

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Texas A&M International Intramural Flag Football is played according to the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association Rules as well as local university rules. The following are relevant excerpts from those rules.

(Last update August 26, 2009)

ELIGIBILITY, PLAYERS, AND EQUIPMENT

Note: All participants must have a proper TAMIU I.D. to play. Faculty/Staff must have proper identification.

1. Players may compete on only one (1) men's / women's team regardless of league classification/division and play for only one (1) Co-Recreational team as well.
2. The game shall be played between two (2) teams of seven (7) players each. **Five (5)** players are required to avoid a forfeit. The game may be continued with less than five (5) players, if the team has a chance to win.
3. Teams will have a **roster limit of 12 players** (All divisions of play).
4. Players, substitutes, coaches, and other persons affiliated with the team are subjected to the rules.
5. Men shall use the regular size ball while women shall use youth size ball. The women's ball shall be used for Co-Recreational games.
6. Jerseys must be either:
 - A. Long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down or,
 - B. Short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline.
7. **Flag Belts Procedure:**
 - A. A set of flag belts **must** be checked out by a representative of each team prior to each game.
 - B. Each Player must wear a three-flag belt with one flag on each hip and one in the rear. All players must have their belts on at the beginning of each play.
 - C. If a runner loses his/her flag during action, play continues. The play ends when a defensive player touches the runner with one hand between the shoulders and the knees.
8. A player wearing illegal equipment **shall not** be permitted to play. This applies to any equipment, which in the opinion of the Referee is dangerous or confusing. Types of equipment or substances, which shall always be declared illegal include:
 - A. Headgear containing any hard, unyielding, or stiff material, including billed hats, and bandannas.
 - B. Jewelry (exception: medical bracelet/necklace must be taped down).
 - C. Pads or braces worn above the waist.
 - D. Shoes with metal spikes
 - E. Shirts or jerseys, which do not remain tucked in.
 - F. Pants or shorts with belt loops. (i.e.) **Jeans, khaki shorts.**
 - G. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material.
 - H. Towels attached at the player's waist.
 - I. Any exposed hood on a coat or sweatshirt.

PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, OVERTIME

1. **GAME TIME IS FORFEIT TIME.** Therefore, a team that is considered "Ready to Play" they may claim a win by forfeit. **ALL FORFEITED CONTESTS WILL NOT BE RESCHEDULED.**

Ready to Play: "Ready to play" is defined as a team who must be on the playing area, ready to play, with the minimum number of players as listed in the sport rules. The line-up must be recorded on the official scorecard. The team must be able to respond immediately to the beginning of play ordered by the official.

2. Playing time shall be 40 minutes; both halves will have the first 18 minutes (running clock) and last two (2) minutes of each half will be converted to seven (7) plays. The intermission between halves shall be no more than five (5) minutes. **Please note: Overtime will only be used during playoffs. If game is tied during league it will end in a tie.**

3. **EACH TEAM IS ENTITLED TO TWO (2) TIMEOUTS PER HALF (Use or lose).**

4. **First Half** timing rules:

The clock will run continuously for the first 18 minutes unless it is stopped for a team and/or referee's time-out.

5. **First Half** timing rules: Final Two-Minutes.

Approximately with two (2) minutes before the end of the first half, the referee shall stop the clock and inform both teams that there are two (2) minutes remaining in the half. Therefore, the final two (2) minutes are converted to seven (7) plays for the remainder of the half.

6. **Second Half** timing rules:

The clock will run continuously for the first 18 minutes unless it is stopped for a team and/or referee's time-out.

7. **Second Half: Two-Minute (2) Warning.**

Approximately with two (2) minutes before the end of the second half, the referee shall stop the clock and inform both teams that there are two (2) minutes remaining in the game. Therefore, the final two (2) minutes are converted to seven (7) plays for the remainder of the game.

8. Regular season games can end in a **tie.** **Only** in the **playoffs** will overtime procedures be used.

9. OVERTIME PROCEDURES:

A coin will be flipped by the Referee to determine the options as in the start of the overtime period. There will be only one coin flip during the overtime. If additional overtime periods are played, field captains will alternate choices. The winner of the toss shall be given options of offense, defense, or direction. The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options. ALL OVERTIME PERIODS ARE PLAYED TOWARD THE SAME GOAL LINE.

Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1st and goal from the Team B 10 yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. An overtime period consists of one possession by each team. If the score is still tied after one period, additional periods will be played until a winner is determined. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the opponent will still have a chance to win the game.

NOTE: Try-for-points will be attempted and scored as indicated in Rule 8. If the defense intercepts the pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown, the ball will be placed at the Team B 10 yard line to begin their series of 4 downs. Each team is entitled to one time-out per overtime period.

They are administered similar to the regular game. Team A shall be awarded a new series of 4 downs when the penalty for defensive pass interference or roughing the passer is accepted. Dead ball fouls following touchdowns are penalized on the try-for-point. Dead ball fouls following a successful try-for-point will be penalized from the succeeding spot, the Team B 10 yard line, if accepted.

PUNTING THE BALL

THERE ARE NO KICKOFFS

1. The only legal kicking in Flag Football is a punt.
2. All punts must be announced to the referee.
 - A. The kicking team must have 4 players (5 for co-rec) on the line of scrimmage.
 - B. The kicker must catch and kick the ball immediately in one continuous motion.
 - C. Neither K or R may advance beyond their respective scrimmage line until the ball is kicked. **Penalty:** Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
 - D. If the offense declares to punt, then wants to change their decision, they may do so after a charged timeout or an accepted penalty in which the down is to be replayed.

SNAPPING, HANDING, AND PASSING THE BALL

1. Team A players are responsible for retrieving the ball after every scrimmage down. The snapper will bring it from the huddle to the Team A scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange).
2. The offensive team must have at least 4 players (Co-recreation rules require 5 players) on their scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange) at the snap. The remaining players must be either on the scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange) or behind their backfield line. All players must be inbounds. A player in motion is not counted as one of the 4 or 5 on the scrimmage line. **Penalty:** Illegal Procedure, 5 yards. NOTE: If in doubt, the player is on the scrimmage line.
3. **Direct snaps are illegal.** The player who receives the snap must be at least two yards behind the offensive scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange). **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards.**
4. A runner may pass the ball backward at anytime, except if intentionally thrown out of bounds to conserve time. **Penalty:** Illegal Pass, 5 yards and loss of down.
5. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where it touches the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on downs.
6. 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 Team A's scrimmage line (first ball spotter) when the ball leaves the passer's hand. Only one forward pass can be thrown per down. NOTE: Once the offense possesses the ball beyond the line of scrimmage a forward pass may not be thrown legally.
7. One foot must land inbounds before any part of the body lands in the out-of-bounds area for a legal pass reception. One knee is equivalent.
8. A forward pass is illegal:
 - A. If the passer's foot is beyond Team A's scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange) when the ball leaves his/her hand.
 - B. If thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
 - C. If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage.
 - D. If a passer catches his/her untouched forward pass.
 - E. If there is more than one forward pass.**Penalty:** 5 yards from the spot of the foul and a loss of down if by Team A before possession changes during a scrimmage down.

Two Minute Warning and Scoring

1. If a team is **19 or more points (Men's and Women's Division)** ahead when the Referee announces the end of 18 minutes for the second half, the game shall be declared over.
2. If a team scores during the last seven (7) plays of the second half and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more the game shall end at that point.
3. At any time after the completion of the first half of any men's, women's, and co-rec game, one team has a lead of 40 or more points, the game shall be ended.
4. All touchdowns are worth **6 points**.
5. The players scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player. If the player is not de-flagged with one pull, and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally on purpose, the touchdown is disallowed. **The player is ejected. Penalty:** Un-sportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot and a loss of down.
6. After a touchdown, the scoring team attempts a PAT from the 3-yard line worth 1 point or the 10-yard line, worth 2 points. An interception on a PAT attempt can be returned for a touchdown worth 2 points.
7. A safety shall count as 2 points. The ball shall be snapped by the scoring team at their 14-yard line, unless moved by penalty.

Conduct and Penalties

1. No player shall commit any acts of unfair play during a period or intermission, examples:
 - A. Abusive or insulting language.
 - B. Any acts of unfair play.
 - C. Using disconcerting acts or words prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with team's signals or movements.
 - E. Intentionally kicking at the ball, other than during a legal kick.
 - F. Intentionally swinging an arm, hand or fist at any opposing player.
 - G. Leaving the field between downs to gain an advantage unless replaced or with permission of the Referee.**Penalty:** Un-sportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS: MISCONDUCT EJECTION

Players ejected from a game due to unsporting conduct must immediately leave the Rec fields. Furthermore, the team will not be allowed to substitute for an ejected player for the remainder of the game.

2. When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he/she shall not:
 - A. Intentionally kick the ball.
 - B. Spike the ball into the ground.
 - C. Throw the ball high into the air.
 - D. Fail to return the ball to the huddle.**Penalty:** Un-sportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender shall be ejected.
3. There shall be no un-sportsmanlike conduct by substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the Rules. This includes:
 - A. Attempting to influence a decision by an official.
 - B. Disrespectfully addressing an official.
 - C. Indicating objections to an official's decision.

- D. Holding an unauthorized conference, or being on the field illegally.
- E. Using profanity, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
- F. Intentionally contacting a game official physically during the game by persons subject to the Rules (Disqualification).

Penalty: Un-sportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender shall be ejected.

4. No player shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player shall:

- A. Steal, attempt to steal or bat the ball from a player in possession.
- B. Trip an opponent.
- C. Contact an opponent on the ground.
- D. Throw the runner to the ground.
- E. Hurdle any other player.
- F. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
- G. Make any contact with an opponent, which is deemed unnecessary of any nature including using fists, locked hands, elbows or any part of the forearm or hand.
- H. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player. NOTE: The responsibility for contact with a spinning or diving ball carrier belongs to the out control player which may be the ball carrier.
- I. Clip an opponent.
- J. Position himself/herself on the shoulders or body of teammate or opponent to gain an opponent.
- K. Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tacklefootball.

Penalty: 10 yards - flagrant offenders will be ejected.

5. Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass. Roughing the passer restrictions end if the forward pass is thrown from beyond Team A's scrimmage line.

Penalty: Roughing the Passer, 10 yards, automatic first down.

Blocking, Running, and Flag Belt Removal

1. The offensive screen block shall take place without contact any place on the field. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind his/her back. Any use of the arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her hand or arm to break a fall or to retain his/her balance. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards.

2. A player who screens shall not:

- A. When he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than a normal step from him or her.
- B. When he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, makes contact with him/her.
- C. Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be 1 to 2 steps or strides from the opponent.
- D. After assuming his/her legal screening position, moves to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path of his/her opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, he/she has committed a personal foul.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards.

3. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge contact the opponent. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official. A blocker may use his/her arms or hands to break a fall or retain his/her balance.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards.

4. Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms or the ball to deny the opportunity for opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes:

- A. Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.
- B. Placing the ball in player possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.
- C. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from de-flagging.

Penalty: Flag guarding, 10 yards - Spot Foul.

5. The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This includes the use of a "stiff arm" extended to ward off an opponent attempting to de-flag/tag.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards - Spot Foul.

6. There are some basic rules that are established for flag football because of legal or illegal removal of the flag belt.

- A. Players must have possession of the ball before they can legally be de-flagged.
- B. When a runner loses his/her flag-belt accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play continues. The de-flagging reverts to a one-hand tag of the runner shoulders and the knees.
- C. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play.

Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards.

- D. Pulling a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player intentionally is illegal.

Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards.

- E. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal.

Penalty: Un-sportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down and player ejection.

Co-Rec Specific Rules

All the above flag football rules will govern Co-Rec play with the exceptions and clarifications listed below.

1. The Co-recreational game shall be played between 2 teams of 8 players, 4 men and 4 women. **Six players are required to avoid a forfeit (3 men & 3 women, 4 men & 2 women, or 4 women & 2 men).** There is a maximum of 4 of each gender allowed on the field at the same time.

2. Regulation or youth size ball may be used.

3. If a female scores a touchdown, the point value is **9**. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and a touchdown is scored by any Team A player, the point value is **9**. All other touchdowns are 6 points. PATs count the same regardless of who scores. One (1) point from the 3-yard line, 2 points from the 10-yard line, 3 points from the 20-yard line.

4. If a team is ahead by **25 or more points** ahead when the referee announces the end of 18 minutes of the second half the game is over. If, at anytime, a team scores during the last seven (7) plays of the game and creates a score that is **25 or more**, the game is over.

5. Advancement of the ball is restricted by the following circumstances, depending on the gender of the ball carrier.

A. A male runner cannot advance the ball past the line of scrimmage. There are no restrictions concerning runs by females.

PENALTY: 5 yards from the previous spot and replay the down.

If a female passer completes a pass to a male behind the line of scrimmage, and then advances beyond the line of scrimmage, the penalty is illegal forward pass.

PENALTY: 5 Yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down.

B. There are no advancement restrictions on a male once the ball has been possessed beyond the line of scrimmage.

C. A male passer cannot complete two consecutive forward passes to a male receiver.

PENALTY: 5 Yards from the previous spot and loss of down.

Closed Definition: Once a male has completed a pass to a male receiver, the next completion for positive yardage must be a legal forward pass with either a female throwing the pass or receiving the pass.

Open Definition: Any player can complete a legal forward pass to any other player.

D. All new possessions begin with the play being OPEN.

NOTE: Open and Closed plays are determined by the action of a legal forward pass and catch. Therefore, throughout a play there may be multiple possessions by males and females but the status of the next play is determined by the initial pass and catch.

1. Open/Closed is not affected when a team scores a touchdown. The extra point attempt's open/closed status is still determined by the previous play that scored the touchdown.

2. No penalty being accepted or declined **WILL AFFECT** the open/closed status.