University of California, Merced - Intramurals
Flag Football Rules

Intramural flag football games will be conducted under the rules of the NIRSA – National Intramural/Recreational Sports Association – with the following modifications.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. All participants must have their current valid UCM ID with them to participate. No player will be allowed to play without their own valid UCM ID. Players must have also completed the registration process and joined the team on IMLeagues.
2. The players must check-in with the supervisor on duty, which will check their UCM ID and verify completion on IMLeagues.
3. A player may play for ONE men's or women's team. Any intercollegiate football player that participated in the 2017 football season at any collegiate institution is ineligible to participate in intramural football.
4. Teams may add players under the following circumstances:
    a. The player must not have played for another team in their respective division.
    b. The player must have a joined the team for that sport.
    c. The player must show his/her valid UCM ID to the supervisor to check-in prior to the game.
5. All men's and women's divisions play 7 on 7 flag football.
6. See the attached diagram for field layout and dimensions.

Protests: Protests are not allowed on judgment calls. Team managers may protest a misapplication of the rule **before the snap of the next play** to staff on duty. The supervisor and officials will decide before the next play. The team manager may protest the game at that point if they believe that the decision is still incorrect. Protest procedures are laid out in the Policy and Procedure manual. Protests regarding plays will not be heard at any other time. Eligibility protests may be made at any time to staff members on duty. The staff will then alert the opposing team of the eligibility issue. Any further eligibility protests must be made in the Competitive Sports Office.

Weather Cancellations: During the week, games will normally be cancelled prior to 4:00pm the day of the scheduled game. On weekends, games will be called by 8:00 am. Team managers will be notified through IMLeagues if a game is cancelled. Cancellation information will also be posted through social media channels. It is the responsibility of the team manager to relay any information concerning game cancellations or make-up games to their team. On-site, the staff members on duty will decide about play. Any game that begins the second half will be considered complete and will not be finished due if called due to weather.

Captains: Each team shall designate to the Referee the team captain or captains. The captain's first choice of any penalty option shall be irrevocable. Decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged time-out is granted to either team. The team captain is responsible for all information contained in the Intramural Flag Football Manager's packet.

The playing field: Respective lines-to-gain (1st down) for each team in order are the 20, 40, and 20. The point of the ball determines if it crosses the line. The side and end-lines are out-of-bounds. One foot must land in bounds for a legal catch. Player, coaches, and fans shall always stay between the 20-yard lines and at least 3 yards off the field. Two ball spotters (small plastic cones) will be used during play. The ORANGE cone marks the offensive scrimmage line, the YELLOW cone the defensive line. The ball spotters will always be one yard apart.

Game balls: Men shall use the regular size ball while women's teams may use either the regular or intermediate size ball. Each team is responsible for providing their own game ball. Teams may bring their own ball or checkout a ball from the supervisor.

Flags: Flags will be provided to each team on site. Pullover jerseys will be provided to teams that require them. **Shirts MUST be tucked in and flag belts must be worn on the outside of all clothing with the clip in the front.**

Equipment: All equipment is subject to the approval of the intramural staff on duty.

1. Players must play with shoes. No sandals, boots, metal cleats or screw-in cleats will be allowed. Molded cleats may be no longer than ½" in length.
2. Players may NOT wear pads or braces above the waist, casts/splints at any time, baseball caps, or bandanas with knots.
3. All pants must not have belts or belt loops or pockets. If a player has pants that has any of the items previously listed, they will not wear flag belts during the game and will be down with a one-hand touch.
4. Players may not have any type of exposed jewelry. All jewelry must be removed before participating in Intramural contests.
5. Players MAY wear kneepads, gloves, covered knee braces, headbands, knit caps, and plastic sunglasses.
6. A player MAY wear a soft, pliable wrist/forearm band that contains plays.

CAPTAIN'S MEETING, GAME TIME, AND SCORING INFORMATION

Coin Toss: The referee shall toss a coin and offer the winning Captain these options:

1. To defer his/her option until the second half.
2. To start on offense or defense.
3. To defend a specific goal.

Starting the game: The first and third quarter shall begin with the ball placed on the 14-yard line. Teams will switch sides prior to the start of the second and fourth quarters. There will be no kickoffs.

1. First quarter = the clock will run continuously for 10 minutes. Stopping only for team timeouts and official's timeouts.
2. Second quarter = the clock will run continuously for 10 minutes. Stopping only for team timeouts and official's timeouts.
3. Half time = 5 minutes.
4. Third quarter = the clock will run continuously for 10 minutes. Stopping only for team timeouts and official's timeouts.
5. Fourth quarter = the clock will run continuously for the first 8 minutes of the quarter. With approximately 2 minutes remaining in the game, the Referee shall stop the clock and inform both captains of the playing time remaining in the game. The clock will then start on the snap. The Back Judge will announce the time and status of the clock after every play. The remaining 2 minutes of the game will use a stopped clock. The clock will stop for a:
    a. Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass – starts on the snap.
    b. Out-of-Bounds – starts on the snap.
    c. Safety – stars on the snap.
    d. Team timeout – starts on the snap.
    e. First down – dependent on the previous play.
    f. Touchdown – starts on the snap (after the try).
    g. Penalty and administration – dependent on the previous play. (EXCEPTION: Delay of game – starts on the snap).
    h. Referee's timeout – starts at his/her discretion.
    i. Touchback – starts on the snap.
    j. Team A is awarded a new series – dependent on the previous play.
    k. Team B is awarded a new series – starts on the snap.
    l. Either team is awarded a new series following a legal punt – starts on the snap.
    m. Team attempting to conserve time illegally – clock restarts on the ready
    n. Team attempting to consume time illegally – clock restarts on the snap
    o. Inadvertent whistle – starts on the ready.

No Show procedure: Any team not ready to play at game time (checked in, flags on, minimum number of players on the field) shall be penalized in the following manner:

1. Team not ready at game time – Ball and choice of goal awarded to the team ready to play.
2. 3 minutes after game time – ball moved to midfield.
3. 6 minutes after game time – ball moved to opponent's 20.
4. 9 minutes after game time – penalized one touchdown and a 3-point try (9 pts).

5. **10 minutes after game time – the game is considered a No Show, 9-0 to the team ready to play.**
6. Should the game begin after the 9-point penalty has been assessed, the team arriving late shall be given the ball at their 14-yard line, as if they had been scored upon.
7. In all cases the team ready to play will have option in the second half.

Mercy Rule: At the time of the 2-minute warning in the second half or any time after the beginning of the last two minutes, if the following occur a mercy rule will be in effect and the game shall end. Prior to applying the Mercy rule, there must be a down free of any accepted live ball fouls.

1. Men's or women's league 19-point spread.
2. Co-Rec leagues 25-point spread.

Touchdowns: After any score the ball shall be placed in play at the opposing team's 14-yard line, unless moved by penalty. All touchdowns are 6 points.

Try-for-point: Ball in play from the 3-yard line = 1 point, from the 10-yard line = 2 points, from the 20-yard line = 3 points.

1. An intercepted pass or fumble during the try that is returned for a touchdown = 3 points.
2. If Team A commits a foul, or Team B commits a foul following a change of possession, the try is over.

Safety: When a safety is scored (2 points) the ball belongs to the scoring team at their own 14-yard line.

Timeouts: Each team is allowed *3* one-minute timeouts per half. **Timeouts do not carry over to overtime.**

Substitutions: Players may substitute at any time between downs provided they are ready to play and have checked in with the supervisor.

HOW TO PLAY FLAG FOOTBALL

Starting the play: The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the Referee has blown the whistle to put the ball in play.

The Snap: The snapper shall pass the ball back from its position on the ground with a quick and continuous motion of the hands. They do not have to pass the ball between the legs. Both of their feet must be behind the offensive scrimmage line.

1. Following the ready whistle, no defensive play may break the plane of the restraining line until the snap.
2. No offensive player shall make a false start or any action that simulates the start of play.
3. The player receiving the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the scrimmage line.

Line of scrimmage sets: All players are subject to motion, position, and illegal procedure rules.

1. The offense must bring all players within 15 yards of the ball at some point after the ready for play whistle and prior to the snap.
2. One player may be in motion, but not forward at the time of the snap.
3. Following a huddle or shift, all offensive players must come to a full stop for one second prior to the snap.

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

1. There are no sneak handoffs.
2. If the ball is tossed or there is time between the ball and the catch, then passing rules will apply.
3. There are no restrictions on handing the ball during punt returns or following changes in possession.

Passing the ball: All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. Backward passes are unlimited.

1. A **pass** is any exchange of the ball that involves airtime. This can be forward or backward, overhand pass, or underhand pitch, or any other toss or flip of the ball.
2. Only one forward pass may be thrown per scrimmage down, but NOT on kicks, punts, or interceptions.
3. These passes are **illegal** – when either of the passer's feet is beyond the line when the ball leaves the hand, the ball is intentionally grounded, the passer catches their own untouched pass, when there is more than one forward pass during a scrimmage down, and if a forward pass is thrown after a change in team possession.

4. A player may pass the ball backwards at any time. NOTE: Backward passes that hit the ground in play are dead at that spot. Backward passes that go out of bounds belong to the offense unless the ball goes out of bounds behind a goal line, and then the pay will result in a touchback or safety.
5. The pass begins when the ball is released from the passer's hand. The ball is dead if the passer is deflagged before the initial release. When in doubt the ball was released before the flag was pulled.
6. The initial direction of a pass determines whether a pass is forward or backward.
7. If opposing players catch a forward or backward pass simultaneously, the ball becomes dead, is considered a complete pass, and belongs to the offensive team at that spot.
8. Interceptions in a team's own end zone may be advanced out or downed for a touchback.
9. Momentum rule: When a defensive player intercepts a forward pass, backward pass, fumble, or catches a legal kick between his/her 5-yard line and the goal line, and the player's momentum carries them into the end zone and becomes dead, the ball is placed at the spot where possession is gained.

Ending the play: The ball becomes dead when:

1. The whistle blows. (On inadvertent whistles, the team may replay the down or take the ball at that spot.)
2. It goes out-of-bounds.
3. Any part of the runner's body other than a hand or foot touches the ground. Ball in possession is considered part of the hand.
4. After any score.
5. Any punt comes to rest on the ground and no player attempts to secure it, or a muff hits the ground.
6. A forward or backward pass or snap hits the ground. (Dead at spot on backward pass and snap.)
7. The flag belt is removed legally. If the belt falls off, one-hand touch between shoulders and knees. If a player has pants that have belt loops or pockets, they will not wear flag belts and the play become dead when they are one-hand touched.

Punting the ball: On fourth down, the referee will ask the offensive captain if they want to punt. The referee may enforce a delay of game penalty for failing to decide in a timely manner.

1. There are no fake punts.
2. The offense may change their decision to punt if any of the following occur: either team calls a charged timeout, the period ends, a foul occurs, or an inadvertent whistle occurs prior to or during the play.
3. Neither K nor R may advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked. After receiving the snap, the kicker must kick immediately and in a continuous motion. The kicker may not kick the ball to themselves or any other member of the kicking team. Defensive players may jump to block the kick.
4. IF a punt having crossed the line of scrimmage touches a player on either team and then hits the ground it is dead and belongs to R. If a punt <u>hits</u> an R player and is then caught in the air by R it can be advanced. If a punt <u>hits</u> an R player and is then caught in the air by K it belongs to K at that spot with a new series of downs.
5. If a punted ball goes out-of-bounds at any time before being touched or comes to rest between the goal lines it shall belong to R at that spot.
6. There are no fair catches. The punting team may not interfere with the receiving team's ability to catch the ball. If the punting team touches the ball first, the receiving team can take the ball at that spot or the result of the play.

OVERTIME PROCEDURE: In case of a tie game at the end of regulation the following procedure will be used.

1. The Referee will conduct a coin toss like the beginning of the game. The team not calling the toss to start the game will call the toss in overtime.
2. The winner of the toss will be given the following options: Offense, Defense, or direction. The loser of the toss will choose the remaining option. ALL OVERTIME PERIODS WILL BE PLAYED IN THE SAME DIRECTION.
3. Each team will start their possession on Team B's 10-yard line. The line-to-gain is the goal line. A team will have four downs to score a touchdown. If a change of possession occurs a team's series will be over. The object is to score a touchdown and try for extra point. If the score is tied after both teams have had a series, the overtime will continue until the tie is broken.
4. All fouls and penalties will be enforced as usual. A penalty with an automatic first down will result in a new set of four downs to score a touchdown. The goal line will always be the line to gain in overtime.

5. Each team will be given 1 timeout for the entire overtime.

FOULS AND PENALTIES

Flag football is NOT a CONTACT sport. However, incidental contact will occur.

Personal Fouls: Players may not commit any of the following personal fouls:

1. Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
2. Trip, clip, or hurdle any player.
3. Contact an opponent who is on the ground, or after the ball is dead.
4. Throw the runner to the ground.
5. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player or lower the shoulder.
6. Commit any unnecessary roughness.
7. Tackle a runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms.
8. Rough the passer (automatic first down) – applies only to the player throwing a legal forward pass behind the offensive line of scrimmage. If a defender contacts the passer in any fashion, whether or not they touch the pass, it is roughing the passer.
9. Aid the runner, grab, push, or pull a teammate with the ball.
10. Stiff-arm an opponent.
11. Guard flags by using their hands, arms or the ball to cause contact between the runner and an opponent that denies the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt.
12. Use hands or body to block an opponent.
13. Pulling the flag from an opponent who does not have the ball.
14. Tying the flag belt in a knot or any other tampering with the flag belt (Also results in player ejection.).

Legal and Illegal Offensive Screen Blocking: Offensive players may protect the runner by screening.

1. The offensive screen block shall take place without contact and screener may maintain a position (moving or stationary) between the defensive player and the runner.
2. The screen blocker shall have their arms at their sides or behind their back. Any use of arms, elbows or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use a hand or arm to break a fall or retain balance. Players must remain on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking. Any part of the screener's body, except their feet, may not be in contact with the ground.
3. Defensive players must avoid the offensive player's screen block and may not use their arms or hands as a wedge to contact the offensive blocker.
4. Illegal contact between the blocker/rusher will be called against the player determined to have initiated the contact (like "block/charge" in basketball).

Pass Interference

1. Pass interference is defined as bumping, pushing, or unnecessary contact with an opponent OR restricting a player from access to a pass while on offense or defense. Players may not wave their hands in the face of an opponent.
2. Offensive screen blocking beyond the line of scrimmage when a forward pass crosses the line is illegal.
3. Players may not go through opponents to get a ball in flight.

Penalty enforcement

1. There are 5 and 10-yard penalties. (See attached chart).
2. Enforcement will be from one of 4 spots – the line of scrimmage (previous spot), the spot of the foul, the end of the run, or the spot where the ball will next be snapped or kicked (succeeding spot).
3. PUNT EXCEPTION: A foul by R during the punt on R's side of the line of scrimmage with the punt ending beyond K's scrimmage line in R's possession, will be enforced from the spot that the kick ends. If the kick ends in a touchback the spot of enforcement will be the 14-yard line. Any foul behind the spot that the kick ends will be enforced from the spot of the foul.
4. TOUCHDOWN EXCEPTION: Any foul by the defense on a play in which the offense scores a touchdown, the penalty may be enforced on either the succeeding play (try) or from the 14-yard line following the try.

COED MODIFICATIONS

All previously listed rules apply to coed games in addition to those listed below.

Number of players: The game is played 8 on 8. Minimum to play is 5.

Full team of 8: 4 men and 4 women
Team of 7: 4 men and 3 women, 3 men and 4 women
Team of 6: 3 men and 3 women, 2 men and 4 women, 2 women and 4 men
Team of 5: 3 men and 2 women, 3 women and 2 men

Touchdown: If a female scores a touchdown, the point value is 9. If a female throws a legal forward pass, and a touchdown is scored by any Team A player, the point value is 9. All other touchdowns are 6 points.

Substitutions: Substitutions must be man for man or woman for woman only, unless it will bring the ratio of male and female players to 4 and 4.

Punts: Males or females may return punts.

Male Runners:

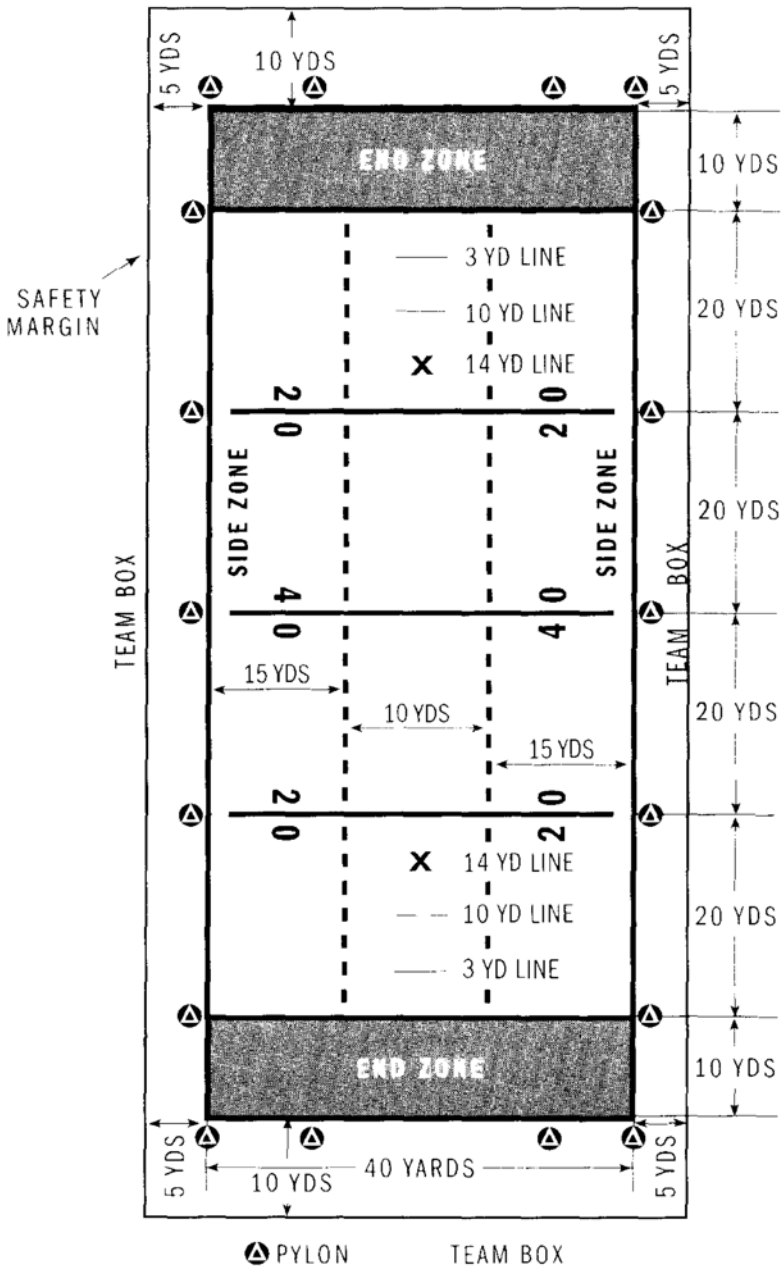
1. Male runners may not cross the line of scrimmage with the ball.
2. There are no restrictions concerning runs by a female.
3. Once the line of scrimmage has been legally penetrated, all advancement restrictions are eliminated (i.e., a female runner may advance beyond the line and then pitch to a male who is still behind the line and he may advance with no restriction).
4. After a change of team possession any male runner may advance the ball without restrictions, as in an interception or punt return.

Male-to Male forward pass completions: During the offensive team's possession there may not be two consecutive legal forward pass completions on downs from male passer to male receiver.

1. The term – CLOSED means a male player may not complete a legal forward pass to a male.
2. The term – OPEN means any player may complete a pass to any other player.
3. If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male, the next legal forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or receiver for positive yards. If the female is deflagged before gaining positive yards, the next play remains closed.
4. If a male receiver catches a pass from a female passer behind the line of scrimmage and then advances beyond the line of scrimmage, the penalty will be illegal male reception, 5 yards from the previous spot, loss of down and the next play will be closed.
5. For a closed play to become open, the direction of the pass involving a female **MUST** be forward.

Penalty Yardage Summary

5 Yard Loss		10 Yard Loss	
Delay of Game	Dead Ball	Punt catch interference	
Encroachment (Offsides)	Dead Ball	Illegal worn flagbelt	Loss of Down
False Start	Dead Ball	Offensive Pass Interference	Loss of Down
Illegal Snap	Dead Ball	Defensive Pass Interference	Auto 1st Down
Unfair tactics		Roughing the Passer	Auto 1st Down
Illegal Motion or Shift		Unsportsmanlike Conduct	
Illegal punt formation		Quick kick or illegal kick	
Player receiving snap within 2 yards of scrimmage		Spike, kick, throw dead ball	
Illegal Forward Pass	Loss of Down	Illegal Screen block	
Intentional Groudning	Loss of Down	2 encroachments same down	
Advancement by a male runner	Coed Only	Flag guarding or illegal removal	
Illegal male reception	Coed Only; Loss of Down	Throw Runner to the Ground	
Illegal Substitution		Holding or obstruction of runner	
Illegal Equipment		Clip, Tackle, trip, stiff arm	
Aiding the Runner		Illegal contact	
Offensive player not within 15 yards		Illegal participation - too many players	
Not enough players on the line		Hurdling any player	
Player out of bounds at snap			

Flagrant contact fouls can also be disqualification

Flag Football Field Diagram