

**University of Massachusetts Lowell
Campus Recreation Department**



Intramural Flag football Rules

Current NFHS (National Federation of State High School Associations) & NIRSA (National Intramural Recreational Association) shall govern all intramurals rules used for flag football unless modified by the University of Massachusetts Lowell Campus Recreation Department for program needs. Persons subject to the rules are team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, spectators & other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game & shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

EQUIPMENT, FIELD, PLAYERS & GAME TIMING

- 1) Illegal / Prohibited Equipment is as listed by not limited to the following:
 - a. Helmets & pads or braces worn above the waist
 - b. Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-in or detachable cleats
 - c. Ski or logger boots or boots with exposed metal, hook (s), loop (s) or soles exceeding 2-inches
 - d. Any item containing exposed knots: Includes bandannas, do-rags & stocking caps
 - e. Headwear containing any hard & unyielding material: Baseball caps
 - f. Pants, shorts or jerseys with any belt (s), belt loop (s), pocket (s), exposed drawstring or zippers
 - g. Tear-away pants, shorts or jerseys
 - h. Jewelry: Includes earrings, rings, watches, bracelets, necklaces
 - i. Any exposed body or facial piercing must be taken out
 - j. Hooded coats & sweatshirts
 - k. Hard & unyielding leg & knee brace material
 - l. Cleats that are molded to the sole of the shoe or shoes made of canvas, leather or synthetic material which covers the foot & attached to a firm sole of leather, rubber or composition material
- 2) Legal Equipment
 - a. Protective gear is highly recommended (Mouth, crotch & pelvic protectors)
 - b. Jersey (short / long sleeve or sweaters) must be long enough to remain tucked into pants or shorts & short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to player's waistline
 - c. Pants or shorts without belt (s), belt loop (s), pocket (s), exposed drawstring or zippers
 - d. Religious & medical alert bracelets or necklaces must be taped to the body for participation (Written prove may be required for religious bracelets/necklaces)
 - e. Knit headwear without a bill & headbands made of non-abrasive material
 - f. Hair control devices, knee pads, gloves & mittens that are soft, pliable & non-abrasive
 - g. Play books may be carried inside clothing
- 3) The game field shall be a rectangular area divided into two 25 yard zones & two – eight yard end zones.
 - a. The field dimensions are as followed: 65 yards long X 32 yards wide.
- 4) Game balls will be provided by the Office of Campus Recreation.

- 5) If teams wish to warm up, they must provide their own ball.
- 6) Teams must wear matching colored shirts. Matching pinnies may be checked out from the supervisor on duty.
- 7) Shirts must be worn and tucked in
- 8) Each player must wear the flag belts provided by Campus Recreation.
- 9) Men use a regular size ball
- 10) The game shall be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. 5 players are required to start the game to avoid a forfeit.
- 11) It is highly recommend for teams / individuals to arrive 10 minutes early before the scheduled game time. At the scheduled game time, if a team does not have the required number of players a 10-minute grace period is in effect. If a team/individual does not appear within the grace period, a win by forfeit will be accredited to the opposing team.
- 12) The game shall consist of two 20-minute running halves with the clock stopping in the last 2-minutes of each half. Intermission is 5 minutes in length.
- 13) During the final 2-minutes (2-minute warning) the clock will begin on the snap or officials signal
- 14) At the 2-minute warning of each half the clock will stop for a:
 - a. Incomplete legal / illegal pass, pass goes out-of-bounds or penalty
 - b. Team is awarded a new series after gaining a first down or a legal punt
 - c. First down or touchdown
 - d. Change of possession
 - e. Team attempting to consume or conserve illegally
 - f. Safety or touchback
 - g. Time-out, referee's time-out or inadvertent whistle
- 15) Mercy Rule for men's & women's game
 - a. The game will end when a team is 19 or more points ahead at the 2-minute warning in the second half.
- 16) Overtime will only occur in playoffs.
 - a. Shall be played towards the same goal line.
 - b. Only one coin toss will occur & shall begin the overtime period & the winner of the toss is given the options of offense, defense. The opponent shall make a choice of remaining options.
 - c. Time-outs do not carry over from regulation game; each team is awarded 1 time-out.
 - d. Unless a penalty occurs, each team will start 1st & goal on the 25-yard line. Each team will have 4 downs to score. If a tie remains after one period, captains will alternate choices & series will continue until a winner is determined.
 - e. Teams can intercept a pass & return it for a touchdown, if team scores, team wins & the game has ended.

KICKING THE BALL

- 1) Quick kicks & free kicks are illegal, Illegal Kick = 10 yards
- 2) Players shall ignore signals given by kickers or receivers, the ball remains live
- 3) Punting, after the kicker receives the snap the ball must be kick immediately in a continuous motion = Illegal procedure = 5 yards
- 4) If a punt goes out-of-bounds between the goal lines or comes to rest inbounds untouched and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead & belongs to the receiving team @ that spot.
- 5) If the ball is dropped or muffed by the receiving team the ball is dead on the spot.
- 6) An offensive team shall have 4 consecutive downs to advance the ball to the next zone.
 - a. On the forth down, the team may punt or attempt to advance, if punting is not chosen & advancement is not obtained, the ball shall be the opponents at the spot.
 - b. A captain may declare a punt on any down (Exceptions apply)
- 7) The kicking team may not recover a punt by the kicking team.
 - a. Illegal Kicking = 10 yards
- 8) After a punt, the ball may be blocked, if blocked to the ground it is dead at that spot.
 - a. If the punt is blocked & then caught behind the scrimmage line the ball may be advanced.

PLAYING REGULATIONS

- 1) **Each team is 1 time out per half and time outs do not carry over.**
- 2) Each half will begin with a coin toss between opposing captains. The captain winning the coin toss shall have a choice of the following:
 - a. Defer their option to the second half
 - b. Begin game on the offense or defense
 - c. Side to defend

The captain not winning the coin toss shall have the choice of what goal to defend.

SUBSTITUTIONS

- 1) All subs must enter field from their team bench.
- 2) No substitute shall enter during a down.
- 3) Substitution can occur between downs, time-out, injury or ending of a half.
- 4) Substitutes shall be on their side of the neutral zone before ball is snapped / becomes live

PLAYERS

All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass.

1. All players must be inbounds within 5-yard of the sideline & 15-yard of the play when the ball is snapped.
2. The offense & defense scrimmage lines shall be 1-yard apart & separated by ball spotters.

3. The offensive team is responsible for retrieving the ball after a down & the ball will be marked for play.
4. Offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after the ball is marked ready for play.
 - a. Delay of game = 5 yards
5. Players may use a 2, 3, or 4 point stance.
6. No defensive player may encroach, touch the ball or make contact or interfere with opponents prior to the snap.
 - a. Encroachment = 5 yards, Consecutive encroachments = 10 yards
7. The offensive team must have at least 4 players on their scrimmage line at the snap.
 - a. One offensive player may be in motion but not in motion towards the opponent's goal line at the snap. All other players must come to a stop & remain stationary (without movement of feet, body, head or arms) for a full second until the ball is snapped.
 - i. Illegal Motion = 5 yards
8. No offensive player shall false start, which includes simulating a charge or start of play.
 - a. Illegal Procedure = 5 yards
9. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2-yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.
 - a. Illegal Procedure = 5 yards
10. The snapper, after assuming the position for the snap & adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball & shall be penalized for such movement whether or not the ball is snapped = Illegal Procedure = 5 yards
11. The snap must be in a backwards motion either between the legs or to the side of the snapper & the snap must be quick & in a continuous motion. Illegal snap = 5 yards
12. All fumbles, muffs or backwards passes that hit the ground shall be dead on the spot. If the ball is intercepted during a fumble, muff or backwards pass it may be advanced.
13. A backwards pass or fumble which goes out-of bounds between the goal lines belongs to the offensive team at the out-of bounds spot. If out-of-bounds behind a goal line, it is a touchback or safety.
14. Any player, replaced player or substitute enters during a down, Illegal Participation, 10 yards
15. Only one forward pass can be thrown per down
 - a. Illegal forward pass = Illegal pass = 5 yards from spot & loss of down
 - i. Passer's foot is beyond the scrimmage line
 - ii. Passer intentionally throws ball to the ground to save loss of yardage
 - iii. Passer catches untouched forward or backward pass
 - iv. If there is more than one forward pass per down
16. Pass interference can only occur beyond offensive scrimmage line: after the ball is snapped, passed & touched:
 - a. Offensive pass interference = after the ball is snapped & until touched

- i. 10 yards & loss of down from previous spot
 - b. Defensive pass interference = after the ball is thrown & until touched
 - i. 10 yards from previous spot = automatic first down
 - ii. Defense deflags an offensive player before receiving the ball
- 17. A runner may pass the ball backwards (lateral) at anytime & a backwards pass or fumble in flight may be caught or intercepted by any player inbounds & advanced
- 18. A runner shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled or pushed to gain yardage
 - a. Helping the runner = 5 yards
- 19. Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms or the ball to deny opportunity of pulling or removing the flag belt such as but not limited too:
 - a. Personal foul = 10 yards
 - i. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
 - ii. "Stiff arm" opponents
 - iii. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt
 - iv. Lowering shoulder in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt
- 20. A runner may jump over an opponent to avoid contact but shall not hurdle a player
 - a. Penalty = 10 yards from spot of foul
- 21. A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in their path, nor attempt to run between two opponents unless space provides a reasonable chance to proceed without contact
- 22. An opponent shall not hold, grasp or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag = Personal foul = 10 yards
- 23. A player may dive to gain more yardage for 1st down & touchdown situations only
 - a. A dive constitutes arms & feet extended with ball extended from body
 - b. @ no time may a player dive through an opponent = Personal foul = 10 yards
 - c. If official views diving as an intent to harm, player may be disqualified

BATTING & KICKING

- 25. Players shall not bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight
- 26. Batting a ball in player possession
 - a. A ball in player possession shall not be batted forward by a player of the team in possession = Penalty = Illegal Batting, 10 yards
- 27. Illegal kicking
 - a. No player shall intentionally kick a ball other than a punt = illegal punt & shall be treated like a fumble = Illegal Kicking, 10 yards

BLOCKING

- 1) Offensive screen block shall take place without contact = Personal foul = 10 yards
 - a. Hands & arms must be on their side or behind their back
 - b. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact is illegal
 - c. At no time shall players interlock to encircle or interfere with the runner

2) Defensive players may not go or push through offensive screen blocker's, they must go around an offensive screen = Personal Foul = 10 yards

ROUGHING THE PASSER

- 1) Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally.
 - a. Roughing the passer = 10 yards & automatic 1st down
- 2) No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as they are considered out of the play after the pass.
 - a. Roughing the passer = 10 yards & automatic 1st down
- 3) Contacting hand or arm, regardless of contacting the pass
 - a. Roughing the passer = 10 yards @ automatic 1st down
- 4) Contacting the ball before contacting the passer
 - a. Roughing the passer = 10 yards @ automatic 1st down
- 5) Roughing the passer restrictions do not apply if the forward pass is thrown from beyond the scrimmage line but personal foul penalties can be assessed.

FLAG BELT REMOVAL

- 1) Players must have possession of the ball before they can be legally deflagged by an opponent
- 2) A runner who accidentally or inadvertently loses their flag belt shall be deflagged by one-hand touch between the shoulders & the knees by an opponent
- 3) A runner who purposely removes their flag belt to gain an advantage
 - a. The play shall continue with the option of the penalty or the play
 - i. Personal foul, 10 yards
- 4) In circumstances where the flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play
- 5) An opponent intentionally pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal = Personal foul = 10 yards
- 6) Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, use foreign materials or other methods results in a personal foul & disqualification.

All of the following infractions will result in a five-yard penalty.

Delay of Game

- Failure to put the ball in play within twenty-five seconds after the ball is ready to play.
- Putting the ball in play before it is declared ready by the officials
- Failure to punt the ball immediately after receiving the snap on a protected punt kick.

Illegal Procedure

False Start

- Offensive moves forward into the neutral zone before ball is snapped and line is set

Illegal snap

- Receiving a snap within two-yards of the line of scrimmage.

Encroachment

- After the center has placed his/her hands on the ball, it is illegal for any player to enter the neutral zone.

Illegal Motion

- One offensive player may be in motion at the time the ball is snapped. The player in motion must be moving parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage.

Illegal Formation

- An offensive team that does not have four players on the line of scrimmage to begin a play.

Illegal Time-Out

- When a time out is asked for, by a team, and they have none remaining

Illegal Forward Pass

- The passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage.
- A pass thrown after a possession change.
- A passer catches his/her untouched pass.
- There is more than one forward pass per down. (This penalty also includes a loss of down).

Intentional Grounding

- Throwing the ball out of bounds or throwing the ball away to avoid a loss of yardage. (This penalty also includes a loss of down).

All of the following infractions will result in a ten-yard penalty.

Fair Catch Interference

- The punting team may not obstruct the path of the receiver of the punt. (Ten yards and repeat fourth down).

Illegally Secured Flag Belt and/or Metal Cleats

- A flag belt that is secured in any manner other than the way it is intended to be secured or metal cleats. (Also includes loss of down and player ejection).

Illegal Contact

- Any contact, a player may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in attempt to remove the flag belt.

Roughing the Passer

- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown. (Includes automatic first down).

Illegal Participation

- To many players on the field. Playing a disqualified player.

Unnecessary Roughness

- Tripping, handling, tackling, contact after the ball is declared dead, any contact with fists, forearms, or hands. (Includes disqualification if the act is flagrant.)

Flag Guarding

- Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt.

Defensive Pass Interference

- On a legal forward pass beyond the line of scrimmage, defenders may not interfere with an eligible receiver. This includes deflagging a receiver before he/she has touched the ball. (Includes automatic first down.)

Offensive Pass Interference

- Interference or contact that interferes with a defenders' right for the ball. (Includes loss of down.)

Diving to de-flag

- Diving to pull a flag