

Flag Football Rules

All games will be governed by the 2005-2006 NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rules Book with the following Berry College Intramural Sports modifications.

I. The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment

1. Eligibility- See Intramural Handbook.
2. Each Men's and Women's team shall consist of 7 players. Each team must have a minimum of 5 players in order to begin a game.
3. Due to injury, a team may continue a game with less than the minimum number of required players as long as the team has a chance to win. An ejection that leaves a team with less than the minimum number of required players will result in a forfeit by that team.
4. Men shall use a regulation-sized football. The regular or junior football shall be used for Women's play. A game ball will be provided for each game or teams may choose to provide their own.
5. Each team is required to wear numbered shirts of one distinguishable color. Any team not dressed in like-colored shirts must wear the colored intramural jerseys provided by Intramural Sports. Flag belts will be provided for each team. Players must wear shorts or pants without belt loops or pockets. Shorts with pockets may not be turned inside-out or taped. Shorts or pants must be of a different color than the flag belts worn.
6. **Shoes:** Regulation rubber-soled cleats, plastic cleats, detachable rubber cleats that screw into the shoe, and tennis shoes are the only permissible footwear. Sandals, street shoes, hiking boots, combat boots, or metal spikes are not allowed. No player will be allowed to participate in bare feet. No steel cleats or shoes with detachable steel cleats that screw onto the shoes may be worn.
7. Players may wear soft, pliable pads or braces on the leg, knee, and/or ankle. Braces made of any hard material must be covered with at least one-half inch padding for safety reasons. Elbow pads are not permitted.
8. Tape or bandages of the hand, wrist, forearm, or elbow are prohibited except to protect an injury. This must be approved by the Intramural Supervisor before the game begins. Under no circumstances will a player wearing a cast or splint be permitted to play.
9. If eyeglasses are worn, they must be unbreakable. Each player is responsible for the safety of his/her own glasses.
10. **Foreign Substance:** Any slippery or sticky substance of a foreign nature on equipment, clothing, or an exposed part of the body is illegal.
11. **Jewelry:** No jewelry or any other item deemed dangerous by the Intramural Staff may be worn. Any player wearing exposed permanent jewelry (i.e. body piercings) will not be permitted to play.
12. **Headwear and Gloves:** Players may wear a knit or stocking cap (no caps with bills) and/or soft, pliable, non-abrasive gloves. Bandanas which are tied with a knot are not permitted.
13. Shirts must be tucked into the shorts or pants and flag belts must remain outside of the shirt/jersey during play. Any untucked jersey must be four inches above the waist.

14. Women's teams may have one coach on the field. This coach cannot speak to players, except in the huddle.

II. Definitions

1. **Flag Belt Removal:** When the flag belt is clearly taken from the ball carrier (flag belt is detached), the ball is declared dead. If a flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, a one-hand touch between the shoulders and knees constitutes capture. A runner is also down if any part of that runner touches the ground other than the feet, hands, or the ball while in the hand of the runner.
2. **Scrimmage Line:**
 - A. Offensive scrimmage line - the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the forward point of the ball.
 - B. Defensive scrimmage line - the yard line and its vertical plane which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line.
 - C. Minimum line players - The offensive team must have at least 4 players on the offensive line of scrimmage at the snap. The remaining players must either be on their scrimmage line or behind their backfield line. A player in motion is not counted as one of the minimum number of players on the scrimmage line.
3. **Penalties:**
 - A. Penalty Accepted - the down shall remain the same unless otherwise specified by the rules regarding change of team possession, penalty enforcement, or the ball is left beyond the zone line to gain.
 - B. Penalty Declined - the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

III. Periods, Time Factors, and Substitutions

1. Each game will consist of two 20-minute halves with a running clock. The clock will stop during the last two (2) minutes of the second half (fourth period).
2. **Game time is forfeit time.** A team must have a minimum number of players to start a game. If there is fewer than the required number of players, the opposing captain has the option of taking the win or waiting for the minimum number of players to show. In the event that he/she decides to wait, that decision is irreversible and game clocks will be adjusted accordingly. If a team chooses to wait, it must wait for a minimum of 20 minutes. The minimum number of players to start a game is five for Men's/Women's.
3. The winner of the coin toss shall have the option starting on offense or defense, defending a goal, or deferring the options until the second half. The remaining options shall be given to the opposing captain. Unless moved by penalty, play starts at the beginning of each half with the ball placed on the offensive/receiving team's 14-yard line.
4. **Mercy Rule:** 35 points in 2nd half or 19 at two-minute warning of game
5. **Timeouts:** Each team is permitted two (2) timeouts per half and one (1) timeout during the entire overtime. Timeouts do not carry over from the first or second half or from overtime periods. A timeout shall not exceed one (1) minute. The clock stops during all timeouts.

6. **Overtime:** If the score remains tied at the end of regulation play, an overtime period will be played. An overtime period consists of a series of downs by each team from the 10-yard line, the object of which is to score a touchdown. If the score remains tied after one overtime period, play will proceed to a second period or as many as needed to determine a winner. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line. Possession at the beginning of the overtime period shall be determined by a coin toss. Beginning with the 3rd overtime the scoring team must attempt a try for two or three points.
7. **Delay of Game:** After a ball is declared ready for play, the offensive team has twenty-five (25) seconds after the Referee has sounded the whistle to put the ball in play. Penalty: Delay of game, 5 yards. The official may order the clock to be stopped/started when, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume playing time using tactics in his/her judgment to be unfair.
8. **Substitutions:**
 - A. Substitutions are allowed at any time that the ball is dead, but games must not be delayed by them. Each substitute shall be in uniform and ready for play with flags in position.
 - B. Substitutions used with the obvious attempt to confuse or deceive the opposing team will result in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
9. A half may be extended by an untimed down when, during the last timed down, there was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted, there was a double foul, there was an inadvertent whistle, or there was a touchdown scored. During the two minute warning of the 2nd 10. half, the clock will stop for: time outs, incomplete pass, out of bounds penalty, touchdown, and first down.

IV. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out of Bounds

1. **Ball declared dead:**
 - A. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
 - B. When a backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground.
 - C. When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
 - D. When a runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, once the flag belt is no longer attached.
 - E. When a snap hits the ground.
 - F. When a muff of a protected scrimmage kick strikes the ground.
 - G. When the passer is deflagged before releasing the ball.
2. **Fumbles:** A fumble or backward pass is dead at the point it hits the ground. The ball goes to the team that last had possession. Just touching the ball is not sufficient for legal possession. A fumble by the offense into the opposing team's end zone will result in a touchback.
3. **Out-of-Bounds:** A ball in player possession is out-of-bounds when either the ball or any part of the runner touches the ground or anything else, except a player or game official, which is on or outside a boundary line. If the runner inbounds bumps into or is touched by player or an official on the sidelines out-of-bounds, the ball is still in play.

V. Series of Downs and Line to Gain

1. **Series of Downs:** A team in possession of the ball shall have four (4) consecutive downs to advance to the next zone by scrimmage.
2. **Zone Line to Gain:** The zone line to gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such case, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line to gain. The zones formed by the marking of the twenty and forty yard lines are used to determine the distance to be gained. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

VI. Kicking the Ball

1. There are no fair catches.
2. The receiving team may advance the ball out of its end zone.
3. **Punt:** Prior to putting the ball in play on fourth down, the offensive team must declare whether it chooses to go for a first down or punt. If the offensive team chooses to kick, the ball must be kicked. Touch-backs will be placed at the 14 yard line.
 - A. The offensive team may put the ball in play with a punt on any play, but it must notify the defensive team. There are no quick kicks.
 - B. The snap must be received at least five (5) yards back and the kick must be executed behind the scrimmage line within a reasonable time. There are no fake punts.
 - C. After receiving the snap, the kicker must kick the ball immediately and in a continuous motion.
 - D. No player may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been kicked.
 - E. Kick out of bounds - If the kicked ball goes out of bounds between the goal lines or comes to rest in bounds untouched and no player attempts to secure it, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the receiving team at that spot
 - F. A punt that touches anything while the ball is on or behind the receiving team's goal line can be downed by the receiving team and is a touchback.
 - G. Opportunity to catch a kick - A player of the receiving team who is within the boundary lines and who is so located that he/she could have caught a kick which is beyond the scrimmage line while such a kick is in flight must be given an unmolested opportunity to catch the kick. Penalty: Kick Catch Interference, 10 yards.
 - H. The defensive team may attempt to block a punt as long as team members do not cross the plane of the defensive restraining line. A blocked punt that is caught behind the line of scrimmage (on the offender's side) may be advanced by the offense.
 - I. When a punt, which has crossed the line of scrimmage, touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the ball is dead and belongs to the receiving team. If it hits a player on the receiving team and then is caught in the air, it can be advanced by the receiving team. If it is caught by the kicking team (after the ball contacts a receiving team player), the ball is dead, belongs to the kicking team, and a new series begins for the kicking team.

VII. Snapping and Passing the Ball

1. The ball must be snapped backwards and off the ground. The ball need not be snapped between the center's legs, but the center cannot have his/her feet over the scrimmage line. In a legal snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous motion of the hand or hands backwards. Once the ball leaves the ground, the defense may rush.
2. The player who receives the snap must be at least two (2) yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.
3. Any time at or after the ball is ready for play, each offensive player must momentarily be within fifteen (15) yards of the ball before the snap.
4. The offensive team must have a minimum of four (4) players on their line of scrimmage at the snap.
5. **Offensive Player in Motion:** One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line. Such a player must be behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. A player in motion is not counted as one of the 4 players on the scrimmage line. Only one offensive player may be in motion at a given time. Penalty: Illegal motion, 5 yards from the previous spot. Other offensive players may not draw the defense offsides.
6. **Fumbles:**
 - A. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead immediately at the spot where the ball hits the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on downs.
 - B. Out of Bounds - A backward pass or fumble going out of bounds between the goal lines remains in possession of the fumbling team at the out of bounds spot. If out of bounds behind the goal line, it is a touchback or safety.
7. **Encroachment:** After the snapper has made his/her final adjustment of the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the plane of his/her scrimmage line (Exception: the snapper/center has the right to be over the ball.) Penalty: Encroachment, 5 yards from the previous spot.
8. Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after each scrimmage down. The snapper will bring the ball from the huddle to the scrimmage line (first ball spotter - orange). A towel may be used to help keep the ball dry and must be placed behind the deepest offensive player at the start of each play from scrimmage.
9. All offensive players must be motionless for one second preceding the snap, except for a (one) player moving parallel to or away from the scrimmage line. Penalty: Illegal motion, 5 yards from the previous spot.
10. An offensive player that shifts (other than going legally in motion) must stop for one full second before the snap. Penalty: Illegal shift, 5 yards from the previous spot.
11. A player may not hand the ball forward or backward at any time.
12. **Forward Pass:** All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive scrimmage line when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only one (1) forward pass can be thrown per down.
13. A forward pass is counted as a completion or interception as long as the first part of the person to make contact with the ground after the catch, usually one foot, touches in bounds.

14. **A forward pass is illegal:**

- A. If the passer's foot is beyond Team A's scrimmage line (orange ball spotter) when the ball leaves his/her hand.
- B. If thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
- C. If intentionally grounded to save a loss of yardage.
- D. If a passer catches his/her untouched forward pass.
- E. E. If it is the second forward pass during a down.

Penalty: Illegal forward pass, 5 yards from the spot, loss of down, if prior to change of possession.

- 15. After the ball is snapped, and until it has been touched, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the offensive scrimmage line when the legal forward pass crosses the offensive scrimmage line (orange ball spotter). Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot and loss of down.
- 16. After a legal forward pass is released by the passer and until it is touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond Team A's scrimmage line while the ball is in flight which crosses the Team A scrimmage line. Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot and automatic first down.
- 17. **Simultaneous Catch:** If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team that snapped the ball at the spot of the catch.

VIII. Scoring Plays

- 1. **Touchdown Values:** All touchdowns are six (6) points. The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the official determines that the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed. The player is disqualified and a penalty will result.
- 2. **Try for 1, 2, or 3:** An opportunity to score one (1) point from the 3-yard line, two (2) points from the 10-yard line, or three (3) points from the 20-yard line by running or passing only shall be granted the team scoring a touchdown. Once the offensive captain has declared his/her choice (try for 1, 2, or 3), he may change the decision only when a charged timeout for either team is taken. A team's choice cannot be changed if a penalty should occur. If the defensive team intercepts a pass or fumble during the try and returns it for a touchdown, they score 3 points.
- 3. **Safety:** A safety results when a runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line, and it becomes dead there in his/her team's possession. A safety results in two (2) points for the defensive team.
- 4. After scoring, the scoring team can elect to give the opposing team the ball on the scoring team's 20 yard line in order to keep the opponent from using up the clock. Once this is done, the scoring team must give their opponents the ball on their 20 yard line every time the scoring team scores until the end of the game. This hurry-up tactic becomes the irrevocable "right" of the scoring team's opponent.

IX. Blocking, Rushing, and Conduct

1. **Offensive Screen Blocking:** Screen blocking is permitted and shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the hands, arms, legs, elbows, or body to initiate contact by an offensive player is illegal. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking.
2. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent.
3. **Player Restrictions:**
 - A. No player shall make contact with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary.
 - B. There shall be no clipping or tripping.
 - C. There shall be no bumping the receiver. The defensive player must play the ball and shall not interfere with a receiver. However, defensive and offensive players are equally entitled to a passed ball.
 - D. Pulling or removing the flag belt from an offensive player as the ball is snapped or before a pass reception with the obvious intent of confusing the offensive player as an eligible pass receiver or ball carrier is illegal.
 - E. A defensive player may not bump or push a runner out of bounds.
 - F. Offensive charging is not permitted. The ball carrier may not run through a defensive player but must attempt to evade the defensive player. The runner is allowed to spin in order to avoid being deflagged as long as he/she does not charge during the spin.
 - G. The ball carrier shall not guard his/her flags by blocking with hands or the ball, thereby denying an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. Penalty: Flag guarding, 10 yards from the spot of the foul.
 - H. Stiff arming by the ball carrier is illegal. Holding or swinging the arm near the flag to ward off attempts to seize the flag is illegal and results in flag guarding.
 - I. Defensive players may not steal or strip the ball from an offensive player once he/she has control.
 - J. The flag belt is to be fastened around the waist by use of the end clip. Any tampering to secure the flags so as to make them more difficult to pull is illegal and will result in ejection from the game. Penalty: Unsportsmanlike conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down, and player disqualification.
 - K. Players, coaches, and spectators are to position themselves between the 20-yard line markers on their team's respective sideline.
4. **Pass Interference:** Once a pass is in the air, the ball belongs to anyone who can get it. Any contact which occurs between two or more players making a legal attempt to catch or bat the pass is considered incidental. Screening a player's eyes or waving the hands or arms in his/her face to distract a receiver is considered interference.
5. **Roughing the Passer:** Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall contact the passer.
6. **Personal Fouls:** There shall be no personal fouls committed by players' substitutes or coaches. Personal fouls include: Using fist, foot, knee, or leg to contact an opponent; tackling the ball player (disqualification); illegal contact; unnecessary roughness, hurdling, roughing the passer (when the defender contacts any part of the passer during his/her motion or follow through).
7. The third unsportsmanlike foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.

8. Flagrant Foul - An automatic 6 point touchdown will be awarded to the offense when an intentional/ flagrant penalty is called on the last defensive player between the ball carrier and the end zone.

X. Enforcement of Penalties

1. Penalty Enforcement at the basic spot:

- A. Pass play or during the punt (see exception below) – basic enforcement spot is the scrimmage line (where ball was snapped).
- B. Post Scrimmage Kick Foul- Any foul by the receiving team on its side of the expanded neutral zone prior to the end of the kick, the receiving team shall retain possession of the ball. The basic spot is the spot at which the kick ends and the penalty will be enforced using the “all but one principle”.
- C. On all running plays - basic enforcement spot is the end of the run.
- D. All fouls are marked from the basic enforcement spot (Exception: An offensive foul behind the basic enforcement spot which becomes a spot foul, or the “all but one principle”).
- E. The only exception to the above regulations is roughing the passer; this penalty will be added on to the end result of the play.
- F. If there is a foul by the offensive team, other than unsportsmanlike or non-player, during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score. If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the penalty will be enforced from the succeeding spot.