



Flag Football Rules

General IMS Policies and Procedures

All participants are required to complete a waiver of liability form each year. All participants in intramural sports activities assume the risk of injury. Rice University, its employees and agents shall not be liable for injury to person, loss or damage to personal property arising from or in any way resulting from participation in the intramural sports activities.

Flag Football rules will be conducted under the NIRSA rules of the game with the following additions, exceptions, and clarifications.

Captains are required to read the general IM Rules and Eligibility, and inform their team of any changes to policies and/or procedures!

Illegal Equipment

Game officials will be strictly enforcing the NIRSA policy regarding illegal equipment, specifically shorts with pockets. You will NOT be allowed to participate in our games if your shorts have any pockets!

For clarification, illegal equipment consists of:

1. Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats, or items containing exposed knots.
2. Jewelry
3. Pads or braces worn above the waist.
4. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in, or detachable cleats. EXCEPTION: Screw-in cleats are allowed if the screw is part of the cleat.
5. Shirts or jerseys that do not remain tucked in. Any hood on a coat, sweatshirt, or shirt that does not remain tucked in.
6. Jerseys that have an arm opening more than 4" below the armpit.
7. Pants or shorts with any belt(s), belt loop(s), pockets(s), or exposed drawstring(s).
8. Taping pockets, turning shorts inside out resulting in inner pockets exposed ("dog ears")



9. Underwear/garments as outerwear (i.e. only compression shorts without normal shorts over them)
10. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges overlapped.
11. Any slippery or sticky foreign substance on any equipment or exposed part of the body.
12. Exposed metal on clothes or person.
13. Towels attached at the player's waist.

Number of Players

Each team should start the game with 7 players; a minimum of 5 is needed to avoid a default. A player may play on only one team per sport.

Length of Game

Playing time shall be 40 minutes, separated into two halves of 20 minutes. Half-time shall be 3 minutes. There will be a running clock for the entire first half, and the first 18 minutes of the second half. The last 2 minutes of the second half will follow NIRSA timing rules. A period will not be extended for a foul which specifies loss of down, if accepted. A coin toss will determine who shall receive the choice of possession or side at the beginning of the game. If only one team is ready to play at game time, they will automatically have the choice. In the case of overtime, there will be a 3-minute intermission prior to starting overtime.

Time-Outs

Each team will be given two time-outs per half. A time-out will be 30-seconds in length and any unused time-outs will NOT carry over to overtimes. A time-out can be requested by any player or head coach. If a time-out is called following a score, the extra point will be an un-timed down.



Mercy Rule

If a team is 38 points or more ahead (50 points in Coed) when there are 5 minutes remaining for the second half, the game shall be over. If a team scores during the 5 minute mark until the 2 minute mark that creates a point differential of 38 or more points (50 points in Coed), the game shall end at that point.

If a team is 19 points or more ahead (25 points in Coed) when the Referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over. If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more points (25 points in Coed), the game shall end at that point.

Overtime (Tie Game)

Regular Season: There will not be an overtime period. The game will end in a tie.

Playoffs: If the game score is tied after regulation time, then a coin toss will determine who will get the ball & side. The home team shall call the toss. If additional overtime periods are needed to decide the outcome of the game (more than first overtime), captains shall alternate choices.

Each team will have the chance to score in series of four downs from the 10-yard line. If the defense intercepts the ball during overtime, they cannot run it back for a touchdown. On the interception, the try would then be over and a change of possession would occur. If the score is still tied after each team has had a try (including extra point attempts), a second series is played, and so on until a winner is determined.

Free Kick

There will be no free kicks, only punting.

Punting

Quick punts are illegal. On fourth down the Referee must ask the Offensive team if they want a protected scrimmage kick. Once the offense has declared their choice, the Referee will inform the Defense of the offense's choice. The only way the Offense can change their decision is to call a time-out, or if a foul occurs any time prior to or during the down and the down is to be replayed. In the latter case the



Offensive team will be asked if they want a protected scrimmage kick or not. The kicking team must have all of its players, except for the punter, on the line of scrimmage. No kicking team players may move until the ball is kicked. There are no restrictions to the number of players the defensive team must have on the line. Defensive players MAY attempt to block the punt by jumping straight up in the air. They may not, however, penetrate the line of scrimmage. If a punt crosses the scrimmage line and touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the receiving team. The ball will be declared dead if it breaks the plane of the receiving team's goal line and will be a touchback.

Line of Scrimmage

The offensive team must have a minimum of 1 player (the Center satisfies this requirement) set on the line of scrimmage at the snap. Players in motion do not count as being set. All players on the offensive team must come set for a minimum of 1 second before the ball is snapped. Once the center has placed his/her hands on the ball no offensive player may enter the neutral zone. Following the ready for play whistle and until a legal snap, no defensive player may encroach, touch the ball, stand in, or in any other way interfere with the offensive team. ***Penalty – Dead Ball foul, encroachment, 5 yards from succeeding spot***

Backward Passes and Fumbles

Any ball that is fumbled during a down will be dead by rule once it has touched the ground. A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted by any player inbounds and advanced. A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed. ***This will be penalized as an Illegal pass: loss of 5 yards, loss of down and the clock will start on the ready for play.*** Once a ball has touched the ground the ball is considered dead.

Forward Passes and Interceptions

If a player is in the air attempting to catch a ball, the player must contact the ground with at least one foot in-bounds with the ball in their possession prior to going out of bounds, unless contact by an opponent causes the player to first touch out-of-bounds. If possession of the ball is lost simultaneously when they hit the ground, it is not a catch. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the team that snapped the ball.



Pass Interference

Any contact that, in the view of the official, interferes with the attempt to catch a pass (offensive or defensive player) is pass interference unless, in the view of the official, it occurs when two or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or touched prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offense's line of scrimmage.

Clarification: Hindering an opponent's vision without making an attempt to catch, intercept or bat the ball is NO LONGER pass interference, even though no contact was made (New in 2017). If the pass interference by the defense is intentional and/or unsportsmanlike, the defense may be penalized an additional 10 yards.

Scoring

Touchdowns = 6 points

Extra Points = 1 point if successful from the 3 yard line

Extra Points = 2 points if successful from the 10 yard line

Extra Points = 3 points if successful from the 20 yard line

Safety = 2 points

Once a team has made their choice on the extra point, they can only change their decision by taking a time-out. A try that is intercepted by the defense cannot be returned for a score. At that point, the try will then be over and a change of possession will occur.

Safety

If a player carries the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead while in their team's possession, it is a safety. If a team commits a foul in the end zone where the spot of enforcement is designated as the spot of the foul, it will be declared a safety. A team recording a safety will receive two points, and the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their own 30-yard line, unless moved by penalty.



Exception- Momentum Rule - When a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage kick between their five yard line and their goal line and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.

Personal Fouls

Any act listed below or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. Players shall not:

1. Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
2. Trip an opponent.
3. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
4. Throw the runner to the ground.
5. Hurdle another player.
6. Contact an opponent either before the ball is put in play or after the ball is declared dead.
7. Make any contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary.
8. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
9. Clip an opponent.
10. Position themselves on the shoulders of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
11. Tackle the runner. (may warrant ejection)

Screen Blocking

Legally obstructing an opponent without using any part of the body to initiate contact. Screen blocking shall take place without contact. The blocker shall have their hands and arms at their sides or behind their back. A screen blocker cannot use their hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact. If they do use contact it will be called a Personal Foul.

Screen blockers may not:

1. Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
2. Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
3. Take a position so close to an opponent that they cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction.



Stiff Arming

Stiff arming is not allowed; a personal foul will be called, and if warranted an unsportsmanlike conduct or ejection will result.

Obstructing the Runner

A defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of the runner when attempting to remove the flag belt.

The Flag Belt

All shirts must be tucked in, and are not permitted to hang over the flag belt. Should a player lose their flag belt legally or illegally during a down and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag (one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made.

When a player scores they must immediately raise their hands and allow an official to remove their flag belt. This is done to insure that the flag belt has not been illegally secured. If the belt has been illegally secured the score is disallowed, the player ejected and a 10 yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will be administered from the previous spot.

Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be deflagged. It is illegal for a defensive player to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who is not in possession of the ball. In cases where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty of the play (Penalty: Personal foul, 10 yards).

Guarding the Flag Belt

Runners shall not flag guard by using any part of the body or ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes but is not limited to:

1. Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
2. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.



3. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that flag guards.

Official's Authority

An official assumes authority 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, and until they have left the field. The officials have the authority to rule on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. His/her decision is final, unless ruled otherwise by the Intramural Sports Supervisor on duty or the Intramural Sports staff. The official has the right to eject players or have them sit out of part or all of the game. Fans, coaches, and spectators are a part of a team and any fouls they commit will go against their team.

Coaches, fans, and players not on the field must remain 2 yards off the sideline and must stay between the 20 yard lines of the field. Officials can issue sideline warnings for players, coaches, and fans not abiding by this rule. Multiple infractions could result in Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalties for the team, or even possible ejections.

Additional Rules for Co-Rec Flag Football

Players

A game is played between two teams of 8 players, 4 men and 4 women. Teams with 7 players shall be 4 men and 3 women or 3 men and 4 women. To avoid a forfeit, six players, 3 men and 3 women, 2 men and 4 women, or 4 men and 2 women are required.

The Ball

A regular, intermediate, youth or junior size football may be used.

Line of Scrimmage

The offensive team must have at least 1 player on their scrimmage line. Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.



Male Runner

The offensive team males cannot advance the ball through their scrimmage line. Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot. There are no restrictions: during a run by a male runner once the ball is beyond the offensive scrimmage line; during a run by a female runner, and after a change of possession.

Open vs. Closed Plays

Each drive begins with the play being Open. Open plays allow the ball to be advanced through the air by any combination of players (Male to Male, Male to Female, Female to Female, etc.)

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. This rule applies to the Try. If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass completion **MUST** involve either a female passer or a female receiver for positive yards. (i.e. All plays are OPEN until a legal forward pass is completed from a male QB to a male receiver. After a male-to-male completion, the next play shall be CLOSED, and will remain closed until positive yards are gained on a passing play that involves either a female QB *or* a female receiver). All closed play violations shall be penalized as illegal forward passes. 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. **Male runners cannot advance the ball by running past the line of scrimmage unless they are the receivers for a forward and completed pass.** On a closed play, a male to male completion will result in a penalty, regardless of where the catch is made.

Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completing is "open" or "closed." If a female ball carrier rushes the ball for positive yardage on a CLOSED play, there is no penalty, but the play shall remain closed. ***Positive yards are any yards gained passed the line of scrimmage (orange ball spotter).***

Illegal Forward Pass

- If the passer's foot is beyond the plane of the line of scrimmage when ball is released
- Cannot throw a pass after a change of possession



- Only one forward pass per play by the offense. Any forward throw after that is illegal.
- Thrower may not catch his/her own pass
- On a closed play, if a male player completes a forward pass to a male, it is an illegal forward pass.

Penalty – Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass and loss of down.

Scoring

Touchdowns = 6 points

Extra Points = 1 point if successful from the 3 yard line

Extra Points = 2 points if successful from the 10 yard line

Extra Points = 3 points if successful from the 20 yard line

Safety = 2 points

Once a team has made their choice on the extra point, they can only change their decision by taking a time-out. A try that is intercepted by the defense cannot be returned for a score. At that point, the try will then be over and a change of possession will occur.

Please Note: All final decisions to eligibility and game rules will be at the discretion of the Competitive Sports staff.

FURTHER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS MAY BE DIRECTED TO:

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