

# Flag Football Rules 2009

The 2009-2010 National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (NIRSA) Flag and Touch Football Rules will be in effect with the following interpretations and exceptions.

## THE GAME, FIELD, PLAYERS, AND EQUIPMENT

1. The game shall be played between 2 teams of 7 players each. Five players are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit.
2. The playing field is 80 yards long by 40 yards wide and is divided into four 20 yard zones.
3. Proper identification (picture ID) must be presented to an official prior to the beginning of the game. Teams are encouraged to show up early for their assigned games in order to allow as much playing time as possible. All paying members must have submitted payment BEFORE playing in their first game.
4. Men shall use a regulation-sized football. The regulation or junior football shall be used for Women and CoRec play. The team on offense has its choice of what ball it would like to play with. **Game balls will not be provided, but teams may check out footballs at the Penberthy control building.**
5. All members of each team are **REQUIRED** to wear shirts or jerseys of one distinguishable color. Jerseys must be long enough so they remain tucked in or short enough so there is a significant gap from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline. Jerseys also cannot have sleeve openings of more than 4" under the armpit. All guidelines are written for the safety of all players and will be strictly enforced.
6. Flag belts will be provided for each team.
7. **Players must wear shorts or pants without belt loops or pockets. Shorts with pockets may not be turned inside out or taped.**
8. Each player must wear 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 steel cleats, metal tips or shoes with detachable steel cleats that screw onto the shoes may be worn.
9. 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.
10. Tape and bandages on the hand, wrist, forearm, or elbow are prohibited except to protect an injury. Under no circumstances will a player wearing a cast or splint be allowed to play.
11. If eyeglasses are worn, they must be unbreakable. Each player is responsible for the safety of his/her own glasses.
12. Any slippery substance of a foreign nature on equipment, clothing, or an exposed part of the body is illegal.
13. 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.
14. **Jewelry:** Participants are not permitted to wear any visible jewelry. If participants choose to wear jewelry, it must be completely covered BEFORE arriving at the game site, with a band-aid or athletic tape. The Campus Recreation Department WILL NOT provide band-aids or athletic tape to cover jewelry items. If covered, jewelry must remain flush with the skin and not be protruding out; this is for the protection of all participants.

## DEFINITIONS

1. **Flag Belt Removal:** When the flag belt is clearly taken from the runner in possession of the ball, the ball is declared dead and the down shall end. In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, an opponent may contact the body and shoulders, but not the face, neck, or any part of the head of the runner with their hands. An opponent may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt. If a flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, a one-hand touch between the

2. **Offensive Scrimmage Line:** The offensive scrimmage line is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the forward point of the ball.
3. **Defensive Scrimmage Line:** The defensive scrimmage line is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line.
4. **Minimum Line Players:** The offensive team must have at least 4 players (5 in CoRec) on the offensive line of scrimmage at the snap. The remaining players must either be on their scrimmage line or in their backfield. A player in motion is not counted as one of the minimum number of players on the scrimmage line.

## **PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

A game will consist of two halves with a 3 minute intermission. Both halves will be 20 minutes in length.

**In all leagues, the clock will run continuously in the first half. In the second half, the clock will run continuously until the last 2 minutes, when we will proceed according to 2-minute mechanics.**

**2-Minute Policies and Mechanics-** The clock will stop in the final 2 minutes of the second half for a:

- a. Team time-out – clock restarts on the snap
- b. Incomplete legal or incomplete illegal forward pass- starts on the snap
- c. Out-of-bounds- starts on the snap
- d. Safety- starts on the snap
- e. First down- depends on the previous play
- f. Touchdown- starts on the snap (after the Try)
- g. Penalty and administration- dependent on previous play (EXCEPTION: Delay of game ALWAYS starts on the snap)
- h. Referee’s time-out- starts at his/her discretion
- i. Touchback- starts on the snap
- j. Team A is awarded a new series- dependent on previous play
- k. Team B is awarded a new series- starts on the snap
- l. Either team is awarded a new series after a legal punt- starts on the snap
- m. Team attempting to conserve time illegally- starts on the ready whistle
- n. Team attempting to consume time illegally- starts on the snap
- o. Inadvertent whistle- starts on the ready whistle

**Mercy Rule:** If a team is 19 or more points (**CoRec Rule – 25 points**) ahead when the Referee announces the 2 minute warning for the second half, the game is over. Prior to applying the Mercy Rule, there must be a down free of any accepted live ball fouls.

If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more points (**CoRec Rule – 25 points**), the game will end at that point.

**Forfeits:** Game time is forfeit time!

Each game will begin with a coin toss. The winner of the coin toss shall have the option of starting on offense, defense, defending a goal or deferring the options until the second half. The remaining options will 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 team’s 14-yard line.

**Tie Game:** If scores are tied at the end of the second half, the game will be recorded as a tie game (game over) during the regular season. During the playoffs an overtime period will be played. A coin flip will determine the options. All overtime periods shall be played toward the same goal line.

- a. An overtime period consists of one possession by each team.

- b. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start first and goal from the 10-yard line. Each team will have a series of downs to score a touchdown.
- c. If the score is still tied after one overtime period, as many period as necessary will be played to determine a winner.
- d. Try for points will be attempted and scored during overtime.
- e. Each team is entitled to one timeout for the entire overtime session, and time outs do not carry over from regulation.
- f. If the defensive team 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, the ball will be places at the 10 yard line and the defense will now receive their series of downs.

**Timeouts:** Each team is entitled to 3 timeouts per game. A charged timeout requested by any player will not exceed one minute. Timeouts cannot be carried into overtime during the playoffs. The clock stops during all timeouts.

**Delay of Game:** After a ball is declared ready for play, the offensive team has 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.

**Substitutions:** 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.

## **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. **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 in-bounds bumps into or is touched by player or an official on the sidelines out-of-bounds, the ball is still in play.

## **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.

## **KICKING THE BALL**

- 1. **There are no fair catches.**
- 2. The receiving team may advance the ball out of its endzone.
- 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.

- 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 two 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.

## 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 (5 for Co-Rec) 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 when the ball is snapped. 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 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 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. If it is the second forward pass during a down.
  - f. 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.

## 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.

## 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.
  - b. 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.
  - c. 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. Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yds.
  - d. A defensive player may not bump or push a runner out of bounds.
  - e. 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.
  - f. 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.
  - g. 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.
  - h. Defensive players may not steal or strip the ball from an offensive player once he/she has control.
  - i. 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.
  - j. 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 fourth unsportsmanlike foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.

## 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 nonplayer, during a down which results in a successful touchdown or try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score.
- g. **If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down that results in a score, the offense may choose to enforce the penalty on the try or on the defense’s ensuing possession.**

# Co-Rec Modifications

## Flag Football 2009

All of the regular rules apply with these modifications.

1. **Number of Players** – The CoRec games shall be played between two teams of eight players, four men and four women. A team must have at least 6 players present to start and continue a game. The five players must contain at least two members of the opposite sex.
2. **Minimum line players** – Offense must have 5 players on their scrimmage line at the snap.
3. **Game Ball** – CoRec games will use the regular, intermediate, junior, or youth size football.
4. **Scoring** – All touchdowns scored by females and touchdowns following a legal forward pass completion with a female passer count 9 points.
5. **Mercy Rule** – If a team is 25 or more points ahead when the Referee announces the 2 minute warning for the second half, the game is over. Prior to applying the Mercy Rule, there must be a down free of any accepted live ball fouls.

If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 25 or more points, the game will end at that point.

6. **Illegal Forward Pass**
  - a. The term “closed,” means a male player may not throw a forward pass completion to any other male player. The term “open” means any player can complete a forward pass to any other player.
  - b. During the offensive team’s possession there may not be two consecutive forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. **This rule also applies for all try (point after touchdown) attempts. If the previous scoring play was male to male, the try will be closed.**
  - c. If a male passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver, the next forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or female receiver for positive yards. The spot where the ball becomes dead by rule must be beyond the offensive team’s scrimmage line (marked by the orange disc). There is no foul for a female receiver being deflagged behind the offensive scrimmage line. The next forward pass completion remains “closed.”
  - d. **If a female passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver behind the scrimmage line who then runs beyond this scrimmage line, it is an illegal forward pass.**
  - e. The penalty for an illegal forward pass is five yards from the spot where the pass is released, and a loss of down. One example of an illegal forward pass is the second consecutive male-to-male completed forward pass.
  - f. Any foul, whether accepted or declined, will have no effect on whether the next forward pass completion is “open” or “closed.”
7. **Running the Ball**- An offensive male runner (this includes a pass receiver) cannot penetrate through the offensive line of scrimmage with the ball. **Penalty: Illegal procedure - 5 yards. There are two exceptions to this rule:**
8. A male runner may advance the ball through the offensive line of scrimmage after the ball has been previously advanced legally beyond the line.
9. Females have no limitations on their advancement behind or beyond the line of scrimmage.