

Princeton University – Intramural Sports

Flag Football Rules



I. EQUIPMENT/UNIFORM/FIELD/ELIGIBILITY

- a. All players **MUST** have their Princeton University I.D. in order to play. IM Supervisors will verify the scoresheet with I.D.s before play begins.
- b. Vests and belts will be in the bag in addition to a football, a ball marker, and orange cones to mark the end zones.
- c. Shoes must be worn at all times. No cleats of any kind allowed on 1952 Stadium Fields.
- d. No hats with brims, or jewelry are allowed to be worn during play.
- e. Shirts must be long enough to be tucked in so that they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down.
- f. All games are played on the fields at 1952 Stadium.
- g. All players must play in at least **ONE** regular season game in order to be eligible for playoffs.
- h. A player may play on **ONE** Open/Women's Team and **ONE** CoRec Team. Please check the Rules of Eligibility for all other rules concerning Intramural Sports.
- i. Varsity football and sprint football players are not eligible to participate in IM flag football.

II. NUMBER OF PLAYERS/FORFEIT PLAY/GAME TIME

- a. Each team is allowed up to 7 players on the field at a time; a minimum of 5 is needed to avoid a forfeit.
- b. CoRec teams require a gender ratio of 4:3 when playing with 7 players; 4:2 when playing with 6 players; or 3:2 when playing with 5 players.
- c. Open League – combination of both men and women participants. There will not be a gender ratio requirement for teams.
- d. Teams not arriving with at least 5 players within 10 minutes after scheduled starting time will forfeit/default the game. A default loss is only awarded if the teams agree to scrimmage, and utilize the space reserved for this game. If a scrimmage does not occur, the game will result in a forfeit and \$25.00 will be charged to that team.
 - i. Teams with 2 forfeits will be removed from the league.
 - ii. Teams with 2 defaults will be removed from the league.
 - iii. Teams with a combination of 1 forfeit and 1 default will be removed from the league.
- e. The winner of the pre-game toss shall have the first choice of options:
 - i. Offense/defense
 - ii. Which goal to defend
 - iii. To defer their choice until the second half
- f. A game shall consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute half-time. The clock will run continuously throughout the game with the exception of the last 2 minutes of the second half.
 - i. The last 2 minutes of the second half, the clock will stop after every down is complete.
 - ii. There will **NO** longer be "Last 4 Downs" procedure to end the game.
- g. Every team is allowed two (2) time-outs per half (1-minute time-outs); time-outs not used in the first half are not carried over into the second half. The clock will stop during time-outs.

III. TIE GAMES – Regular Season games will end in a tie. During PLAYOFFS:

- a. A coin toss will precede "Tie Breaker". The team winning the toss has 3 options: Offense, Defense, or Direction. The opposing team then has the remaining choices.
- b. Play will begin on the 20-yard line and teams will have 4 plays each.
- c. The object is to score a touchdown and subsequent extra point (1 or 2 points). After team A scores, team B then has 4 plays within which to score. If no team has scored after their respective plays, the process is repeated.
- d. When a pass is intercepted the defense becomes the offense and begins their series of 4 plays. If the interception is returned for a touchdown, the game is over.
- e. Penalties are assessed similar to the regular game. A team shall be given a new series of 4 plays when an automatic first down penalty is accepted. Dead ball penalties after a touchdown are penalized on the extra

point attempt. Live ball penalties committed by either team after team B gains possession during an attempt or an overtime shall be enforced at the succeeding spot. Dead ball penalties following a successful attempt will be penalized from the succeeding spot, the team B 20-yard line, if accepted.

IV. KICKOFFS/PUNTING

- a. There will be no kickoffs or punts
- b. The ball will be placed on the offensive team's 20 yard line.

V. LINE OF SCRIMMAGE

- a. One (1) yard of NEUTRAL ZONE must be given up by the defense from where the ball is spotted.
- b. Not contacting an offensive player, the defense can enter the neutral zone as long as they are clearly out of the neutral zone at the time of the snap.
- c. The offensive team must have a minimum of 4 players on the line of scrimmage at the time of the snap.
- d. **No direct snaps.** Player receiving snap must be at least 2 yards behind the line scrimmage line.
- e. All players are eligible for a forward pass. The passer may pass from anywhere behind the Line of Scrimmage.
- f. The passer shall not intentionally ground the ball in order to avoid a sack. The passer has 10 seconds to throw before the defense can attempt to deflag the passer. **Penalty:** 5 yards and loss of down.

VI. BACKWARD PASSES AND FUMBLES

- a. A player may not intentionally throw a backward pass out of bounds to conserve time or to avoid being downed. This will be penalized as an Illegal pass (loss of 5 yards), loss of down and the clock will start on the ready for play.
- b. Once a ball has touched the ground, the ball is considered dead. The last team having possession will retain possession of any fumble at the point the ball was fumbled.
- c. Backward laterals are not allowed past the line of scrimmage. If a backward lateral is thrown, the ball will be dead even if successfully caught by the offense, and the team throwing the lateral will retain possession at that point the lateral was thrown.

VII. FORWARD PASSES AND INTERCEPTIONS

- a. If a player is in the air attempting to catch a ball, the player must contact the ground with at least one foot in-bounds with the ball in their possession prior to going out of bounds, unless contact by an opponent causes the player to first touch out-of-bounds.
- b. If possession of the ball is lost simultaneously when they hit the ground, it is not a catch.
- c. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball is dead at that spot and belongs to the team that snapped the ball; in particular, if it is caught simultaneously in the end zone, it is a touchdown. A catch is only "simultaneous" if both players attain full possession at the same moment; if either player attains possession first, that team shall keep the ball. (If, for example, an offensive player attains possession in mid-air, and a defensive player also grabs the ball a moment afterward, the offense will keep possession provided that the offensive player maintained possession after landing on the ground.).

VIII. PASS INTERFERENCE AND DEFENSIVE HOLDING

- a. It is pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged or touched prior to touching the ball on a forward pass. If the pass interference by the defense is intentional and/or unsportsmanlike, the defense may be penalized an additional 10 yards.
- b. Defensive pass interference is a "spot foul" – the offense gets the ball at the location the interference took place – and an automatic first down.
- c. Non-incident contact initiated by a defender on a receiver beyond the line of scrimmage prior to a pass being thrown is defensive holding, and results in a 5-yard penalty on the defense, and an automatic first down for the offense.

IX. SCORING

- a. A team is given the choice of going for 1 or 2 points after scoring a touchdown. Once the captain makes the choice, it may only be changed if a time-out is called.
 - i. Touchdown = 6 points
 - ii. Safety = 2 points

X. SAFETY

- a. If a player carries the ball across the goal line they are defending and the ball becomes dead while in their team's possession, it is a safety. If a team commits a foul in the end zone where the spot of the foul is designated as the spot of enforcement, it will be declared a safety.
 - i. Exception: when a player intercepts a forward pass or catches a scrimmage punt between their 5-yard line and their goal line, and their momentum carries them into the end zone where the ball becomes dead, the ball will belong to the receiving team at the spot of the catch or reception.
 - ii. After a safety is scored, the team that is awarded the 2 points will automatically gain possession at their own 20 yard-line.

XI. SCREEN BLOCKING

- a. **Offensive screen blocking.** The offensive screen block 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 arms, elbows, legs, or knees to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her feet in order to gain position before, during, and after screen blocking. Penalty: 10 yards
- b. **Screen blocking fundamentals.** A player who screens shall not (Penalty 10 yards):
 - i. When he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than a normal step from him or her.
 - ii. When he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with him/her.
 - iii. Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will be determined where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be one to two normal steps or strides from the opponent.
 - iv. After assuming his/her legal screening position, move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path of his/her opponent.
- c. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block, not through it. The arms and hands may not be used to hold, grab, or push the opponent aside ("bullrushing"). Penalty: 10 yards

XII. THE FLAG BELT

- a. Should a player lose their flag belt legally or illegally during a down and should that player gain possession of a live ball, that player will be considered down when a legal tag (one hand touched by the defense between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm) is made.
- b. All shirts must be tucked in, and are not permitted to hang over the flag belt. When a player scores they must immediately raise their hands to allow the supervisor to remove their flag belt. This is done to insure that the flag belt has not been illegally secured. If the belt has been illegally secured the score is disallowed, the player ejected and a 15 yard Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty will be administered from the previous spot.
- c. The defensive player shall not (intentionally or accidentally) hold, grasp, or obstruct forward progress of a ball carrier when in the act of removing the flag belt. **Penalty: 10 yards.**
- d. The flag belt removal. Intentionally pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player is illegal. **Penalty: 10 yards.**
- e. If a player attempting a diving flag removal trips the ball carrier there is a penalty of 10 yards from the spot of the foul.

XIII. GUARDING THE FLAG BELT

- a. Ball carriers shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes:
 - i. Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
 - ii. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
 - iii. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which flag guards.
 - iv. Extending the hand or arm in any way to impede a defensive player attempting to deflag.
- b. If flag guarding occurs, the play shall be considered dead. Penalty: 10 yards.

XIV. **PLAYER'S CONDUCT**

- a. It is illegal to steal or attempt to steal (strip) the ball from a player in possession. The object of the game is to deflag a ball carrier, not to steal the ball. **Penalty: 10 yards from the end of the run.**
- b. Roughing the passer. Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear that the ball has been thrown, and may not make contact with the throwing arm.
- c. There shall be no bumping, checking, or other intentional contact between a defender and an offensive pass receiver. Both offense and defense are limited to screening an opponent.
- d. Stiff arming is not allowed; a personal foul will be called, and if warranted an unsportsmanlike conduct or ejection will result.

XV. **SUMMARY OF FOULS AND PENALTIES**

Loss of 5 Yards:

1. Delay of game – automatic dead ball
2. Illegal snap – automatic dead ball
3. False start – automatic dead ball
4. Encroachment (defense touching an opponent on the line before the snap) – automatic dead ball
5. Illegal procedures (not enough men on the scrimmage line, illegal substitutions)
6. Illegal forward pass – 5 yards from the point of pass and loss of down.
7. Intentional grounding – 5 yards from point of pass and loss of down

Loss of 10 Yards:

1. Offensive pass interference – and loss of down
2. Defensive pass interference – automatic first down
3. Illegal participation
4. Illegally securing flag belt – player ejection
5. Unsportsmanlike conduct
6. Unnecessary contact
7. Roughing the passer – automatic first down
8. Defensive use of hands
9. Flag guarding/Stiff arming
10. Personal Fouls
11. Flagrant Unsportsmanlike conduct – disqualification
12. Flagrant Personal Fouls – disqualification

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