

Rocklin Junior Thunder's Tiny Mite Flag Football Rule Book
(Updated for the 2026 Season)

Below are the official RJT Rules for Tiny Mite Division play. If there is a challenge to any interpretation of a rule made by a referee, a Head Coach may request review by the Tiny Mite Coordinator immediately after the play in question but before the next play. The game clock will stop during review. All decisions are final.

1. Tiny Mite Goals + Divisions

1.1. Goals. The RJT Tiny Mite program is the start of RJT football for boys and girls aged 5-8 years old and in K-4th grade as of August 31st of the current year. The overall goal of the program is to provide young players with a fun, positive, safe, and competitive environment to learn football and develop their individual skills for a team sport. Our philosophy is that player development and learning occurs regardless of playing time during games. Players will learn the proper football fundamentals (i.e. lining up at the line of scrimmage ("LOS"), correct direction of play, run versus pass plays) and eventually be ready for the next level at RJT.

1.2. Tiny Mite Divisions

1.2.1. To maintain a safe and competitive playing field, all efforts will be made for players aged 5 and 6 and any players who are Tiny Mite aged and playing football for the first time, to be placed on teams together and play a majority of their games against similarly aged and experienced teams.

1.2.2. Players aged 7 and 8 and those who have at least two prior football seasons playing experience will be placed on teams together and play a majority of their games against similarly aged and experienced teams.

1.2.3. Each team will have eight (8) to ten (10) players, one (1) head coach and one (1) assistant coach. Teams made up primarily of those in 1.2.1 may have one (1) additional assistant coach. All coaches must meet RJT coaching requirements (i.e. application, fingerprinting).

1.2.3.1. Each Head Coach will receive a RJT duffle bag with the list below included. The duffle bag and all contents will be distributed at the first practice or as soon as practical thereafter and must be returned to the Tiny Mite Coordinator after the last game of the season.

- 1 dry erase board with 4 markers
- 4 footballs
- 10 yellow flags with belt attached
- 30 small disc cones
- 1 first aid kit

1.2.3.2.

2. Overall Game Format: 6 v. 6

2.1. 6 players per team will take the field at any time during play.

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- 2.2. Player time and/or amount of touches will be at coaches' discretion (i.e. player skill level, player's attention during games and practices, etc.). All reasonable efforts to ensure players received approximate equal playing time will be made. To foster a developmental approach and remain competitive, players who are less experienced may have less playing time or touches during a game than more skilled players.
 - 2.3. Field is normal regulation football width and 50 yards long with an end zone on the side. Play will be half-field.
 - 2.4. Two 20-minute running clock halves (*5-10 minute break at half for RJT Mascot Cheer to perform*)
 - 2.5. Each possession starts at the 45 yard line after scores, turnover on downs and/or halftime.
 - 2.6. 45 second play clock from the end of prior play
 - 2.7. The offensive team has three downs to get a first down at mid-field, then 4 downs to score once they have crossed mid-field.
 - 2.8. All players are eligible!
 - 2.9. **NO RUSHING THE QUARTERBACK!**
 - 2.9.1. **Exception:** The QB fakes a handoff which will trigger a defensive player to cross the LOS and rush the QB.
3. **Scoring**
 - 3.1. Touchdown = 6 points
 - 3.2. Extra Point from the 5 yard line = 1 pt
 - 3.3. Extra Point from the 10 yard line = 2 pts
 - 3.4. No field goals will be attempted or awarded in this Division.
 4. **Tiny Mite Rules**
 - 4.1. **Division Rules**
 - 4.1.1. UNLIMITED run plays
 - 4.1.2. 45 second play clock
 - 4.1.3. One (1) Coach per team is allowed on the field at any given time
 - 4.1.4. Defensive players can cross the line of scrimmage when a handoff, fake handoff or backward pass has occurred. THE PLAY CLOCK DOES NOT RESET WHEN A BACKWARD PASS IS MADE ("Deception Rule"). This helps with the integrity of the passing game for both offense and defense.
 - 4.2. **Basic Rules**
 - 4.2.1. Coin flip determines choice of possession or direction (winning team can elect to defer to the 2nd half)
 - 4.2.2. The clock will only stop for time-outs and injuries unless it is the last minute of the game. *NOTE: The clock does not stop for incomplete passes, out of bounds, change of possession.*
 - 4.2.3. **Time-Outs.**
 - 4.2.3.1. Each team has TWO 30-second timeouts per half

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- 4.2.3.2. If a timeout is called after a touchdown, the clock will not start until the play after the conversion attempt
- 4.2.4. Teams switch sides at halftime.
- 4.2.5. If there is a bad snap, the ball is dead and placed at the prior LOS. There is NO loss of yardage.
- 4.2.6. Center cannot take a handoff from the QB.
- 4.2.7. Ball is placed where a flag is pulled, not where the ball is when the flag is pulled.
- 4.2.8. A receiver must have one (1) foot in bounds when making a reception.
- 4.2.9. Lateral passes are allowed but if the ball hits the ground, the ball is spotted at that yard mark.
- 4.2.10. Absolutely **NO TACKLING OR BLOCKING** (a stationary pick is allowed but the blocking player cannot move)
- 4.2.11. Only one (1) offensive player can be in motion at a given time prior to the snap.
- 4.2.12. Three (3) offensive players must be on the LOS prior to the snap or Illegal Formation penalty will be assessed. The Center counts as one (1) player on the LOS.
- 4.2.13. No direct QB run plays.
- 4.2.14. The ball carrier can spin to avoid their flag being pulled but cannot purposefully or accidentally position their hand to block a flag from being pulled ("flag guard").
- 4.2.15. No fumbles (a fumbled, or stripped ball is dead and placed at the spot of the fumble with the offensive team retaining possession.)
- 4.2.16. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty. The offense will be allowed one (1) play
- 4.2.17. **Last minute of the game.** The clock will stop in the final 1 minute of the game for:
 - 4.2.17.1. Incompletions
 - 4.2.17.2. Out of Bounds
 - 4.2.17.3. QB Sack and kneel downs
 - 4.2.17.4. Change of Possession Penalties. If it's an offensive penalty the clock will start on the official's whistle unless the penalty is a dead ball foul.

4.3. Special Alert Rules

- 4.3.1. Deception Rule. Defensive players can cross the line of scrimmage when a handoff, fake handoff or backward pass has occurred. This *Deception Rule* is applied to define the integrity of the LOS and development of the passing game for both offense and defense. This rule applies to all Divisions. Interceptions can be returned for a TD. If the intercepting team's flag is pulled before the end zone then possession will begin where the defender is flagged.
- 4.3.2. **MERCY RULE.**

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4.3.2.1. If a team is up by 30 or more points, they only have 2 downs to get a first down and 2 downs to score until that point difference is trimmed below 30 pts, after which regular game rules apply.

4.3.2.2. The team that is behind by 30 or more points will start their offensive possession at the +10 yard line and get 4 downs to score. If the point difference is trimmed below 30 pts, then regular game rules apply.

4.3.3. Pass Game Rules

4.3.3.1. Offense has to throw the ball within 7 seconds. The sack count starts on the snap of the ball no matter which offensive play is attempted.

4.3.3.2. Forward pass can be underhand or overhand as long as it is beyond the LOS.

4.3.3.3. If the QB does not release the ball before time expires, the result of the play is a sack and the ball stays at the LOS.

4.3.3.4. There are NO passes behind the LOS. This is a 5 yard penalty and loss of down.

4.3.3.5. Blitzing the QB is allowed any time from 7 yards off the line of scrimmage.

4.3.3.6. The QB can HAND or PITCH the ball off to another player and they can throw the ball within the allotted time. If/When the QB hands or pitches or throws a backward pass to another player, this alerts the defense that they CAN cross the LOS to pull the flag of the player with the ball.

4.3.3.7. Offense has the option to throw a backward pass for a double pass play. This alerts the defense that they CAN cross the LOS to pull the flag of the player with the ball.

4.3.3.8. Defense must start 2 yards off the LOS unless the ball is at the +1 then the Defense can start at Goal line.

4.3.4. Run Game Rules. A play will be considered a run play, when the ball carrier crosses the line of scrimmage, or if a player takes a hand-off from the quarterback, and does not cross the line of scrimmage in 6 seconds. A play in which a player takes a hand-off from the quarterback, and then throws a forward pass will be considered a pass play, and not count as a team's run play.

4.3.5. Dead Ball. The play is dead when the following occurs to the ball carrier:

4.3.5.1. Flag is pulled

4.3.5.2. Runner's knee or elbow touches the ground

4.3.5.3. Runner steps out of bounds with at least one (1) foot.

4.3.5.4. Runner loses their flag and the opposing team touches the player.

4.3.5.5. Runner dives, jumps or leaps while possessing the ball; ball is spotted where the runner left their feet. For clarity, a player may jump or leap to catch a pass.

5. GAME PENALTIES

5.1. OFFENSE PENALTIES

5.1.1. **Offensive Pass Interference** – 10 yard penalty and replay the down

5.1.2. **Illegal motion (2+ players in motion)** – 5 yard penalty and replay the down

5.1.3. **Illegal Formation** – 5 yard penalty. Replay the down

5.1.4. **Illegal Run** – 5 yard penalty + loss of down

5.1.5. **False Start** – 5 yard penalty. Replay the down

5.1.6. **Illegal Forward Pass** – 5 yard penalty + loss of down (QB steps over the LOS or QB throws a forward pass beyond the LOS)

5.1.7. **Blocking** – ball is placed at the spot of the foul + loss of down

5.1.8. **Leaping** (leaping or diving to advance the ball or avoid a flag pull) – ball is placed at the spot of the foul + loss of down

5.1.9. **Flag Guarding (including stiff arms)** – 5 yard penalty from the spot of the foul + loss of down

5.1.10. **Unsportsmanlike conduct** – 15 yard penalty (possible ejection of offending player as determined by the referee)

5.1.11. **Delay of Game** – clock is stopped + 5 yard penalty

NOTE: There will not be a penalty for QB throwing a forward pass into an empty area without a realistic chance of completion, specifically to avoid a sack or loss of yardage (“Intentionally Grounding”) in this Division.

5.2. DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

5.2.1. **Defensive Pass Interference** - 10 yard penalty and replay down unless the play results in an offensive catch; Offense decides whether to accept the penalty or the catch. NOTE: 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.

5.2.2. **Illegal Contact (holding, jams, etc.)** – 5 yard penalty and replay down unless the play results in an offensive catch; Offense decides whether to accept the penalty or the catch. NOTE: 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.

5.2.3. **Defensive Holding while pulling flag** – 5 yard penalty added to the end of the play and replay down. NOTE: 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.

5.2.4. **Illegal Flag Pull (before player has ball)** – 5 yard penalty and replay down. NOTE: 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.

5.2.5. **Off-sides** – 5 yard penalty and replay down. NOTE: 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.

5.2.6. Illegal Rushing (before a hand-off has occurred) – 5 yard penalty and replay the down; offense decides depending on the result of the play. NOTE: 1st down can occur depending on the yardage.

5.2.7. Inadvertent tackle – 5 yard penalty added to the end of the play and replay down.

5.2.8. Inadvertent tackle from behind with a clear path to end zone – Automatic Touchdown awarded

5.2.9. Unsportsmanlike conduct – 15 yard penalty + automatic 1st down (possible ejection of offending player as determined by the referee)

Defensive Penalties inside the 10 yard line will result in half the distance to the Goal line if applicable.

6. **OVERTIME FORMAT (ONLY USED IN THE PLAYOFFS)**

6.1. Overtime period will take place with each team receiving a possession.

6.2. Coin flip determines choice of 1st or 2nd possession

6.3. Possession begins at the 10 yard line (both teams will go in the same direction)

6.4. If a touchdown is scored, a team can elect to go for a 1 or 2 point conversion.

6.5. If the Defense intercepts the ball it's a change of possession starting at the 10 yard line unless the Defense returns it for a TD. Game could be over if (1) the intercepting team was ahead in points in OT prior to playing Defense or (2) intercepting team returns it for a TD on its 1st Defensive possession of OT.

6.6. If the game is still tied, overtime will be repeated until there is a winner.

6.7. Offensive team will get 2 downs to score from the +10 yard line

6.8. Teams alternate first possession each overtime period