



4 on 4 Flag Football Rules Summary

1. Team Composition

Four players constitute a team. A team must have 3 players present to start a game.

2. Field Size

The field measures 40 yards in length goal line to goal line with a midfield zone line and two end zones of 10 yards each. The width of the field is 30 yards.

3. Game Time

Each half is 12 minutes in length. The clock runs continuously for the first 11 minutes of each half. There will be a stop clock for the final minute of each half.

4. Overtime

No games, regular season and playoff, can end in a tie. All games will follow the overtime procedure to break any ties. Each team will receive a 3-down possession from the opponent's 10-yard line (Team A tries, then Team B tries to match or beat). The game is won when one team has more points after an equal number of possessions. There are no timeouts in overtime.

5. Number of Downs / Punting

Teams will have 3 downs to advance across the next zone line (or goal line). There are NO punts.

6. Ball Placement to Begin a Half / After Scores

The ball will be placed on the 10-yard line to begin each half and following any scores unless moved by penalty.

7. Running

An offensive player may NOT advance the ball across the scrimmage line. There are no restrictions after a change of possession or once a legal forward pass has been caught beyond the offense's scrimmage line.

8. Legal Forward Pass

There must be a legal forward pass each down. The receiver must catch the ball beyond the offense's scrimmage line. There is no time limit for attempting a forward pass.

9. The Mercy Rule is 25 points at the 1 minute warning of the 2nd period. If a team is ahead by 25 or more at this point, the clock will run continuously.



Intramural Sports 4 on 4 Flag Football Rules

The rules for the University of Iowa Intramural Flag Football program are derived from the National Intramural Recreational Sports Association's rules with the following exceptions. The NIRSA Flag and Touch Football Rules Book will apply in all cases not specifically covered below. Copies of the rules are available at www.nirsa.org. *Rule differences used for 4 on 4 Flag Football as opposed to regular Flag Football are highlighted.*

RULE 1. THE GAME, FIELD PLAYERS AND EQUIPMENT

- 1) **ELIGIBILITY:** Any University of Iowa student, faculty, and staff that was registered by the university in either the Spring 2009, Summer 2009, or Fall 2009 semesters are eligible to participate. All eligibility rules apply. Consult the Intramural Rules in regard to these rules.
- 2) **NUMBER OF PLAYERS:** The game shall be played between 2 teams of 4 players each. 3 players are required to start a game. Each team will be required to provide one person, player or spectator, to keep score for one half.
- 3) **EQUIPMENT:** Each player on the field must wear a one-piece belt at the waistline with three flags permanently attached, one flag to each side and one to the center of the back. Cleats are limited to studs or projections that are not to exceed ½ inch in length and are made with non-abrasive rubber or rubber type synthetic material, which does not chip or develop a cutting edge. *No metal cleats will be allowed.* Players may wear a stocking cap. It is allowed to have a knit ball attached. The cap must have no bill. Bandannas are permitted provided the knot is not exposed. Players may wear a headband no wider than 2 inches and made of non-abrasive single-colored cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Rubber or elastic bands may only be used to control hair. Illegal equipment consists of pads, shoulder pads, **JEWELRY**, or any unyielding or dangerous equipment, which include shoes with detachable cleats unless the screw is part of the cleat. Any slippery or sticky substance of a foreign nature on equipment or exposed parts of the body is illegal.

NO JEWELRY WILL BE PERMITTED. This includes, but is not limited to, earrings, wedding rings or bands, other rings, necklaces, bracelets, rubber bands, and metal barrettes. The only exception to this rule is a medic alert bracelet or necklace. In that specific case, it must be taped down. When any illegal equipment is found on any player or incoming substitute, the illegal equipment must be removed before participation. If illegal equipment removal takes more than 25 seconds, that player must be replaced for at least one down, or the team may call a team time-out. **TAPING OF JEWELRY TO THE BODY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. ALL JEWELRY MUST BE REMOVED PRIOR TO THE INTRAMURAL EVENT.**

ALL PLAYERS MUST KEEP SHIRTS TUCKED IN AT ALL TIMES. A cut-off shirt short enough not to interfere with the flags is permissible.

(Wearing illegal equipment - PENALTY: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 5 yards)

(Failure to wear required equipment – PENALTY: 3 yards)

- 4) **TEAMS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYERS AND FANS:** Players and fans must remain at least three (3) yards from the sideline. **(PENALTY: First Offense - warning, Second Offense – 3 yards, Thereafter – 5 yards)**
- 5) **GAME BALL:** *Each team can use any legal ball when in possession.*
- 6) **WEARING FLAGS:**
 - a) All players must wear flags while on the playing field.
 - b) The flags will be fastened to the belt in such a manner as not to be twisted under or fastened to the inside of the belt.
 - c) The two flags are to hang down vertically along the side seam of the trousers and one down the center of the back.
 - d) Solid belts will be comprised of three flags. The ball carrier will be declared down when the belt clip becomes unfastened when pulled by a defensive player. If the defensive player pulls the belt and it does not immediately become unfastened, the ball carrier will not be considered down until the belt does become unfastened.
EXAMPLE: The ball carrier, A1, has his/her flag belt pulled by B1, the defender. A1 takes five (5) more steps before the belt becomes unfastened. **RULING...** The offensive player will be ruled down at the spot the belt becomes unattached from the runner's waist.
 - e) If the flag belt should become unfastened without being pulled by a defensive player, the play will remain alive until a defensive player contacts the runner between the shoulders and the knees with one hand.
 - f) If a defensive player unfastens an offensive player's belt after throwing a forward or backward pass, the player is still eligible to advance the ball. He/she must be tagged with one hand if he/she catches a pass.
 - g) A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. **(PENALTY – Defensive Pass Interference - 5 yards)**
 - h) It is illegal for any player to participate in a play with an illegally secured flag belt. **(PENALTY – Illegally Secured Flag Belt – 5 yards from previous spot – player ejection – loss of down if player is on offense, automatic 1st down if player is on defense)**

RULE 2. DEFINITIONS OF PLAYING TERMS

- 1) **CATCH:** A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds or being contacted by an opponent in such a way that he/she is prevented from returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball. Sideline cones are considered out-of-bounds.
 - a) If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.
- 2) **FIGHTING:** Fighting is an attempt by a player or non player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to: attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet) whether or not there is contact.

RULE 3. PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, SUBSTITUTIONS

- 1) STARTING THE GAME:
 - a) Before the start of the game the referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the opposing captains, after first designating which captain shall call the coin toss.
 - i) The captain of the winning toss shall choose one of the following options.
 - (1) Offense.
 - (2) Defense.
 - (3) To designate which goal his/her team will defend.
 - (4) To defer their option to the second half.
 - ii) The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
 - b) Putting the ball into play. The ball shall be put into play at the beginning of the game, at the beginning of the second half, after a score and a safety by a scrimmage down on the 10-yard line.
 - c) *Before the coin toss, the referee will approve each team's game ball.* In needed, a football will be provided by the Recreational Services Intramural Department.
- 2) LENGTH OF GAME: Playing time shall be 24 minutes, divided into 2 periods of 12 minutes each. There will be a 3-minute intermission between halves. Between the 1st and 2nd period, the teams shall change goals. Team possession, number of the next down, and the zone line-to-gain remain unchanged. The time between the 1st and 2nd period shall be no more than 1 minute. At 1 minute before the end of each half the referee shall stop the clock and inform both captains of the playing time remaining in the half. The starting of the clock depends on the previous play.
 - a) During the final 1 minute of each half the clock stops for:
 - (1) Incomplete Pass – starts on the snap.
 - (2) Out-of-bounds – starts on the snap.
 - (3) Penalty and Administration – depends on the previous play. (Exception: following delay of game, clock starts on the snap).
 - (4) Any successfully score – starts on the succeeding snap.
 - (5) Team Time-out – starts on the snap.
 - (6) First down – depends on the previous play.
 - (7) Official's Time-out – starts at the referee's discretion.
 - (8) Touchback – starts on the snap.
 - (10) New series for a team – starts on the snap.
 - b) The clock will start when the ball is legally snapped and run continuously for the 11 minutes of each half, except for a team time-out or official's time-out.
- 3) TIME-OUTS: Each team is entitled to one (1) time-out during each game, including overtime. Time-outs will be no longer than one minute.
- 4) TIES: If the game is tied at the end of the second period the following procedures are used:
 - a) Overtime Periods – All overtime periods are played towards the same goal line. A coin toss, as in the beginning of the game, will determine the options. If additional overtime periods are played, field captains will alternate option choices. Each team will have a series of downs to score a touchdown beginning from the 10-yard line.
 - b) Penalties – Penalties shall be assessed according to the regular rules of the game.
 - c) No kicks from scrimmage are permitted.
 - d) Intercepted Passes – Intercepted passes may be returned. If the ball is not returned for a touchdown, the ball will be placed at the ten (10) yard line and play will begin as in section a) above.
 - e) The goal line shall always be the line-to-gain in overtime.

RULE 4. BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT-OF-BOUNDS

- 1) **DEAD BALL:** A live ball becomes dead when an official sounds the whistle or declares it dead:
 - a) When the ball goes out-of-bounds or when it touches the ground beyond the goal line of the opponent.
 - b) When any part of the ball carrier's person other than the hand or foot touches the ground.
NOTE: The ball carrier may contact the ball to the ground and the ball will remain live as long as no other body parts other than the foot or hand are in contact with the ground. The ball is considered to be part of the hand.
 - c) When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or try is attempted.
 - d) When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
 - e) When a backward pass or fumble by a player touches the ground, this includes a snap.
NOTE: Backward passes and fumbles may be caught in flight, in-bounds by any player and advanced.
 - f) When a ball carrier has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
 - g) When a ball carrier is legally touched with one hand below the shoulders once the flag belt is no longer attached.
 - h) When an inadvertent whistle occurs.
 - i. Inadvertent whistle: In flag football, it is not uncommon for a play to be mistakenly blown dead. In these cases, the offensive team shall have the option of replaying the down or accepting the ball at the spot where it was blown dead. On loose balls such as a pass in flight, the down must be replayed. After a change of possession the team in possession at the time the ball is blown dead shall have the option of accepting the play or replaying the down.

RULE 5. SERIES OF DOWNS, NUMBER OF DOWN AND TEAM POSSESSION AFTER PENALTY

- 1) **YARDS AND DOWNS:** When a first down is gained in a zone, the team in possession of the ball is allowed **three (3) downs** in which to move it from that point into the next zone.

RULE 6. KICKING THE BALL

- 1) **THERE IS NO KICKING.**

RULE 7. SNAPPING, HANDING AND PASSING THE BALL

- 1) **FORWARD PASS:** Any member of the passing team is eligible. All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass per down.
- 2) **BALL IN PLAY:** Team A gets 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it is signaled ready for play by the referee. **(PENALTY –Delay of the Game– 3 yards)**
 - a) The snapper need not have his/her shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage or snap the ball between his/her legs in order for the snap to be legal.
 - b) Ball must be snapped to a player at least two yards behind the line of scrimmage.
 - c) The snapper may not snap the ball to him/herself.
 - d) A team may legally spike the ball to prevent loss of time in the final minute of each half.
- 3) **MINIMUM LINE PLAYERS:** **The offensive team must have at least 1 player 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 inbounds. **(PENALTY – Illegal Formation – 5 yards.)**

RULE 8. SCORING PLAYS AND TOUCHBACK

- 1) **SCORING:** Touchdown – 6 points; Extra point try 1 point from 3 yards; 2 points from 10 yards; safety – 2 points. (After a safety, the team who scored the safety will put the ball into play on their own **10 yard-line** with a new series of scrimmage downs.) In Coed, a touchdown scored by a female or is the result of a pass thrown by a female. – 9 points. The defense scores 2 points, on any try by returning an interception for a touchdown.
- 2) **FOULS ON A SCORE:** *If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down that results in a successful touchdown, the scoring team may choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot or after the try on the **10 yard line**. If there is a foul by the defensive team during a successful try, the scoring team may choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot.*
- 3) **MERCY RULE:** If a team is ahead by 25 or more points when the Referee announces the 1 minute warning for the 2nd period, the game clock will run continuously stopping only for team and officials time outs.
 - a) If a team scores during the last minute of the 2nd period and that score creates a point differential of 25 or more, the clock will start and run continuously starting with the confirmation of score by the Referee.
 - b) If a team scores during the last minute of the 2nd period and that score creates a point differential of less than 25, the clock will stop immediately once the Referee has confirmed the score. Stop clock timing and rules will then be in effect.

RULE 9. CONDUCT OF PLAYERS AND OTHERS

- 1) **BLOCKING:** Offensive screen blocking should take place without an attempt to make contact with an opponent. The screen blocker shall position her/his hands and arms at his/her sides or behind his/her back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a screen block is illegal. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. *Some legal incidental contact may occur. (PENALTY – Illegal Contact – **5 yards**)*
 - f) Screen Blocking Fundamentals. A player who screens shall not:
 - i) Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
 - ii) Initiate contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
 - iii) Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be 1 to 2 normal strides from the opponent.
- 4) **DEFENSIVE RESTRICTION:** Defensive players may not use their hands on blockers. They must attempt to avoid blockers. Incidental contact with the hands will be allowed, but should the defender gain an advantage by use of the hands, he will be penalized. **(PENALTY – Illegal Contact – 5 yards)**
- 5) **TACKLING:** It is a foul to tackle, trip, kick, push, shove, or elbow the ball carrier or blocker. It is also a foul for a defensive player to strip or attempt to strip the ball by punching, striking, or stealing it. The runner's forward progress cannot be impeded in any way. **(PENALTY –Illegal Contact - 5 yards. If flagrant ADDITIONAL PENALTY – Disqualification)**
- 6) **BALL CARRIER AND RUNNING WITH THE BALL:** It is a penalty for the ball carrier to “stiff arm”, charge into, knee, kick or try to knock over a player at anytime. **(PENALTY – Illegal Contact – 5 yards).**

This is judged like a block/charge foul in basketball.

- a) Spinning is legal; however, the ball carrier must be in control of his/her person at all times.
- b) Diving is allowed, however, the ball carrier cannot make contact with a defender while in the act of diving.

THE BALL CARRIER MUST TRY TO AVOID CONTACT WITH ALL DEFENSIVE PLAYERS AT ALL TIMES.

- 7) ROUGH TACTICS: Such as attempting to run over or batter down an opponent must be penalized as flagrant and unnecessary roughness. **(PENALTY – Illegal Contact or Unsportsmanlike Conduct – 5 yards, ejection, and suspension)**
- 8) DISQUALIFICATION: Whenever in the judgment of the officials, or field supervisor, player or players may be involved in any deliberate or flagrant violation of the rules, the person will be ejected and their team penalized 5 yards. This includes foul, dirty or abusive language or violent protest by either word or action against any official or other players. In the judgment of any official or supervisor any type of unsportsmanlike conduct by any player or team will be penalized by a 5-yard penalty and if the official feels it necessary, he/she can eject players or forfeit the game. Players or spectators will be automatically ejected if they physically (or attempt to) contact an official or supervisor. Any player ejected will be required to sit out the next scheduled game for his/her team. Repeat disqualifications will result in expulsion from the league and future intramural sports.
- 9) FOULS TO PREVENT PLAY: If the defensive team commits a foul so near its own goal line that they can be penalized only by halving the distance to the goal line, the object being (in the opinion of the referee) to consume time, it shall be regarded as a refusal to allow play to proceed. In that event, the referee shall warn the offending team once and then if the offense is repeated, it will be a touchdown.

OTHERS

- 1) PROTESTS: If a team feels that an official has made a misinterpretation of the rules, they should lodge a protest immediately with the official. The official must (1) stop the game and (2) bring the rule in question to the attention of the Field Supervisor who will make his/her ruling on it. His/her ruling will stand. If the team questioning the rule believes the Field Supervisor is incorrect, they must lodge a written protest along with \$2.00 to the Recreational Services Office (FH E216) within 24 hours of lodging the original protest. The Recreational Services Office will then make a ruling. If the protest is allowed, the \$2.00 will be refunded.
NOTE: Arguing over a call does not constitute lodging a protest. Protests on judgment calls will not be considered. Play must be stopped. If the protesting team allows subsequent action without talking to the Field Supervisor, they forfeit the right to protest.
- 1) POSTPONEMENTS IN CASE OF WEATHER: Should a postponement be necessary due to inclement weather, the teams must contact the Recreational Services Office in regards to the make-up time and place. Games will not be cancelled before 3:00 PM (Monday-Thursday) so each team must call the info line **353-3000** to obtain information on rainouts. Sunday cancellations will be made by 12:00 PM.

RULE 10. ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES

2) SUMMARY OF PENALTIES:

- a) Loss of Down
 - i. Illegal forward passes by team. (Also loss of 3 yards.)
 - ii. Offensive pass interference. (Also loss of 5 yards.)
 - iii. Intentional grounding. (Also loss of 3 yards from the spot of the ball.)
 - iv. Illegally secured flag belt. (Also loss of 5 yards from previous spot, player ejection).
- b) Loss of Five (3) Yards:
 - i. Delay of game.
 - ii. Encroachment.
 - iii. Illegal motion or shift.
 - iv. Snap infraction.
 - v. Snap received by a player less than two yards behind the snapper.
 - vi. Illegal procedure.
 - vii. Advancement by the male runner.
 - viii. Two consecutive male to male passes.
 - ix. Failure to wear required equipment
- c) Loss of Ten (5) Yards:
 - i. Team not ready to play at start of either half.
 - ii. Interference with the opportunity to catch a punt.
 - iii. Defensive pass interference. (Automatic 1st down-penalized from the line of scrimmage.)
 - iv. Striking, kicking, kneeling, elbowing, etc.
 - v. Unsportsmanlike conduct.
 - vi. Holding by offense or defense.
 - vii. Illegal use of hands or arms (block).
 - viii. Flag guarding.
 - ix. Tripping.
 - x. Running into opponent obviously out of play.
 - xi. Shoving opponent out-of-bounds instead of pulling flag.
 - xii. Impeding the ball carrier.
 - xiii. Person illegally on the field.
 - xiv. Throwing runner to ground.
 - xv. Wearing illegal equipment.

4 ON 4 FIELD DIAGRAM

