



These rules have been modified for the purpose of this tournament. Please refer to the NIRSA Flag Football rule book for all other rules.

## I. Policy and Procedures

- A. For all Policy and Procedures, please refer to Columbia University's Intramural Handbook which can be found on [perec.columbia.edu](http://perec.columbia.edu) under Intramurals, Rules & Policies, as well as under Handbooks/Manuals on the Columbia University's [imleagues.com](http://imleagues.com) website. All Intramural participants are responsible for knowing all of the Intramural Policy and Procedures.
- B. Leagues offered:
  1. **Open-Recreational:** is a mixed gender league that is open for anyone to register and participate.
- C. All players must present a valid Columbia University identification (CUID) and a Dodge Fitness Center membership to Intramural Staff in order to play.
- D. All games are played at Baker Athletics Complex at 533 W. 218<sup>th</sup> Street. Teams must arrive ready to play no more than 10 minutes after the scheduled game time or a forfeit will be declared.

## II. Team Size

- A. Seven (7) players constitute a full team.
- B. Teams may start and finish the game with five (5) players.

## III. Equipment

- A. Players must wear close-toed, athletic type shoes at all times. No metal cleats allowed, rubber cleats can be worn.
- B. Players must wear athletic clothing such as shorts or sweatpants. Jeans or dress pants are not permitted.
- C. Pinnies will be provided and must be worn unless a team has matching jerseys with legible numbers and the officials can differentiate between the teams. **Players must wear a t-shirt underneath their pinnies. A player cannot just wear a pinnie.** Shirts worn under pinnies must remain tucked in so that flags are exposed.
- D. No hats, jewelry, or watches may be worn during a game. Exceptions may be made for mandatory religious paraphernalia, at the discretion of the Columbia Intramurals Department.
- E. Any equipment that, in the official's judgment, would be injurious to the participants, would aid the individual who is wearing it, or is not within the spirit of the rules is illegal.
- F. Towels and play sheets may not be tucked into shorts or flag belts.

- G. **Each player must wear shorts or pants without any belts, belt loops, POCKETS, or exposed drawstrings.** Pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags.

## IV. Time Factors and Substitutions

- A. Games shall consist of two 15-minute halves with a 3-minute halftime.
- B. Games may be shortened if weather or other conditions interfere.
- C. During the entire first half and for the first 13 minutes of the second half, the clock will start on the initial snap of the half. It will run continuously for the first 28 minutes of play unless it is stopped for an injury (starts on the ready) or a team timeout (starts on the snap).
- D. During the **last two minutes** of the game, the clock will stop for:
1. Penalties (dependent on previous play)
  2. Inadvertent whistle (starts on the ready)
  3. Touchdown - starts on 1st scrimmage snap (the try is an untimed down)
  4. Incomplete passes/out-of-bounds (starts on the snap)
  5. Injured players
  6. First downs (until the ball is set in play by the referee's ready-to-play whistle)
  7. Change of possession
  8. Time outs (starts on the snap)
  9. Safety (starts on the snap)
- E. Each team is allowed two 1-minute timeouts per half. Unused timeouts from the first half will not carry over into the second half. The clock will stop on timeouts.
- F. Substitutions are unlimited but may only occur when the ball is dead (i.e. in-between downs, after a score).
- G. No substitute can enter after the ready for play whistle has been blown.

## V. Basic Rules

- A. The winner of the pre-game coin toss shall have the first choice of three options: choice of offense/defense, which goal to defend, or to defer their choice until the second half.
- B. The field of play is 60 yards in length with 10-yard end zones.
- C. The offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after the referee signals "ready for play".  
**Penalty: Delay of Game, 5 yards from the previous spot, replay the down**
- D. The ball is declared dead when the ball touches the ground: on a fumble, on a lateral, on a mishandled snap, on a pass, or on a punt.
- E. **Mercy Rule:** If a team is ahead by 17 points at the two-minute warning in the second half, the game is over.
- F. At the start of each half, following a safety, a touchback, or after each try the game will begin with a scrimmage play from the offensive teams own 10-yard line unless moved by penalty.

- G. When an official blows an inadvertent whistle, the ball is dead at the point when the whistle was blown. The team, against which the inadvertent whistle was blown, has the option of accepting the play at the time of the whistle or replaying the down. No time may be added to the clock.
- H. Spiking the ball, taunting, and excessive celebration are considered unsportsmanlike conduct.  
**Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Unsportsmanlike Penalty, 10 yards.**
- I. Blockers and rushers cannot initiate contact to gain an advantage.
- J. All players are eligible receivers.
- K. A player may not strip the ball or attempt to knock the ball out of a player's hand once he or she has possession. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Stripping, 10 yards from the spot of the foul.**

## VI. Downs

- A. Each team will receive 4 downs to attempt to move the ball 10 yards from the original line of scrimmage.
- B. Once a first down is achieved either by offensive progress or penalty a new 10 yards will be counted off by an official.
- C. A cone will be placed by the line judge to mark the zone line to gain.

## VII. Scrimmage

- A. The scrimmage line for the offense is the vertical plane that passes through the center point of the orange/red marker (ball spotter). The scrimmage line for the defense is the vertical plane that passes through the center point of the yellow marker. A one-yard neutral zone should always exist between the markers. This is true even when the offensive team is less than one yard from the end zone or the zone line-to-gain.
- B. The offensive team is responsible for the ball. They must bring the ball back to the huddle. The referee will place ball markers only.
- C. Offense must have at least 1 player on the line of scrimmage.
- D. No defensive players are required to be on the one-yard rush line at the time of the snap.
- E. No players may enter the neutral zone prior to the snap.
  1. **Defensive Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Encroachment, 5 yards, replay down.**
  2. **Offensive Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, False Start, 5 yards, replay down.**
- F. No players may line up in the neutral zone (both offense and defense).  
**Penalty: Off-sides, 5 yards, replay down**
- G. The ball may be snapped between the legs or to the side of the snapper. The center, after assuming the position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may not move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of a play. The ball must be snapped in one continuous motion, not necessarily between the center's legs. Shifting the ball in a snapping motion without actually snapping or "double clutching" is illegal. **Penalty: Dead Ball Foul, Illegal Snap, 5 yards.**
- H. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.  
**Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards, replay the down.**

- I. Before the snap, all offensive players must come to a complete stop for *at least one full second*. All other shifts before the snap are legal so long as every player is set for one full second before the ball is snapped. **Penalty: Illegal motion, 5 yards, replay the down.**

## VIII. Flags/Removing The Flag Belt

- A. Flags must be worn within a 3-inch zone of the hip. Do not wrap flags around belt.
- B. There must be three flags present, with one on each hip and one in the middle of the back.
- C. A player may not tie their flags or fasten flags to their uniform or belt other than prescribed in the rules. **Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down, and automatic ejection. If it occurs after an interception ball will be placed at the spot of the turnover.**
- D. Removal of flag belt: When the flag belt is clearly taken from the ball carrier the down shall end and the ball is declared dead. A player who removes the flag belt from the ball carrier should immediately hold the flag belt above their head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred.
- E. A player may dive to remove a flag belt as long as no contact is made with the opposing team.
- F. The position of the ball when a player is deflagged determines the spot of the next line of scrimmage. A player is considered deflagged at the point where the clip on the flag belt breaks.
- G. In an attempt to remove the flag belt from a runner, defensive players may not hold, push, or knock the runner down in an attempt to remove the flag belt. **Penalty: Holding, 10 yards from spot of foul.**
- H. An offensive player may not hold, block, or run through a defensive player trying to remove the flag belt. Screen blocking is allowed as long as the offensive player does not initiate contact. **Penalty: Personal Foul, 10 yards from the spot of foul.**
- I. If a flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, a one-hand tag between the shoulders and knees constitutes a capture.
- J. Flags should be immediately returned to opponents. DO NOT THROW FLAGS ON THE GROUND. This can result in a delay of game or unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
- K. A defensive player may not remove an offensive player's flag when the offensive player does not have the ball. **Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from previous spot.**
- L. Flag Guarding
  - 1. An offensive player may not stiff arm or guard their flags by blocking them with their hands, the ball, or lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt. **Penalty: Flag guarding, 10 yards from the spot of the foul, replay the down.**
  - 2. It is not flag guarding if a defensive player is not within distance to de-flag.
  - 3. If flag guarding occurs and the defender de-flags the ball carrier at the same time, there is no penalty.
  - 4. Flag guarding is a spot foul and can result in positive yards once the penalty has been assessed.
- M. An official will check the flags of each person who scores a touchdown or try.

## IX. Passing and Catching

- A. For a legal catch, a pass receiver must come down with at least **one foot** in bounds and control of the ball.
- B. All players are eligible for a forward pass. The passer may pass from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage. If the passer crosses the line of scrimmage then comes back behind the line with both feet and throws the team's first forward pass of the down the pass is legal. Only one forward pass is allowed per down. There is no limit on the number of laterals.  
**Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards, loss of down**
- C. A player may not go out-of-bounds voluntarily and be the first player to touch a legal or illegal forward pass. **Penalty: Illegal Participation, 10 yards, replay the down.**
- D. **Roughing the passer:** Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into the passer after it is clear that the ball has been thrown and may not make contact with the throwing arm.  
**Penalty: Roughing the passer, 10 yards from previous spot, automatic first down.**
- E. If a pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams inbounds, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.
- F. **Defensive Pass Interference** occurs when the defense hinders the receiver from catching the ball by creating contact/advantage. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is de-flagged prior to touching the ball on a pass. Face guarding is also the attempt by a defensive player to wave their arms in the face of a receiver who is attempting to catch the pass.  
**Penalty: Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot.**
- G. **Offensive Pass Interference** occurs when the offensive player hinders the defender from catching the ball by creating contact or face guarding. **Penalty: Pass Interference, 10 yards from the previous spot.**
- H. Interception in the end zone is a touchback and the ball is placed on the 10-yard line.
- I. **Intentional Grounding:** The passer may not throw the ball out of bounds or to the ground to avoid a sack. To avoid intentional grounding, the quarterback must pass the ball in the general direction of a receiver.  
**Penalty: Intentional Grounding, 5 yards from the spot of foul and loss of down.**

## X. Punting

- A. Punts must be announced before the ball is ready for play. Once the decision to punt has been made by the captain, it cannot be changed unless a charged time-out occurs. Quick kicks and fake punts are illegal. **Penalty: Illegal Kick, 10 yards, replay the down.**
- B. The kicking team must have **all players** on their line of scrimmage except the punter.  
**Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards, replay the down**
- C. Punts must be snapped from the center. The punter must be at least two yards off the line of scrimmage upon receiving the snap and must punt the ball immediately.
- D. The offense may not move forward until the ball is kicked. **Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 5 yards, replay the down.**
- E. Defensive players may not enter the neutral zone until the ball is kicked.
- F. The receiving team may not advance the ball after it has touched the ground.
- G. Once the punted ball crosses the scrimmage line, it is free for any receiving team player to catch as long as the kicking team does not get in the way of a receiving team players attempt to catch the kick.

**Penalty: Kick-Catch Interference, 10 yards.**

- H. There will be no fair catch recognized - Players will ignore any signals given by the kickers or receivers. The ball remains live. There is no foul.

## XI. Blocking, Rushing and Contact

- A. **Offensive Screen Blocking:** The offensive screen blocking shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have their hands and arms at their side or behind their back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A player must be on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking.  
**Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Block, 10 yards from spot of foul**
- B. **Blocking and interlocked interference:** Teammates of a runner or passer may screen block, but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner.  
**Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Block, 10 yards from spot of foul**
- C. A runner shall not charge into or initiate contact with an opponent in their path.  
**Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Contact, 10 yards from spot of foul**
- D. Defense may rush as many players as desired.
- E. Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used to grab or push the opponent aside. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official. **Penalty: Personal Foul, Illegal Rush, 10 yards from previous spot**

## XII. Safety

- A. If a player is deflagged, commits flag guarding, or fumbles the ball in their own end zone it is a safety.
- B. Intentional grounding in the end zone is safety.
- C. The team scoring the safety will receive 2 points and will obtain possession of the ball on their own 10 yard-line.

## XIII. Scoring

- A. Touchdown – 6 points
- B. Extra points (Tries)
1. Run or pass from 5-yard line = 1 point
  2. Run or pass from 10-yard line = 2 points
  3. If an extra point attempt is intercepted and returned to the defensive team's end zone the defense is awarded the corresponding point(s).
- C. Safety – 2 points

## XIV. Penalties

### *5-Yard Penalties*

- A. False Start (**Dead Ball**)
- B. Encroachment (**Dead Ball**)
- C. Illegal Snap (**Dead Ball**)
- D. Delay of game (**Dead Ball**)
- E. Illegal Formation
- F. Illegal Motion
- G. Illegal Shift
- H. Off-sides
- I. Illegal Procedure
  - 1. Offensive Movement on a Punt
  - 2. Player receives a snap within 2 yards of center
- J. Illegal forward pass (loss of down).
- K. Intentional grounding (loss of down).
- L. Intentionally throwing a backward pass or fumble out of bounds (loss of down).
- M. Helping the runner: The runner shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled or pushed by a teammate.

### *10-Yard Penalties*

- N. Holding
- O. Flag Guarding
- P. Illegal Touching
- Q. Roughing the passer (Automatic 1st down).
- R. Pass interference—Offense
- S. Pass interference—Defense
- T. Kick catch interference
- U. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
  - 1. Spiking the ball, excessive celebration
  - 2. Taunting
  - 3. Disrespecting intramural staff
- V. Personal Foul
  - 1. Illegally secured flag belt on a touchdown –Offense (Loss of Down); Defense (Automatic First Down)
  - 2. Illegal Block/Screen
  - 3. Illegal Rush
  - 4. Illegal/ Unnecessary contact of any nature
  - 5. Illegal Stripping
  - 6. Contact with opponent on the ground (possible ejection)
- W. Any egregious contact by players is subject to **ejection** including but not limited to:
  - 1. Throw runner to the ground

2. Tackle the runner
3. Intentional contact with intramural staff

## XV. Overtime

- A. Play will begin on the 10-yard line and teams will have 4 downs each to attempt to score a touchdown and the possible extra points.
- B. A coin toss will take place, the team winning the toss has 3 options: Offense, Defense, or Direction. The opposing team then has the remaining choice. **Note: All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.**
- 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. If the game has not been decided after the second overtime, teams must attempt a 2-point conversion after scoring a touchdown for the remaining overtime periods.
- D. When a pass is intercepted the defense becomes the offense and begins their series of 4 plays at the 10-yard line. 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 downs when an automatic first down penalty is accepted. Dead ball penalties after a touchdown are penalized on the extra point attempt.

**Only the captain or designated captain can approach officials or activity supervisors during or after the game.**

Email [intramurals@columbia.edu](mailto:intramurals@columbia.edu) with any questions.

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