



Vanderbilt University Intramural Sports Flag Football Rules

I. GENERAL RULES

- A. Registration fee is \$60 per team.
- B. Each participant must present a valid Commodore card and be on the IMleagues.com roster in order to participate.
- C. Intramural sports with varsity or club sports counterparts are limited to either one former varsity athlete or two club sport members. Teams will forfeit all games in which they are found to be in violation of this rule.
- D. Teams should arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled start time of their game. Teams will be given a 10 minute grace period after their posted start time to have the minimum number of players required to begin. Once the grace period expires, the game will be declared a forfeit. Game clocks will be adjusted to account for late starts.
- E. Attire
 - 1. Uniforms – Teams are required to wear matching colored shirts. Teams will wear their respective color selected during registration. Shorts without pockets are required. In the instance players don't have shorts without pockets, duct tape will be available to cover pockets.
 - 2. Shoes – all players must wear shoes. Tennis and running shoes are acceptable for all sports, and plastic cleats are acceptable for outdoor soccer, flag football, and softball. No player will be allowed to wear metal cleats, play in sandals or play barefoot.
 - 3. Pads and 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 must be lined with appropriate slow-recovery padding.
 - 4. Jewelry - No jewelry or any other item deemed dangerous by the Intramural Staff may be worn. Any player wearing exposed permanent jewelry (e.g. body piercings) will not be permitted to play unless the exposed jewelry is completely covered.
- F. Forfeit Policy
 - 1. Teams have a 10 minute grace period before games are declared a forfeit
 - 1. First offense = warning
 - 2. Second offense = ejection from the league without refund
 - 2. Captains must notify the Competitive Sports staff (Wade) via email of a forfeit **no later** than 2pm on game day to avoid penalty. Emails should be sent to wade.e.evans@vanderbilt.edu
 - 3. An attempt to reschedule the game will made by pro staff if ample notice is given and the opposing team is available

II. TEAM COMPOSITION

- A. An official OPEN LEAGUE team consists of seven (7) players on the field.
 - 1. Co-Rec Flag Football is 8v8. Teams are required to have four (4) males and four (4) females on the field.

2. Players can compete on only one men's or women's team, regardless of league classification. In addition, players may compete for one Co-Rec team during the same season.
- B. Five (5) players are required to start the game and rosters are limited to 15 players.
1. Players who arrive late may be added to the roster and may enter the game at a dead-ball situation.
 2. Co-Rec teams are required to have a minimum of six (6) players to start a game.
 - a. Three (3) males and three (3) females, four (4) males and two (2) females, or two (2) males and four (4) females.
 - b. Co-Rec teams with seven (7) players will be either four (4) males and three (3) females or three (3) males and four (4) females.

III. EQUIPMENT

- A. Regulation footballs will be provided.
- B. Players may use their own equipment as long as both captains and the Intramural Supervisor agree prior to the start of play.
- C. All players must wear shoes. Tennis/running shoes, soft-soled shoes, and football shoes are permitted. Metal spikes, baseball-style spikes, and cleats with metal exposed are prohibited. Any player caught wearing spikes will be ejected from the game.
- D. All shirts must be tucked in and remain tucked in during play. Shirts (sweatshirt or jacket) with a hood, the hood must be tucked inside the shirt (sweatshirt or jacket).
- E. Participants must wear shorts or pants without pockets or belt loops.
- F. No jewelry, hats or anything that would be considered potentially harmful to other participants may be worn.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.

IV. FIELD DIMENSIONS & THE GAME

A. FIELD DIMENSIONS

1. The dimensions of the fields have been standardized into regulation 80 yard x 40 yard playing areas with two 10-yard end zones and three 20-yard zones. Two inbounds lines (hash marks) shall run parallel with and 15 yards inbounds from each sideline.
2. For each play, the ball shall be spotted at the spot on the field where the previous play ended, if inside the inbounds lines. For plays that end between the inbounds line and the sideline or out-of-bounds, the ball will be spotted on the inbounds line closest to the spot where the previous play ended. At the start of each half and following any touchbacks or touchdowns, the ball will be spotted at the center of the field.
3. There will be lines 3 yards and 10 yards from either goal line from which extra point plays will be run, and 14 yards from either goal from which to put the ball in play to begin a half, after a score, safety, or touchback.
4. There will be a restraining line 2 yards outside and parallel to the sideline. Teams and spectators must stay behind this line and between the 20 yard lines.

5. Field barriers shall be set at the distance from the field of play as required by National Federation rules.

B. LENGTH OF PLAY

1. Games will consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute halftime.
 - a. Game Time starts the 5-minute grace period for a team waiting on players to arrive. A team needs at least 5 legal players to begin the game. Any team that forfeits a game will be charged a \$10 fee for a first offense and can become ineligible for the playoffs following a second offense. If the forfeiting team wishes to play the rest of its regular season games, the team captain must come into the IM Office by appointment to present their case. A team that forfeits a regular season game must contact the IM office by 12pm on the day following the scheduled contest to request to stay in the league.
2. A coin toss will determine which team will gain possession of the ball first. The team that wins the coin toss may make a choice or defer to the second half. The team that retains the choice has the following options:
 - a. Go on offense to start the game (first possession of the ball).
 - b. Go on defense to start the game.
 - c. Defend the goal of their choice.
 - d. After the initial choice, the opposing team will select from the remaining two options
3. Timing will be continuous for the entire first half and for the first 18 minutes of the second half. Only a team time-out and official's time-out can stop the clock. The clock will stop during the final two minutes of the second half for:
 - a. Incomplete pass - clock restarts on the snap.
 - b. Out of bounds - clock restarts on snap.
 - c. Penalty - clock restarts depending on the result of the previous play.
 - d. Score - clock restarts on opponent's next snap from scrimmage.
 - e. Time-outs - clock restarts on snap.
 - f. Fair catch - clock restarts on snap.
 - g. Touchback - clock restarts on snap.
 - h. Inadvertent whistle - clock starts on the ready for play whistle.
 - i. First down - clock restarts depending on result of the previous play.
4. Approximately 2 minutes before the end of each half, the Referee shall inform both team captains of the playing time remaining in each half. The clock will stop in the 2nd half for the 2-minute warning and will restart on the next snap.
 - a. The ball must be put into play no more than 25 seconds after the official has marked it ready for play.
 - b. If inclement weather disrupts time of play during the first half, game will be rescheduled and played on a different day.
 - c. If first half is complete and inclement weather disrupts play during the first 10 minutes of 2nd half, game details will be recorded and play will resume on a different day where the game left off.
 - d. If inclement weather disrupts game play in the 2nd half with under ten minutes remaining, the game will end and will count as full game played.

C. THE GAME

1. There will be no kickoffs. In all "kickoff" situations, the "receiving" team will get the ball on their own 14 yard line, 1st and 6. This includes all touchbacks and after touchdowns

and safeties. The ball will be spotted at the center of the field at the start of each series in these instances.

2. Two one-minute time-outs per half are allowed for each team. Teams will receive one time-out for the entire overtime session, regardless how many overtime periods take place. Time-outs do not carry over between halves or into the overtime period.
3. Regular season games can end in a tie. Overtime will only be played during the playoffs. In overtime:
 - a. A coin toss will be conducted to start the overtime period. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. If the game goes to a second overtime, the team which lost the toss at the beginning of the first overtime, has the choice to start on offense or defense for the second overtime. The choice will then alternate for each succeeding overtime period.
 - b. Each team will have a series of four downs to score from their opponent's 10-yard line. Teams which begin their overtime period outside of the 20-yard line due to penalty must score in 4 downs and will NOT receive any first downs for crossing zone-line-to-gains in the process. Teams may receive another set of downs by penalty only (automatic first down).
 - c. When a team scores, they will attempt an extra point (1, 2, or 3).
 - d. The team on defense first will have its chance to score and attempt an extra point.
 - e. Overtime will continue until a winner is declared.
 - f. When the defense secures possession of the ball during overtime, the offense's series shall be over and the ball declared dead. The defense may not return the ball for a touchdown.

D. SCORING

1. A touchdown shall count for six (6) points.
2. 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 deflag the player.
 - a. 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.)
3. 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 captain may also designate where, between the inbounds lines, the ball shall be spotted for the PAT.
 - a. From the 3-yard line - 1 point.
 - b. From the 10-yard line - 2 points.
 - c. From the 20-yard line - 3 points.
4. When the defense secures possession of the ball during a PAT attempt, the attempt is still live. The defense may return the ball for a "touchdown" (worth 3 points).
5. A safety shall count for 2 points.
 - a. Afterwards, the ball will be put in play by the scoring team at their 14-yard line.
6. Mercy Rule: If a team is leading by 19 points, or attains a lead of 19 points or more, in the final 2 minutes of the game, the game will end. If a team is leading by 25 points, or attains a lead of 25 points or more, in the final 5 minutes of the game, the game will end.

E. FLAGS

1. Each player must wear a three flag belt with one flag on each hip and one in the rear. Special rules have been established to determine how to legally fasten and remove the flag belt.
2. All players must have three flags at the beginning of play.
3. Failure to wear a flag belt at the start of the play, if noticed by an official prior to the snap is a live ball penalty (5 yards).
4. If a runner loses his/her flag during the action, play continues. The play ends when a defensive player touches the runner with one hand.
5. 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. The defense can accept the result of the play or penalize for failure to wear required equipment (5 yards).
6. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain advantage, including tying, using foreign material, or other such acts is unsportsmanlike conduct. (10 yards, loss of down and player disqualification)After completion of the each game, teams will switch sides and the serving team from the previous game will receive and vice versa.

V. RULES OF PLAY

A. FIRST DOWNS

1. 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.

B. LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

1. 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 shortly be at least 5 yards inbounds prior to the snap, unless covered (recognized) by a defensive player. There is no requirement for defensive players to line-up along the line or be at least 5 yards inbounds prior to the snap.

C. FUMBLES

1. A fumble is dead at the point the ball touches the ground. 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

D. HANDOFFS

1. Any player may hand the ball forward or backward to any player anywhere on the field. During a handoff, the ball is in contact with a player at all times.

E. FORWARD PASSES

1. A forward pass is LEGAL when:
 - a. The passer's foot is 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 is pass is completed beyond or behind the line of scrimmage.
2. An offensive player may run through (across) the line of scrimmage, then run back behind the line of scrimmage and throw a forward pass OR 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.

F. PASS RECEPTIONS

1. All legal players are eligible to receive a pass. One foot must land in bounds before any part of the body lands in the out-of-bounds area for a legal pass reception. One knee is equivalent.

G. INTERCEPTIONS IN THE END ZONE

1. If a player intercepts the ball in the end zone, the player may return it out of the end zone. If the player is deflagged while running in the end zone, it is a touchback. Interceptions in the end zone during a PAT attempt may be returned for a "touchdown" (worth 3 points).

H. SCREEN BLOCKING

1. The only type of blocking that is allowed is screen blocking. No contact is allowed between the offense and defense.
2. The screen blocker must have his/her hands at his/her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the hands, arms, legs or body to initiate contact is illegal.
3. The player must be on his/her feet before, during and after the screen block.
4. 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.
5. Penalty: Personal foul, 10 yards.

I. RETREIVAL OF BALL AFTER A PLAY

1. 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.

J. PUNTING THE BALL

1. On fourth down, the referee will ask the offensive team captain to select if they wish to (a) punt or (b) try to reach the zone-line-to-gain ("go for it"). Once a decision is made, the referee will announce the decision to the defense. If the offense declares to punt, then wants to change their decision, they may do so after a charged timeout or an accepted penalty in which the down is to be replayed.
2. All punts must be announced to the referee. There are no quick kicks.
 - a. PENALTY: Illegal kicking, 10 yards from the previous spot.
3. The kicking team must have 4 players (5 in co-rec) on the line of scrimmage during a punt.
 - a. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
4. The kicker must catch and kick the ball immediately in one continuous motion.
 - a. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
5. Neither team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage line until the ball is kicked.
 - a. PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
6. Kickers may not punt barefoot.
 - a. PENALTY: Failure to wear proper equipment, 5 yards from the previous spot.

7. No player from the kicking team may interfere with a player from the receiving team that is in position or moving into a position to catch an airborne punt. The opportunity for kick catch interference ends when a punt hits the ground.
 - a. PENALTY: Kick catch interference, 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
8. Punts that have not been touched by a player are NOT dead while bouncing on the ground. When a punt touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, it is dead at that spot and belongs to the receiving team. If a punt is muffed by the receiving team and caught in the air by the kicking team, it is dead at that spot and the kicking team retains possession, first and line-to-gain. If caught in the air by the receiving team, they may advance the ball.
9. When a punt breaks the plane of the receiving team's goal line, it is a touchback. Punts may not be returned out of the end zone.
10. There are no fair catches. Fair catch signals that are used in an attempt to confuse the opponent shall be considered Unfair Acts.
 - a. PENALTY: Unfair Act, 10 yards from spot of signal or catch (depending on which is a greater penalty for the receiving team).

K. INADVERTANT WHISTLES

1. 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.

VI. EXPLANATION OF PENALTIES

A. DELAY OF GAME

1. Dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot.
2. 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.

B. ENCROACHMENT (OFFSIDES)

1. Dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot.
2. 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 his/her scrimmage line plane (yellow disk [defense], orange disk [offense]). Players do NOT have the opportunity to jump across the line and "get back" onside. It is a foul as soon as the player initially enters the neutral zone.

C. FALSE START

1. Dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot.
2. No offensive player shall simulate a charge or start of a play.

D. ILLEGAL FORMATION

1. Five (5) yards from the previous spot.

2. 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.

E. ILLEGAL BATTING

1. 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
2. Players shall not bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight.
 - a. Exception: A backward pass in flight may not be batted or thrown forward by the passing team.

F. ILLEGAL MOTION AND SHIFT

1. 5 yards from the previous spot.
2. 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.

G. FLAG GUARDING

1. 10 yards from the spot of the foul & replay the down OR spot of the foul & loss of down.
2. 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/passer in possession of the ball.
 - a. Note: Stiff arming is flag guarding. Running while holding the ball at hip-level, intentionally or unintentionally, may also be considered flag guarding.

H. ILLEGALLY DEFLAGGING AN OPPONENT

1. Personal foul, 10 yards.
2. An offensive player must have possession of the ball before they can be legally deflagged. 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.

I. ILLEGAL CONTACT BY THE BALL CARRIER

1. Personal foul, 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
2. 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 deflagging; 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.

J. HOLDING

1. 10 yards from the end of the run (defense), 10 yards from the spot of the foul (offense).
2. 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.

K. TRIPPING

1. 10 yards from the end of the run.

2. Tripping is using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent (including the ball carrier) below the knees.

L. ILLEGAL CONTACT BY THE DEFENSE

1. 10 yards from the end of the run.
2. 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.
3. 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.

M. ROUGHING THE PASSER

1. 10 yards from previous spot, if incomplete pass thrown; 10 yards from end of run following completed pass.
2. 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 deflag 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.

N. ILLEGAL FORWARD PASS & INTENTIONAL GROUNDING

1. Five (5) yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.
2. 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.

O. OFFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE

1. 10 yards from the previous spot.
2. 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.

P. DEFENSIVE PASS INTERFERENCE

1. 10 yards from the previous spot, automatic first down.
2. Restrictions exist for the defense from the time the pass is thrown until a receiver has touched it. Face guarding with no intent to catch, intercept, or bat the ball is also considered pass interference.
 - a. 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.

Q. OTHER PERSONAL FOULS

1. 10 yards from the end of the run (defense), 10 yards from the spot of the foul (offense) .
2. 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 both feet or knees foremost over a player or between player. (You can jump or spin away from players to avoid having your flag pulled.)

R. UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

1. All enforced from dead ball spot, 10 yards.
2. 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 alternation.
3. 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

VII. CO-REC MODIFICATIONS

A. TEAM COMPOSITION

1. Eight players, four men and four women, constitute a team. A team may have as few as six players, with the makeup of the team being 3 men and 3 women. A team can participate with seven players, with the composition being 4 men and 3 women or 3 men and 4 women. At no time shall the number of males over females exceed one.

B. EQUIPMENT

1. Regular or intermediate size footballs may be used.

C. SCORING

1. All touchdowns score 6 points. Successful PATs count the same for both genders (1, 2, or 3)

D. MERCY RULE

1. If a team is leading by 25 points, or attains a lead of 25 points or more, in the final 5 minutes of the game, the game will end.

E. LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

1. Five (5) offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.