

Flag Football Rules

NO CURRENT UTHSC ISSUED I.D. = NO PLAY. PERIOD!

Flag football rules will be conducted under the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) laws of the game with the following additions, exceptions, and clarifications.

PLAYER ELIGIBILITY:

-Participation is limited to anyone who has a UT ID or is a member of the UTHSC Fitness Center.

-No more than 2 players per team can be UTHSC Fitness Center members.

-In order to participate in intramurals, each player must present their current, valid UT Card when checking in before the game starts. (NO EXCEPTIONS)

** Requests for exceptions to any policy must be directed to the IM Coordinator during regular weekday business hours in the Campus Recreation Office.*

NUMBER OF PLAYERS:

Each team should start the game with 7 players, and a minimum of 5 is needed to avoid a forfeit. **Forfeit time will be 10 minutes past game time.** A player may play only on one single sex team and one coed team. Please check the Rules of Eligibility for all other rules concerning IM Sports.

**Note* For a player to be eligible in playoffs, they must have joined their team in IM Leagues AND must have played one regular season game with the team. If a team forfeits once, they will not be eligible for the playoffs.*

LENGTH OF GAME:

The game will consist of two halves of 20 minutes. The clock will run continuously during the first half and the first 18 minutes of the second half, except when a timeout is called, or at the referee's discretion. During the last two minutes the clock will stop for an incomplete pass, when a player goes out of bounds, on penalties, on a change of possession, on any score, and on first downs. Each team is entitled to three (:30 seconds) charged timeouts per half. Timeouts do not carried over to the 2nd half.

EQUIPMENT:

-Teams are allowed to use their own football. All football s will be checked by the officials. For the Men's league, high-school, college and pro balls can be used. For the Coed & Women's leagues, a junior, intermediate, high-school, college, and pro sized balls can be used.

-Teams are encouraged to furnish their own like-colored jerseys. Scrimmage vests (pennies) will be available.

-Individual player equipment must meet the following requirements:

-Shirts: All shirts must be tucked in and remain tucked in during play. If the shirt (sweatshirt or jacket) has a hood, the hood must be tucked inside the shirt (sweatshirt or jacket). If the player wears a half shirt, it must be a minimum of 4

inches above the waist. Shirts must not have arm openings that are larger than 4 inches. Referee will use his fist to measure the distance of the arm opening.

-Pants: Players may not wear pants or shorts that have belt loops, or an exposed drawstring. Players may not wear towels that hang from the waist.

-Headgear: Players may not wear baseball style caps or other rigid headwear. Knit and stocking caps are permitted. Players may wear a headband no wider than two inches and made of non-abrasive cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Bandanas with knots are prohibited. Rubber or cloth elastic bands may be used to control hair.

-Pads or Braces: No pads or braces may be worn above the waist. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material must be covered on both sides and all edges with appropriate slow-recovery padding.

-Shoes: All players must wear shoes. Tennis/running shoes, soft-soled shoes, and football shoes are permitted. Metal spikes and cleats with metal exposed are prohibited. Any player caught wearing metal spikes will be ejected from the game.

- Participating while wearing illegal equipment is a 10-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

-If teams choose to bring a playbook out onto the field, it cannot be of an unyielding material and must not be visible during play. Also, the playbook must stay on the person instead of being thrown on the ground.

-Jewelry is NOT allowed to be worn by any participant during a game. This jewelry consists of any visible rings (including wedding bands), watches, necklaces, earrings, studs, bracelets, and any other such similar jewelry. Medic alert bracelets must be taped to the body or secured under clothing such as a wristband or sock to be worn during play. A player is subject to ejection for failure to remove any jewelry after first warning.

Playing Field:

-The dimensions of the fields have been standardized into regulation 80 yard x 40 yard playing areas with two 10-yard endzones and four 20-yard zones.

- There will be lines on the 3 yards and 10 yards from both goal line from which extra point plays will be run, and 14 yards from both goal from which to put the ball in play to begin a half, after a score, safety, or touchback.

-Teams and spectators must stay at least 2 yards off the sideline and between the 20 yard lines. Failure to do so will result in a warning the first time. Each offense after the warning will result in a 10 yard unsportsmanlike penalty against the offending team

OVERTIME (TIE GAME):

If the game's score is tied after regulation time, then a coin toss will determine who will get the ball & side. Each team will have the chance to score in series of four downs from the 10-yard line. If the score is still tied after each team has had a try, a second series is played, and so on until a winner is determined.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:

The Intramural Coordinator reserves the right to postpone or reschedule a contest if circumstances warrant such action. Regular season games cancelled by weather will be attempted to be rescheduled, if possible. Contests postponed due to other reasons may or may not be rescheduled at the discretion of the Intramural Coordinator.

·In the case of inclement weather, the Intramural Coordinator will not make a decision regarding the playing of games until after **4:00 pm**. If games are canceled you shall be notified by email through IMLeagues.

Campus Recreation STRONGLY suggests that team captains use their cell phone numbers in IMLeagues to be notified of game cancelations via text messages, if possible.

·If inclement weather occurs after the closing of the Intramural office, decisions regarding the continuing of the games will be made on the field by the IM on-site staff. A message will be sent through IMLeagues as soon as possible to all league members if games get canceled on-site.

-When games are cancelled due to the weather, the fields will not be available for practice.

GAME RESCHEDULING:

If a team cannot make a scheduled game they have the following options:

Forfeits - If a team fails to contact the IM Coordinator by 2pm the day of the game and fails to field a team, they will no longer be eligible for playoffs.

Defaults - If a team contacts the IM Coordinator that they cannot field a team by 2pm the day of their game, that team will avoid a Forfeit and take a Default loss, but still remain eligible for playoffs.

Rescheduling - If more than 48 hours' notice is given, the IM Staff will attempt to reschedule the game. If it cannot be rescheduled, the team will be notified and given the option to default the game if they cannot field a team.

Scoring:

A touchdown shall count for six (6) points.

After a player scores a touchdown or try after a TD, the player must raise their arms above their head so that the nearest official can de-flag the player.

If the official deems that the flag belt has been illegally fastened (tied, twisted, tucked in, etc), the player is disqualified and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is enforced. (10 yards from the previous spot with loss of down and the score is nullified, no loss of down if it occurs after change of possession).

After a touchdown, the scoring team attempts a PAT (point after touchdown). The captain will indicate from which distance the offense will attempt the PAT. The ball will always be spotted in the middle of the field.

- A. From the 3-yard line - Worth 1 point.
- B. From the 10-yard line - Worth 2 points.
- C. From the 20-yard line - Worth 3 points.

Extra point interception resulting in touchdown = point value of extra point

Once a team has made their choice on the extra point, they can only change their decision by taking a time-out.

PLAYING RULES:

First Downs

A team registers a first down when it crosses or touches one of the first down lines (zone lines-to-gain). Once the first down has been established, that team may not make another first down by crossing the same line during that series of downs. There are a total of 3 zone line-to-gain lines on the field (Both 20s and the 40).

Line of Scrimmage

Required Number of Players: Four (4) offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap. A player is deemed on the line of scrimmage when facing his/her opponent's goal line with the line of his/her shoulders approximately parallel thereto and with his/her head or foot breaking the plane of the imaginary line drawn through the waistline of the snapper and parallel to the scrimmage line.

At any time at or after the ready for play signal, all offensive players must momentarily be at least 5 yards inbounds prior to the snap. There is no requirement for defensive players to line-up along the line or be at least 5 yards inbounds prior to the snap.

Once the center has placed his hands on the ball, no offensive or defensive player may enter the neutral zone. Not following these rules warrants a false start, offsides, or encroachment call.

*** (Snaps are considered legal that go through the legs of the center/Parallel to line of scrimmage, while ball touches the ground).

Fumbles

A fumble is dead at the point the ball touches the ground, if fumbled backwards, or at the spot where the fumble occurred if fumbled forward. The ball goes to the team who last had possession with the resulting loss of down. A ball that has not hit the ground can be recovered (in the air) and advanced by either team. This includes snaps by the center that are not caught by an offensive player (i.e. quarterback). Bad snaps are dead at the spot they hit the ground. For the purposes of timing, fumbles and bad snaps are considered running plays and the clock will not stop on such plays.

Handoffs

Behind the line of scrimmage and prior to advancing the ball across the line of scrimmage or a forward pass crossing the line of scrimmage, any offensive player may hand the ball backwards or forwards to any player. Once the ball has been advanced or thrown across the line of scrimmage (in any downfield plays), an offensive player may only hand the ball backward to another player. At all times, defensive players may only hand the ball backward to another player.

Forward Passes

A forward pass is LEGAL when:

- A. The passer's foot is on or behind the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the hand.
- B. The pass occurs before a change of possession (defense may not throw a forward pass following a fumble recovery or interception).
- C. It is the first and only forward pass made during the down. Only one forward pass is permitted per down, regardless of whether the pass is completed beyond or behind the line of scrimmage.

Note: An offensive player may toss the ball backward to another player who can then throw a forward pass as long as such pass abides by the provisions of this section.

Pass Receptions

All players are eligible to receive a pass. One foot must land in bounds before any part of the body lands out-of-bounds for a legal pass reception, 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 the opposing and receiving team, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the team that snapped the ball. One knee is equivalent.

Interceptions in the End Zone

If a player intercepts the ball in the end zone, the player may return it out of the end zone (excluding PAT). If the player is de-flagged while running in the end zone, it is a touchback.

PASS INTERFERENCE

It is 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. If the pass interference by the defense is intentional and/or unsportsmanlike, the defense may be penalized an additional 10 yards.

Extra point interception resulting in touchdown = point value of extra point.

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).

-If failure to wear the flag belt is noticed by the official after the play starts, the play continues with the ball becoming dead when the runner is touched between the shoulders and knees. The defense can accept the result of the play or penalize for failure to wear required equipment (5 yards).

When removing a flag belt, the individual who removes the belt must immediately hold the flag belt high in the air.

GUARDING THE FLAG BELT

Flag Guarding (10 yards from the spot of the foul & replay the down OR spot of the foul & loss of down)

The ball carrier shall not protect his/her flags by blocking with his/her arms or hands in order to deny the opponents the opportunity to remove them. This includes the quarterback/passers in possession of the ball. Note: Stiff arming is flag guarding. Running while holding the ball at hip-level, intentionally or unintentionally, may also be considered flag guarding.

Screen Blocking

The only type of blocking that is allowed is screen blocking. No contact is allowed between the offense and defense. Penalty: Personal foul, 10 yards.

- A. The screen blocker must have his/her hands at his/her side or behind his/her back.
- B. **Any** use of the hands, arms, legs or body to initiate contact is illegal.
- C. The player must be on his/her feet before, during and after the screen block.

D. The blocker cannot take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. This position will vary from 1 to 2 steps depending on speed of the defensive player (and is viewed at the discretion of the officials).

Retrieval of Ball after a Play

The offensive team must retrieve the ball after every play from scrimmage. The snapper will maintain control of the ball and bring the ball from the huddle to the line of scrimmage. Officials are not responsible to retrieve balls.

Punting the Ball

Quick kicks are illegal. On fourth down the referee must ask the offensive team if they want a protected scrimmage punt. Once the offense has declared their choice, the referee will inform the defense of the offense's choice. If punting, the offensive team must have all players on the scrimmage line and remain motionless until the punt is made. The defense may not advance beyond their respective scrimmage line until the ball is kicked. 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 only way the offense can change their decision is to call a timeout, or if a foul occurs anytime prior to or during the down and the down is to be re-played.

Inadvertent Whistles

When an official sounds his/her whistle inadvertently:

- A. During a legal pass, while a snap is in flight, or while a kick is in-flight, the down will be replayed.
- B. When a player is in possession or during a backward pass, the team in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle may choose either to accept the play where it is blown dead or to replay the down.

Mercy Rule

All mercy rules will take effect during the 2nd half of the game. Leading by 25+ points with 10 minutes left in the game or up 18+ points with 2 minutes left in the game.

EXPLANATION OF GENERAL PENALTIES

Delay of Game : (dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot)

The ball must be put in play properly and legally and any action or inaction by either team which tends to prevent this is illegal delay of game. This includes:

- A. Interrupting the 25 second count for any reason, except for a time-out allowed by the referee.
- B. Consuming more than 25 seconds in putting the ball in play after it is marked ready for play.

C. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.

Offsides: (5 yards from the previous spot. Offense has choice to take penalty and replay down, or decline the penalty). If a defensive player is lined up on or over their defensive scrimmage line plane (yellow disk [defense]) at the time the ball is snapped, the play will NOT be blown dead. This will be a "free" play for the offense.

Encroachment: (dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot)

Following the ready-to-play whistle and prior to the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, or contact an opponent in any way. It is encroachment for any player to break the offensive scrimmage line plane (orange disk [offense]). Players do NOT have the opportunity to jump across the line and "get back" outside. It is a foul as soon as the player initially enters the neutral zone and the play will be blown dead.

False Start: (dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot)

No offensive player shall simulate a charge or start of a play.

Illegal Formation : (5 yards from the previous spot)

When there are less than four (4) offensive players on the line of scrimmage at the snap, it is a live ball illegal procedure penalty. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.

Illegal Batting: (10 yards from the spot of the foul)

Players shall not bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight. Exception: A backward pass in flight may not be batted or thrown forward by the passing team.

Illegal Motion and Shift: (5 yards from the previous spot)

Only one offense player may be in motion, but not in motion towards the opponent's goal line (or line of scrimmage), at the time of the snap. After a huddle, all offensive players must come to a stop and remain stationary for 1 second before an offensive player may go in motion. If two or more players shift/go in motion simultaneously prior to the snap, both must come to a stop and reset prior to the snap.

Illegally De-flagging an Opponent: (Personal foul, 10 yards)

An offensive player must have possession of the ball before they can be legally de-flagged. Pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. If the player is an eligible receiver, the violation may be considered pass interference.

Illegal Contact by the Ball Carrier: (Personal foul, 10 yards from the spot of the foul)

The ball carrier must run to avoid tacklers. Deliberate charging of an opponent is against the rules. Officials will use the same judgment on charging and blocking by offensive and defensive players as in basketball. "Brushing contact" and unavoidable contact is not willful "charging." The ball carrier may spin or jump around defenders to avoid de-flagging; however, the ball carrier must remain in control of his/her body during such moves. If the foul is intentional or unsportsmanlike, then 10 more yards will be added to the penalty and the player will be disqualified.

Holding: (10 yards from the end of the run [defense], 10 yards from the spot of the foul [offense])

Holding is grasping or encircling an opponent with the hand or arm in any way that impedes his/her movement. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the ball carrier down in an attempt to remove the flag. Similarly, an offensive player may not hold an opponent to prevent a deflagging.

Tripping: (10 yards from the end of the run)

Tripping is using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent (including the ball carrier) below the knees.
PENALTY: 10 yards from the end of the run.

Illegal Contact by the Defense & Tackling: (10 yards from the end of the run)

If a defensive player reaches across the body of the ball carrier to pull the flag and contact is made, the responsibility of the contact lies with the defensive player. A runner shall not be thrown to the ground. There shall be no contact with an opponent who is on the ground. If a defensive player tackles the ball carrier, who in the opinion of the referee, would have scored except for being tackled, a touchdown shall be awarded. Deliberate tackles will result in disqualification.

Roughing the Passer: (10 yards from previous spot, if incomplete pass; 10 yards from end of run if completed pass, Automated 1st Down)

Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer. Contact with the passer shall be avoided except in cases where the defensive player is attempting to de-flag the passer. Excessive contact is not permitted at all times. Contact with a thrown ball (hitting the ball then the passer in the same motion) does NOT affect this rule and roughing the passer may still be called. Roughing the passer does not apply on illegal forward passes; however, illegal contact may be called.

Illegal Forward Pass & Intentional Grounding: (5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down)

A pass thrown in violation of the legal pass guidelines listed above is considered illegal. A pass that is intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds to avoid a loss of yardage is also illegal.

Offensive Pass Interference: (10 yards from the previous spot & loss of down)

Pass interference occurs when a player contacts another eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage. Restrictions exist for the offense from the time that the ball is snapped until it has been touched by a receiver.

Defensive Pass Interference: (10 yards from the previous spot & automatic first down)

Restrictions exist for the defense from the time the pass is thrown until it has been touched by a receiver. Face guarding with no intent to catch, intercept, or bat the ball is also considered pass interference. Note: Contact or interference by the defense prior to when the pass is thrown is still considered illegal and will be penalized as a personal foul.

Other Personal Fouls: (10 yards from the end of the run [defense], 10 yards from the spot of the foul [offense])

Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul.

- A. No player shall punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from the player who has possession.
- B. There shall be no tripping or clipping.
- C. There shall be no hurdling. Hurdling shall be interpreted as an attempt by the runner to jump with either feet or knees foremost over a player or between players. (You can jump or spin away from players to avoid having your flag pulled.)

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: (all enforced from dead ball spot, 10 yards)

No player shall commit unsportsmanlike acts during play or intermission including:

- A. Using words similar to offensive audibles or quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an effort to interfere with the offense's signals or movements.
- B. Intentionally kicking the ball (other than a punt)
- C. Intentionally kicking an opponent or swinging an arm, hand or fist at any opposing player or official.
- D. Disrespectfully addressing an official or indicating objections to an official's decision.
- E. Using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
- F. Fighting or leaving the sidelines and entering an altercation.

Two unsportsmanlike fouls by the same player or non-player results in disqualification. A player or non-player can be disqualified following the first unsportsmanlike foul.

EJECTIONS:

- A player will be ejected from the game if he or she plays in a malicious manner, or shows disrespect towards the opposing team, an official, teammate, or fan.
- Fans are the responsibility of each team's Captain. Teams will be held accountable for their fan's behavior.
- A substitute may replace the ejected player.

OFFICIAL'S AUTHORITY: An official assumes authority 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time, and until they have left the game 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 supervisor on duty or the Director of Intramural Sports. 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.

HANDLING PROTEST: Whenever a dispute occurs in an officiated game or contest, the team manager must ask the officials' for a clarification of the issue. If no solution can be reached, the manager must request that the activity supervisor on duty be summoned to clear up the situation. Matters involving an official's judgment **may not** be protested. Other questions, except eligibility, must be clarified at the time of the incident prior to resuming play.

An eligibility protest must be filed, and if upheld, cause the removal of the offending player. All games or contests in which the player in question participated will be defaulted. If a person plays for more than one team, his loyalty will be considered with the team for which he first played. The ineligible player can no longer participate in that particular sport.

Should the Intramural Office detect player ineligibility violations, which are not protested by a team, or individual, it will initiate appropriate follow-up action.

Eligibility protests must be submitted in writing to Room 312, Student Alumni Center, Office of Campus Recreation by 12:00pm(noon) the following school day of the game or match in question.

ADDITIONAL COED FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

PLAYERS: A game is played between two teams of 8 players, 4 men and 4 women. 4 women and 2 men can be used to start the game. Teams with 7 players shall be 4 men and 3 women or 3 men and 4 women. To avoid forfeit six players, 3 men and 3 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 5 players 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.

SCORING: If a female player scores a touchdown, the point value is 9. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and any offensive team member scores a touchdown, the point value is 9. All other touchdowns (by male players) score 6 points. Successful PATs count the same for both genders (1, 2, or 3).

Pass Plays / Open and Closed Status / Illegal Male Pass Reception

A. Announcement - Prior to each play, the game referee will announce both the down and either "open" or "closed" status for the upcoming play.

B. Open Status - The term "open" means any player can complete a legal forward pass to any other player anywhere on the field (male to male forward passes are permitted).

C. Closed Status > The term "closed" means a male player may not complete a legal forward pass to any other male player anywhere on the field. The next legal forward pass completion must involve either a female throwing the pass or receiving the pass (male to male forward passes are NOT permitted).

D. Open to Closed - The status changes from "open" to "closed" on any legal male to male forward pass completion, regardless of a gain or loss of yardage on the play.

E. Closed to Open > The status changes from “closed” to “open” on any legal male to female, female to male, or female to female forward pass completion, *that directly results in positive yardage gain*.

F. Restricted Play > Any male to male forward pass completion during a “closed” play is considered an Illegal Male Pass Reception foul.

PENALTY > The penalty for an Illegal Male Pass Reception foul is 5 yards from the previous line of scrimmage AND loss of down.

Open and Closed Status – Specifics

A. Initial Series Starts Open - Following any change of possession or at the start of a half, the first play for an offense's series shall be open.

B. Laterals and Backwards Passes - There are no restrictions on any lateral or backward pass.

C. Only First Forward Pass Matters - Open and closed plays are determined by the action of a legal forward pass and catch by a male or female or by positive yards from a female runner. Therefore, throughout a play there may be multiple possessions by males or females but the status of the next play is determined by the initial pass and catch.

D. Positive Yardage Gain - The spot where the ball becomes dead by rule (before penalty enforcement) must be beyond the scrimmage line.

E. Penalties Have No Effect - The enforcement of a penalty has no effect on open/closed status.

F. PAT Attempts - Open/closed status for a PAT attempt is determined by the previous play (that scored the TD) just like a normal down.