

Department of Recreational Sports | Intramural Sports 2022-23

4v4 Flag Football Information Sheet

Rules of the Game

Note: All adaptations made for 4v4 Flag Football are **highlighted in gray and bold/italicized**.

1. Number of Players
 - a. **Games are played between teams of 4.**
 - b. In CoRec games, only half of the players actively participating for a team may identify as the same gender. For example:
 - i. 4 players → gender max 2
 - ii. 3 players → gender max 2
 - c. **Only two Sport Club or Registered Student Organization team members may be on a team roster in their sport or allied sport.**
 - d. If a team falls below the required number of players due to injuries or ejections, play may continue until the game is no longer competitive.
 - e. Teams must have **at least 3 players** present in order to begin a game.
 - f. If a team does not have the required minimum number of players checked in at the scheduled game time, a 10-minute grace period is given.
 - i. If a team (or teams) doesn't have the required number of players by the end of the 10-minute grace period, the game is recorded as a forfeit.
 - ii. If one team is present at the start of the grace period (scheduled game time), that team has the option to start up by the mercy rule (19 points) when their opponent arrives during the grace period. However, the present team may also elect to decline the penalty and start the game with a score of 0-0.
2. Periods/Time
 - a. The game consists of **four 10-minute quarters** with a running clock. The clock will stop for the 2 minute warning in each half and will restart on the snap.
 - i. During the last 30 seconds of the first half and the final two minutes of the game, the clock will stop on scores, penalties, out of bounds, first downs, possession changes, touchbacks, inadvertent whistles, and incomplete passes.
 - ii. Overtime periods will not be used during the regular season but during the playoffs only.
 - b. Each team is entitled to one 30-second time-out per half.
3. Flag Belts
 - a. Must be worn with 1 flag on each hip and 1 flag in the back. The clip must be secured to the other end of the belt. Flag belts must be wrapped over the top of a player's shirt or jersey.
 - b. **Flag belts may not be tied!** *Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct*
4. The Ball
 - a. Teams may use their own ball, as long as it meets all requirements:
 - i. Men's games - regular size ball only
 - ii. Women's/CoRec games - regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size ball
 - b. During play, the offensive team is responsible for the football. The officials will not retrieve balls.
5. Substitutions
 - a. Players may substitute freely between downs. Substitutes must be in uniform and ready for play prior to the substitution.
 - b. In CoRec, the gender ratio must be maintained following a substitution.
6. Live Ball/Dead Ball
 - a. **Each new possession to start a half or after a score will be awarded to the team in possession at their own 10-yard line.**
 - b. The offense must legally snap the ball within 25 seconds after the referee has sounded the ready for play whistle. *Penalty: Delay of Game.*
 - i. If a team attempts to conserve time illegally, the clock may be started on the ready for play signal.

- ii. If a team attempts to consume time illegally, the clock may be started on the snap. This includes delay of game and encroachment fouls by the defense.
 - c. The ball becomes dead when:
 - i. A forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
 - ii. A backwards pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground.
 - iii. A runner's flag belt is removed legally by an opponent. A flag is removed when "the clip" is detached from the belt, or if the flag/belt rips when pulled.
 - iv. A runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, if the belt falls off during play.
 - v. A snap hits the ground.
 - vi. If a ball in-flight hits an official at any time and the ball falls to the ground (if the pass was forward, it is an incomplete pass, otherwise the play is dead at the spot).
 - vii. Any part of a runner's body - other than the hand or foot - hits the ground.
 - viii. The passer does not release the ball in 5 seconds of the snap.
 - d. Out-of-bounds
 - i. If the ball or any part of a player touches the boundary line, the ball is dead.
 - ii. If an inbounds runner touches or is touched by an out-of-bounds player or official, the ball remains live.
7. Fumbles
- a. There are no fumbles in flag football.
 - b. A fumble or backward pass is dead at the point it hits the ground.
 - c. The ball belongs to the team last in possession - touching is a fumble is not considered legal possession.
8. Series and Number of Downs
- a. The team in possession of the ball shall have **three consecutive downs** to advance to the next zone line-to-gain. After a change of possession, the succeeding play will be first down for the team with possession.
 - b. The zone line-to-gain shall be the line (or field marker) in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such cases, the original line in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line-to-gain (referred to as "double stakes").
 - c. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines is the determining factor.
9. Kicking the Ball
- a. There are no kicks in 4v4 flag football.
10. Scrimmage Play
- a. Snapping
 - i. The snap need not pass through the snapper's legs but must be done in one continuous motion. *Penalty: Illegal Snap.*
 - ii. The player receiving the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the scrimmage line. *Penalty: Illegal Formation.*
 - iii. **The snapper is the only offensive player required to be on the offensive scrimmage line.**
 - iv. The snapper may carry the ball from the huddle to the scrimmage line. A towel may be used to help keep the ball dry and placed under the ball, but may not be attached to the player.
 - v. No player on the offensive team shall make a false start. A false start is any movement simulating the start of play. *Penalty: False Start.*
 - vi. At the time of the snap, it is encroachment for any player to break the plane of their scrimmage line, except the snapper's right to be over the ball. *Penalty: Encroachment.*
 - vii. Prior to the snap, all offensive players must come to a complete stop and remain stationary for at least one full second. If two or more players shift, all must become set for one second before the snap. *Penalty: Illegal Shift.*
 - viii. Only one offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent's goal line. *Penalty: Illegal Motion.*
11. Handling the Ball
- a. Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.
 - b. **No runner can advance the ball through the scrimmage line until the ball has been touched beyond the line of scrimmage. Penalty: Illegal Advancement.**
 - c. There are no restrictions under the following conditions:

- i. After a change of possession.
- ii. **After the ball has been touched beyond the line of scrimmage.**

12. Passing and Receiving

- a. **There must be a legal forward pass every down.**
- b. **The passer has 5 seconds to release the ball, or else the ball becomes dead and the play is over.**
- c. **All forward passes must be initially touched beyond the line of scrimmage.**
- d. All players are eligible to touch or catch a forward pass. Only one forward pass may be thrown per down.
- e. A forward pass is illegal if:
 - i. The passer's foot is beyond A's scrimmage line when the ball leaves their hand.
 - ii. The ball is thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
 - iii. A passer catches their untouched forward or backward pass.
 - iv. If there is more than one forward pass per down.
 - v. **The pass is initially touched by A behind the line of scrimmage.** *Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass.*
- f. After the ball is snapped, and until it has been touched, there shall be no offensive pass interference beyond the offensive scrimmage line if the legal forward pass crosses the offensive scrimmage line. *Penalty: Offensive Pass Interference.*
- g. After a legal forward pass is released by the passer and until it has been touched, there shall be no defensive pass interference beyond the offensive scrimmage line while the pass that crosses the offensive scrimmage line is in flight. *Penalty: Defensive Pass Interference.*
- h. If opposing inbounds players simultaneously catch a pass, the ball becomes dead at the spot and belongs to the passing team.
- i. A player must have one foot inbounds for a legal reception.

13. Scoring and Touchback Plays

- a. A touchdown is 6 points.
- b. A safety is 2 points.
- c. A try is granted to a team following a touchdown. The team will have the opportunity to score:
 - i. 1 point from the 3-yard line
 - ii. 2 points from the 10-yard line
 - iii. 3 points from the 20-yard line

14. Mercy Rule

- a. If a team is 19 or more points ahead with two minutes to play, the game is over.
- b. If a team scores during the last 2 minutes of the game and that score creates a 19 or more point difference the game is over.

15. Penalties

- a. **All 5-yard penalties will be enforced as 3-yard penalties.**
- b. **All 10-yard penalties will be enforced as 5-yard penalties.**
- c. **Defenders are not allowed to cross the line of scrimmage to rush the passer. This will be enforced as an Illegal Advancement penalty (3 yards).**

16. Onside Conversion

- a. Only in the last 2:00 of a game, a team that scores a touchdown and attempts a try will then have the option to attempt an "onside conversion".
- b. The onside conversion option may be attempted from the offense's own 10-yard line with the zone line-to-gain being the goal line.
 - i. The offense has one down to attempt the onside conversion, unless extended by penalty.
 - ii. The conversion would be an untimed down.
 - iii. Note: The onside conversion is treated as "4th down". If the conversion is unsuccessful, the defensive team would gain possession of the ball at the spot that it became dead.

17. Overtime Procedure (Playoffs Only)

- a. Each team will have a chance on offense.
- b. The offense will start from the 10-yard line (unless moved by penalty) with 3 downs to score.
- c. The goal line is always the zone line-to-gain.
- d. After scoring a touchdown, the team has an option of 1, 2, or 3 points for the try.
- e. If the defense intercepts the ball, the ball is dead immediately and the series of downs is ended.
- f. One timeout per team for the entirety of overtime is allowed.

****All other rules will follow the NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rules Book.****