

George Mason University

4v4 Flag Football - Rules

Revised Summer 2019

The Game, Field, Players, and Equipment

General Provisions

- 1. No ID...No Play...!** - Each player must present a valid Mason G Card before each contest to be eligible to participate.
 - a. Regular Season Exception**– During the regular season a valid photo id (Drivers license, passport, etc) and that player must be able to login into their patriot web account. If the player is not able to provide both, then they cannot participate.
 - b. Playoffs** – There is NO Substitute for a Mason G Card to sign into a playoff game.
- 2. Game time is forfeit time.**
3. The game shall be played between two teams of **four (4)** players each. **Three (3)** players are required to start the game to avoid a default; **three (3)** players to avoid a forfeit (injuries).
4. All players must have checked in with the supervisor and be recorded on the game sheet before they are allowed to participate.
5. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, spectators and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.
6. The Referee has authority to rule promptly, and in the spirit of good sportsmanship, on any situation not specifically covered in the rules. The Referee's decisions are final in all matters pertaining to the game.

The Field

1. Field Layout
 - a. The field dimensions are 40 yards by 20 yards with 10-yard end zones. The playing field is divided into two 20-yard zones. Both 3 yd. lines shall be marked with an "X" on the hash mark.
2. Inbounds/Out-of-Bounds
 - a. The lines bounding the sidelines and the end zones are out-of-bounds.

3. Team Box and Spectator Area

- a. Each team box is a designated area for players. Each box is marked between the Goal line and opposite goal line and one yard from the sideline. Players must stay within this team box. All spectators **MUST** remain behind the fenced area from Goal line and opposite goal line.
- b. Spectators must stay behind the bench area at all time. Any fan that sets foot on the playing surface during the contest will be subject to removal from the facility.

Game Equipment

1. The Ball

- a. Each team must provide their own football.
- b. The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered and meets the recommendations of size and shape for regulation football.
- c. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings.
- d. Men shall use the regular size while women shall use the men's, intermediate, youth, or junior size. **For Co-Rec, teams may decide which ball they would like to use.**
- e. The referee shall be the sole judge of any ball offered for play and may change the ball during play at his/her discretion.
- f. During the game each team must use a legal ball of its choice when in possession.

Player Equipment

1. Jersey

- a. Jerseys **may not** have pockets, holes, or a button placket. All team members must wear the same shade of color shirt. Jerseys must be either:
 - i. Long enough so they **remain tucked** in the pants/shorts the entire down, or
 - ii. Short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline.

2. Pants/Shorts

- a. Each player must wear pants or shorts **without** any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s), holes, or exposed drawstrings.
 - i. Pockets cannot have: Velcro, zippers, or be taped
- b. Pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags.
- c. Pants or shorts may **not** be turned inside out, and pockets may not be taped.

3. Flag Belt

- a. Each player must wear a one-piece belt at the waistline with three flags permanently attached, one flag on each side and one in the center of the back.
 - i. The Referee must know that a player was not wearing a flag belt during the down in order to penalize a team.

4. Shoes
 - a. All players must wear shoes made of canvas, leather or synthetic material, which cover the entire foot.
5. Headwear
 - a. Players may wear a knit stocking cap. The cap must have no bill.
6. Sunglasses
 - a. Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses.
7. Play Book
 - a. Players may carry a Play Book inside their clothing as long as it is not made of unyielding material.
8. Illegal Equipment
 - a. A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be allowed to play. Types of equipment that shall be declared illegal include:
 - i. Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats
 - ii. Hard pads or braces worn above the waist.
 - iii. Shoes with metal cleat.
 - iv. *Exception: Towels may hang from a participant's waist but counts as an additional flag. *
 - b. Competitive Sports highly encourages all participants to remove jewelry prior to entering any contest. Those participants that choose to wear jewelry do so at their own risk. Competitive Sports staff reserves the right to remove a participant from play if they deem the jewelry to be unsafe to themselves or others. A list of jewelry items that will always be deemed unsafe is available in the Intramural Sports Handbook. Medical emergency bracelets/necklaces may be worn but must be taped to the person.
 - c. Casts (plaster, metal or other hard substances in their final form) or any other item judged to be dangerous by the supervisor, official or athletic trainer may not be worn during the game. Knee braces made of hard, unyielding substances covered on both sides with all edges overlapped and any other hard substances covered with slow recovery rubber or similar material will be allowed.

Periods, Time Factors, Substitutions

Start of Each Half

1. Coin Toss
 - a. The captain winning the toss shall have the choice of options for the first half or shall defer his/her option to the second half. The options are:
 - i. To choose whether his/her team will start on offense or defense.
 - ii. To choose the goal his/her team will defend.
 - iii. The captain not having the first choice of options for a half shall exercise the remaining option.

Game Time

1. Playing Time and Intermissions

- a. Playing time shall be **twenty-four (24) minutes**, divided into **two (2) halves of twelve (12) minutes** each.
- b. The clock will run continuously for the first 10 minutes of play of in each half unless stopped for charged time out, officials' time out, or injury.
 - i. The clock will stop the last 2 minutes of each half and restart according to the following:
 - A. Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass – starts on the snap.
 - B. Out-of-bounds – starts on the snap.
 - C. Safety – starts on the snap.
 - D. Team time-out – starts on the snap.
 - E. First down – depends on previous play.
 - F. Touchdown – starts on next offensive snap (Point Tries are untimed)
 - G. Penalty and administration – dependent on the previous play (except delay of game-starts on snap)
 - H. Referee's time out – starts at his/her discretion.
 - I. Touchback – starts on the snap.
 - J. Team attempting to conserve time illegally – starts on whistle.
 - K. Team attempting to consume time illegally – starts on snap.

2. Play

- a. Play at the beginning of each half will start at the offense's **ten (10)** yard line.

3. Extension of Periods

- a. A half must be extended by an untimed down, except for unsportsmanlike or non-player fouls which specify a loss of down, if during the last timed down, one of the following occurred:
 - i. There was a foul by either team and the penalty is accepted.
 - ii. There was a double foul.
 - iii. There was an inadvertent whistle.
 - iv. If a touchdown was scored, the Try is attempted unless the touchdown is scored during the last down of the second half and the point(s) would not affect the outcome of the game.
 - v. If (i), (ii), or (iii) occurs during the untimed down, the procedure is repeated
 1. Note: The period shall not be extended further when the defense fouls during a successful try and the offended team accepts the results of the play with enforcement of the penalty from the succeeding spot.

Overtime

1. The Coin Toss

- a. There will be only one coin flip during the overtime.
 - i. Teams may select from the following options
 1. Offense
 2. Defense
 3. Which end zone they would like to play towards
- b. ALL OVERTIME PERIODS ARE PLAYED TOWARD THE SAME GOAL LINE.
- c. All overtime periods will be untimed

2. Tie Breaker

- a. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start first down and goal from the 20-yard line (midfield mark).
- b. The team will have three downs to score, unless awarded first down automatically, or a penalty allows for repeating the down.
- c. Any turnovers will result in the play being blown dead immediately, and the ball awarded to the opposing team at the 10-yard line.
- d. Each team is entitled to one time-out per overtime period.
- e. Teams will alternate possessions during overtime:
 - i. Ex: 1st Home – Away – 2nd Away- Home – 3rd Home – Away

3. Overtime-Fouls and Penalties

- a. The goal shall always be the zone line-to-gain in overtime.

4. Timeouts do not carry over into OT

5. Extra point attempts

- a. 1st overtime, teams can go for 1, 2, or 3
- b. 2nd overtime, teams can go for 2, or 3
- c. 3rd overtime and on, teams can only go for 3

Time Outs

1. Charged Time-outs

- a. Each team is entitled to two charged time-outs per game.

2. Length of Time-outs

- a. A charged time-out requested by any player (**on the field**) which is legally granted shall be one minute and can be shortened if both teams are ready.

3. Injured Player

- a. An injured or apparently injured player, who is discovered by an official while the ball is dead and the clock is stopped, shall be replaced for at least one down unless the halftime or overtime intermission occurs.
- b. A player who is bleeding, or has an open wound, or has blood on their uniform shall be considered injured.

Delays

1. Delay of Game
 - a. The ball must be put in play promptly and legally and any action or inaction by either team, which tends to prevent this, is a delay of game. This includes:
 - i. Failure to snap within **fifteen (15) seconds** after the ball is whistled ready for play.
 - ii. Putting the ball in play before it is whistled ready for play.
2. Illegally Conserving or Consuming Time
 - a. The Referee may order the game clock started or stopped whenever, in his/her opinion, either team is trying to conserve or consume time.

Substitutions

1. Eligible Substitutions
 - a. No substitute shall enter after the ball has been snapped
 - b. An incoming substitute must enter the field directly from the team area.
 - c. A replaced player must leave the field at the sideline nearest his/her team area prior to the ball being snapped.

Live Ball, Dead Ball, Out-of-Bounds

Live Ball-Dead Ball

1. Ball Declared Dead
 - a. A live ball becomes dead and an official shall sound the whistle or declare it dead when:
 - i. When it goes out-of-bounds
 - ii. When any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground
 - iii. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful Try is made
 - iv. When a forward pass strikes the ground
 - v. When the ball strikes the ground after being first touched by the kicking team
 - vi. When a backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players. A ball snapped, which hits the ground before or after getting to the intended player is dead at the spot where it hit the ground
 - vii. When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached by another player from the belt
 - viii. When a runner is legally tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm when the flag belt inadvertently becomes detached.

Series of Downs, Number of Down, and Team Possession

Series

1. Zone Line-to-Gain
 - a. Each team has **three (3) downs** to cross the midfield zone line-to-gain yardage and then **three (3) downs** to score a touchdown.
2. Awarding a new series
 - a. A new series of downs shall be awarded when a team:
 - i. Moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty
 - ii. A penalty against the defense moves the ball into the next zone
 - iii. An accepted penalty against the defense involves an automatic first down
 - iv. Either team has obtained legal possession of a ball as a result of a penalty, touchback, pass interception, or turnover on downs.
3. Change of Possessions
 - a. All drives and changes of possessions (except interceptions) start at the **ten (10)-yard line**.
 - b. Possessions starting as a result of in an interception returned for a touchdown will be the only exception
 - c. Safety results in 2 points and possession.
4. Down and Possession After a Penalty
 - a. After a penalty which leaves the ball in possession of a team beyond its zone line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulated a 1st down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be 1st down with next zone line-to-gain.
5. Penalty Resulting in a First Down
 - a. After a penalty which leaves the ball in possession of a team beyond its zone line-to-gain, or when a penalty stipulates a first down, the down and distance established by that penalty shall be first down with the next line-to-gain.
6. Foul Before Change of Possession
 - a. The down shall be repeated unless the penalty also involves a loss of down, or leaves the ball on or beyond the line-to-gain. If the penalty involves a loss of down, the down shall count as one of the four in that series.
7. Rule Decisions Final

- a. No rule decision (interpretation) may be changed or protested after the ball is next legally snapped.

Kicking the Ball

1. There is **NO** kicking or punting in 4-on-4 flag football

Snapping, Handing, and Passing the Ball

1. The Scrimmage
 - a. The Start
 - i. All plays must be started by a legal snap from a point on or between hash marks.
 - b. Ball Responsibility
 - i. The offensive team is responsible for retrieving the ball after a down.
2. Prior to the snap
 - a. Encroachment
 - i. Following the ready for play whistle, and until the snap, no player on defense may enter the neutral zone or in any other way interfere with them (verbally or otherwise).
 - b. False Start
 - i. No offensive player shall make a false start or simulate the start of a play. An infraction of this rule may be penalized whether or not the ball is snapped.
 - c. Snap
 - i. The snapper, after assuming position for the snap and adjusting the ball, may neither move nor change the position of the ball in a manner simulating the beginning of play until the snap.
 - ii. When over the ball, the snapper shall have his/her feet behind the scrimmage line.
 - iii. The snapper shall pass the ball backwards from its position on the ground with a continuous motion.

Position and Action During the Snap

1. Minimum Line Players
 - a. The snapper is the only offensive player required to be on their scrimmage line at the snap.

2. Motion
 - a. One offensive player may be in motion, but not toward the opponent's goal line at the snap. Other offensive players must be stationary in their positions without movement of the feet, body, head, or arms.
3. Illegal Formation
 - a. The player receiving the snap must be **at least two (2) yards** from the offensive line of scrimmage.
4. Shift
 - a. If two or more players go in motion prior to the snap, ALL players MUST come to a stop for at least 1 second prior to the snap.

Backward Pass and Fumble

1. Ball Dead when It Hits the Ground
 - a. A ball, which touches the ground between the goal lines, is dead at the spot where it touches the ground or crosses the sideline.

Legal and Illegal Forward Pass

1. Legal Forward Pass
 - a. All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass.
 - b. During a down and before a change of possession, a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer's feet are behind the offensive line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the passer's hand.
 - c. Only one forward pass is allowed per down.
 - d. There must be a legal forward pass, before a person with the ball can cross the LOS

Illegal Forward Pass

1. A forward pass is illegal if:
 - a. The passer's foot is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.
 - b. The ball is intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage.
 - c. A passer catches his/her untouched forward or backward pass.
 - d. There is more than one forward pass per down.

Completed or Intercepted Passes

1. Simultaneous Catch by Opposing Players
 - a. If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead at the spot of the catch and belongs to the offensive team.

Forward Pass Interference

1. Contact
 - a. During a down, contact or action that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage is pass interference.
 - b. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged prior to touching the ball.

Rushing the Quarterback

1. Defensive players must wait **five (5) seconds** until they can cross the line of scrimmage and attempt to rush the quarterback.
 - a. The Head Referee will give a verbal count
2. Teams will get 1 blitz per possession, where they will not have to wait the 5 seconds

Scoring Plays and Touchback

Mercy Rule

- 40 points or more with five minutes remaining in the second half
- 20 points or more with one minute remaining in the second half

Touchdown

1. Player Responsibility
 - a. The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player.
 - b. If the player is not de-flagged with one pull to the left or right and the official determines the belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is nullified and the player is ejected.

Point(s) after Touchdown Tries

1. One, Two, or Three points
 - a. An opportunity to score **one (1) point** from the **five (5) yard line**, **two (2) points** from the **ten (10) yard line** or **three (3) points** from the **20 yard line** by passing, shall be granted to the team scoring a touchdown.

- i. Note: If a touchdown is scored on the last timed down of the second half, the Try is not attempted, unless it will affect the outcome of the game or playoff qualifying.

2. Decision

- a. Once the scoring captain makes the choice, the decision may only be changed when either team takes a charged time-out.
- b. A penalty does not allow for a change in point value, nor does awarded or lost yardage affect the point value.
- c. Interceptions on Tries are blown dead immediately.

3. Penalties During a Try

- a. If a double foul occurs, the Try will be replayed.
- b. If the offensive team is penalized on a successful try, the down will be repeated if the penalty is accepted.
- c. If the offensive team incurs a loss of down penalty, the Try will not be repeated.

4. Subsequent Series

- a. After the Try, the new offensive team shall snap the ball from their own **ten (10)-yard line** unless moved by a penalty.

Momentum, Safety, and Touchback

1. Safety = 2 points

- a. A safety occurs when:
 - i. A runner carries the ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line and the ball becomes dead.
 - ii. A player, passes, fumbles, snaps, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play to or across his/her own goal line and the ball becomes dead behind their goal line.
 - iii. A player on offense commits any penalty for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in his/her end zone; or throws an illegal forward pass from within his/her end zone, or any situation which leaves the offense in possession of the ball in their own end zone.
 - iv. After a safety, the scoring team shall snap the ball at their **own 10 yard line**, unless moved by a penalty.

Conduct of Players and Spectators

Unsportsmanlike Conduct

1. Noncontact Player Acts
 - a. No player shall commit acts including:
 - i. Using words similar to the offensive's audible or quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an attempt to interfere with the offense.
 - ii. Intentionally kicking the ball, other than a punt.
 - iii. Participating while wearing illegal player equipment.
 - iv. Fighting or attempting to fight (results in disqualification).

Dead Ball Fouls

1. When the ball is dead, no player shall:
 - a. Intentionally kick the ball
 - b. Spike the ball
 - c. Excessive Celebrations

Prohibited Acts

1. There shall be no unsportsmanlike conduct by players, substitutes, coaches, or others subject to the rules. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Attempting to influence a decision by an official
 - b. Disrespectfully addressing an official
 - c. Using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar language or gestures
 - d. Intentionally making contact with a game official during the game
 - e. Fighting
 - f. Leaving the team area and entering the playing field during a fight

Second Unsportsmanlike Conduct Foul

1. The second unsportsmanlike conduct foul by the same player results in disqualification.
 - a. If a spectator receives the penalty, it will be assessed to the team

Personal Fouls

1. Player Restrictions
 - a. No player shall:
 - i. Strip or attempt to strip the ball from a player in possession by punching, striking, or stealing.
 - ii. Contact an opponent who is on the ground

- iii. Throw a runner to the ground
- iv. Hurdle any other player
- v. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is dead
- vi. Make contact of any nature which is deemed unnecessary
- vii. Deliberately dive or run into a defensive player
- viii. Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms.

2. Roughing the Passer

- a. Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally.
- b. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as he/she is considered out of the play after the pass.
 - i. NOTE: The passer remains the passer while the ball is in flight or until they move to participate in the play. Defensive players may not make contact with the passer's arm, including the ball.

3. Screen Blocking

- a. Offensive Screen Blocking
- b. The offensive screen block shall take place without contact.
- c. The screen blocker shall have his/her hands and arms at his/her side or behind the back.
- d. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal.
- e. A blocker must be on his/her feet before, during, and after the screen.

4. Screen Blocking Fundamentals

- a. A player who screens shall not:
 - i. Make contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
 - ii. Take a position close to a moving opponent such that the opponent cannot avoid contact.
 - iii. After assuming the legal screening position, move unless the blocker moves in the same direction as the opponent.

5. Runner

- a. Flag Guarding
 - i. 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:
 - 1. Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
 - 2. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt

3. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt
- b. Obstructing the Runner
 - i. The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt.
- c. Charging
 - i. A runner shall not charge into nor contact an opponent in their path.
 - ii. If a runner in progress has established a straight path, he/she may not be crowded out of that path, but if a defensive player legally established position, the runner must avoid contact by changing direction.
- d. Quarterback Quarterbacks may not run the ball, but may scramble.
 - i. They may not cross the line of scrimmage without throwing the ball. However, they may hand the football off to a teammate who may cross the line of scrimmage. By doing this however, it eliminates **the 5 second rush count.**

Summary of Co-ed Rules

1. The co-rec game shall be played between two (2) teams of four **(4) players, two (2) males and two (2) females.**
 - a. Teams with three (3) players shall be **two (2) males and one (1) female** or **two (2) females and one (1) male.**
 - b. Three (3) players are required to start the game and avoid a forfeit.
2. The Ball
 - a. A regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size ball may be used.
3. Minimum Line Players
 - a. The offensive team must have at least **one (1) player** on their line of scrimmage at the snap.

Illegal Forward Pass

There are no open or closed plays in 4v4 flag football

Touchdown Value

1. A touchdown involving a female receiver/runner crossing the goal line or throwing a legal forward pass, is worth **nine (9) points**.
2. PATs that involve a female are still worth 1, 2, or 3 respectively

