows by name, and who plays where in each.

FOR YOUR LEVEL

The ball

In NFL FLAG tournaments, boys' 8U plays with the smaller black ball. Use a ball that fits your players' hands in practice.

NFL FLAG §III, Tournament Play 3

Mouth guards

Every player wears one on the field. Bring spares: someone always forgets.

NFL FLAG §III.1

THE OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

NFL FLAG Official Playing Rules (Revised March 24, 2025)

https://cdn.mediavalet.com/usca/rcx/DgBtnnoMFUCXWCBQE3YN2w/XMiAtpBTH0er4fUrKeYJAQ/Original/NFL_Flag_Rulebook_21423.pdf

STAT YOUR GAMES FREE IN BREAKAWAY

- Statting is free.
- Pick the NFL FLAG 5v5 preset in the app. Change what your league does differently. Then stat every game.
- 100,000+ ruleset combinations, so your league's rules fit.
- Every game you stat gets a live game center families can follow from anywhere. You also get a box score and a stat card for every athlete. Team leaderboards, season totals and recaps come with it.

