

Flag Football Rules

Any rule not specifically covered will be governed in accordance with the 2011 and 2012 NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rules Book & Officials' Manual 15th Edition. Modifications have been made to suit DCA Management Sports programs.

Rule 1: Team Captain Responsibilities

- Ensure their team members follow all eligibility requirements. Team captains are also advised to seek clarification on special eligibility requirements, if necessary.
- Responsible for communicating game time, location
- Ensure that all teammates sign a waiver form before participating in their first game.
- Representing the team and communicating with the officials. The captain is the only player permitted to discuss the game with officials.
- Ensure good team sportsmanship among teammates.

Rule 2: Players

- Players are not allowed to argue or question calls or game specifics with the referees during play. Casual conversation can be permitted at the referees discretion, but arguing or becoming confrontational with the ref can result in penalty and suspension from game. All questions or communication with refs should be done via team captains.
- Each team may have a maximum of eight players on the field at one time. A team may begin a game with a minimum of six players. If injuries or ejections cause a team to drop below six players and the referees decide that team still has an opportunity to win the game, the game shall continue.
- The following Male/Female on-field combinations are allowed:
 - 8 players - 6 male, 2 female / 5 male, 3 female
 - 7 players - 5 male, 2 female / 4 male, 3 female
 - 6 players - 4 male, 2 female
- Between downs any number of eligible substitutes may replace players provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced players off the field before the ball is snapped.
 - All substitutes must enter the field from their sideline and all replaced players must leave the field on their sideline.
 - During the same dead ball interval, 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, a dead ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out, or a period ends.

Rule 3: Forfeits/Defaults

NEW! Forfeit Policy:

- Five Minutes Late: The team ready for play begins the game with a touchdown. The late team will start its first series from their own 20-yard line.
- 10 Minutes Late: Forfeit
- If neither team is ready to play by game time, but they are ready before 10 minutes have elapsed from game time, they will be allowed to play. The game clock will start at the scheduled time and play will begin without the game clock being reset.

There are (2) situations that will result in a forfeit:

- Not Enough Players – Team does not have the required number of players to participate by 10 minutes after scheduled game time.
- Sportsmanship – Game is ended by staff for sportsmanship-related issues.

Rule 4: Play

Start of Game

The game shall begin with a captain's meeting and coin toss. The team winning the coin toss may choose to defer their option to the second half or choose from the following two options:

1. Select to play offense or defense first, or
2. Select which end they would like to defend.

The team losing the coin toss shall exercise the remaining option.

Timing

- The game shall consist of (2) 22-minute halves
- The clock shall stop in the last two minutes of each half otherwise, the clock will run continuously barring timeouts. During those last two minutes, the clock is stopped for an incomplete pass, if a player goes out of bounds before having their flag pulled, if either team scores, for a change of possession, if a penalty must be marked off (clock will resume as soon as the ball is placed and referee indicates the ball is in play), or if a team calls time out. The clock does not stop on first downs or for a completed pass in bounds.
- Each team is permitted (2) timeouts per game to be used at the captain's discretion.
- Tiebreakers are to only be used in the playoffs. During the regular season, all ties will remain as

such.

- OVERTIME
 - There will be no ties, all games will have an overtime.
 - There will only be one coin toss in overtime. If additional overtime periods are played, the captains will alternate choices. The choices are: offense, defense, or direction. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.
 - Each team will receive one timeout for the entire overtime. Timeouts not used during regulation will not be carried over.
 - An overtime period will consist of each team receiving four downs (unless there is an automatic first down) to score.
 - Unless moved by penalty, each team will start first and goal from the opposing team's 20-yard line.
 - If the score is still tied after one period, play will proceed to a second period, or as many as are needed to determine a winner. Teams will alternate starting offense & defense each period
 - If the defense intercepts a pass or fumble, the ball will be declared dead immediately and the series will be over.

Equipment

Teams shall use league provided footballs and flags. Teams may not use their own ball unless both teams use the same ball.

Scoring

- A touchdown is scored when the ball breaks the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line. A touchdown is worth 1 point. If TD is scored on a girl play, TD is worth 2 points.
- A safety is scored when the ball becomes dead in a team's own end zone while they are in possession of the ball or have caused the ball to become dead in their end zone. A safety is also scored when the team in possession of the ball incurs a penalty that leaves the ball on or behind its own goal line. A safety is worth 1 point. The team that gave up the safety shall kick off (punt) from their own 10 yard line.

Ball In Play, Dead Ball, Out of Bounds

- Ball in play:
 - The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds of the referee sounding the ready for play whistle.

- Penalty: Delay of game, five yards.
- Rushing: Defensive team may not rush opposing team until standard 3 second rush count has been given. Rush count shall be called off OUT LOUD BY THE REFEREE, starting from the snap of the ball, in the form of:
 - One- one thousand, two- one thousand, three- one thousand, RUSH.
 - If QB hands the ball off or laterals prior to the end of the rush count, rushers are free to rush.
- A ball is declared dead when:
 - a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players - a backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground
 - a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player
 - 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.
 - a snap hits the ground.
 - a muff of a kickoff or protected scrimmage kick strikes the ground
 - the passer is deflagged before releasing the ball
 - a fumble or backward pass hits the ground. The team in control of the ball prior to the fumble or backward pass will maintain possession, unless it was fourth down and the offense did not reach the goal line to gain.
 - the defense secures possession during overtime
- 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 inbounds, bumps into or is touched by a player or an official on the sidelines out-of-bounds, the ball is still in play.
- Zone Line-to-Gain, Number of Downs
 - Zone Line-to-Gain
 - Each zone is 20 yards in length.
 - The zone line-to-gain in any series shall be the zone (next field marker) in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain.
 - In such case, the original zone line-to-gain shall be maintained.
 - The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines shall be the determining factor.
 - Number of Downs
 - The offense shall have four downs to reach the zone line-to-gain.

- Kicking the Ball

- Kick-offs will be punted from behind the 20 yard line
- The kick must be executed behind the scrimmage line within a reasonable time.
- Neither team may cross the scrimmage line (20 yd line) until the ball is kicked.
- Kickoffs that travel out of bounds in the air will be spotted at midfield. Kickoffs traveling out of bounds after bouncing in bounds will be spotted where the ball went out of bounds
- Punts kicked out of bounds will always be spotted where the ball went out of bounds
- There are no quick kicks or fakes. All punts must be announced to the referee.
- Kickoffs and punts do not have to be played on the fly, they can/will be played off the bounce.
- Punts received in endzone may be advanced.
- No blocking punts
- No member of the receiving team shall raise/wave his/her arm above his/her head during a punt in attempt to confuse the kicking team.
 - Penalty: Unfair Act, 10 yards from the end of the kick or run using the all but one principle

Snapping, Handing and Passing the Ball

- The Scrimmage

- Snapping - the snap does not have to be between the snapper's legs. The player receiving the snap, and any other players not on the line, must be at least two-yards (2 yard mark) behind the scrimmage line. A QB may roll to the right or left prior to the end of the rush count, but may not take off rushing (past the "rough" 2 yard mark) until the rush count is completed.
 - Penalty: Illegal Snap/Rush, five-yards from the previous spot
- During the snap, the offensive team must have at least five players on their scrimmage line within one yard of the scrimmage line with (2) designated linemen.
 - Penalty: Illegal formation, five-yards from the previous spot

Linemen:

Linemen are only allowed to block for QB. Linemen are not eligible receivers. Linemen must declare themselves by a raised hand prior to the start of a play to signify their position.

- BLOCKING

Blocking by linemen must be done with full body or chest. Hands must be held behind the back and not used to block. No grabbing, clutching or shoving with the hands will be allowed.

- Penalty: Illegal blocking, f10 yards, previous spot, loss of down

- No player of the offensive team shall make a false start. A false start is any movement simulating the start of a play.

- Penalty: False Start, five yards from the previous spot

- Encroachment - After the snapper has touched the ball, it is encroachment for any player to break the plane of his/her scrimmage line, except the snapper's right to be over the ball.

- Penalty: Encroachment, five-yards from the previous spot

- Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after the scrimmage down. The snapper will bring the ball from the huddle to the scrimmage line (first ball spotter- orange).

- A towel may be placed under the ball, regardless of weather conditions.

- All offensive players must be motionless for one second preceding the snap. After all players are set, a player moving parallel to or away from the scrimmage line is legal.

- Penalty: Illegal motion, five yards from the previous spot

- An offensive player that moves/shifts (other than going legally in motion) must stop for one full second before the snap.

- Penalty: Illegal Shift, five yards from the previous spot.

- After the ready for play whistle, an offensive player must momentarily be at least five yards inbounds before the snap.

- Penalty: Illegal Formation, five yards from the previous spot.

- Handing the Ball

- Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.

- Forward Pass

- All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass except linemen. Only one legal forward pass per down is allowed.

- A forward pass is illegal:

- if the passer's foot is beyond Team A's scrimmage line (first ball spotter orange) when the ball leaves his/her hand

- if thrown after team possession has changed during the down

- if intentionally grounded to save loss of yardage - if a passer catches his/her untouched forward or backward pass

- if it is the second forward pass in that down

- Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, five yards, spot of the pass, loss of down, if prior to possession change.

- Interference

- 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: Offensive Pass Interference, 10 yards, previous spot, loss of down

- 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: Defensive Pass Interference, 10 yards, previous spot, automatic first down

- If opposing players catch a pass simultaneously, the ball becomes dead, is considered a completed pass, and belongs to the offensive team.

Gender related play:

1. Open/Gender Play:

Teams must use a female as an operative player within 4 consecutive downs. An open play will be called by the referee if a gender play is not required on the current play. For an open play, the ball may be advanced by either a male or female player. If a female was not used within 3 downs, then the forced gender rule is put into effect. This means that a female must be an operative player used in the next play.

2. Forced Gender Play:

A female can be used on any play, however when the offense has not used a female as an operative player within the last 3 plays, the next play must be a forced gender play. Once a female is used in any play then the gender count is reset.

PENALTY for noncompliance of gender rule: If the girl play is not successfully executed by the 4th play, the penalty shall be loss of down and the next play is still a forced gender play. Failure to complete forced gender play cannot result in positive yards & forced gender is still in effect for the following down. If the offense receives a penalty on a successful gender play, the gender play is declined (will not count) and a forced gender is still in force.

A female play must be either:

1. Completed pass by a female QB for positive yards (pass must cross line of scrimmage)
2. Completed pass to female as a receiver for positive yards (pass must cross l.o.s)

3. A female gaining positive yards rushing as a running back or QB

The gender count is reset once a TD is made. The gender rule is not in effect during punts.

Examples / Scenarios:

Satisfies a Forced Gender Play:

-MALE QB: A forward pass thrown across the line of scrimmage to a female for a completion. A pass is deflected by a male and CAUGHT by a female. Male QB hands off or laterals to female who rushes for positive yards (both players must begin play at least 2 yards behind line of scrimmage).

-FEMALE QB: A female takes the snap and runs across the line of scrimmage or a female QB throws a forward pass across the line of scrimmage for a completion to an offensive player.

Does NOT Satisfy a Forced Gender Play:

- Male QB hands the ball off to a female player only to hand it back to a male behind the line of scrimmage.
- Laterals past the line of scrimmage
- A female snaps the ball into play.
- A female receives a hand-off, but does not run for positive yards.
- Spiking the ball on a forced gender play to stop the clock (equivalent to a sack resulting in loss of that down and repeat of forced gender play).
- A female QB grounds the ball to stop the clock.
- A female QB throws a pass that does not cross the line of scrimmage while in the air (even if the receiver catches the ball behind the line and proceeds to move across the line of scrimmage).
- A female QB takes the snap but hands it off to a male player.
- Any gender play that does not gain positive yards
- An incomplete pass by a female QB

Unnecessary roughness:

It is unfortunate that this section must be added, but players in previous seasons have not seemed to understand that this league is for FLAG FOOTBALL, not actual football. Light, incidental contact is to be expected, but bottom line: You are to be going for the opposing player's flags, not their bodies. Sometimes rough contact and collisions happen by accident, but then there are the intentional and preventable. Here is a rough guideline:

- Defending players are not allowed intentionally grab around waste, run into, push, grab or bump in any manner that is not consistent with "incidental". As receivers and defenders run down field together and turn unexpectedly, light contact is to be expected.

- Defending players are prohibited from pulling an opposing player down by his shirt, shorts or any part of the body. If a defending player catches some shirt while grabbing a flag, that is to be labeled as incidental.
- When going for a ball, defending players are only allowed to go for a deflection or interception and are allowed to incur normal incidental contact. However, you are not allowed to “level”, push or “ram” the receiver.
- Defending players are allowed to position themselves in front of an oncoming player with the ball, but are expected to go for the flag, not wrap their arms around the waste and say “but he ran into me”.

- Penalty: Unnecessary roughness - Automatic 1st down +5 yards from end of play/spot of foul

- Pass rushers are not allowed to run into linemen, nor push them out of the way. Contact is expected as pass rushers try to run around linemen, but contact should be light and incidental.

- Penalty: +5 yards from end of play

- Offensive players may not shove defenders out of the way.
- Offensive player with the ball may not intentionally run into a defender. Running into a defender can, and often does, happen, but the offensive player is required to try to run around, not through, a defender.
- Linemen have already been covered.

- Penalty: Unnecessary roughness, 10 yards, previous spot, loss of down

As with all penalties, referees will make the above roughing calls at their discretion. A referee reserves the right to warn a player rather than calling a penalty if the roughing infraction is deemed “borderline”. In the case the a player incurs multiple penalties:

- (2) penalties by any one player in a game will result in a warning.

- (3) penalties will result in ejection from game. If any roughing play is deemed severe enough a player can be immediately ejected from the game and the league.

Enforcement of Penalties

- Basic Spot

- Loose ball plays the basic spot of enforcement is the previous spot

- Punt, exclude post scrimmage kick fouls
- Legal forward pass
- Backward pass, including the snap, or fumble made by A-1 from on or behind his/her scrimmage line
- The run or runs which precedes such legal pass, punt, or fumble
- Punts (before possession is gained) basic enforcement spot is previous spot (where ball was kicked from).
- On all running plays the basic enforcement spot is from the end of the run.
- All fouls are marked off from the basic enforcement spot except an offensive foul behind the basic enforcement spot that becomes a spot foul.
- Live ball fouls committed by either team after B gains possession during a try or in OT shall be enforced at the succeeding spot.
- All dead ball fouls are administered separately and in the order of occurrence.
- Fouls during a scoring play committed by the opponent of the scoring team and there was no change of possession, the scoring team may enforce the penalty on the try or on the 14-yard line after the try.
- Fouls during a scoring play committed by the opponent of the scoring team with a change of possession and the foul occurred after the change of possession, the scoring team may enforce the penalty on the try or on the 14-yard line after the try.
- Loss of Five Yards
- Delay of game (dead ball foul)
- False start (dead ball foul)
- Encroachment (dead ball foul)
- Illegal snap (dead ball foul)
- Offensive player leaving the field on the wrong side (dead ball foul)
- Illegal procedure
- Illegal formation
- Illegal motion
- Illegal shift
- Illegal use of arms
- Player receiving snap within two yards of scrimmage line
- Illegal forward pass (loss of down, if by Team A)

- Intentional grounding (loss of down)
- Illegal substitution
- Aiding runner by teammates
- Male advancing ball through the neutral zone
- Two consecutive male-to-male forward pass completions (loss of down)
- Male catches pass and runs beyond scrimmage line (loss of down)
- Required equipment worn illegally
- Offensive player not momentarily five yards inbounds after ready for play and before snap
- Player out-of-bounds when ball is snapped
- Intentionally throwing a backward pass or fumble out-of-bounds (loss of down)
- Loss of 10 Yards
- Illegal contact
- Eligibility lost by going out of bounds and participating in the play
- Offensive pass interference (loss of down)
- Defensive pass interference (automatic first down)
- Stiff arm
- Flag guarding, from the spot of the foul
- Illegal flag belt removal
- Personal foul
- Roughing the passer (automatic first down)
- Illegally secured flag belt on touchdown (Team A - loss of down, Team B – automatic first down and player DQ)
- Illegal participation
- Illegal kicking (treated as a fumble)
- Illegal stripping
- Unsportsmanlike conduct (players, coaches, substitutes, or others)
- Illegal player equipment
- Quick kick
- Spiking, kicking, or throwing ball during dead ball
- Batting a free ball
- Receipt of an unsportsmanlike penalty
- Two or more encroachment fouls during the Interval between downs

- Hurdle any player
- Kick catch interference
- Unfair act
- A nonplayer deflags or interferes with a runner (disqualification and touchdown awarded)
- NOTE: if any of the above infractions are deemed flagrant, the player will be disqualified.

Rule 5: Sportsmanship

The team captain is responsible for the actions of his or her team and their spectators. Additionally, the captain will ensure that his or her team is familiar with the rules of play and league policies and procedures contained in this handbook. Sportsmanship is a vital component for success in every league contest. Participants and spectators are expected to display good sportsmanship toward opponents and the sports staff at all times.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct Participants and spectators shall not commit acts of unsportsmanlike conduct. This includes, but is not limited to, arguments with staff, flagrant fouling, fighting, etc. before, during or after a contest. No player or team shall:

- Use foul or derogatory language, threaten, or verbally abuse any other participant or DCA Employee before, during or after the game.
- Participate in a game for which he or she is ineligible.
- Argue or talk back to the league staff or referee. Only the captain should address an official, and only if done so in a courteous manner.
- Intentionally strike, push, trip or flagrantly foul another participant, spectator, or Recreational Sports employee.
- Mistreat the facility, equipment, or supplies of DCA and/or the hosting recreational sports facility

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Any Participant display unsportsmanlike conduct will be issued wither a conduct warning or ejection by the game officials or DCA Supervisors

Flag Football

- One Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalty - Conduct Warning
- Two Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalties - Ejection
- Two Ejections or Three Unsportsmanlike Conduct Penalties - Forfeit

Any player receiving two conduct warning in one game or ejected from a game is required to meet with the league sports coordinator. Any player ejected form game who refuses to leave game and or field shall result in such player's team forfeiting the game at hand. The player will be

suspended from ALL play until the meeting occurs and for a minimum of one week from the meeting date.