

# University of Washington Bothell

## Intramural Sports

### Flag Football Rules

#### **1. The Game, Field, Players and Equipment**

##### 1.1. General Provisions

- 1.1.1. The game shall be played between two teams of seven players each. Five players are required to start the game and avoid a default; three players to avoid a forfeit (1-1-1).
- 1.1.2. All players must have checked in with an official and be recorded on the game sheet before they are allowed to participate (1-1-4).
- 1.1.3. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, spectators 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 (1-1-5).
- 1.1.4. The Referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The Referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game. The Referee has the authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship on any situation not specifically covered in rules. The Referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game (1-1-6).

##### 1.2. The Field

- 1.2.1. The field dimensions are 80 yards by 40 yards with 10-yard end zones. The playing field is divided into four 20-yard zones (1-2-1).
- 1.2.2. The lines bounding the sidelines and the end zones are out-of-bounds (1-2-4).
- 1.2.3. Teams and spectators are permitted in the area between the 20-yard lines and one yard off the sideline. Players and spectators must stay within this area (1-2-5).

##### 1.3. Game Equipment

- 1.3.1. Each team must provide their own football. The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and meets the recommendations of size and shape for a regulation football. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings. Men shall use the regular size, while Women's and Co-Rec leagues shall use the regular, intermediate, youth or junior size. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion. Balls may be checked out from the Intramural staff prior to the game. During the game, each team must use a legal ball of its choice when in possession (1-3-1).

##### 1.4. Player Equipment – Required

- 1.4.1. Jerseys may not have pockets, holes, or a button placket (1-4-1). All team members must wear the same color shirt. Jerseys must be either:
  - a. Long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts the entire down, or
  - b. Short enough so there is a minimum of 4 inches from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline.

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

Revised September 2018

- 1.4.2. Pants/Shorts without any belts, belt loops, pockets, holes or exposed drawstrings must be worn. Pants/shorts must be a different color than the flags. Pants/shorts may not be turned inside out, and pockets may not be taped (1-4-2).
- 1.4.3. Flag Belt issued by the Intramural Activities Program is required at all times.
  - 1.4.3.1. Players with improper pants may play without a flag belt and is downed with one hand touch when in possession of the ball.
    - 1.4.3.1.1. The Referee must know that a player was not wearing a flag belt during the down in order to penalize a team (1-4-3).
- 1.4.4. All players must wear shoes made of canvas, leather or synthetic material, which cover the entire foot (1-4-4).
- 1.5. Player Equipment – Optional
  - 1.5.1. Headwear (1-5-3)
    - a. Players may wear a knit stocking cap. The cap must have no bill.
    - b. Players may wear a headband no wider than 2 inches.
  - 1.5.2. Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses (1-5-6).
  - 1.5.3. Players may carry a play book inside their clothing as long as it is not made of unyielding material (1-5-6).
- 1.6. Player Equipment – Illegal
  - 1.6.1. Hard Billed Hats and/ or Bandana with Knots

## **2. Periods, Time Factors, Substitutions**

- 2.1. Start of Each Half
  - 2.1.1. The captain winning the toss shall have the choice of options for the first half or shall defer to their option to the second half (3-1-1). The options are:
    - a. To choose whether their team will start on offense or defense.
    - b. To choose the goal their team will defend.
    - c. The captain not having the first choice of options for a half shall exercise the remaining option.
- 2.2. Game Time
  - 2.2.1. Playing time shall be 40 minutes, divided into two halves of 20 minutes each. The clock will run continuously for the first 20 minutes of the first half, unless stopped for a charged time out, officials' time out, or injury. The clock will stop in the last two minutes of the second half. Half-time will be five minutes (3-2-1).
  - 2.2.2. Play at the beginning of each half will start at the offense's 14 yard line (3-2-2).
  - 2.2.3. A half must be extended by an untimed down, except for unsportspersonlike or non-player fouls which specify a loss of down, if during the last timed down, one of the following occurred (3-2-3):
    - a. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted.
    - b. There was a double foul.
    - c. If a touchdown was scored, the try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the second half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game.
    - d. If (A), (B), or (C) occurs during the untimed down, the period will be extended by the same rule.
  - 2.2.4. During the last two minutes of the second half, the clock will stop for a(n):
    - a. Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass – clock starts on the snap
    - b. Out-of-bounds – clock starts on the snap.
    - c. Safety – clock starts on the snap.
    - d. Team timeout – clock starts on the snap.

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

- e. First down – clock starts depending on previous play.
- f. Touchdown – Clock starts on next offensive snap (point tries are untimed).
- g. Penalty and administration – clock starts dependent on the previous play (except delay of game starts on snap).
- h. Referee’s timeout – clock starts at Referee’s discretion
- i. Touchback – clock starts on the snap.
- j. Team attempting to conserve time illegally – clock starts on whistle.
- k. Team attempting to consume time illegally – clock starts on the snap.

### 2.3. Tie Game

- 2.3.1. During the regular season, there will be no overtime period. During playoffs, overtime will continue until a winner is determined (3-3-1).
- 2.3.2. There will only be one coin flip during the overtime. ALL OVERTIME PERIODS ARE PLAYED TOWARD THE SAME GOAL LINE. The end zone used is at the discretion of the Intramural staff and game officials (3-3-2).
- 2.3.3. Tie breaker. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start first down and goal from the 10-yard line. The team will have four downs to score, unless awarded first down automatically, or a penalty allows for repeating allows for repeating the down. If the defense intercepts a pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown, they win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the series is over. Each team is entitled to one timeout per overtime period (3-3-3).
- 2.3.4. Overtime – Fouls and Penalties. The goal shall always be the zone line-to-gain in overtime (3-3-4).

### 2.4. Timeouts

- 2.4.1. Each team is entitled to two charged timeouts per half.
- 2.4.2. A charged timeout requested by any player which is legally granted shall be one minute and can be shortened if both teams are ready (3-4-4).
- 2.4.3. An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs. A player who is bleeding, or has an open wound, or has blood on their uniform shall be considered injured (3-4-8).

### 2.5. Delays

- 2.5.1. The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is delay of game (3-5-1). This includes:
  - A. Failure to snap within 25 seconds after the ball is whistled ready for play.
  - B. Putting the ball in play before it is whistled ready for play.
- 2.5.2. The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in their opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume time (3-5-2).

### 2.6. Substitutions

- 2.6.1. No substitute shall enter during a down. An incoming substitute must enter the field directly from the team area. A replaced player must leave the field at the sideline nearest their team area prior to the ball being snapped (3-6-1).
- 2.6.2. No substitute shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a substitute unless a penalty is accepted (3-6-2).

## **3. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-of-Bounds**

### 3.1. Ball in Play – Dead Ball

- 3.1.1. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound the whistle or declare it dead when (4-1-2):

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

- a. When it goes out-of-bounds.
- b. When any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground.
- c. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful try is made.
- d. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
- e. When the ball strikes the ground after being first touched by the kicking team.
- f. When a backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A ball snapped, which hits the ground before or after getting to the intended player is dead at the spot where it hit the ground.
- g. When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached by another player from the belt.
- h. When a runner is legally tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm when the flag belt inadvertently becomes detached.
- i. When a punt has touched the receiving team and then touches the ground.

### 3.2. Inadvertent Whistle

3.2.1. There is no time added to the clock during a down with an inadvertent whistle (4-2-1).

## **4. Series of Downs, Number of Downs, and Team Possession**

### 4.1. Series

4.1.1. 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 (5-1-3).

4.1.2. A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty; or a penalty against the defense moves the ball into the next zone; or an accepted penalty against the defense involves an automatic first down; or either team has obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, punt touchback, pass interception, or turnover on downs (5-1-4).

### 4.2. Down and Possession After a Penalty

4.2.1. After a penalty which leaves the ball in possession of a team beyond its zone line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulates a first down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with the next line-to-gain (5-2-1).

4.2.2. The down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves a loss of down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line-to-gain. If the penalty involves a loss of down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series (5-2-2).

4.2.3. No rule decision (interpretation) may be changed or protested after the ball is next legally snapped (5-2-5).

## **5. Kicking the Ball**

### 5.1. Punting

5.1.1. Prior to making the ball ready for play on the fourth down, the Referee must ask the offensive team captain if they want to punt. The team captain may request to punt on any down. After such announcement, the ball must be punted, unless a charged timeout is called or a penalty occurs prior to or during that down which allows the kicking team to repeat the down (6-1-2).

5.1.2. Neither the kicking team nor the receiving team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage line until the ball has been punted. All scrimmage line rules regarding the snap, encroachment, false start, minimum players, motion and shift in Rules 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 apply (6-1-3).

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

- 5.1.3. After receiving the snap, the kicker must punt the ball immediately in a continuous motion (6-1-4).
- 5.1.4. Once the ball is punted, any receiving team player may block the kick. If the blocked punt touches the ground, the play is dead at that spot. If the punt is blocked by any receiving team player and then caught by any kicking team player behind the line of scrimmage, they may advance the ball. The receiving team may advance the punt anywhere on the field. A kicking team player cannot punt the ball to themselves or any other kicking team player. The kicking team may only punt once per down (6-1-5).

## **6. Snapping, Handling, and Passing the Ball**

### 6.1. The Scrimmage

- 6.1.1. All plays must be started by a legal snap from a point on or between the hash marks (7-1-1).
- 6.1.2. The offensive team is responsible for retrieving the ball after a down (7-1-2).

### 6.2. Prior to the Snap

- 6.2.1. Encroachment. Following the ready for play whistle, and until the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, nor make contact with opponents or in any other way interfere with them (verbally or otherwise). This includes standing in or shifting through the neutral zone (7-2-1).
- 6.2.2. False start. No offensive player shall make a false start or simulate the start of a play. An infraction of this rule may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped and the penalty for any resultant encroachment shall be cancelled (7-2-2).
- 6.2.3. Snap. The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of play until the snap. When over the ball, the snapper shall have their feet behind the scrimmage line. The snapper shall pass the ball backward from its position on the ground with a continuous motion (7-2-3).

### 6.3. Position and Action During the Snap

- 6.3.1. Legal Position. Anytime on or after the ball is marked ready for play, each offensive player must be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap (7-3-1).
- 6.3.2. Minimum line players. The offensive team must have 1 player (Snapper) on or within one yard of their scrimmage line (7-3-2).
- 6.3.3. Motion. One offensive player may be in motion, but not toward the opponent's goal line at the snap. Other offensive players must be stationary in their positions without movement of the feet, body, head or arms (7-3-3).
- 6.3.4. No Direct Snap. The player receiving the snap must be at least two yards from the offensive line of scrimmage (7-3-4).
- 6.3.5. Shift. All offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain still for one second prior to the snap (7-3-5).

### 6.4. Handing the Ball

- 6.4.1. Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time (7-4-1).

### 6.5. Backward Pass and Fumble

- 6.5.1. A runner may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble anytime (7-6-1).
- 6.5.2. A backward pass or fumble in flight may be caught or intercepted and advanced by any player inbounds (7-6-2).
- 6.5.3. A backward pass or fumble, which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead where it touches the ground or crosses the sideline (7-6-5).

### 6.6. Legal and Illegal Forward Pass

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

6.6.1. All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a down and before a change of possession a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only one forward pass is allowed per down. A play involving a run across the line of scrimmage and then back behind the line of scrimmage where a forward pass is thrown is a legal play (7-7-1).

6.6.2. A forward pass is illegal if (7-7-2):

- a. If the passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.
- b. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage.
- c. If a passer catches their untouched forward or backward pass.
- d. If there is more than one forward pass per down.

6.7. Completed or Intercepted Passes

6.7.1. Simultaneous catch. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by member of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team (7-8-2).

6.8. Forward Pass Interference

6.8.1. Contact. During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the offensive line of scrimmage, contact or action that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged prior to touching the ball (7-10-1).

## **7. Scoring Plays and Touchback**

7.1. Mercy Rule

7.1.1. Two Minute Warning. If a team is 19 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the two-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over (8-2-1). Co-Rec rules differ.

7.1.2. After the Two Minute Warning. If a team scores during the last two minutes of the second half causing a score difference of 19 or more points, the game shall be over (8-2-2).

7.1.3. Halftime Mercy Rule – The game will end at halftime or any point thereafter if one team reaches a lead of 45+ points.

7.2. Touchdown

7.2.1. The player scoring the touchdown must raise their arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the player is not deflagged with one pull to the left or right and the official determines the belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is nullified and the player is ejected (8-3-3).

7.3. Point(s) After Touchdown Tries

7.3.1. One, Two or Three Points. An opportunity to score one point from the three yard line, two points from the ten yard line, or three points from the 20 yard line by running or passing shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown. Note: If a touchdown is scored on the last timed down of the second half, the try is not attempted, unless it will affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying (8-4-1).

7.3.2. Decision. Once the scoring captain makes the choice, the decision may only be changed when either team takes a charged timeout. A penalty does not allow for a change in point value, nor does awarded or lost yardage affect the point value. If the defense intercepts a pass or fumble on a try and returns the ball for a touchdown, they will receive three points (8-4-2).

7.3.3. Penalties During a Try. If a double foul occurs, the try will be replayed. If the offensive team is penalized on a successful try, the down will be repeated if the penalty is accepted. If the offensive team incurs a loss of down penalty, the try will not be repeated (8-4-3).

7.3.4. Subsequent Series. After the try, the new offensive team shall snap the ball from their own 14-yard line unless moved by a penalty (8-4-4).

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

#### 7.4. Momentum, Safety, and Touchback

##### 7.4.1. Safety = 2 points. A safety occurs when (8-6-1):

- a. A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across their own goal line and the ball becomes dead.
- b. A player punts, passes, fumbles, snaps, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play to or across their own goal line and the ball becomes dead behind their goal line.
- c. A player on offense commits any penalty for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in their end zone; or throws an illegal forward pass from within their end zone, or any situation which leaves the offense in possession of the ball in their own end zone.
- d. After a safety, the scoring team shall snap the ball at their own 10-yard line, unless moved by a penalty.

##### 7.4.2. Touchback. A touchback occurs when (8-6-2):

- a. The receiving team downs a punt that touches anything while the ball is on or behind the receiving team's goal line.
- b. The kicking team downs a punt that touches anything while the ball is on or behind the receiving team's goal line
- c. The ball is out-of-bounds behind a goal line (except from an incomplete forward pass).
- d. After a touchback, the ball shall be snapped from the nearest 10-yard line, unless moved by a penalty.

### **8. Conduct of Players and Spectators**

#### 8.1. Unsportspersonlike Conduct

##### 8.1.1. Noncontact Player Acts. No player shall commit acts including (9-1-1):

- a. Using words similar to the offensive's audible or quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offense.
- b. Intentionally kicking the ball, other than a punt.
- c. Participating while wearing illegal player equipment.
- d. Fighting or attempting to fight (results in disqualification).

##### 8.1.2. Dead Ball Fouls. When the ball is dead, no player shall (9-1-2):

- a. Intentionally kick the ball.
- b. Spike the ball.

##### 8.1.3. Prohibited Acts. There shall be no unsportspersonlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches or other subject to the rules (9-1-3). Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. Attempting to influence a decision by an official.
- b. Disrespectfully addressing an official.
- c. Using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
- d. Intentionally making contact with a game official during the game.
- e. Fighting.
- f. Leaving the team area and entering the playing field during a fight.

##### 8.1.4. Second Unsportspersonlike Conduct Foul. The second unsportspersonlike conduct foul by the same player results in disqualification. If a spectator receives the penalty, it will be assessed to the captain (9-1-4).

#### 8.2. Personal Fouls

##### 8.2.1. Player restrictions. No player shall (9-3-1):

- a. Strip or attempt to strip the ball from a player in possession by punching, striking or stealing.
- b. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.

Any rule not mentioned in the following will be governed by NIRSA Flag Football rules.

- c. Throw a runner to the ground.
- d. Hurdle any other player.
- e. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is dead.
- f. Make contact of any nature which is deemed unnecessary.
- g. Deliberately dive or run into a defensive player.
- h. Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms.

8.2.2. Roughing the Passer. Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally. 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. NOTE: The passer remains the passer while the ball is in flight or until they move to participate in the play (9-3-2).

### 8.3. Screen Blocking

8.3.1. Offensive Screen Blocking. The offensive screen block shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have their hands and arms at their side or behind the back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker must be on their feet before, during and after the screen (9-4-1).

8.3.2. Screen Blocking Fundamentals. A player who screens shall not (9-4-2):

- a. Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
- b. Take a position close to a moving opponent such that the opponent cannot avoid contact.
- c. After assuming the legal screening position, move unless the blocker moves in the same direction as the opponent.

### 8.4. Runner

8.4.1. 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 (9-5-1). Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to:

- a. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt.
- b. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt.
- c. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt.

8.4.2. Obstructing the Runner. The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt (9-5-4).

8.4.3. Charging. A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in their path. If a runner in progress has established a straight path, they may not be crowded out of that path, but if a defensive player legally establishes a position, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction (9-5-5).

## **9. Summary of Co-Rec Rules**

### 9.1. The Game

9.1.1. The game shall be played between two teams of eight players, four men and four women. Teams with seven players shall be four men and three women, or three men and four women. Six players, three men and three women are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit.

### 9.2. The Ball

9.2.1. A regular, intermediate, youth or junior sized ball may be used.

### 9.3. Minimum Line Players

9.3.1. The offensive team must have at least one player on the line of scrimmage.

### 9.4. Male Runner

9.4.1. An offensive male runner cannot advance the ball across the line of scrimmage.

### 9.5. Open/Closed Plays

9.5.1. During the offensive team's possession, there may not be 2 consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule also applies to the Try. After a male-to-male completion, the play is "closed".

9.5.2. To "open" the play, the next legal forward completion must involve a female passer or a female receiver for positive yards.

9.5.3. Any foul which is accepted or declined shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completion is "open" or "closed".

### 9.6. Illegal Forward Pass

9.6.1. If an official erroneously indicates the 'open/closed' status of a down, the play is nullified and the down will be repeated.

9.6.2. Male to Male Completion – During the offensive team's possession there may not be two consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule applies to the Point After Touchdown try. If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass must involve a female passer or female receiver for positive yardage. Any penalty, whether accepted or declined shall have no effect on whether the next forward pass completion is 'open' or 'closed.'

9.6.3. If a female passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver behind the line of scrimmage, and he runs across that line, it is an illegal forward pass.

### 9.7. Mercy Rule

9.7.1. If a team is ahead by 25 points or more at the two minute warning in the second half, the game is complete.

9.7.2. If a team becomes ahead by 50+ points at any time after half, the game is complete.

### 9.8. Touchdown Value

9.8.1. A touchdown involving a female receiver/runner crossing the goal line or throwing a legal forward pass is worth 9 points.