

Northwest University Flag Football Rules

THE GAME, FIELD, PLAYERS, AND EQUIPMENT

1. The players

- The game shall be played between 2 teams of 9 players each.
- Five players must be checked in with scorekeeper prior to scheduled game time to avoid a forfeit
- All students, faculty or staff can participate provided they meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the intramural sports handbook

2. Team Captains

- Each team shall designate one player to the referee as the field captain. This person is the only person who can talk to the referee during the game. The captain is responsible for any information contained in the Intramural Flag Football Rules.

3. Persons subject to the rules

- Team representatives including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, fans and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

THE FIELD

1. Markings

- The field shall be a rectangular area 100 yards x 40 yards with lines. First down markers will be placed on each of the 20 and 40 yard lines. These are the first down lines. Each team will have 4 downs to get to the next first down zone. Each time a team crosses into a new zone they make a first down

2. Inbounds/Out of Bounds

- Any portion of the sidelines, or end lines, is considered out of bounds. The entire width of each goal line shall be part of the end zone.

3. Team Areas

- Players, coaches, and fans shall stay between the 20 yard lines at all times.

EQUIPMENT

1. The Ball

- The official ball shall be leather or rubber covered and meet the recommendation of size and shape for a regulation football.

2. Flag Belt

- Each player must wear a one piece belt that is free of any knots clipped at the waist line with three flags permanently attached, one flag on each side and one at the center of the back. Shirts must be tucked in and flag belts must be worn on the outside of all clothing.

3. Team Jerseys

- A team shall wear shirts that are of the same color. Team colors must contrast with the jerseys of the opposing team. Jerseys may not be tied in a manner that creates any type of knot.

4. Shoes

- Players must wear shoes, either soft soled soccer/football cleats, tennis, or Astroturf shoes. No sandals, boots, or metal/sharp plastic cleats will be allowed. No screw in or detachable cleats will be allowed

5. Supports, Braces, Gloves, and Pads

- No casts/splints will be allowed under any circumstances. No pads or braces will be allowed above the waist. Players who wear a knee brace with exposed metal or metal hinges are required to cover it with at least ½ inch of closed cell slow recovery or other material of the same minimum thickness and physical properties. Players may use gloves, which consist of a soft pliable non abrasive material. Knee pads of a soft pliable nature will be allowed below the belt. Any player wearing illegal or dangerous equipment shall not be permitted to play. All equipment shall be subject to the approval of the officials and their decisions shall be final

6. Headwear

- Players may wear a one piece elastic headband made of a soft pliable material. Stocking caps and bandannas are permitted. No baseball caps or helmets are allowed.

7. Jewelry

- Jewelry or hard hair control devices will not be allowed. This includes but is not limited to necklaces, earrings, newly pierced earrings, facial piercings, rings, bracelets and watches. Individuals will not be allowed to tape over any jewelry item. If the item cannot be removed, the person cannot play.

PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, AND SUBSTITUTIONS

1. Length of Game

- The game shall consist of two 25 minute halves, with a 5 minute halftime. If the score is tied after the two halves, overtime shall be played.

2. Overtime Procedure

- The team that wins the coin toss will be given the option of offense or defense. Both teams will go the same direction in overtime. Each team will be given a series of 4 downs from the 15 yard line. The object is to score a touchdown. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the second team will still have a series of downs to attempt to win the game. Try for extra points will be attempted in a normal manner by any team who scores a touchdown. If the defense intercepts the ball and returns it for a touchdown they will win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the ball will be placed at the 15 yard line to begin their series of downs. If the score is tied after both teams have had their series of downs the process will be repeated. However, the team that went first will now go second. And the teams will rotate positions until a winner is declared.

3. Timeouts

- Each team is allowed two one-minute time-outs per game.

BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT OF BOUNDS

1. Ball in Play

- Offense must snap the ball within 30 seconds after the ball is placed by the referee.

2. Dead Ball occurs in the following situations:

- Whistle blows
- Ball goes out of bounds
- Any part of the runner's person other than hand or foot touches the ground.
- Person fumbles the ball and it hits the ground
- Incomplete pass
- Player's flag belt is removed
- Official sounds the whistle inadvertently during a down. (In this case the team will get ball where they were when the whistle sounded)
- On a botched or fumbled snap from scrimmage, the quarterback is the only player that may touch the ball. When any other player contacts the ball, the play is dead at the spot of the ball. (No change of possession occurs on a fumble)

3. Out of Bounds

- A ball in player possession is out-of-bounds when the runner or the ball touches the ground or anything else which is on or outside a boundary line, except a player or game official.
- A loose ball is out-of-bounds when it touches the ground, a player, or anything else, which is on or outside a boundary line.
- On a pass reception, one foot must be in bounds to count as a completed pass

SERIES OF DOWNS, NUMBER OF DOWNS

1. Number of downs

- A team has four downs to convert a first down.

2. Line to Gain

- First downs are 20 yards and they are at the 20, 40, 40, and 20 yard lines

KICKING RULES

1. Kick-off

- Kick-off is from the 40 yard line; on a safety the punt is from the 30 yard line.

2. Punts

- A team must declare when punting (NO FAKE PUNTS). Line up as on the kickoff and punt the ball from the line of scrimmage.
- Neither the kicking team nor the receiving team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked.

- If the ball is fumbled in the air and the kicking team gets it before it hits the ground they can advance the ball.
- On kick-offs and punt returns that are fumbled the only player that may advance the ball is the player who made first contact. When any other player contacts the ball, the play is dead at the spot of the ball. (No change of possession occurs on fumbles)

KICK CATCH INTERFERENCE, FIRST TOUCHING, FAIR CATCH

1. Kick Catch Interference

- No member of kicking team may interfere with the ability of the receiving team to catch a protected scrimmage kick. This includes anytime the kicking team touches the ball or any receiving player while the ball is in flight. Penalty: Kick Catch Interference. The receiving team may take the ball at the spot of the foul, or accept a 10-yard penalty from previous spot and replay the down.

2. First Touching (ball not in flight)

- If any member of kicking team touches the kicked ball first, after it crosses the line of scrimmage, it is referred to as first touching and the receiving team may take the ball at that spot or at the spot determined by the action that follows first touching. The receiving team loses the right to take the spot of first touching if during the return a foul is committed by the receiving team, or any penalty is accepted by the receiving team.

3. Fair Catch

- NO FAIR CATCH. There are no signals, fair catch or otherwise, during kicks.

THE SCRIMMAGE AND SNAP

1. The Snap

- The snapper shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hands. The ball does not have to pass the ball between the legs.
- Following the ready for play signal, no defensive player may break the plane of the restraining line at any time until the ball is snapped. Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Encroachment, 5 yards. If this occurs twice in same dead ball interval, the penalty will be 10 yards for the second encroachment foul, if accepted.
- No offensive player shall make a false start, or any action that simulates the start of play. This penalty may be enforced whether a snap occurs or not. Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Illegal Procedure, 5 yards.
- The snapper must have both feet behind the scrimmage line and may not simulate the start of the snap. Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Illegal Procedure, 5 yards.

2. Legal Positions

- All players are subject to motion, position, and illegal procedure rules.
- Two, three, and four point stances are legal.
- One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line at the snap. Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards.

- Following a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary for one full second before the snap. Penalty: Illegal Shift, 5 yards.
 - There must be at least 3 offensive linemen. (Offensive linemen are not eligible to receive passes from the quarterback.)
3. After the Play
- Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after the scrimmage down. The snapper will bring the ball from the huddle to the scrimmage line.

HANDING THE BALL

- Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time, behind the line of scrimmage.

PASSING AND RECEIVING

1. Legal and Illegal Forward Passing

- All players are eligible to touch or catch a forward pass. Only ONE forward pass may be thrown per down.
- A forward pass is illegal in the following situations:
 - a. If either of the passer's feet are beyond the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball leaves his/her hand;
 - b. If thrown after team possession has changed during the down;
 - c. If intentionally grounded to save loss of yardage;
 - d. If a passer catches his/her untouched forward pass;
 - e. If there is more than one forward pass per down.

2. Backward Pass and Fumble-

- A runner may pass the ball backward at anytime.
- A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted in flight inbounds by any player and advanced.
- A backward pass or fumble which goes out of bounds between the goal lines belongs to the team last in possession at the out of bounds spot.

3. Pass Interference

- Intramural Football is NOT a CONTACT sport, however, incidental contact will occur.
- Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot and loss of down. Note: Offensive screen blocking beyond the line of scrimmage during a pass attempt is considered offensive pass interference.
- Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot and an automatic first down. Note: If contact is made on a receiver behind the line of scrimmage during a pass attempt, the penalty is illegal contact, not defensive pass interference.
- Pass interference is defined as bumping, pushing, or unnecessary contact with an opponent OR restricting a player from access to a pass while on offense or defense.

- Players may NOT “go through opponents” to get to a ball that is in flight. This could result in automatic ejection from the game.

4. General Information

- A pass is any exchange of the ball that involves airtime. This can be a forward or backward, overhand pass, underhand pitch, or any other toss or flip of the ball.
- The pass begins when the ball is released from the passer’s hand. The ball is dead if the passer is deflagged or legally touched before the release.
- The initial direction of a pass determines whether a pass is forward or backward.
- If a forward or backward pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players, the ball becomes dead, is considered a completed pass, and belongs to the offensive team.

SCORING

1. Touchdowns score 6 points.
2. Extra points
 - 1 point conversion is from the 3 yard line
 - 2 point conversion is from the 10 yard line
 - 3 point conversion is from the 20 yard line
3. Safety scores 2 points

PLAYER CONDUCT

1. Personal fouls include but are not limited to the following:
 - Using fist, foot, knee or leg to contact an opponent
 - Tackling the ball carrier (automatic ejection)
 - Attempt to strip the ball from a player in possession
 - Illegal contact
 - Hurdling an upright player, tripping or clipping
 - Unnecessary roughness
 - Touching a player or ball carrier with undo force
 - 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, also there should be no attempts to hit the player’s arm during a throwing motion. Roughing the passer, penalty of 10 yards, automatic first down
2. The runner may not
 - Be aided by a teammate
 - Use a stiff arm
 - Flag guard
3. FOUL LANGUAGE
 - 1st time warning
 - 2nd time 5 minutes penalty
 - 3rd time ejection from game

BLOCKING AND SCREENING

1. Blocking as it is done in regulation football is prohibited
 - Defensive players may use hands to ward off an opponent. BUT NO SWIMMOVES OR MOVES THAT REQUIRE YOU TO MOVE YOUR HANDS TOWARDS A PLAYERS HEAD.
 - An offensive player may use his body (but not his hands or feet) to restrict the defensive player's progress.
2. Offensive players may protect the runner by screening.
 - The offensive screen block shall take place without contact and the screener may maintain a position (moving or stationary) between the defensive player and the runner.
 - The screen blocker shall have his/her arms at their sides or behind their back.
 - Any use of arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal.
 - Player's must remain on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking.
 - The runner may not stiff arm or lower a shoulder into defender. Must try to make a football move to get out of the way

FLAG REMOVAL

1. A player must have possession of the ball before they can be deflagged or touched legally.
2. Pulling or removing a flag from an offensive player without the ball or intentionally touching an offensive player without the ball is a 5 yard penalty.
3. Once a player's flag is removed the player is down at that spot.
4. If the flag falls off accidentally, the player is down by a one hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and the knees.
5. Flags cannot be tied or tampered with in any other fashion.

PENALTIES AND YARDAGE

1. Loss of 5 yards
 - a. Encroachment (dead ball)
 - b. False start (dead ball)
 - c. Illegal snap (dead ball)
 - d. Delay of game (dead ball)
 - e. Infraction of free kick formation (dead ball)
 - f. Encroachment of free kick lines (dead ball)
 - g. Illegal motion
 - h. Illegal shift
 - i. Illegal procedure
 - j. Intentional grounding (loss of down)
 - k. Illegal substitution
 - l. Free kick out of bounds
 - m. Required equipment worn illegally

- n. Player receiving snap within 2 yards of scrimmage line
 - o. Helping the runner
 - p. Illegally handing ball forward (loss of down for offense)
 - q. Illegal forward pass (loss of down for offense)
2. Loss of 10 yards
- a. Kick catch interference
 - b. Two or more consecutive encroachments during same down interval
 - c. Forward pass interference (defensive = automatic first down; offensive = loss of down)
 - d. Illegally secured flag belt on touchdown (loss of down and disqualification)
 - e. Unsportsmanlike player, coach, or fan conduct
 - f. Spiking, throwing, kicking, or not returning the ball to the official
 - g. Steal, strike, or attempt to strip the ball
 - h. Trip, hurdle, tackle, clip, stiff arm, or any unnecessary contact of any nature
 - i. Roughing the passer (automatic first down)
 - j. Illegal offensive screen blocking
 - k. Flag guarding by offense, illegal removal by defense
 - l. Obstruction of runner
 - m. Illegal participation
 - n. Defensive illegal use of hands

Note: Any flagrant activities associated with 5 or 10 yard penalties result in immediate disqualification.