

NIRSA Flag Football Rules
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs INTRAMURAL SPORTS

THE GAME, FIELD, AND EQUIPMENT

To participate, all players must show a current UCCS ID prior to each game!

1. The game shall be played between two teams of seven players. Five players are required to avoid a forfeit.
2. Each team will elect one captain, who will be the only player for each team allowed to talk to the referee. All questions and suggestions will be made through the team captain.
3. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game, and shall be governed by decisions of the officials assigned to the game.
4. The field shall consist of four 20-yard zones from goal to goal. The end zones shall measure ten yards in length. However, in case of facility limitations, distances of field length and width can be modified.
5. Two ball spotters are required. One will mark the offensive line of scrimmage and the second will mark the defensive scrimmage line. The ball spotters will always be approximately one yard apart.
6. The official shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion. During the game, each team will be allowed to use a legal ball of its choice when in possession.
7. Required player equipment:
 - A. Players of opposing teams must wear contrasting, colored jerseys. Jerseys must be either:
 - 1) Long enough so they remain tucked in pants/shorts during the entire down, or;
 - 2) Short enough so there is minimum of 4 inches from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline. (Ex. A-1 is advancing the ball as A-1's jersey comes out of his/her pants covering part of the flag belt. Ruling, if B player's attempt to de-flag A-1 is hindered by the loose jersey, then a five yard penalty is assessed from the point of infraction.)
 - B. Pants/shorts must not contain belt loops or pockets. If your pants/shorts contain belt loops or pockets, you will not be allowed to play - **no exceptions**. This is for the safety of you and other players. The pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags. You may not tape your belt loops or pockets.
 - C. Each player must wear shoes. They must be made of soft, pliable upper material (canvas, leather, or synthetic), which covers the foot. Screw-in cleats are legal if a) the screw is part of the cleat and b) no metal is exposed. Any shoe with metal exposed will not be allowed!
8. Optional Equipment:
 - A. Players may wear basketball, volleyball, or wrestling kneepads on the leg, knee, and/or ankle.
 - B. Players may wear stocking caps. Caps with bills are not allowed.
 - C. Players may wear gloves as long as they are made of soft, non-abrasive material.
9. Illegal player equipment:

Any player wearing illegal equipment shall not be permitted to play. Types of illegal equipment may include:

 - A. Headgear containing any hard, unyielding, or stiff material including billed hats.
 - B. **Jewelry**. This includes but is not limited to rings, watches, earrings and necklaces.
 - C. Pads or braces worn above the waist.
 - D. Shoes with metal cleats.
 - E. Shirts or jerseys that do not remain tucked in.
 - F. Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets.
 - G. Leg and knee braces must be completely covered. Must be approved by supervisor if they contain any unyielding parts.
 - H. Any slippery or sticky, foreign substance.
 - I. Any electronic or mechanical devices.
 - J. Towels attached at the player's waist.

PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS

1. The game will begin with a captain's meeting. During this time first possession of the ball shall be decided by the officials and captains with a coin toss. The winning captain may choose for his/her team to be on offense or defense to begin with. The decision will automatically be reversed for the start of the second half.
2. The Start of each half shall begin with a kick-off from the 20-yard line
3. Forfeit time is five minutes after the scheduled game time. Note: There will be no make-ups for forfeits. If your team delays the game during the initial five minutes, you may be assessed a delay of game penalty by the officials.
4. Playing time shall be 40 minutes, divided into two halves of 20 minutes of running clock each. Half time shall be five (5) minutes.
5. **The supervisor at each location reserves the right to shorten the length of the remaining period if the game is threatened by darkness or bad weather.**
6. The clock will run continuously except for the following:
 - A. Team time-out. Clock begins on the snap.
 - B. Referee's time-out. Clock begins on the ready-for-play.
7. There will be no tiebreakers until playoffs begin.
8. Each team is entitled two time-outs per half. Each time-out will last thirty seconds.
9. A team has 25 seconds to put the ball into play. The referee shall warn each team five (5) seconds before a delay of game penalty is called. (Penalty 1 or 2).
10. Eligible substitutions:

No substitute shall enter during a down. Between downs, any number of eligible substitutes may replace players provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced players off the field before the ball becomes live. For this reason, each team will only receive 7 flag belts. (#50)
11. Legal substitutions:

During the dead ball interval, no substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless a dead-ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out, or a period ends.

KICK-OFFS, PUNTS, AND FAIR CATCH

1. The game and 2nd half will begin with a kickoff. The ball will be kicked using a tee, or having the ball placed on the ground from the 20-yard line. **NO PUNTING!!!!**
 - A. The ball must be kicked at least 20 yards. If the ball does not travel 20 yards, the opposing team will take possession of the ball wherever the ball went out of bounds, or wherever the ball stopped.
 - B. If the ball is kicked out of bounds and travels past the 40-yard line, the opposing team will start their possession from the 40-yard line.
 - C. There will be no on-side kicks.
 - D. No player on the kicking team may cross the 20-yard line before the ball is kicked. PENALTY: The receiving team may either have the ball re-kicked or take the ball as is.
 - E. A ball that is kicked into the end zone will result in a touchback. The ball will be placed on the 20-yard line.
 - F. If the ball is dropped when attempting to be caught, the play will be called dead, and the receiving team will start their possession where the ball was dropped.
 - G. During the kickoff **ALL BLOCKING RULES WILL APPLY.**
 - H. The receiving team may call for a fair catch. In doing so, they will start their possession from the spot where the player called the fair catch.
2. Protected Punt:

Before making the ball ready for play on fourth down, the referee must ask the team A captain if he/she wants to punt. The referee will then relay the information to team B. **Team A may punt on any down, but must tell the referee.** After the announcement to either punt or try has been made, the play must be executed (Note: to change options, team A will be charged with a time-out unless a penalty occurs giving team A the right to repeat the down). If the signal for a punt is given, yet the calling team "fakes" the punt. PENALTY: Illegal Kick, 10-yard penalty, re-kick, and a charged time-out (#24).

3. Both teams must have and maintain, at least, **four** (4) players, (Co-Rec 5 players); within one (1) yard of their scrimmage line and all players **must remain motionless** until the kick is made. A line player may not raise his/her arms to distract or block the kick. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5-yards from the previous spot. (#12)
4. The kicker must be, at least, five (5) yards behind the line of scrimmage when receiving the snap. After receiving the snap, the kicker must kick the ball immediately and in a continuous motion. PENALTY: Delay of game, 5 yards from the line of scrimmage. (#1)
5. The player receiving the punt must be given a 2 yard distance to catch the ball. If the player receiving the punt bobbles the punt, the ball is live while it is in the air. The ball is dead when it hits the ground.
6. Any receiver may signal for a fair catch while any kick is in flight. If any receiver gives a valid signal for a fair catch and catches the kick, it is a fair catch and the ball becomes dead at that point. No receiver may advance the ball after a fair catch signal.
7. After a punt, the ball becomes dead if kicking team touches the ball first or if the ball rolls into the end zone. The receiving team can pick up a live bouncing ball that has not been touched and return it.

SNAPPING, HANDLING, AND PASSING THE BALL

1. Players may use a 2, 3, or 4-point stance.
2. The center, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of play until it is snapped. (#7)
3. The center shall pass the ball back between his/her legs from a crouched position or passing it to the left or right of his/her body with the football touching the ground with a quick and continuous motion. No part of your body is to be in ahead of the ball. (#6)
4. After the ball is ready for play and until the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, nor may any player contact opponents in any other way. This includes standing in the neutral zone. PENALTY: Dead ball foul, encroachment, five yards from previous spot. (#9)
5. No offensive player shall make a false start. PENALTY: Dead ball foul, illegal procedure, five yards from the previous spot. (#10)
6. The offensive team must have at least four (4) players on their scrimmage line at the snap. The remaining players must be either on their scrimmage line or behind their backfield line. All players must be on or behind the line of scrimmage and within the side hash marks. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards. This is a live ball foul.
7. All offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary in legal position without movement of feet, body, head, or arms for at least one-full second. PENALTY: Illegal motion, five yards. (#11)
8. After being set for one full second, one offensive player may be in motion parallel to the opponent's goal line. If such player starts from their scrimmage line, that player must be at least 5 yards behind that line when the ball is snapped. Other offensive players must be stationary in their positions without movement of feet, body, head, or arms. The offensive team must have four (4) players on their scrimmage line at the snap. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5-yards. This is a live ball foul.
9. The player who receives the snap must be at least two yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. Direct snaps are illegal. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards. (#10)
10. Any player may hand or pass the ball backward at any time except if intentionally thrown out-of-bounds. (#18)
11. A backward pass or fumble may be caught in flight inbound by any player and advance.
12. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines and in the field of play is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on downs.
13. A backward pass or fumble that lands on the ground within the end zone behind the line of scrimmage will result in a safety.
14. A fumble lands in the end zone in front of the play will result in a touchback and possession will be changed to the non-advancing team. (I.e., Team A runner is on Team B's 3 yard line but fumbles the ball into Team B's end zone. RULEING: Touchback, Team B's ball, first down and zone to gain)

LEGAL AND ILLEGAL FORWARD PASS

1. All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. Only one forward pass can be thrown per down.
2. A forward pass is illegal:
 - A. If the passer's foot is touching or beyond team A's scrimmage line when the ball leaves his/her hand.
 - B. If thrown after the team possession has changed during the down.
 - C. If there is more than one forward pass per down.
3. If members of opposing teams catch a legal forward pass simultaneously, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the offensive team. (Referee's discretion)
4. Intentional grounding will be called if the quarterback is trying to avoid being sacked, even in the last two-minutes of play. Intentional grounding is when a quarterback is behind the line of scrimmage and is about to be sacked and throws the ball out of bounds or to the ground to avoid the sack. To avoid intentional grounding, the quarterback must pass the ball in the general direction of a receiver. (Referee Discretion) (#20)

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE

1. During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses Team A's scrimmage line, contact with an eligible player (offensive or defensive) who is beyond team A's scrimmage line is pass interference unless it occurs when two or more eligible players (offensive or defensive) make a simultaneous attempt to catch, reach, or bat a pass. (Official's judgment) It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is de-flagged/tagged prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond team A's scrimmage line. (#27)
2. After the ball is snapped, no offensive receiver can initiate contact against a defender when the ball is in the air. This is the same for the defender. The player that initiates contact will be called for pass interference.
3. PENALTY: Defensive pass interference, 10 yards from the previous spot, automatic first down. If the pass interference is by either player and intentional or unsportsmanlike, his/her team shall be penalized an additional 10 yards.

SCORING PLAYS

1. The score of a forfeited game shall be: offended team-1, opponent-0. If the offended team is ahead at the time of the forfeit, the score stands.
2. If a team is 17 or more points ahead when referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half the game shall be over.
3. If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 17 or more the game shall be over.
4. Touchdown is 6 points. Safeties are 2 points.
5. After scoring a touchdown, the captain of the team will tell the official 1, 2, or 3. An opportunity to score 1 point from the 3-yard line, 2 points from the 10-yard line or 3 points from the 20 yard line shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown. If you change your mind, your team has to call time-out to change your decision. If you have no time-outs remaining, the initial decision will stand. The defense can score on point after attempts by intercepting the ball and running it back for a touchdown! The defensive team will get as many points as the offensive team is attempting.
6. After every score which the player crosses the goal line with the ball, the player who scores must remain in the end zone until an official checks his/her flags. (#29) **Safety reasons**

MOMENTUM, SAFETY, AND TOUCHBACK

1. It is a safety when:
 - A. A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead at that point, in his/her team's possession.
 - B. Exception: When a player intercepts a forward pass inside the five-yard line and their original momentum carries them into the end zone, the ball becomes dead. (Official's judgment) Ball will be a touchback start on 20.
2. A player on offense commits any foul in his/her end zone.
3. A touchback is when:

- A. During a punt or kickoff, if the football crosses the goal line either in the air or rolling, the play is a touchback. No offensive player may run a punt or kickoff out of its own goal line.
- B. The team whose goal line is involved shall put the ball in play on the 20-yard line by a snap after a touchback.
- C. If a defender intercepts in, or whose momentum carries the defender into, the offensive end zone, that player can run out of the end zone to advance the ball. On point after tries the ball is dead if defense gains possession during play.

CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. No player shall commit any of the following non-contact acts during a period or intermission:
 - A. Abusive or insulting language.
 - B. Any acts of unfair play.
 - C. Using disconcerting acts or words before the snap in an attempt to interfere with A's signals or movements. This includes subs, coaches, and spectators.
 - D. Intentionally kicking at opposing player.
 - E. Intentionally swinging an arm, hand, or fist at any opposing player.
 - F. Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with the permission of the referee.
2. When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he/she shall not:
 - A. Spike the ball into the ground. Includes after touchdown.
 - B. Intentionally kick the ball.
 - C. Throw the ball into the air.
 - D. Fail to return the ball to the huddle.
3. Unsportsmanlike conduct by substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the rules will not be allowed.
4. Personal fouls. No player shall:
 - A. Steal, attempt to steal or bat the ball from player in possession.
 - B. Trip an opponent.
 - C. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
 - D. Throw the runner to the ground.
 - E. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
 - F. Make contact with an opponent that is deemed unnecessary of any nature.
 - G. Clip an opponent.

Penalty for all above: 10 yards, flagrant offenders will be disqualified.

BLOCKING

1. The offensive screen block shall take place with out contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her hand or arm to break the fall or to retain his/her balance. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
2. A player who screens shall not:
 - A. When he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than normal step from him or her.
 - B. When he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with him/her.
 - C. Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing directions.
 - D. After assuming his/her legal screening position move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path of his/her opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, he/she has committed a personal foul. PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
3. Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere for him/her by screen blocking, but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner. PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.

4. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arm and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official. PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.

RUNNER

1. Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes:
 - A. Swing the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.
 - B. Place the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.
 - C. Lower the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging. PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
2. The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This is also known as stiff-arming. PENALTY: Personal foul, 10 yards.
3. Flag guarding will be called if there is an attempt at de-flagging an opponent. If there is no attempt, then there is no flag guarding.
4. Diving or leaping forward to gain yardage is legal provided the dive is not toward or over a defensive player. PENALTY: Illegal contact, 10 yards from the point of infraction, the play stands.
5. The runner shall avoid contact with a defender who has established position on the field.

FLAG BELT REMOVAL

1. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be de-flagged. (#52)
2. **When a runner loses his/her flag belt, (accidentally or inadvertently) play continues. The de-flagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and the knees. If the flag belt was removed intentionally, it will be regarded as a Tampering Infraction.**
3. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including taping, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal. PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down, and player disqualification.

CO-REC MODIFICATIONS

1. The game shall consist of eight players: four men and four women. The minimum amount required to avoid a penalty is six players. At NO time should there be more than one male than the number of females playing in the game or vice versa (plus-one rule). For example, a team may have three males and four females but not two males and four females.
2. An intermediate size football should be used.
3. There must be five players on the line to begin the play. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards*
4. Males CAN NOT run the ball unless the ball is first caught beyond the line of scrimmage.
5. Open vs Closed Plays:
 - a. During the offensive team's possession there may not be 2 consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver.
 - b. 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 (it is a closed play, meaning it must involve a female).
 - c. The spot where the ball becomes dead by rule must be beyond the Team A scrimmage line. 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.
 - d. *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.
 - e. Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is "open" or "closed."

5. MERCY RULE - If a team is 25 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 2 minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 25 or more the game shall end at that point.
6. TOUCHDOWN VALUE - If a female player scores a touchdown, the point value is 9. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and a touchdown is scored by any Team A player, the point value is 9.

SUMMARY OF FOULS AND PENALTIES

	<u>OFFICIAL'S SIGNAL</u>	<u>INITIATION OF THE PENALTY</u>
<u>LOSS OF 5 YARDS</u>		
1. Illegal Delay of Game	21	
2. Putting Ball in Play Before Ready for Play	21	
3. Exceeding 25 Second Count	21	
4. Invalid or Illegal Fair Catch Signal	32	Point of Infraction
5. Illegal Ball Adjustment by Center	7, 19	
6. Illegal Position by Snapper	7, 18	
7. Illegal Snap	29	
8. Interference with Opponents or Ball	7, 18	
9. Defensive Encroachment	7, 18	
10. False Start	7, 19	
11. Illegal Shift	20	
12. Illegal Formation	19	
13. Player out-of-bounds when ball is snapped	19	
14. Offensive player Illegally in Motion Player Receiving Snap within	20	
15. 2 yards of Scrimmage Line	19	
16. Offensive player not within 15-yards of ball	19	
17. Illegally handling ball forward	35, 9	
18. Intentionally throwing backward pass or fumble out-of-bounds	35, 9	Mark where out-of-bounds
19. Illegal forward pass	35, 9	
20. Intentional grounding	36, 9	
21. Helping the runner	44	
22. Shirt or other clothing hinders the pulling of the flags	24	Point of Infraction
<u>LOSS OF 10 YARDS</u>		
23. Delaying Start of Either Half	21	
24. Quick Kick/Illegal Kicking	31	
25. Fair Catch Interference	33	Point of Infraction
26. Two or more consecutive encroachments during same interval between downs	7,18	
27. Offensive forward pass interference	33,9	Loss of down
28. Defensive forward pass interference	33,8	Automatic 1 st down
29. Illegally secured belt on touchdown	47,27,9	Loss of down
30. Unsportsmanlike player conduct	27	
31. Spiking, kicking, or throwing ball during dead ball	27	
32. Unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches, substitutes, or others	27	
33. Tackle runner	38	Point of Infraction /LOS
34. Steal, bat, or attempt to steal ball	38	Point of Infraction /LOS
35. Tripping an opponent	46	Point of Infraction /LOS

36. Contact with opponent on ground	38	
37. Throwing runner to ground	38	Point of Infraction /LOS
38. Hurdling any player	38	Point of Infraction
39. Unnecessary contact of any nature	38	
40. Drive or run into any player	38	Point of Infraction
41. Position upon shoulders or body	38	
42. Roughing the passer (auto 1 st down)	34,8	
43. Illegal offensive screen blocking	38	
44. Interlocked interference	38	
45. Defensive use of hands	38	
46. Guarding the flag belt	24	Point of Infraction
47. Stiff arm	38	Point of Infraction
48. Obstruction of runner	38	Point of Infraction
49. Illegal participation	28	
50. Illegal substitution	28	
51. Re-entry of disqualified player	28	
52. Illegal flag belt removal	38	Point of Infraction

DISQUALIFICATION ASSOCIATED WITH CERTAIN 10 YARD PENALTIES

53. Flagrant unsportsmanlike player conduct	47
54. Flagrant spiking, kicking, throwing ball	47
55. Flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct by coaches, substitutes, or others subject to the rules	47
56. Flagrant personal fouls	47
57. Intentional tampering with flag belt	38