
UTC Campus Recreation

INTRAMURALS

4v4 FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Spring 2023

All games will be governed by the 2021-2022 NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rules Book with the following UTC Intramural Sports modifications:

Items highlighted are changes for the 2023 Flag Football season.

Section 1: THE GAME, FIELD, PLAYERS, AND EQUIPMENT

1. Each participant must present a current, valid UTC student or faculty/staff ID card in order to be eligible to participate.
2. The game shall be played between two teams of 4 players each. Each team must have a minimum of 3 players in order to begin a game. This is an open league where there are no restrictions or requirements relating to gender to create a team.
3. Due to injury, a team may continue a game with less than the minimum number of required players. An ejection that leaves a team with less than the minimum number of required players will result in a forfeit by that team.
4. A game ball will be provided for each game or teams may choose to provide their own. Footballs are available for check-out with a UTC ID.
5. Each team is recommended to wear shirts of one distinguishable color. Any team not dressed in like-colored shirts may 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. Hoodies must be inside out and have no zipped pockets.
6. **Shoes:** Regulation rubber-soled cleats, plastic cleats, detachable rubber cleats that screw into the shoe, and tennis shoes are the only permissible footwear. Players may not play barefoot. No combat, cowboy, or hiking boots may be worn. No steel cleats or shoes with steel detachable 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 Sports Supervisor before the game begins. Under no circumstances will a player wearing a cast or splint be permitted to play. Players may wear a face shield molded to the face with no protrusions to protect against a facial injury.
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 official may be worn. Any player wearing exposed permanent jewelry (i.e. body piercing) will not be permitted to play. Religious jewelry is allowed but must be taped and secured.
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 un-tucked jersey must be four inches above the waist.

Section 2: 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. The player who removes the flag belt should immediately hold the belt above his/her head to assist the officials. 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 – Orange Yard Marker.
 - B. Defensive scrimmage line – Yellow Yard Marker.
 - C. Minimum line players - The offensive team must have one player snap the ball from the line of scrimmage.
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.

Section 3: PERIODS, TIME FACTORS, AND SUBSTITUTIONS

1. **All games will consist of two (2) ten-minute halves with a running clock. The clock will stop during the last two (2) minutes of the second half only. Teams will switch directions at the end of the second quarter.**
2. **Game time is forfeit time. Grace Period:** The captain with a full team can choose to wait 10 minutes for opposing team to have minimum number of players.
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. Play starts at the beginning of each half with **the ball placed on the offensive/receiving team's 14-yard line.**
4. **Mercy Rule:** If a team is 35 or more points ahead at any time after halftime, or if a team is 19 or more points or more at any point with 2 minutes left in the 4th quarter. The intramural supervisor has the ability to call a game at any point.
5. **Timeouts:** Each team is permitted two (2) timeouts per half and one (1) timeout for the entire overtime period. Timeouts do not carry over from the first or second half. 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. In that case, the visiting captain shall call the toss to determine possession at start of the overtime period. 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. **If the offensive team turns the ball over during an overtime period, then that possession is over.**

7. **Delay of Game:** After a ball is declared ready for play, the offensive team has twenty-five (25) seconds 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 deemed to be unfair in said official's judgment.
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.

Section 4: BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT OF BOUNDS

1. The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the referee has put the ball in play (sounding whistle and dropping hand).
2. 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 free or protected scrimmage kick strikes the ground.
 - G. When the passer is de-flagged before releasing the ball.
 - H. When a punt breaks the plane of the receiving team's goal line.
 - I. When the defensive team secures possession during a Try or in overtime.
3. **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.
4. **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.

Section 5: 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 line to gain.
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.
3. **Incorrect Down:** The R shall have authority to rectify an error until the series has ended.

Section 6: KICKING THE BALL

1. There are no fair catches. If a receiving team signals fair catch during a kick, a 10 yard penalty shall be assessed for unsporting like behavior.
2. The receiving team may advance the ball out of its end-zone.
3. **Protected Scrimmage Kick:** A legal protected scrimmage kick is a punt made in accordance with the rules. 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 Referee. There are no quick kicks.
 - B. The snap must be received at least two (2) 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 protected scrimmage kick 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 protected scrimmage kick 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 (orange ball spotter) may be advanced by either team.

Section 7: 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 only needs the snapper on 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. 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 while behind the line of scrimmage.***
 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 completed when caught by a member of the passing team in bounds. A forward pass is intercepted when caught by a member of the opposing team in bounds. It 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.
 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 dead ball 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.

Section 8: 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 de-flag 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/she 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, that try shall be over.
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. Defense receives the ball on their 14 yard line.
4. **Mercy Rule:** If a team is 35 or more points ahead in the second half or if a team is 19 or more points ahead when the two-minute warning sounds in the second half, the game shall be over. If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the game and that score creates a 19 or more point difference, the game shall end at that point. This rule is for all divisions of play.

Section 9: 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, hands and legs 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 de-flagged 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.
 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. Penalty: Roughing the Passer on a completed forward pass: 10 yards enforced from the dead ball spot when the run ends beyond A's scrimmage (Automatic 1st down) line and no change of possession has occurred.
 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.

Section 10: ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES

1. Penalty Enforcement at the basic spot:
 - A. Pass play or during the protected scrimmage kick (before possession is gained) – basic enforcement spot is the scrimmage line (where ball was snapped).
 2. On all running plays - basic enforcement spot is the end of the run.
 3. All fouls are marked from the basic enforcement spot (Exception: An offensive foul behind the basic enforcement spot which becomes a spot foul.)
 4. The only exception to the above regulations is Roughing the Passer; this penalty will be added on to the end result of the play.
2. Dead Ball Fouls:
 - A. Where there are 10 yard dead ball fouls committed by each team prior to the penalty administration, each 10 yard foul will cancel a 10 yard foul on the other team. Any remaining 10 yard fouls will be enforced.
 - B. 5 yard dead ball fouls will be enforced and in the order of occurrence and would never cancel a 10 yard foul.