

# Maine Sportsmanship League Game Rules Summary

**Divisions:** Varsity- 6<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade, JV-5<sup>th</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Pee Wee- 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. A 5<sup>th</sup> grader who plays 12 or more plays from scrimmage in a varsity game cannot play in the JV game. Teams must declare which 5<sup>th</sup> graders playing in the varsity game would be eligible to play in the JV game before the player enters the varsity game. Also, the team would be responsible to assign a person to count plays for all declared 5<sup>th</sup> graders. The opposing team has the right to ask for a play count on any of the declared 5<sup>th</sup> graders. 6<sup>th</sup> graders or 5<sup>th</sup> graders that played 12 or more plays in the varsity game, are not allowed to play in a JV game unless mutually agreed upon by both coaches. Pee Wee is 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade only

**Weight limits:** No Player weighing more than 110 lbs (PW), 135 lbs (JV) or 150 lbs (Varsity) in full equipment **without helmet** can line up in the offensive backfield or advance the ball including kick returns or on defense following a turnover. If they recover a fumble or intercept a pass, it remains dead on the spot. An offensive player exceeding the weight limit may receive a pass but cannot advance the ball. Players exceeding the weight limit will have a black football decal affixed to the front of their helmet. The home team must have a scale available and coaches may challenge a player's weight. Coaches may challenge the weight of a player before the game or during halftime without penalty to either team. When a coach challenges a weight during the game, The challenging team will be charged with a time out and play will be stopped. If the challenge is unsuccessful, the challenging team will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty. If the challenge is successful, the opposing team will be assessed an unsportsmanlike penalty.

## **Offensive Rules:**

Teams must huddle except in the last two minutes of each half  
No blocking below the waist (cut or crack blocking) anywhere on the field.  
JV and Pee Wee (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) must use a cadence, no silent snaps.  
“Banana snap” may be used at the Pee Wee (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) level

## **Defensive rules:**

Defensive linemen must line up helmet to helmet with offensive linemen and must be in a three or four point stance. Defensive players lined up on or outside the TE can be in a two point stance, If the offense uses a tight end, the defensive end cannot line up in the gap between the tackle and tight end but can line up helmet to helmet, outside shoulder or anywhere outside the tight end. There is no restriction on defensive players on the line of scrimmage outside the tight end or last interior linemen if there is not a tight end in the offensive formation  
LB's must line up 3 yds from the line of scrimmage.  
LB's can line up 1 yd from the line of scrimmage when the opponent is inside their 10 yd line.  
There are no restrictions on LB's after the ball is snapped, blitzing is allowed.  
LB's may not be moving toward the line of scrimmage before the snap trying to “time up the snap” on a blitz. If the LB is inside the 3 yds when the ball is snapped (1 yd goal line), it is a violation of the rule.  
Pee Wee (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) level only, a defensive lineman may not line up opposite the center, No NT

## **Special teams:**

**Kickoffs:** Varsity and JV - live kickoffs. Pee Wee (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) - the ball will be spotted at the receiving teams 30 yd line.

**Punts Varsity** - punts are declared The punting team must have seven players on the line of scrimmage with no more than one yard splits, two split ends, and two players including the punter in the backfield between the tackles. The receiving team must have 8 players on the line of scrimmage with no more than 3 players back. The ball must always be punted at least 7 yds from the line of scrimmage and from within the tackle box. If the punter muffs the snap, then the ball must be kicked from where the kicker gains possession unless it is outside the tackle box in which case the ball will be moved inside the tackle box but no closer to the the line of scrimmage before it is punted or unless it is less than 7 yds from the line of scrimmage in which case the ball will be moved back at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage before it is punted. No rush is allowed and the punting team is not allowed downfield at the snap. The play becomes live when the ball is kicked, the punt can be returned, the receiving team may block and the punting team may proceed downfield to tackle the punt returner.

**Punts JV-** punts are declared . The punting team must have seven players on the line of scrimmage with no more than one yard splits, two split ends, and two players including the punter in the backfield between the tackles. The receiving team must have 8 players on the line of scrimmage with no more than 3 players back. The ball must always be punted at least 7 yds from the line of scrimmage and from within the tackle box. If the punter muffs the snap, then the ball must be kicked from where the kicker gains possession unless it is outside the tackle box in which case the ball will be moved inside the tackle box but no closer to the the line of scrimmage before it is punted or unless it is less than 7 yds from the line of scrimmage in which case the ball will be moved back at least 7 yards from the line of scrimmage before it is punted. No rush is allowed or no blocking takes place even after the snap. The punt may be caught but not returned. If the receiving player muffs the punt behind him, it will be spotted where it rolls dead or is downed. If the receiver muffs the punt forward, the ball will be spotted where the player first made contact with the ball.

**Punts Pee Wee (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade )-** Punt is declared and the ball is advanced 30 yds or to the receiving teams 20 yd line whichever is further from the receiving teams goal line.

**Field Goals and extra points :** Field goals and extra point attempts are declared kicks at all levels. There is no rush or blocking, lineman take a knee. The ball must be snapped to a holder and the ball must be kicked from at least 5 yds from the line of scrimmage. If the holder muffs the snap, he may bring the ball back to where the kicking tee is placed.

**Coaches on the field:** Varsity and JV – one offensive and one defensive coach are allowed on the field. Pee Wee – two offensive and two defensive coaches are allowed on the field. No coaching after the huddle breaks but offensive coaches are allowed to position players before the snap. On field coaches should be 20 yds. From the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.

**Regulation game and OT:**

At all levels, a regulation game will consist of four 8 minute stopped time quarters with an 8 minute running time break at halftime. If a game remains tied at the end of regulation, Varsity will play up to 3 overtime possessions and JV will play one overtime possession before the game ends in a tie. High School Federation rules for overtime will be used. At the Pee Wee level, games can end in a tie (No overtime).

**Game Balls:**

A junior size ball shall be used in all Varsity and JV games. A Pee Wee size ball will be used in all Pee Wee games (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> grade). The offensive team has the option to provide the ball to be used.

**Sportsmanship Rule:** Once a team gains a 24-point or greater advantage, the head coach is responsible to take deliberate steps with play calling and personal changes not to increase the lead. These steps shall include but are not limited to no passing, no double hand-offs (reverses) and obvious personal changes. If team scores after a 24-point lead, it does not automatically indicate a violation of the rule if the proper steps were taken.

**Penalty assessments:**

Violation of any of the MSL rules such as having LB's inside 3yds at the snap or D linemen in the gaps or not using a cadence at the JV level will result in an illegal formation or an illegal procedure 5 yd penalty. On field coaches continuing to coach after the huddle breaks may result in a 15 yd unsportsmanlike penalty after a warning has been issued. Violation of the sportsmanship rule may also result in a 15 yd unsportsmanlike penalty.

**High School Federation Rules:**

High School Federation football rules will be used for all games except for the rules noted above.

**Contact Information:**

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**Game cancellations:** If a game has to be cancelled due to weather, the home team should make the decision at least 60 minutes before game time, earlier if the visitors are traveling a long distance. The visiting team should be the first to be called. Ray should be called next so he can stop the officials from coming. Also, let Ray know if you have set a make-up date so he can work on scheduling officials. Please be advised, the officials also have the right to cancel or suspend a game if there are unsafe playing conditions such as standing water or lightening. If the officials come to the field, they have to be paid even if the game is cancelled or not completed.