



4-on-4 Flag Football Rules

Revised: March 2019

Any rule not specifically covered will be governed in accordance with the NIRSA Flag and Touch Football Rules Book and Official's Manual.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK STATEMENT

All Intramural Sports participants are responsible for their own medical expenses. Any participant unsure of his/her physical condition should check with their physician or the University Clinic before participating in an Intramural Sports contest.

Teams are responsible for keeping their spectators under control. Misconduct of participants, coaches or spectators can result in an unsportsmanlike penalty, ejection or forfeiture of the game. Team Captains will be held responsible for spectator, team and sideline misconduct. Two ejections from any contest will result in an automatic forfeiture.

RULE 1: ELIGIBILITY

- 1. PARTICIPATION:** Participation is limited to currently enrolled, fee-paying University of Southern Mississippi students and faculty/staff members with Recreational Sports Memberships.
- 2. SOUTHERN MISS ID CARD:** A current Southern Miss Student ID Card must be presented to the Supervisor to participate at each Intramural Sports activity.
- 3. NUMBER OF TEAMS:** Players can compete for only one single sex team and one Co-Rec team, regardless of league classification (example: participants cannot play for a men's recreational team and a men's fraternity team).
- 4. SIGNED IN:** Once a participant has signed in for a team, he/she may not transfer to another team.

RULE 2: TEAM COMPOSITION

- 1. TEAMS:** Each team will consist of 4 players. A minimum of 3 players are required to start the game.
- 2. CAPTAIN:** Each team shall designate a team captain to make all decisions.
- 3. PARTICIPANTS:** Team representatives including players, coaches, spectators, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to these sport rules and all Intramural Sports policies.

RULE 3: DEFAULTS, FORFEITS AND PROTESTS

- 1. FORFEITS:** If a team fails to appear with the required minimum number of players, ready to play, at the scheduled location at the scheduled start of the game, a member of the Intramural Sports staff will declare the contest a forfeit. Teams that forfeit will receive a 'C' for sportsmanship and will be required to pay \$15 to the Payne Center welcome desk. The captain of the forfeiting team will be suspended from play until that payment is made. Teams are allowed one default or forfeit per sport. Upon the second infraction that team will be dropped from the league.
- 2. DEFAULTS:** If a team knows that they will be unable to play a scheduled game, the team captain must contact the Intramural Sports office by 12:00 PM the day of the contest to declare a default. The defaulting team will receive a loss and a 'B' for sportsmanship. Teams are allowed one default or forfeit per sport. Upon the second infraction that team will be dropped from the league.
- 3. PROTESTS:** Protests involving rule interpretations will be considered immediately following the incident in question. Play will be suspended until an Intramural Sports Supervisor rules on the protest. If a team continues to play without calling the supervisor to the game site, then that team forfeits its right to a protest. Protests will not be honored after play has resumed. Judgment calls cannot be protested. If the protest is not approved, the protesting team is charged with a time out. If the protest is upheld, they delay shall count as an official's time out. Official's judgment calls cannot be protested.

RULE 4: PLAYING AREA AND EQUIPMENT

- 1. PLAYING AREA:** All matches will be played at the Intramural Sports Fields. Each field will be 30 yards in width and 40 yards in length from goal line to goal line with 10 yard end zones.
- 2. BALLS:** Teams may provide their own game balls or check one out from the Intramural Sports staff. Men's shall use an adult size football and women's and co-rec teams will be permitted to use a youth size football.
- 3. FLAG BELTS:** Each player must wear a one piece, quick release belt without any knots, at the waistline with three flags permanently attached. One flag must be on each side and one in the center of the back. Flag belts will be provided for each team by the Intramural Sports program.
- 4. SHOES:** Athletic, close toed shoes are required. Shoes with metal cleats no longer than ½" will be permitted.
- 5. JERSEYS/SHIRTS:** Teams are required to furnish their own like-colored jerseys with individual numbers for each player. Jerseys must be tucked in at all times. If a jersey cannot be tucked in, it must be a minimum of 4 inches above the waist. Jerseys may not have arm openings that are larger than 4 inches.
- 6. SHORTS/PANTS:** Players may not wear pants or shorts that have belt loops, pockets, or exposed drawstrings. Pants and shorts may not be turned inside out or tugged to avoid the pocket violation.
- 7. SUNGLASSES:** Players may not wear sunglasses that are metal or rigid.
- 8. SHOES:** All players must wear shoes. Tennis/running shoes and rubber molded cleats are permitted. Spikes with metal tips no longer than ½" are permitted, however cleats with protruding metal and sharp surfaces are not allowed.
- 9. HEADWEAR:** Players may not wear baseball style caps, bandannas with knots, or other rigid headwear. Knit and stocking caps are permitted.

- 10. JEWELRY:** No jewelry may be worn. Jewelry must be removed before participating in Intramural Sports. Medical alert bracelets are permitted but they must be taped down. Taping of all other jewelry is not permitted.
- 11. PLAYBOOKS:** Players may carry a playbook inside their clothing as long as it is not made of rigid material. If carried on the field, a player must secure the playbook to his/her person and it must be covered.
- 12. TOWELS:** No towel may hang from a player's waist or otherwise interfere with the removal of the flag belt. However, towels may be used and kept on the ground in-between the ball spotters before the snap.
- 13. BLOOD RULE:** When a player is bleeding, has an open wound, or an excessive amount of blood on his/her uniform the player will be directed to leave the game. The injured player is not to return until the bleeding has stopped, the wound is covered, and the bloody uniform is changed.

***The Intramural Sports Staff has the right to deem certain equipment unsafe or illegal.

RULE 5: LENGTH OF THE GAME AND TIMING

- 1. LENGTH OF GAME:** The game shall consist of 2 halves of 12 minutes.
- 2. COIN TOSS:** A toss of a coin or odds/evens will determine which team shall have the first choice. The team that wins the toss shall have the following options:
 - a. To defer their option until the second half.
 - b. To receive the ball first or play defense (selecting defense does not guarantee a team the ball to start the second half).
 - c. To defend a specific goal (this does not guarantee a team the ball to start the second half).
After the winner of the coin toss has chosen, the losing team will have choice of the remaining options.
- 3. TIMING REGULATIONS:** The clock will run continuously, unless a time-out is called, until the last minute of the second half. During the final minute of the second half, the clock will stop for a:
 - a. Incomplete Legal/Illegal Forward Pass – clock restarts on the snap
 - b. Out Of Bounds Play – clock restarts on the snap
 - c. Safety – clock restarts on the snap
 - d. Team Timeout – clock restarts on the snap
 - e. First Down – clock restarts on the ready for play whistle

- f. Touchdown – clock restarts on the snap (after the extra point try)
 - g. Penalty – clock restarts depending on the result of the previous play
 - h. Official’s Timeout – clock restarts at the discretion of the officiating crew
 - i. Touchback – clock restarts on the snap
 - j. Change Of Possession – clock restarts on the snap
 - k. Inadvertent Whistle – clock starts on the ready for play whistle
4. **ONE MINUTE WARNING:** With one minute remaining in the second half, the referee shall stop the clock and inform both teams of the time remaining in that period. The clock will start on the snap.
5. **HALFTIME:** There will be a 3 minute halftime. The referee shall have discretion to reduce the length of the half-time if conditions deem it necessary.
6. **OVERTIME:** Regular season games can end in a tie. Overtime will only be played during the post-season. Overtime procedures will be as followed:
- a. To start overtime, a coin toss will be conducted with the winner selecting offense, defense, or direction. If additional overtime periods are played, the order of possession will alternate each new period. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.
 - b. Each team will attempt to score by passing from either the 3 yard line for 1 point, from the 10 yard line for 2 points, or from the 20 yard line for 3 points.
 - c. If the defense gains possession of the ball, the series is over and they will receive possession.
7. **TIME-OUTS:** Each team will receive one 2, 1-minute time-outs per game. Time-outs do not carry over into overtime.
8. **MERCY RULE:** If a team is winning by 19 points or more at any point during or after the referee announces the 1-minute warning for the second half, the game shall be over.

RULE 6: PLAYING THE GAME

1. **BEGINNING A SERIES:** There are no kickoffs or punts. The ball will be put in play from the 10 yard line to begin a half, following a score, touchback, turnover on down, or safety (unless moved by penalty).

2. **SERIES OF DOWNS:** The team in possession of the ball shall have 3 downs to advance the ball to the next zone line-to-gain.
3. **FIRST DOWNS:** A team gains a first down when it crosses or touches the 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. Once the first down has been established, the team may not make another first down by crossing the same line during that series of downs.
4. **PLAY CLOCK:** The offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after the referee signals “ready for play” and blows his or her whistle.
5. **BALL RESPONSIBILITY:** The offensive team must retrieve the ball after each play from the line of scrimmage.
6. **MINIMUM LINE PLAYERS:** The offensive team must have at least 1 player on the line of scrimmage at the snap (this may be the center). A player is deemed on the line of scrimmage when facing his/her opponent’s goal line his/her head or foot breaking the plane of the imaginary line drawn through the waistline of the snapper. A player in motion is not counted as being on his/her scrimmage line.
7. **ADVANCING THE BALL:** Only a legal forward pass behind the offensive line of scrimmage may advance the ball (Penalty: Illegal Advancement). Running the ball across the line of scrimmage will not be permitted.
8. **TOUCHDOWNS:** A touchdown shall count for 6 points.
9. **POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN:** After a touchdown, the scoring team shall attempt a Point After Touchdown (PAT). Once the decision is announced, it can only be changed by taking a charged timeout. The options for the try are:
 - a. 1 point from the 3-yard line
 - b. 2 points from the 10-yard line
 - c. 3 points from the 15-yard line
10. **INTERCEPTIONS:** An interception can be returned for a touchdown during normal play. If the defense intercepts the ball during a PAT, they cannot return it. The ball will be dead and the intercepting team will gain possession of the ball on their 10 yard line.
11. **SAFETY:** 2 points shall be awarded for a safety. A safety is scored when a team is de-flagged, downed, or commits a penalty in their own end zone.

- 12. SNAPPING THE BALL:** The player who receives the snap from the center must be at least 2 yards behind the scrimmage line. The snapper shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hand(s).
- 13. PASSING THE BALL:** All players are eligible to touch a forward pass after it is thrown. The passer may catch his/her own forward pass provided it has been touched by another player first. There must be a legal forward pass each down. The receiver must touch the ball beyond the offensive team line of scrimmage.
- 14. 5 SECONDS:** The passer has 5 seconds to release the ball. If not, it is a loss of down and the ball is next snapped at the previous spot.
- 15. SIMULTANEOUS CATCH:** If a legal forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball immediately becomes dead upon returning to the ground and belongs to the offense.
- 16. GENERAL PENALTIES:**
- a. 3 Yard Penalties:
 - i. Delay Of Game
 - ii. Encroachment
 - iii. False Start
 - iv. Illegal Procedure
 - v. Illegal Motion
 - vi. Illegal Shift
 - vii. Illegal Forward Pass (Loss of Down)
 - viii. Intentional Grounding (Loss of Down)
 - b. 5 Yard Penalties:
 - i. Flag Guarding
 - ii. Illegal Contact
 - iii. Holding
 - iv. Tripping
 - v. Offensive Pass Interference
 - vi. Defensive Pass Interference
 - vii. Roughing The Passer (Automatic First Down)

RULE 7: SPORTSMANSHIP

- 1. RATING:** Each team will begin the contest with a 4 sportsmanship rating and shall be rated by the officials at the end of the contest. The authority of the officials' ratings exists prior to, during, and following all contests to which that official is assigned, and extends to all persons

on, at, or near the playing site. Sportsmanship ratings shall be marked on the score sheet prior to captain signing off on the score and sportsmanship rating.

- A. (4.0) – Excellent Sportsmanship:** Players cooperate fully with the intramural sports staff and opposing team members. If necessary, the captain converses calmly with officials about rule interpretations and calls.

- B. (3.0) - Good Sportsmanship:** Team members verbally complain about some decisions made by the Intramural Sports staff and/or show minor dissent which may or may not merit a conduct warning (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.). Teams that receive one conduct warning will receive no higher than a "B" rating.

- C. (2.0) - Mediocre Sportsmanship:** Team constantly comments to the Intramural Sports staff or the opposing team. The team captain exhibits little or no control over teammates or him/herself. Teams that receive one ejection or two conduct warnings (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.) will receive no higher than a "C" rating.

- D. (1.0) - Below Average Sportsmanship:** Team constantly comments to the intramural sports staff or the opposing team. The team captain exhibits little or no control over teammates or him/herself. Teams that receive one ejection and one conduct warning or a combination of three conduct warnings (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.) will receive no higher than a "D" rating and the game will be forfeited.

- F. (0) - Unacceptable Sportsmanship:** Team is completely uncooperative. Captain has no control over teammates and/or him/herself. Any team that receives two ejections or four conduct warnings (unsportsmanlike penalty / technical foul / yellow cards / etc.) will receive a "F" rating and the game and season will be forfeited.

RULE 8: CO-REC CLARIFICATIONS

- 1. TEAM COMPOSITION:** Each team will consist of 4 players on the field at one time. A minimum of 3 players are required to start the game.
 - a. 4 players are on the field - 2 males and 2 females.
 - b. 3 players are on the field - 1 male and 2 females or 2 males and 1 female.

- 2. EQUIPMENT:** Game ball may be regular size, intermediate, youth, or junior size football.

- 3. PLAYING RULES:**

- a. **PASSING:** During the offensive team's possession, there may not be two consecutive legal forward pass completions, from a male passer to a male receiver. Each series will begin with an "open" play. Once a male to male forward pass is completed, the following plays will be "closed" until a male to female, female to male, or female to female forward pass is completed for positive yards.
 - i. **OPEN PLAYS:** During an "open" play, any player can complete a legal forward pass to any other player.
 - ii. **CLOSED PLAYS:** During a "closed" play, the next completion for positive yardage must be a legal forward pass with either a female throwing the pass or receiving the pass (Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from where the pass was released and loss of down).
 - iii. 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 or females but the status of the next play is determined by the initial pass and catch.
 - iv. No penalty, accepted or declined, will affect the open/closed status of the following play. The open/closed status of a play is not affected when a team scores a touchdown. The PAT's status is determined by the previous play that scored the touchdown.
- 4. SCORING PLAYS:** If a female scores a touchdown, the touchdown is worth 9 points. If a female player throws a legal forward pass and a touchdown is scored by any offensive player, prior to a change of possession, the touchdown is worth 9 points. All other touchdowns are worth 6 points.