

4-on-4 Flag Football Rules

The NIRSA Flag & Touch Football Rules shall govern all 4-on-4 flag football games. The only exceptions to these rules are the special league rules as indicated below. In all other areas not listed below, NIRSA rules shall apply.

Section 1: Playing Field

The field measures 60 yards in length, end line to end line, and 30 yards in width. The field consists of two end zones (10 yards each), two 20-yard zones.

Section 2: Game/Player Equipment (Required/Optional/Illegal):

Each team must provide their own football. The official ball shall be pebble-grained leather or rubber covered. Men's teams' will use Men's size football. Women's teams' will use Junior size football, but may use Men's size if they wish. There are no requirements regarding ball pressure and markings.

Jerseys may not have pockets, holes, or a button placket. All team members must wear the same shade of color shirt. Jerseys must be long enough so they remain tucked in the pants/shorts the entire down. Each player must wear pants or shorts without any belt(s), belt loop(s), pocket(s), holes, or exposed drawstrings. Pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags. Pants or shorts may not be turned inside out, and pockets may not be taped. All players must wear shoes made of canvas, leather or synthetic material, which cover the entire foot. Players may wear a knit stocking cap. The cap must have no bill. Players may wear a single-colored headband no wider than 2". Players may wear pliable and non-rigid sunglasses.

A player wearing illegal equipment shall not be allowed to play. Types of equipment that shall be declared illegal include:

- * Headwear containing any hard, unyielding, stiff material, including billed hats, or items containing exposed knots, such as bandanas.
- * Jewelry and rubber bands of any kind.
- * Pads or braces worn above the waist.
- * Shoes with metal, ceramic, screw-on, or detachable cleats.
- * Jerseys that have been altered in any manner which produces a knot-like protrusion.
- * Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material, unless covered on both sides and all edges.
- * Towels may not hang from a participant's waist.

Section 3: Teams

The game is between 2 teams of 4 players each. Two players are required to begin the game and avoid a forfeit.

Section 4: Game Time

Playing time shall be two 12 minutes halves. The clock is running time except for the last one minute of each half. During this time the clock will start and stop according to the NIRSA Flag Football Rules Book.

Section 5: Time-outs

Each team is entitled to 2 charged time-outs per game and one charged time-out in each overtime period.

Section 6: Coin Toss

The referee will conduct a "game of chance" to determine who will receive the initial choice for game. The visiting team captain will have the opportunity to choose in the "game of chance" for the opportunity to win the initial choice. Should the visiting team captain lose the game of the chance, the home team captain will be awarded the choice. The captain's choices are as followed and only one can be selected:

1. Play offense
2. Play defense
3. Choose what side of the field to defend
4. Defer choice to the second half.

Section 7: POINT AFTER TOUCHDOWN

After a touchdown, the scoring team may choose from the following options for the conversion:

- A) 1 point from the 3 yard line
- B) 2 points from the 10 yard line
- C) 3 points from the 20 yard line
- D) Immediately after scoring a touchdown the Referee will ask the team captain for his/her choice for the conversion. Once this decision is made, it can only be changed by taking a charged time-out. A team's decision cannot be changed should a penalty occur on the conversion attempt.

Section 8: Scoring:

All touchdowns will count as 6 points. There will be no difference in points awarded for female touchdowns

Section 9: Putting Ball in Play

The ball shall be placed at the offensive team's 10 yard line to begin each half of a game and following a PAT, touchback or safety, unless moved by penalty.

Section 10: Kicking

There will be no kicks in 4-on-4 Flag Football.

Section 11: Mercy Rule

There will be no mercy rule in 4-on-4 Flag Football

Section 12: Series of Downs

A team shall have 3 consecutive downs to advance the ball to the next zone. A new series of downs will occur when a team moves the ball legally into the next zone or the opponent obtains possession of the ball by penalty, pass interception, or failure to advance to the next zone. If a team fails to convert or score after the permitted 3 downs, a turnover on downs occurs, and the defense is awarded possession at the succeeding spot after the 3rd down attempt of the offense.

Section 13: Scrimmage Lines

The scrimmage lines will be the same as regular flag football. Offensive line of scrimmage and defensive line of scrimmage with a one yard neutral zone between.

Section 14: Players on Scrimmage Line

The offensive team must have at least one player on their scrimmage line (other than the center) at the snap.

Section 15: Running the Ball

An offensive runner cannot advance the ball through the offensive scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange). There are no restrictions after a change of possession or once a legal forward pass has been caught beyond offensive scrimmage line. Teams cannot rush the quarterback while on defense.

Section 16: Legal Forward Pass

There must be a legal forward pass each down. The receiver must catch the ball beyond the offensive scrimmage line. The passer has 5 seconds to release the ball on a forward pass. A lateral or backwards pass has no effect on the 5 second time limit for a forward pass to occur. If a legal forward pass does not occur during the 5 second time limit, the play is immediately blown dead, the result of the play is a loss of down, and the ball is next snapped at the previous spot. The Referee will sound his or her whistle at 5 seconds if the passer has possession of the football. The Referee shall have a verbal count loud enough for the passer to hear the official. The verbal announcement of the time limit for forward passes will occur in the following fashion: "One, Two, Three, Four (Whistle sounds)." The word "five" will not be verbally spoken.

Section 17: Penalty Enforcement

All 10-yard penalties are 5 yards and all 5-yard penalties are 3 yards.

Section 18: Types of Penalties and Rule Clarifications

- ❖ **FLAG GUARDING** – Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opponent an opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes:
 - A) Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.

- B) Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- C) Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
- D) Any other act, besides spinning and various other types of hip movement, to prevent an opponent from deflagging.

Penalty: 5 yards (all-but-one).

- ❖ **PASS INTERFERENCE** – During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses Team A’s scrimmage line, contact which interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond Team A’s scrimmage line is pass interference unless it occurs when 2 or more eligible receivers make a simultaneous and bona fide attempt to reach, catch, or bat a pass. It is also pass interference if an eligible receiver is deflagged prior to touching the ball on a pass thrown beyond Team A’s scrimmage line. Offensive pass interference may be called at any time after the ball is snapped. Defensive pass interference, however, can only be called during the time of a pass attempt.

Offensive Pass Interference – Penalty: 5 yards (previous spot) and loss of down.

Defensive Pass Interference – Penalty: 5 yards (previous spot) and automatic first down.

- ❖ **LEGAL CATCH / SIMULTANEOUS CATCH** – A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball in flight, and first contacting the ground inbounds or being contacted by an opponent in such a way that he/she is prevented from returning to the ground inbounds while maintaining possession of the ball.
 - A) One foot is required to be inbounds (while in player possession). Additionally, a catch by a kneeling or prone inbounds player is a completion.
 - B) A simultaneous catch or recovery is a catch in which there is joint possession of a live ball by opposing players who are inbounds. The ball will be blown dead at that spot and possession will be awarded to the offense.

- ❖ **FUMBLES** - A fumble is a loss of player possession of the ball other than by handing, passing or punting the ball. A fumbled ball that hits the ground is dead at that spot and belongs to the fumbling team. EXCEPTION: A fumble that strikes the ground in the end zone may be either a touchback or a safety depending on which end zone the ball is fumbled into.

- ❖ **HANDING THE BALL FORWARD** – A player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time anywhere on the field.

- ❖ **10 YARDS AFTER READY FOR PLAY** – At any time after the ready for play whistle and prior to the snap, all offensive players must be within 10 yards from the ball (orange ball spotter). This is to prevent offensive players from “sneaking” onto the field and staying near the sideline just before the ball is snapped, which would in many cases, leave that particular player uncovered with a clear path to the end zone.

Penalty: Illegal Procedure, 3 yards (previous spot).

- ❖ **ENCROACHMENT** – The first offender rule is in effect when it comes to encroachment. This means that the moment a player from either team enters the neutral zone (after the ready for play whistle) he/she shall be called for the penalty. This is a dead ball foul, so play should be whistled dead immediately after the encroachment occurs.
Penalty: 3 yards.

- ❖ **SCREEN BLOCKING** – This is legal as long as the following guidelines are followed:
 - A) The blocker's arms must be kept at his/her side, in front of his/her waist, or behind his/her back.
 - B) The blocker may not initiate contact with a defender.
 - C) The blocker must stay within the framework of his/her body (no extending arms, legs, knees, etc.)
 - D) A penalty occurs when contact is initiated and there is an advantage gained.Penalty: Illegal contact, 5 yards (all-but-one).

- ❖ **SNAP REGULATIONS** – To start every play there must be a snap.
 - A) A snap must be one smooth, quick, and continuous motion, either between the snapper's legs or from the side. The ball must leave the snapper's hand(s) during this motion. After the snapper takes his initial position over the ball, he/she may move or rotate the ball. After the snapper comes to a set position, he/she may not move the ball again until it is snapped. Penalty: Dead Ball, Illegal Snap, 3 yards.
 - B) The player who receives the snap must be at least two (2) yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. Direct snaps are illegal. Penalty: Live Ball, Illegal Snap, 3 yards.

- ❖ **FOUL ON A SCORE** – If there is a foul by the offensive team, other than an unsportsmanlike or non-player foul during a down, which results in successful touchdown or try, the acceptance of the penalty nullifies the score. If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down, which results in a touchdown or try, the penalty will be enforced from either the succeeding spot or the ensuing possession (Captain's choice).

- ❖ **RUNNING PLAYS** – No player with the ball may run through the line of scrimmage until a forward pass has been caught beyond the line of scrimmage.
Penalty: Illegal procedure, 3 yards (previous spot)

Section 19: Overtime Procedures:

If the score is tied at the end of regulation, the following procedure will be used to break the tie:

1. Both teams will meet with the officials to discuss the procedure.
2. The team calling the original coin toss will call the 1st OT coin toss.
3. The winner of the coin toss will choose from the following options:
 - a. Offense
 - b. Defense
 - c. Side of the field to play on (side will not change)
 - d. If we go to multiple OT periods, the opposite team will have choice of Off. Or Def.
 - e. Teams do not have to go for 2 after 2nd OT

Each team will attempt to score by passing from the 3 yard line for 1 point, from the 10 yard line for 2 points, or from the 20 yard line for 3 points. Each team is granted 1 time out per OT period (TO do not carry over). The goal line is always the zone line to gain regardless of position of ball on field.

