

**University Of Houston – Downtown
Sports & Fitness
Intramural Flag Football Rules**

Intramural Sports Handbook

The intramural sports program is governed by the UHD Sports & Fitness Intramural Sports Handbook. It is too comprehensive to include here but participants are expected to familiarize themselves with it and adhere to its contents.

Eligibility

UHD intramural flag football is open to UHD students, faculty, staff, and other UHD Sports & Fitness members. Some limitations may apply. Each individual is required to turn in his/her valid UHD ID or Sports & Fitness membership card before every game to the scorekeeper. An ID must also have a Rec Sticker on the back indicating he/she has completed a Waiver and Assumption of Risk form. The forms will be made available at each game.

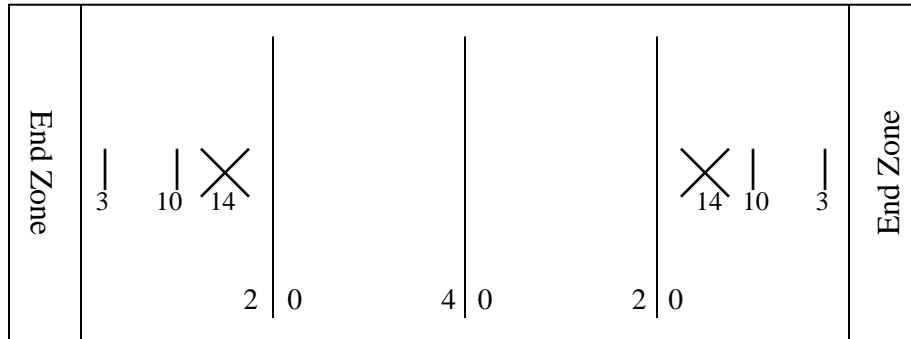
Game Regulations

UHD intramural flag football game will be conducted under the rules of the NIRSA, National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHSA) and with some exceptions.

Playing Field

The field shall be rectangle, 100 yards by 40 yards, including end zones.

The field of play shall be marked according to the following:



Game Time

Game time is forfeit time.

Number Of Players

Seven (7) players shall constitute a complete team on the field. A team may play the game with five (5) players. A game may continue with five (5) players as long as the team has a chance to win. A ten yard penalty for illegal participation will be assessed against a team with less than seven (7) players at the start of the game. A team may have a maximum of twelve (12) players on the team roster. Teams not ready to play with at least five (5) players at game time will be forfeited.

Players Equipment

All players must wear covered athletic shoes. Cleats are limited to studs which do not exceed ½ inch in length, are rubber type and do not have sharp points or edges. If glasses are worn, glass guards must be

worn. No jewelry, towels or baseball style caps may be worn. Pliable sunglasses, kneepads, nonabrasive gloves, sweat bands, knit caps and bandannas are permitted. Shirrtails must be tucked into pants/shorts or must be short enough so there is a minimum at least 4 inches from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline. For teams considering providing their own jerseys, make sure to purchase "shimmel" length or "full length" jerseys. Do not get "belt" or "waist" length jerseys as they would cover the flag belts illegally. Player pants/shorts must not have belts, belt loops, pockets or exposed drawstrings. All players in the game must wear the provided triple flag belts. Flag belts must have flags hanging directly down from the belt. Belt end must be clipped to the opposite end of the belt. Belt excess must also be tucked in. Flags must contrast with the color of the pants/shorts worn by the player. All players must wear jerseys with numbers on the front and back. Teams may purchase their own jerseys or use the ones provided. Numbers must be clearly visible and be at least six (6) inches tall. Players are strongly encouraged to wear a mouthpiece during play.

Game Equipment

The football must be of a leather or similar material and meet the size and shape requirements for a regulation football. Two soft and pliable ball spotters are required and will be provided by the department. One, orange in color, will mark the offensive scrimmage line and the second, gold in color, will mark the defensive scrimmage line. The spotters will be 1 yard apart.

Start of the Game

Each team shall designate a team captain to the referee. The captain's first choice of any penalty option shall be irrevocable. The game shall start with a coin toss in the presence of both team captains and all game officials. One team captain will declare the side of the coin before the toss is made. The winner of the toss shall have the choice of options for the first half or shall defer his/her options to the second half.

The options for each half are:

- a. To start his/her team on offense or defense
- b. To choose which goal to defend

The captain not having the first choice for a half shall exercise the remaining option.

Length of Game

The teams shall change goals between the first and second halves. Playing time is 40 minutes divided into two halves of 20 minutes each. Intermission between halves is 5 minutes. When overtime is used there will be a 3-minute intermission.

The clock will start on the first snap. It will run continuously for the first 20 minutes of each half except for a:

- a. Team time out – starts at the snap.
- b. Official's time out – starts at the ready

Approximately 2 minutes before the end of each half, the referee shall stop the clock and announce to both teams of the playing time remaining.

The clock will stop and start in the last 2 minutes before the end of the first and second halves according to NCAA and NIRSA rules.

Tie Game (Overtime)

A coin toss will determine the options as in the start of the game. There will be only 1 coin toss during the overtime. If additional overtime periods are played, captains will alternate choices. The winner of the toss shall be given the options of offense, defense or direction. The loser of the coin toss shall make a choice of the remaining options. All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.

Each team will start 1st and goal from the opponent's 10-yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. An overtime period consists of a series of 4 downs by each team. If the score is still tied after one overtime period, play will proceed with as many overtime periods as necessary to determine a winner. Tries will be attempted and scored as normal. If the defense intercepts a pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown,

they win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the series is over, the ball is placed at the opponent 10-yard line and the original defense will begin their series of 4 downs if necessary.

Each team is entitled to only 1 timeout during the entire overtime.

Time-Outs

The referee may call a time-out for an injury, equipment repair/replacement that is considered a safety issue or for any other contingency not covered in the rules.

Each team is entitled to **2 charged one-minute time-outs per half**. Each team is entitled to only **1 time-out during the entire overtime** if overtime is used.

Team captain-referee conference - When a team requests a charged timeout for a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule, the referee will confer with the team captain. The request must be made prior to the time the ball becomes live following the play to be reviewed unless the half has officially ended. If the referee changes the ruling, it is an official's time out. If the ruling is not changed, it is a charged, time out. If the team has used its available time-outs, a delay of game penalty will be assessed.

Play Clocks & Delays

The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the ball is declared ready for play.

The offense putting the ball in play before it is declared ready for play, or obviously deliberately consuming time, or deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead is considered delay of game and will be penalized accordingly.

Substitutions

Substitutions may be made at any time providing there is no delay of game, interference with play, or other violation of the rules.

If an injured player causes a delay in the game that player must sit out at least one down or risk a penalty.

Dead Ball

A dead ball, after having been declared ready for play becomes a live ball when legally snapped. When a live ball becomes dead, an official shall sound the whistle to declare it dead. In addition to the obvious dead ball plays, additional dead balls include:

- a. When a ball snapped hits the ground before reaching its intended target. This includes punt attempts. If in doubt, a snap close to the ground is live.
- b. When a runner is legally deflagged.
- c. When a runner is legally tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand or arm, by an opponent once the flag belt is no longer attached.
- d. A passer is deflagged/tagged prior to releasing the ball. If in doubt as to the release or not, the ball is released.
- e. When the muff of a punt strikes the ground.
- f. When an official sounds his/her whistle inadvertently during a down in which a penalty is declined
 1. The ball is in player possession- the team may elect to put the ball in play where declared dead or replay the down.
 2. During a legal forward pass or a punt- the ball is returned to the previous spot and the down replayed.

If a foul occurred during the above downs, an accepted penalty shall be administered as in any other play situation. When the foul is accepted, disregard the inadvertent whistle. Note: There is no time added to the game clock during a down with an inadvertent whistle.

Note: When a player with possession of the ball is running and slips, with the ball touching the ground, but regains his/her balance, the player is NOT down. A ball in possession is considered part of the hand.

Series of Downs and Team Possession After Penalty

A down is a unit of measure within the game that begins with a legal snap of the ball and ends when the ball becomes dead. A team with possession of the ball shall have 4 consecutive downs to advance to the next zone.

The zone line ahead of the ball at the beginning of a series of downs is the **zone line-to-gain**. For example, at the very beginning of the game, the team on offense starts on their 14-yard line. The line-to-gain is the 20-yard line. After crossing the 20-yard line, the next line-to-gain will be the 40-yard line.

Penalty resulting in a first down – After a penalty which places the ball in possession beyond its zone line-to-gain or when a penalty stipulates a first down, the down and distance shall be first down with the next zone line-to-gain.

Kicking the Ball

Quick kicks are illegal. Prior to making the ball ready for play on fourth down, the referee must ask the team in possession of the ball if he/she wants to punt. The referee must communicate this decision to the other team and officials. A team may declare a punt on any down. After the decision to punt is made, the ball must be punted.

Exceptions:

- a. A team calls a time out
- b. A foul occurs prior to or during this down which results in the kicking team having the right to repeat the down, the referee must communicate this decision to the other team and officials.

Neither team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is punted. All scrimmage line rules regarding the snap apply to the punt. After receiving the snap the kicker must punt the ball immediately in a continuous motion. If not, an illegal procedure penalty will apply. The punting team shall not deliberately consume time off of the clock. The appropriate penalty will apply.

Once the ball is punted any player on the receiving team may block it. If a blocked punt hits the ground, it is dead at that spot and ball possession changes. If a punt is blocked and a player on the kicking team catches the ball **behind** the line of scrimmage, the player may advance the ball. If the punt hits a player on the receiving team, after passing the scrimmage line, and hits the ground, the ball is dead at the spot. If the punt hits a player on the receiving team, after passing the scrimmage line, and a player on the kicking team catches the ball, then the ball is dead at the spot and the kicking team retains possession.

If a punt lands in the end zone then the ball will be placed on the 14 yard line for the receiving team to begin their series.

Kick Catch Interference – While any punt is in the air beyond the scrimmage line, the kicking team shall not touch the ball nor obstruct the receiving players path to the ball unless the punt has been touched by the receiving team. The kicking team may only catch, touch, muff or bat a punt in flight beyond the scrimmage line when no player on the receiving team is in position to catch the ball. The receiving team may choose Kick Catch Interference, resulting in a 10-yard penalty from the previous spot with the kicking team retaining possession and the down replayed or they may accept an awarded catch at the spot of the foul. Note from exceptions above: If the Kick Catch Interference penalty is accepted, the referee must ask the team in possession of the ball once again if he/she wants to punt prior to making the ball ready for play on fourth down.

Signals – There are no fair catch or other signals. Signals shall be ignored and the ball remains live. There is no foul.

Snapping, Handing, and Passing the Ball

The Start – Plays must start with a legal snap from a point on the inbounds line. The referee, due to poor field conditions, may move the ball.

Ball Responsibility – The team currently on offense is responsible for retrieving the ball after a down. The snapper (center) will bring it from the huddle to the scrimmage line. A towel may be placed under the ball.

Encroachment – Following ready for play up to the snap, no player may enter the neutral zone. The snapper has a right to be over the ball. If encroachment is committed, play is whistled dead and the penalty assessed. If the defense commits 2 or 3 subsequent encroachment penalties then the penalty is 10 yards each time.

False Start – No offensive player shall make a false start, which includes simulating a charge or start of play. Play is whistled dead and the penalty assessed.

Snap – The snapper (center), after assuming his/her position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change position of the ball simulating the beginning of play until it is snapped. The snap does not have to go between the center's legs.

Legal Position – All offensive players must be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap.

Minimum Line Players – The offensive unit must have at least 4 players on their scrimmage line at the snap.

Motion and Shift – Only one offensive player may be in motion at the snap but not toward the opponent's goal. Other offensive players must be stationary in their positions without movement of feet, body, head or arms. In a snap preceded by a shift, all offensive players must come to a complete stop at least one second before the snap.

No Direct Snap – The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.

Handing the ball – The player receiving the snap may hand the ball forward or backward at anytime.

Backward Pass – A runner may pass the ball backward at any time or lose player possession by a fumble at any time except if intentionally thrown out of bounds to conserve time. Penalty is Illegal Pass, 5 yards from the spot of the pass or fumble and loss of down. Referee will start the clock on the ready for play. A backward pass or fumble may be caught or intercepted by any player inbounds and advanced. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead at the spot where the ball lands and belongs to the offensive team unless lost on downs. If fumbled forward, the ball is dead at the spot where it was fumbled.

Interception- If a pass is intercepted then the intercepting team may advance the ball.

Legal forward pass – All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. A player cannot catch his/her untouched forward or backward pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive scrimmage line. There is only one forward pass per down. Note: Passer may "spike" the ball **immediately** after the snap from center to stop the clock. This play is legal provided the passer is not trying to avoid a loss of yardage.

Pass interference - In addition to the normal pass interference calls; it is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged / tagged prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond the offensive scrimmage line. If pass interference by either player is intentional or unsportsmanlike, his/her team shall be penalized an additional 10 yards.

Legal catch - A pass or with **one foot in bounds** with clear possession of the ball is legal even though a subsequent step or fall takes the player out of bounds. A catch by any kneeling or prone inbounds player is legal.

Scoring

The referee will announce the current score to both team captains after each touchdown, try and safety.

Mercy Rule – If a team is 19 or more points ahead when the referee announces the 2-minute warning for the second half, the game will be over. If a team scores during the last 2 minutes and that score creates a point differential of 19 or more points, the game will be over.

A touchdown is worth 6 points. The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the player is not deflagged with one pull and the official determines that the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed and the player is disqualified.

A team scoring a touchdown has the opportunity for a point try after touchdown. Point tries are 1 point from the 3 yard line or 2 points from the 10 yard line or 3 points from the 20 yard line.

The referee will ask only the team captain from where they will attempt the try. Once the decision is made, the captain may only change the decision if either team takes a time out. The choice cannot be changed should a penalty occur. Enforcement of yardage penalties does not change the value of the try.

If the defensive team intercepts a pass or fumble during the try and returns it all the way to the opponents' goal, then they scored 3 points.

If a penalty against the offense occurs during a try which carries a loss of down, the try has ended and will not be repeated.

A **safety** is worth 2 points. After a safety, the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team from their own 14 yard line.

Any defensive penalties committed during a score will be enforced on the very next play including tries.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Players are expected to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner at all times. Teams are responsible for the behavior of their fans. A official may call an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty if in his/her opinion a player(s) has engaged in rules violation that are contrary to the spirit of fair sportsmanship.

Unsportsmanlike conduct penalties will be recorded by officials and may lead to expulsion from game, league, and facilities. Severe violations will be dealt with UHD Sports and Fitness and may result in loss of Sports and Fitness privileges and further disciplinary action by the university.

Noncontact Player Acts- No player or nonplayer shall commit noncontact acts during a period or intermission. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Refusal to comply or abide by the request or decision of an official.
- Using words similar to the offensive audibles and quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with Team A's signals or movements.
- Intentionally kicking at the ball, other than during a punt.
- Participate while wearing illegal player equipment.

Dead Ball Player Fouls- When the ball becomes dead in possession of a player, he/she shall not:

- Intentionally kick the ball.
- Spike the ball into the ground.
- Throw the ball high into the air.

Prohibited Acts- There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the Rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Disrespectfully addressing an official
- Using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.

- Intentionally contacting a game official physically during the game by persons subject to the Rules (DQ).
- Fighting an opponent (DQ).
- Leaving the team area and entering the playing field during a fight (DQ).

Unfair Acts

Refusal to Play or Halving the Distance- If a team repeatedly commits fouls which can be penalized only by halving the distance to its goal line, the Referee may enforce any penalty he/she considers equitable, including the awarding of a score. For refusal to play, or for repeated fouls, the Referee shall, after one warning, forfeit the game to the opponents.

Unfair Acts- No player, substitute, coach or others subject to the Rules shall use words or phrases or commit any act not in accordance with the spirit of fair play for the purposes of confusing the opponent.

Personal Acts

Player Restrictions- No player or nonplayer shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player shall:

- Strip or attempt to strip the ball from a runner by punching, striking or stealing it.
- Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
- Throw the runner to the ground.
- Hurdle any other player.
- Make contact of any nature with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary including using fists, locked hands, elbows or any part of the forearm or hand, except according to Rule.
- Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
- Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tackle football.
- Fighting an opponent.

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 hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her hand or arm to break a fall or to retain his/her balance. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards.

Screen Blocking Fundamentals- A player who screens shall not:

- Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
- Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
- Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. The speed of the player to be screened will determine where the screener may take his/her stationary position. This position will vary and may be 1 to 2 normal steps or strides from the opponent.
- After assuming his/her legal screening position move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path as his/her opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, he/she has committed a personal foul. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards.

Blocking and Interlocked Interference- Teammates of a runner or passer may interfere for him/her by screen blocking, but shall not use interlocked interference by grasping or encircling one another in any manner. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards.

Use of Hands or Arms by the Defense- Defensive players must go around the offensive player's screen block. The arms and hands may not be used as a wedge to contact the opponent. The application of this

Rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official. A blocker may use his/her arms or hands to break a fall or retain his/her balance. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards.

Runner: Flag Belt Removal

Players must have possession of the ball before they can be deflagged legally by an opponent. When a runner loses his/her flag belt either accidentally, inadvertently (not removed by grabbing or pulling), or on purpose, play continues. The deflagging reverts to a one hand tag of the runner between the shoulders and knees by an opponent. In circumstances where a flag belt is removed illegally, play should continue with the option of the penalty or the play. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards.

Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards from the previous spot, and player disqualification.

Guarding the Flag Belt- Runners 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. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to:

- Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt.
- Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt.
- Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt.

Obstructing the Runner- An opponent shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag. *Penalty:* Personal Fouls, 10 yards.

Charge- A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in his/her path nor attempt to run between two opponents or between an opponent and a sideline, unless the space is such as to provide a reasonable chance for him/her to go through without contact. If a runner in his/her progress has established a straight line path, he/she may not be crowded out of that path, but if an opponent is able to legally establish a defensive position in that path, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction. *Penalty:* Personal Foul, 10 yards.

Protests

Protests may be filed based on a misinterpretation of the playing rules or eligibility of a player. No protests can be made on a referee's judgment call. A protest must be made immediately after the play to the game officials, present Sports & Fitness officials and in the presence of the opposing team captain. Please refer to the Intramural Sports Handbook for Procedures.

Fouls and Penalties Summary

Loss of 5 yards:

1. Required Equipment Worn Illegally
2. Delay of Game (Dead Ball)
3. Eligible Substitutions
4. Legal Substitutions
5. Punt Formation and Snap
6. Punting the Ball
7. Encroachment (Dead Ball)
8. False Start (Dead Ball)
9. Illegal Snap (Dead Ball)
10. Offensive Player Not Within 15 Yards of the Ball
11. Infraction of the Scrimmage Formation
12. Player Out-of-Bounds When the Ball is Snapped
13. Offensive Player Illegally in Motion
14. Player Receiving the Snap Within 2 Yards of the Scrimmage Line
15. Illegal Shift
16. Intentionally Throwing a Backward Pass or Fumble; Out-of-Bounds (Loss of Down if by Team A)

17. Illegal Forward Pass (Loss of Down if by Team A)
18. Intentional Grounding (Loss of Down)
19. Helping the Runner

Loss of 10 Yards

1. Illegal Player Equipment
2. Quick Kick
3. Kick Catch Interference
4. Two or More Consecutive Encroachments During the same Interval Between Scrimmage Downs
5. Offensive Pass Interference (Loss of Down)
6. Defensive Pass Interference (Automatic First Down)
7. Illegally Secured Flag Belt on a Touchdown (Loss of Down if by the Offense) (Automatic First Down if by the Defense)
8. Unsportsmanlike Player Conduct
9. Spiking, Kicking, or Throwing the Ball During a Dead Ball
10. Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Coaches, Substitutes or Others
11. Strip or Attempt to Strip the Ball
12. Contact With Opponent on the Ground
13. Throw Runner to the Ground
14. Hurdle any Player
15. Contact Before or After the Ball is Dead
16. Unnecessary Contact of any Nature
17. Drive or Run into a Player
18. Position Upon Shoulders or Body of a Teammate
19. Tackle the Runner
20. Fighting an Opponent
21. Roughing the Passer (Automatic First Down)
22. Illegal Offensive Screen Blocking
23. Interlocked Interference
24. Defensive Use of Hands
25. Illegal Flag Belt Removal
26. Guarding the Flag Belt
27. Stiff Arm
28. Obstructing or Holding the Runner
29. Batting a Loose Ball
30. Illegal Kicking
31. Illegal Participation
32. Illegal Substitute/Replaced Player
33. Pretended, Unfair Substitution

Disqualification Associated With Certain 10 Yard Penalties

1. Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Player Conduct
2. Flagrant Spiking, Kicking or Throwing the Ball
3. Flagrant Unsportsmanlike Conduct by Players, Coaches, Substitutes or Others Subject to the Rules
4. Intentionally Contacting an Official
5. Flagrant Personal Fouls
6. Tackle the Runner
7. Fight an opponent
8. Intentional Tampering With Flag Belt-Offense (Loss of Down)
9. Intentional Tampering With Flag Belt-Defense (Automatic First Down)

