

East Carolina University
Intramural Sports
Flag Football Rules

I. Governing Rules

Play will be governed by the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) Flag Football Rules. The following are modifications and highlights of these rules. A copy of this book may be reviewed in the Intramural Sports office (SRC 207).

II. Equipment

- A. No protective equipment may be worn: i.e. helmets, shoulder pads or hip pads. All protective medical materials (tape, pads, etc.) must be approved by the Game Official. Casts worn above or below the waist are illegal equipment.
- B. Molded cleats or tennis shoes are the only allowable footwear. **NO METAL OR METAL TIPPED CLEATS ARE ALLOWED.** Shoes must be worn at all times.
- C. Shirts must be worn, with either tails tucked inside pants or short enough to be a minimum of 4 inches above the belt. Jerseys which have been altered in any manner which produces a knot like protrusion or creates a tear-away jersey are illegal. Players of the same team must wear the same color or similar colored jerseys.
- D. **NO BELT LOOPS OR POCKETS ARE ALLOWED ON PANTS. Pants must be a different color than the flag belts.**
- E. All team captains must check out jerseys WITH A VALID ONE-CARD from the Intramural Scorekeeper at the field. Intramural flag belts will be supplied by Intramural Sports and they are the only flags that may be used.
- F. Intramural Sports shall provide a game ball, however each team may use a legal ball of its own choice while in possession. Men shall use the regulation ball while women or co-rec teams may use the regular, intermediate, junior, or youth ball.
- G. The use of headgear (including hats), **JEWELRY**, body pads or any unyielding or dangerous equipment is **prohibited**. Headwear containing any exposed knots, such as bandannas, is illegal. Should there be question regarding the legality of any equipment, the Referee will make the final ruling.
- H. Players may carry a playbook inside their clothing as long as it is not made of an unyielding material. Playbooks may also be worn outside the clothing on a wrist band.
- I. A towel may be placed under the ball, regardless of weather or field conditions.
- J. Hand warmers worn around the waist are **ILLEGAL**.

III. First Downs

- A. A first down is awarded to a team whenever they advance the ball across the next 20 yard marker. Four downs will be allowed to complete the task.

IV. Timing

- A. A game shall consist of **two 20-minute halves** with a continuous running clock.
- B. **Stop timing will be used during the last 2 minutes of EACH HALVE**, at which time the clock will stop on all whistles other than deflagging. **Teams shall be notified and the clock shall stop at the beginning of the 2-minute period.**
- C. **During the first 18 minutes of the each half the clock will stop only for a team or official time out.**
- D. The clock will run during a P.A.T. attempt. Exception: In the final 2 minutes of the second half and if a time-out is called after a touchdown (not in the last two minutes of the game), a PAT will be an untimed down.
- E. Each team is allowed two 60-second time outs per half (time outs may not be carried over).
- F. After a stopped clock, time will begin at the snap of the ball, unless in the final 2 minutes of the second half as dependent on the previous play. When a team is awarded a new series in the final 2 minutes of the second half, the clock will start on the snap or on the ready for play dependent on the previous play.
- G. Once the ball is marked ready for play, a team has 25 seconds within which to snap the ball.
- H. Half time shall be 3 minutes in duration.
- I. A team may defer its toss option to the second half.
- J. Once a team captain declares his/her choice of going for a 1, 2, or 3 point conversion after scoring a touchdown, he/she may change the decision only if a charged time out is granted to either team.
- K. Once a team captain declares to punt, he/she may change the decision only through the use of a charged time-out by either team, the period ends, or a foul occurs that cause the down to be replayed.
- L. With less than two (2) minutes remaining in the game, the offended team of any foul will have the option to start the game clock on the snap.

V. Players

- A. Only seven players per team are allowed on the field at a time. A minimum of four players are necessary to begin and continue play. **The game MAY be continued with less than 4 players (CoRec-6) as long as the team has a chance to win the game.**
- B. **The offense must only have 1 player on the line of scrimmage. (i.e. – snapper)**

- C. All plays must originate with a snap from center. This snap must be received at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. The snap does not need to be made between the legs of the snapper.
- D. Only one offensive player may be in motion when the ball is snapped. This motion must begin more than one second before the ball is snapped, and must be parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage. A player may go in motion from the line but IS NOT considered to be on the line.
- E. After the ball is ready-for-play, each player of the offensive team must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball prior to the snap before moving closer to the sideline.
- F. No defensive player may be closer than 1-yard to the line of scrimmage during all scrimmage downs. Defensive players may not break the neutral zone until the ball is snapped.
- E. Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after a down has ended.
- F. All players not in the game, and spectators, must remain between the 20-yard line markers and two yards off the sideline.
- G. The snapper may not receive the snap.

VI. Carrying the Ball

- A. A ball carrier may not deliberately guard their flags. "Spinning" or jumping to avoid being deflagged is legal. Actions such as slapping with the hand or stiff-arming are examples of flag guarding.
- B. A ball carrier may not hurdle a player to avoid deflagging. Hurdling is interpreted as an attempt by a runner to jump over a player still on their feet with the feet or knees of the runner foremost.
- C. **If a player inadvertently loses their flags** or it is pulled by the opposition before gaining possession of the ball, the play will continue and **the player must be downed by a one hand touch, between the shoulder and knees, including the hand and arm.**
- D. A player will be ruled "down" when any part of the body other than the hand or foot touches the ground, or under the provision of Section C (see above).
- E. The defender may not play the person, nor may they hold or tackle the runner while deflagging the ball carrier.
- F. A fumbled or muffed ball is dead when it strikes the ground.
- G. When an inadvertent whistle occurs, the offensive team will have the option of taking the play with the ball spotted at its location when the whistle blew or replay the down. If the ball is loose following a backward pass or fumble, the team will have the option of taking the ball at the spot where possession was lost or replay the down. During a legal forward pass or any kick, if an inadvertent whistle occurs, the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.
- H. It is illegal to attempt to steal a ball in player possession. The object of the game is to deflag a ball carrier, not steal the ball.
- I. In pulling a flag and/or touching a ball carrier, a defender's feet MAY leave the ground. Diving is legal by defensive or offensive players however, the diving player is still responsible for any contact which they initiate.
- J. Any player may hand the ball backward or forward at any time.

VII. Blocking & Rushing

- A. No part of the body except the feet shall be in contact with the ground and the feet must remain on the ground for the duration of the block.
- B. Blocking will be by SCREENING ONLY. That is, a blocker must hinder a defender's movement through positioning rather than body contact.
- C. During a block, the body must remain upright with elbows and hands touching the body at the side or behind the back.
- D. While incidental contact may occur, blocking/rushing penalties will be called against the player who initiates contact.
- E. The defense may not use hands, arms, or legs as a wedge to gain an advantage over a blocker.

VIII. Passing

- A. A forward pass may be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage (both feet behind LOS).
- B. All incomplete backward passes shall be marked down at the point of ground contact.
- C. Only one forward pass may be attempted from behind the line of scrimmage on a given play.
- D. A forward pass is illegal if:
 1. It is thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage.
 2. It is intentional grounding.
 3. It is thrown after a change of possession.
 4. The passer catches his/her untouched forward/backward pass.
 5. It is the second forward pass during a play.

- E. All players except the passer are eligible to receive a pass.
- F. A player must have complete possession of the ball and land with the first part of their body inbounds, normally one foot, to be a legal reception.
- G. A pass intercepted in the end zone may be advanced.
- H. If the passer is deflagged prior to releasing the ball, the ball is dead at that spot and the down has ended.
- I. If an offensive player goes out-of-bounds on their own accord and returns inbounds, it is an illegal participation foul.
- J. Roughing the Passer -- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid contact with a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass.

IX. Kicking

- A. There will be no kickoffs or free kicks. Possessions beginning a new half will begin on the 14 yard line.
- B. Following any touchdown, the ball shall be placed on the 14 yard line, possession being given to the opponent of the scoring team. Following a safety, the ball shall be placed on the 14 yard line with possession belonging to the team who just scored the safety.
- C. On fourth down, the offense must announce prior to the ball being marked ready-for-play whether or not they will punt. Once the decision is made, it cannot be changed except through the use of a charged time-out by either team, the period ends, a foul occurs, or an inadvertent whistle is blown that cause the down to be replayed. If a kick is to be made, the following procedures must be followed:
 - 1. The offense (no requirements for the defense) must have a minimum of 4 players on their line of scrimmage at the snap.
 - 2. The kicker must receive the snap two yards behind the center as for any other scrimmage play.
 - 3. The kick must be made immediately upon receiving the snap.
 - 4. Players of the kicking or receiving team may not advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked. The receiving team may attempt to block the kick after it crosses their scrimmage line.
 - 5. Once the ball is punted, any R player may block the kick. If a player on the kicking team catches the kick behind the receiving team's line of scrimmage they may advance.
- D. The kicking team may catch, touch, muff or bat a punt in flight beyond their line of scrimmage if no receiving team player is in position to catch the ball.
- E. When a punt breaks the plane of the receiver's goal line it is a touchback.

X. Scoring

- A. Point values will be as follows:
 - 1. Touchdown: 6 points
 - 2. Safety: 2 points
 - 3. PAT from 3 yard line: 1 point
PAT from 10 yard line: 2 points
PAT from 20 yard line: 3 points
*PATs that are intercepted cannot be returned and the ball is dead immediately.
- B. Touchdown verification - The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the player is not deflagged with one pull, and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed, the player is disqualified and it is a foul.
- C. Mercy Rule -
 - 1. If a team is 19 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the 2 minute warning for the second half the game shall be over. If a team scores during the last minute of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more the game shall end at that point.
 - 2. If a team is up by 50 points or more at any point during the game the game shall be over.
- D. If a touchdown is scored to end the half, a try for the PAT will be attempted as part of the same half in which the touchdown occurred.

XI. Tie Breaker

Should a game end with a tie score, the following system shall be used:

- A. Coin toss with the following options.
 - 1. Offense or defense
 - 2. Goal - Both teams will use the same goal on offense.
- B. Each team is allowed a series of 4 downs to score from the 10 yard line. A series is ended by:
 - 1. Scoring a touchdown, PAT is attempted; if needed.
 - 2. Interception- Ball is immediately dead
- C. In the regular season, if the score remains tied following the initial overtime, a tie will be declared (both teams receive a win).

- D. In post season play, if the score remains tied, each team will have another 4 down series with the opposite team having 1st option of offense or defense. This type of play will continue until a winner is determined.

XII. Penalties

- A. The offended team may have its choice of the penalty or the result of the play. (NOTE: If there is a foul by the defense during a down that results in a successful touchdown, the scoring team may choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot or 14 yard line.)
- B. If there is a foul by the defensive team (including unsportsmanlike or non-player) during a down which results in a touchdown, the scoring team may accept the results of the play and then choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot (try), or after the Try, at the 14 yard line.
- C. If after a touchdown and prior to the initial ready for play signal for the Try, either team commits any foul for which the basic spot is the succeeding spot (try), the offended team may have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot (try), or after the try, at the 14 yard line.
- D. When both teams commit an infraction during the same live ball period, regardless of the severity, the down is automatically replayed, provided there is no change of possession. If an ejection is warranted, this may occur even though no yardage is assessed.
- E. When a live ball and dead ball penalty occurs, each is handled on its own merit, regardless of whether the penalties are on the same or opposing teams.
- F. All unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are penalized as a dead ball foul. A player receiving an unsportsmanlike conduct foul must sub out for the subsequent down. If a penalty occurs on the subsequent down which results in repeating the down the player may reenter the game. If a dead ball penalty occurs between downs the player may still not re-enter until after the subsequent down.
- G. If a fight occurs on the playing field, all team substitutes are to remain in their team box. If a substitute enters the field to observe, separate participants, become involved in the fight, etc., he/she will be disqualified and a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot. Each individual substitute who enters illegally will be disqualified and penalized. Entering substitutes, who are on the field for substitution purposes before the fight, will not be penalized for being there if they do not participate in the fight.
- H. The second unsportsmanlike conduct penalty by the same player or non-player results in disqualification. The third unsportsmanlike foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.
- I. Live ball fouls committed by either team after Team B (the team on defense at the start of the down) gains possession during a try or overtime shall be enforced at the succeeding spot (where the ball will next be snapped or free kicked).
- J. Establishing Zone Line-to-Gain- Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement which occur prior to the ready for play signal shall be administered before setting the zone line-to-gain down box for a new series.
- K. Establishing a Zone Line-to-Gain- Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement which occur after the ready for play signal shall be administered AFTER setting the zone line-to-gain box for a new series.
- L. Loose Ball Play. Exception: The penalty for roughing the passer on a completed forward pass will be enforced from the end of the last run when the run ends beyond the neutral zone and no change of possession has occurred ("tack on").
- M. Safety/Goal Line. For a defensive foul, if the enforcement spot which is now the basic spot, is on or behind the offended team's goal line any measurement is from the succeeding spot.
- N. If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down, which results in a successful touchdown or try, the penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot.
- O. A period will not be extended for a foul which specifies loss of down, if accepted. Also, any score by the team which fouled is cancelled.
- P. A flagrant foul is so severe and extreme that it places an opponent in danger of serious injury and/or involves violations that are extremely or persistently vulgar or abusive conduct.

XII. Co-Rec Modifications

1. Co-Rec Teams consist of four (4) males and four (4) females. A team may play with uneven numbers of men and women so long as the number of either gender does not exceed four (4). A minimum of five (5) players are needed to begin and continue play.
2. **Open/Closed Plays-** After any change of possession, a team will begin their offensive series with an "open" play. In "open" plays, any gender passer may complete a pass to any gender receiver. During a "closed" play, either the passer or receiver (or both) MUST be a female if the pass is completed.

3. During the offensive team's possession there may not be 2 consecutive forward pass **completions** from a male passer to a male receiver. If a male passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver, the next play will be **closed**. During a **closed** play, the next forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or a female receiver for positive yards. If a female is involved as the passer and/or receiver during a completed **legal** forward pass for **positive** yardage, the next play will be **open**. A running play or any other play where a forward completed pass is not involved will **not** open the next play. The spot where the ball becomes dead must be beyond the offensive team's scrimmage line. This rule also applies to the try-for-point. Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot where the second consecutive male to male completed forward pass is released, and a loss of down. **Any penalty, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the play from scrimmage is "open" or "closed"**.
4. Male ball carriers are prohibited from advancing the ball across the offensive line of scrimmage prior to the ball being beyond the offensive team's scrimmage line (this rule does not apply after a change of possession). Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
5. If a female throws a forward pass to a male receiver behind the offensive team's scrimmage line and he runs beyond the scrimmage line, it is an illegal forward pass.
6. A regular, intermediate, junior or youth size football may be used. The offensive team is responsible for getting the desired ball in play.
7. The offensive team must have (5) players on the line of scrimmage, including the snapper. If a player is in motion, they are not considered to be on the line of scrimmage.
8. During a punt, the offense must have five (5) players on the line of scrimmage. Players can not advance beyond the scrimmage line until the ball is kicked. Males may advance the ball on a punt.
9. **If a female player scores a touchdown, the point value is nine. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and the end result of the play is a touchdown for that team, the point value is nine.** All other touchdowns will be worth six points.
10. If at, or following, the two (2) minute warning in the 2nd half one team is ahead by 25 or more points, they will be declared the winner and the contest will end.

Five yard Penalties

- Improper equipment
- Encroachment
- Illegal substitution
- Illegal formation, motion, shift, snap, or procedure
- Helping the runner
- Delay of game
- False start
- Illegal position (offensive player not within 15 yards of the ball)

Ten yard Penalties

- Kick catch interference- **Spot of the Foul Penalty**
- Illegal participation
- Protecting the flag
- Illegal removal of flag
- Illegal use of hands, arms, legs or body
- Unsportsmanlike conduct
- Unnecessary roughness
- Tackling the runner (automatic disqualification)
- Fighting (an attempt by a player or non-player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football) includes acts such as attempting to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet), whether or not there is contact (automatic disqualification)
- Intentionally contacting a game official physically (automatic disqualification)
- Defensive pass interference- **No Longer An Automatic First Down**
- Offensive pass interference – **No Longer A Loss Of Down Penalty**
- Roughing the passer, plus automatic first down
- Steal or attempt to steal ball from ball carrier
- Consecutive encroachments in the same interval between downs
- Illegally secured flag belt (if by Team A will also result in player disqualification and loss of down, if by Team B will also result in player disqualification and automatic first down)
- UNFAIR ACTS

Loss of down Penalties

- Illegal forward pass (5 yards)

- Illegally secured flag belt on a touchdown by Team A (10 yards and disqualification)
- Illegal backward pass (5 yards)