



Flag Football Rules

Flag Football is a contact sport and injuries are a possibility. The department of University Recreation, Intramural Sports assumes no responsibility for injuries; however basic, first aid will be available.

Regulations published in the Intramural Sports Handbook will be the governing policies for all intramural sports. Participants are responsible for possessing a thorough understanding of these regulations and their implications.

Flag Football will be conducted under the rules of the National Intramural and Recreational Sports Association published rule book. A review of these rules, along with the Intramural Sports modifications are as follows:

All Rule and Policy and Procedure updates/changes are highlighted in yellow.

ELIGIBILITY AND GUIDELINES

All participants must meet the eligibility guidelines as outlined in the Intramural Sports Participants Handbook.

PLAYERS AND ROSTERS

1. **Men's and Women's:** The game shall be played between two (2) teams of seven (7) players each.
 - a. Four (4) players are required to start the game. The game may be continued with less than four (4) players if the Intramural Sports Staff deems the game still competitive.
 - b. Roster limit is 16 players.
2. **Co-Rec:** The game shall be played between two (2) teams of eight (8) players each; four (4) men and four (4) women.
 - a. The roster limit for co-rec leagues is 18 players.
 - b. Teams with seven (7) players shall be; four (4) men and three (3) women or four (4) women and three (3) men.
 - c. Six players; three (3) men and three (3) women, or four (4) women and two (2) men.
 - d. Five (5) players are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit. (2 males, 3 females or 3 males, 2 females).

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

1. All teams are required to furnish their own jerseys.
 - a. All jerseys must be of the same color.
 - b. All jerseys must have numbers on the back.
 - i. Numbers 0-5 are preferred.
 - ii. No three digit numbers.
 - iii. Numbers may NOT be taped
 1. Numbers that are painted, sharpie, marker etc. are acceptable
2. If a participant is bleeding or has blood on their jersey they will be removed from the game until the bleeding is under control. Prior to any participants re-entering a game the bleeding must be stopped, cleaned and any cuts or lacerations must be covered. Participants will not be allowed to participate in any activity until the above conditions are met.
3. **Jewelry:** Jewelry or hard hair control devices will not be allowed. This includes but is not limited to necklaces, earrings, newly pierced earrings, facial piercing, rings, bracelets & watches. Individuals will not be allowed to tape over any jewelry item. If you cannot remove the item you cannot play.
 - a. The only type of permissible jewelry are medical alert bracelets. These bracelets must be taped down to the participant's wrist, with the important medical information showing.
4. **Shoes:** Only non-marking shoes will be allowed. Athletic style shoes are preferred. Cleats are permitted for Intramural Sports Flag Football. NO metal cleats are permitted.
5. **Supports, Braces, & Pads:** No casts/splints will be allowed under any circumstances. No pads or braces will be allowed above the waist. Players who wear a knee brace with exposed metal or metal hinges are required to cover it. Kneepads of a soft pliable nature will be allowed below the waist. Any player wearing illegal or dangerous equipment shall not be permitted to play. All equipment shall be subject to the approval of the Intramural Sports Staff and their decisions shall be final.
6. **Headwear:** Players may wear a one-piece elastic headband made of a soft pliable material. They may also wear knit stocking caps in cold weather. Rubber or elastic cloth bands may be used to control hair. No other headwear will be allowed. No baseball caps, bandannas (including "Do-rags") or helmets.
7. **Pants/Shorts:** NO pockets are permitted in shorts or pants. Shorts or pants must also not match the color of the team's flag belts.
 - a. NO zip up pockets, taped/stapled pockets, or exposed openings.
8. **Flag Belt:** Each player must wear a 1 piece quick release belt, which shall be provided by UREC Intramural Sports.

TIMING

1. Games shall consist of two (2) 20 minute halves. The clock will continuously run until the final two (2) minutes of the second half.
2. Half-time shall be two (3) minutes in length.
3. Timeouts
 - a. Each team is allowed three (3) one-minute time-outs per game.

OVERTIME

1. There will be only one (1) coin toss.
2. The winner of the toss shall be given options of offense, defense, or direction.
3. The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
4. Both teams will go the same direction in overtime.
5. Each team will be given a series of downs (4 downs) from the 10-yard line. The object is to score a touchdown.
6. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the second team will still have a series of downs to attempt to win the game.
7. Try for points will still be attempted in a normal manner by any team who scores a touchdown.
8. If the defense intercepts the ball at any point during overtime the play is dead immediately.
9. If the score is tied after both teams have had their series of downs, the process will be repeated. However, the team that went second will now go first and the team that went first will now go second. The teams will rotate positions until a winner is declared.
10. Each team is entitled to one (1) timeout only during the entire overtime.

SCORING and BEGINNING THE GAME

All games shall begin with a coin toss.

1. Coin Toss

- a. The Referee shall toss a coin and offer the winning captain these options:
 - i. To defer his/her option until the second half.
 - ii. To receive the ball first or play defense first.
 - iii. To defend a specific goal.
- b. At the start of the second half, the loser of the first half coin toss shall have his/her option to be on offense or defense, or which goal to defend, unless the first half winner deferred his/her selection.

2. 5-Minute Rule and Forfeits

- a. If one team has below the minimum number of players at game time, the 5-Minute Rule will come into effect.
 - i. The team with less than the minimum will have 5 minutes to accrue the minimum number of players to begin the game
 - ii. In this 5 minutes, the other team will accrue six (6) points for each minute that passes.
 - iii. If the 5 minutes expires and the other team does not have the minimum number of players, the game will be forfeited and the team charged the forfeit fine.
 - iv. If the team gains the minimum number of players within the 5 minutes, the game will begin. The score will stand for the first set and the clock will begin at its current time.
 - v. If NO participants appear from either team, the game will be a double forfeit
 - vi. If both teams have below the minimum number of players at game time, the 5-Minute Rule will go into effect for both teams.

- vii. Example: Team A is on time and checked in prior to game time and Team B gains the minimum number of required players, 3 minutes late. The game will still be played but the starting score will be 21-0 and the game will begin with 17 minutes remaining in the first half.

3. **Mercy Rule**

- a. At five (5) minutes left to play in the fourth quarter, or any time thereafter, if a team is up by 30 points or more, the mercy rule will be in effect and the game shall be ended.
 - b. At two (2) minutes left to play in the fourth quarter, or any time thereafter, if a team is up by 19 points or more, the mercy rule will be in effect and the game shall be ended.
 - c. COREC Mercy Rule: At five (5) minutes, its 36 points. At two (2) minutes, its 25 points. Enforcement of the mercy is the same as M/W games.
4. **Substitutions** - Players may substitute at any time between downs. There shall be no limit to the number of substitutes. Substitutes must be within 15 yards of the ball before the play starts.

BALL in PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT of BOUNDS

- 1. **Live Ball:** The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the Referee has blown the whistle to put the ball in play. A ball becomes live when the ball is legally snapped before the 25-second count.
- 2. **Dead Ball:** A live ball becomes dead as provided in the rules, or when an official sounds the whistle, or otherwise declares the ball dead. The ball is declared dead when:
 - a. It goes out of bounds.
 - b. Any part of the runner's person other than hand or foot touches the ground. Ball in possession is considered part of the hand.
 - c. A touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful try-for-point is made.
 - d. Any punt comes to rest on the ground and no player attempts to secure it.
 - e. A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
 - f. A backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground, or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A ball snapped from scrimmage, or other backward pass, that hits the ground before or after getting to the intended receiver, is dead at the spot where it hits the ground.
 - g. A runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached from the belt.
 - h. A runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulders and the knees, including the deflagging.
 - i. A passer is deflagged or legally touched before releasing the ball.
 - j. A muff of a protected scrimmage kick strikes the ground.
 - k. The official sounds the whistle inadvertently during a down.
Result: Team in possession at time of whistle may choose to take the play from the spot of the ball at the whistle or replay the down.
Note: Any penalties that occur during this down will be accepted

3. **Out-of-Bounds:** A ball in player possession is out-of-bounds when the runner or the ball touches the ground or anything else which is on or outside a boundary line, except a player or game official. If the inbounds runner is touched by a player or an official on the sidelines out-of-bounds, the ball is still in play. A loose ball is out-of-bounds when it touches the ground, a player, or anything else, which is on or outside a boundary line. A player who is catching a forward pass is considered out-of-bounds when any part of his/her person contacts that area declared out-of-bounds. One foot inbounds is needed for a legal reception.

SERIES of DOWNS

1. **Number of Downs:** The team in possession of the ball shall have four (4) consecutive downs to advance to the next zone line-to-gain. A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone.
2. **Line to Gain:** The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless the distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor if a line to gain has been achieved.

KICKING

1. **Free Kick:** There will be no free kick to start the game or the second half. The ball will be put in play at the 14-yard line to begin each half and after each touchdown.
2. **Punt**
 - a. **Decision to Punt:** Prior to making the ball ready for play on fourth down, the Referee will ask the offensive captain if he/she wants to punt the ball. The Referee will then communicate this decision to the defensive team captain.
 1. The offense may request a punt on any down. After such announcement, the ball must be kicked. Exception: If a) a team time-out is called, or b) a penalty occurs anytime during this down which results in the right of the kicking team to repeat the down again. The Referee must then again ask the offensive captain whether he/she wants a punt.
 - b. **Formation:** Neither the kicking team nor the receiving team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked. After receiving the snap, the kicker must immediately kick and in a continuous motion.
 - c. **Recovery:** If a punt touches a player on either team and then hits the ground it is dead and belongs to receiving team. If a punt hits a receiving player, and is then caught in the air by the receiving team, it can be advanced. If a punt hits a receiving player, and is caught in the air by the kicking team, it belongs to the kicking team at that spot. If the receiving team catches a punt and then fumbles, and the kicking team catches the fumble in the air before it hits the ground it can be advanced by the kicking team.

- d. **Out of Bounds and Ball at:** If a punted ball goes out of bounds any time before being touched, or comes to rest between the goal lines, it shall belong to the receiving team at that spot. If the ball goes into the end zone it may be taken as a touchback and put in play at the receiving team's 14-yard line or the receiving team may advance it out of the end zone.

3. Kick Catch Interference, First Touching, & Fair Catch

- a. **Kick Catch Interference:** No member of kicking team may interfere with the ability of the receiving team to catch a protected scrimmage kick. This includes anytime the kicking team touches the ball or any receiving player while the ball is in flight. **Penalty: Kick Catch Interference. The receiving team may take the ball at the spot of the foul, or accept a 10-yard penalty from previous spot and replay the down.**
- b. **First Touching (ball not in flight):** If any member of kicking team touches the kicked ball first, after it crosses the line of scrimmage, it is referred to as first touching and the receiving team may take the ball at that spot or at the spot determined by the action that follows first touching. The receiving team loses the right to take the spot of first touching if during the return a foul is committed by the receiving team, or any penalty is accepted by the receiving team.
- c. **Fair Catch:** NO Fair Catch in Intramural Sports Flag Football.

SNAPPING and CATCHING the BALL

1. **The Snap:** The snapper shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hands. The ball does not have to be snapped between the legs.
 - a. Following the ready for play signal, no defensive player may break the plane of the line of scrimmage at any time until the ball is snapped.
 - b. No offensive player shall make a false start, or any action that simulates the start of play. This penalty may be enforced regardless if the ball is snapped.
 - c. The snapper must have both feet behind the scrimmage line. They may also not simulate the start of the snap.
 - d. The player receiving the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the scrimmage line at the time of the snap.
2. **Legal Positions:** All players are subject to motion, position, and illegal procedure rules.
 - a. Anytime at or after the ball is ready for play, each Team A player must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap.
 - b. During the snap, the offense must have at least one (1) player on their scrimmage line. Two, three, and four point stances are legal.
 - c. One (1) offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line at the snap.
 - d. Following a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary for one (1) full second before the snap.

3. **After the Play:** Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after the scrimmage down. The snapper will bring the ball from the huddle to the scrimmage line.
4. **Handing the Ball:** Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.
5. **Legal and Illegal Forward Passes** - All players are eligible to touch or catch a forward pass. Only one (1) forward pass may be thrown per down. A forward pass is illegal:
 - a. if either of the passer's feet are beyond the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball leaves his/her hand;
 - b. if thrown after team possession has changed during the down, i.e. an interception;
 - c. if intentionally grounded to save loss of yardage;
 1. only called when it is an effort to not lose yardage.
 - d. if a passer catches his/her untouched forward pass;
 - e. if there is more than one [1] forward pass per down.
6. **Open-Closed Plays (Co-Rec Only).** During the offensive team's possession, there may not be two [2] consecutive legal forward pass completions, from a male passer to a male receiver. A male may never run the ball past the line of scrimmage.
 - a. During an "open" play, any combination of passers or receivers, or runners may advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - b. After a male-to-male completion, the play becomes "closed". This rule also applies to the try for point.
 - c. During a "closed" play, the play must involve a female passer or a female receiver.
 - d. The spot where the ball becomes dead, by rule, must be beyond the scrimmage line for the play to become "open."
 - e. There are no other restrictions concerning a male passer completing legal forward passes to a female receiver, or female to female, or female to male.

Pass Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot where the second consecutive male-to-male completed legal forward pass is released, and a loss of down. Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is "open" or "closed"

Run Penalty: A male may not advance the ball by running across the line of scrimmage. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot, replay the down. . Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next play is "open" or "closed".**

7. Backward Pass and Fumble

- a. A runner may pass the ball backward at any time.
- b. A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted in flight inbounds by any player and advanced.
- c. A backward pass or fumble which goes out of bounds between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the out of bounds spot.
- d. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground outside of the end zones is down at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on downs.

- f. A backward pass or fumble by the offense that first hits the ground in
 1. the team's own end zone is a safety, or
 2. In the opponent's end zone is a touchback.
8. **Pass Interference** – Intramural Sports flag football is non-contact sport, however, incidental contact will occur.
 - a. **Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot.** Note: Offensive screen blocking beyond the line of scrimmage **DURING** a pass attempt is considered Offensive Pass Interference.
 - b. **Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot.** Note: If contact is made on a receiver behind the line of scrimmage during a pass attempt, the penalty is **Illegal Contact**, not Defensive Pass Interference.
 - c. In a. and b. above, pass interference is defined as bumping, pushing, or unnecessary contact with an opponent OR restricting a player from access to a pass while on offense or defense.
 - d. Players may **NOT** "go through opponents" to get to a ball that is in flight. This could result in automatic ejection from the game.
9. **General Information**
 - a. A pass is any exchange of the ball that involves airtime. This can be a forward or backward, overhand pass, underhand pitch, or any other toss or flip of the ball.
 - b. The pass begins when the ball is released from the passer's hand. The ball is dead if the passer is deflagged or legally touched before the release.
 - c. The initial direction of a pass determines whether a pass is forward or backward.
 - d. If a forward or backward pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players, the ball becomes dead, is considered a completed pass, and belongs to the offensive team.

SCORING and TOUCHBACKS

1. **Touchdown** - (Co-Rec) if a female scores a touchdown; throwing, receiving a pass or running across the goal line, the point value is nine (9). All other touchdowns are six (6) points.
2. **Extra Points** - Ball in play from the 3 yard line = 1 point
Ball in play from the 10 yard line = 2 points, Ball in play from the 20 yard line = 3 points
Note: The try ends when Team B secures possession. Team B cannot score during the Try.
3. **Safety** - When a safety is scored (two [2] points) the ball belongs to the scoring team at their own 14-yard line.
4. **General Information** - After any score, the ball shall be placed in play at the opposing team's 14-yard line, unless moved by penalty
 - a. To be ruled a touchdown; the ball must be on or over the goal line.
 - b. The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown will be disallowed.

- c. Once the captain makes the choice for one, two, or three points after a touchdown, he/she may change the decision only after an offensive or defensive charged team time-out.
- d. A team, which intercepts a pass in its own end zone, may advance the ball out of the end zone. It is a touchback if the interceptor is deflagged before leaving his/her end zone.

PLAYER CONDUCT

1. **Personal Fouls:** No player, substitute, or coach shall commit a personal foul. Personal fouls may include but are not limited to:
 - a. Using fist, foot, knee, or leg to contact an opponent.
 - b. Tackling the ball carrier (automatic ejection).
 - c. Steal, attempt to steal or strip, or bat the ball from a player in possession.
 - d. Illegal Contact.
 - e. Hurdling an upright player, tripping, clipping, etc.
 - f. Diving is allowed as long as there is no contact initiated.
 - g. Unnecessary roughness.
 - h. Touching a player or ball carrier with undo force.
 - i. Roughing the passer (automatic first down) - applies only to the player throwing a legal forward pass behind the offensive line of scrimmage. If a defender contacts the passer in any fashion, whether or not he/she touches the pass, it is roughing the passer.
2. **The runner may not:**
 - a. Be aided by a teammate (grabbed, pushed, or pulled).
 - b. Stiff-arm an opponent.
 - c. Guard their flags by blocking with arms, hands, or the ball, and thereby denying an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt.
3. **Unfair Acts:** No player, substitute, coach or others subject to the rules shall use disconcerting words or phrases or commit any act not in accordance with the spirit for the purpose of confusing the opponent.
Penalty: Personal Foul, Unfair Act, 10 yards.

BLOCKING and SCREENING

1. Blocking, as in regulation football, is prohibited. A player may not use his/her hands or body to block or ward off an opponent.
2. Offensive players may protect the runner by screening. The offensive screen block shall take place without contact and the screener may maintain a position (moving or stationary) between the defensive player and the runner. The screen blocker shall have his/her arms at their sides or behind their back. Any use of arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use a hand or arm to break a fall or retain balance. Player's must remain on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking. No part of the screener's body, except their feet, may be in contact with the ground.
3. Defensive players must avoid the offensive player's screen block.
4. The runner may not stiff arm or lower a shoulder into an opponent.
5. Illegal contact between the blocker/rusher will be called against the player determined to have initiated contact (similar to "block/charge" in basketball). Repeated illegal contact could result in ejection from the game.

6. "Splitting the defenders" is when a rusher creates contact with two blockers by running in between their two screens. If the rusher creates contact it is illegal contact on the defense. If the blockers create the contact it is illegal contact on the offense.

FLAG REMOVAL

1. Deflagging (removal of the flag by a player) or legal touching is allowed only under special circumstances similar to tackling in football in that players must have possession of the ball before they can be deflagged or touched legally.
2. When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play continues. The deflagging reverts to a one hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and the knees.
3. In circumstances where the flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the result of the play.
4. Pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball or intentionally touching an offensive player without the ball is a foul.
5. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is a foul.

SUMMARY of PENALTIES

1. Loss of 5 yards

- a. Encroachment (Dead Ball)
- b. False start (Dead Ball)
- c. Illegal snap (Dead Ball)
- d. Delay of game (Dead Ball)
- e. Infraction of free kick formation (Dead Ball)
- f. Encroachment of free kick lines (Dead Ball)
- g. Illegal motion
- h. Illegal shift
- i. Intentional grounding (Loss of down)
- j. Illegal substitution
- k. Free kick out of bounds
- l. Required equipment worn illegally
- m. Player receiving snap within 2 yards of scrimmage line
- n. Helping the runner
- o. Illegal formation
- p. Illegal forward pass (Loss of down for offense)
- q. Illegal advancement (Co-Rec)

2. Loss of 10 yards

- a. Kick catch interference
- b. Two or more consecutive encroachments during same down interval
- c. Forward pass interference
- d. Illegally secured flag belt on touchdown, the score is no good (Loss of down) and disqualification
- e. Unsportsmanlike player, coach, or fan conduct
- f. Spiking, throwing, kicking, or not returning the ball to the official
- g. Steal, strike, or attempt to strip the ball
- h. Trip, hurdle, tackle, clip, stiff arm, or any unnecessary contact of any nature

- i. Roughing the passer (Automatic first down)
 - j. Illegal offensive screen blocking
 - k. Flag guarding by offense, illegal removal by defense
 - l. Obstruction of runner
 - m. Illegal participation
 - n. Defensive illegal use of hands
 - o. Illegal Equipment
3. **Note: Any flagrant activities associated with 5 or 10-yard penalties result in immediate disqualification**