



4-on-4 FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

Participation: All participants must have a valid Phoenix Card and be eligible for participation as listed in the Elon University Intramural Sports Participant Guide.

Game time is forfeit time.

Unless otherwise noted below, all NIRSA Flag Football Rules apply.

1. Game, Field, and Equipment

Game

- 1.1.** A team consists of four players (*Co-ed: at least two of whom must be female*).
- 1.2.** Each team shall designate a captain to act as team spokesperson and make decisions. Only the captain may talk to officials.
 - 1.2.1.** The Team Captain is responsible for the conduct of his/her teammates, spectators, and managers/coaches. Team representatives are subject to sanctions as listed in the Elon Intramural Sports Participant Guide.

Field

- 1.3.** The field shall be 40 yards long, end line to end line and 40 yards wide. There will be two 10-yard end zones and two 20 yard zones. The field will be divided by one hash mark.

Equipment

- 1.4.** Men will use the regulation size football, women will use the intermediate size football, while Co-ed may use either size.
 - 1.4.1.** Game balls will be provided however teams may choose to use their own footballs. Game balls must be agreed upon by both captains and game officials.
 - 1.4.2.** The offense is responsible returning the ball to the huddle or game official at all times.
- 1.5.** Shirts must be long enough to tuck in so that they remain tucked in the pants/shorts during the entire down or short enough so there is a minimum 4" from the bottom of the shirt to the player's waistline.
- 1.6.** Pants or shorts with BELT LOOPS or POCKETS should not be worn.
- 1.7.** Metal cleats are prohibited.
- 1.8.** Participants must wear closed toe shoes in order to participate.
- 1.9.** Towels may NOT hang from a player's waist or otherwise interfere with the possible removal of a flag.
 - 1.9.1.** Towels may be used and kept on the ground or on the ball before the snap.
- 1.10.** All jewelry must be removed including watches, earrings, bracelets, etc. Players may wear soft, pliable basketball or wrestling knee pads on legs, knees and/or ankle.

2. Timing and Substitutions

- 2.1.** The winner of the pre-game toss shall have the first choice of options:
 - A. offense or defense
 - B. which goal to defend
 - C. to defer their choice of A or B until the second half
- 2.2.** A game shall consist of two (2), 12 minute halves with a 2-minute intermission.



- 2.3. The clock will run continuously during the first 11 minutes of each half and will stop only for time-outs and injuries.
- 2.4. During the last 1 minute of each half, the clock will stop of regulation timing. The clock will stop for: Penalties, Scoring plays, Incomplete passes/out of bounds, Injured players, First downs (until the ball is set in play by referee's ready to play whistle), and Time-outs.
- 2.5. Start (re-start) of play: The ball will be placed at the 10 yard line to begin each half and after all scores.
- 2.6. Each team is allowed one (1) timeout per game. Timeouts are one minute in duration.
- 2.7. Free substitution is allowed after any whistle provided the substitution does not delay the game. However, no offensive substitute may enter unless he joins the huddle and is part of the huddle at the time when it breaks.
- 2.8. The offensive team has 25 seconds to put the ball in play after referee signals "ready for play."
Penalty: Delay of Game - 3 yards.

Overtime (Post Season Tournament Only)

- 2.9. If the score is tied at the end of regulation, overtime will proceed in the following manner:
 - 2.9.1. A coin toss will determine offense, defense, and direction of play. The team winning the toss will be given these options. The opposing team then has the remaining choice.
 - 2.9.2. All overtime periods will be played toward the same goal line.
 - 2.9.3. Each team will have **one** play to attempt to score from either the 5 yard line for 1 point, 10 yard line for 2 points, or the 20 yard line for 3 points.
 - 2.9.4. When a pass is intercepted the defense becomes the offense and begins their down. If the interception is returned for a touchdown, the game is over.

3. Definition of Playing Terms

- 3.1. *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 his head to assist the official in locating the spot where the capture occurred. A player may dive to remove a flag belt as long as no contact is made with the opposing team.
 - 3.1.1. The position of the ball when a player is deflagged determines the spot of the next line of scrimmage.
 - 3.1.2. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock down the ball carrier in an attempt to remove the flag, nor shall an offensive player hold, block, or run through a defensive player trying to remove the flag belt.
 - 3.1.3. When a runner loses his/her flag belt, either accidentally or inadvertently, play continues. The runner will be called down when touched with one-hand by a defensive player.
- 3.2. *Scrimmage line:* The scrimmage line for team A is the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. The scrimmage line for team B is the yard line and its vertical plane, which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. A colored marker will signify each scrimmage line.
 - 3.2.1. A "Team A" runner cannot advance the ball through "Team A's" scrimmage line.
 - 3.2.1.1. There are no restrictions after a change of possession or once a LEGAL forward pass has been caught beyond "Team A's" scrimmage line. *Penalty: Illegal Procedure - 3 yards.*



4. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-Of-Bounds

4.1. The ball is declared dead when:

- A. The ball goes out-of-bounds
- B. When any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground
- C. The ball touches the ground on a fumble, lateral, on a forward pass, and after touching the ground on a punt
- D. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or successful Try is made.
- E. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players
- F. When the ball strikes the ground after being first touched by the kicking team
- G. 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.
- H. When a runner is legally tagged or when the flag belt becomes detached.
- I. When the defending team secures possession during a Try or in Overtime.

4.2. The sideline and end lines are considered out of bounds.

4.2.1. A player only needs one foot in bounds and possession of the football in order for a pass to be complete.

4.3. An offensive or defensive player steps out of bounds, that player is no longer eligible to touch the ball. *Penalty: Illegal touching - 3 yards and replay the down.*

5. Series of Downs, Number of Downs

5.1. In a series of 3 downs, the ball must be advanced forward into the next zone in order for a new series of downs to be awarded.

5.1.1. Yardage lines are considered part of the next zone line to gain.

6. Kicking the Ball

6.1.1. There is no punting or kicking the ball in 4-on-4 Flag Football. Each team will use all 3 downs to attempt to get to the next zone line to gain. Failure to do so will result in a turnover on downs.

7. Snapping, Handling, and Passing the Ball

7.1. The ball must be snapped from the ground. The ball may be snapped between the legs or to the side of the snapper and must be snapped in one continuous motion.

7.1.1. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. *Direct snaps (under center) are illegal.*

7.2. **The offensive team must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage.**

7.3. There must be a legal pass attempt each down. The person receiving the ball must be beyond "Team A's" line of scrimmage.

7.4. **The passer has 7 seconds to release the ball. If not, loss of down and the ball is spotted at the previous location.**

7.5. All players are eligible for a forward pass.

7.5.1. Only one forward pass is allowed per down.

7.5.2. The passer shall not intentionally ground the ball in order to avoid a sack.

7.6. The ball is dead at the spot at which it touches the ground (or the spot where it was last touched if batted forward).



- 7.7. It is *defensive pass interference* if an eligible receiver is deflagged prior to touching the ball on a forward pass attempt.
- 7.8. During the interval between downs, when 2 or more consecutive encroachments are committed by the same team, *the penalty will be 5 yards for the second encroachment foul.*

8. Scoring Plays and Touchbacks

Scoring

8.1. Touchdowns equal 6 points

8.1.1. *Co-ed*: If a female throws a completed forward pass or scores a touchdown it will be worth 9 points.

8.1.2. *Touchdown Verification*: The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player.

8.1.2.1. If the player is not deflagged with one good pull, and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed. The player is disqualified, and it is a penalty is assessed. *Penalty: 5 yards from the previous spot and a loss of down*

8.2. Try on point after touchdown

8.2.1. A team is given the choice of going for 1, 2, or 3 points after scoring a touchdown. Once the Team Captain makes the choice, it may only be changed if a timeout is called.

- A. 5 yards = 1 point
- B. 10 yards = 2 points
- C. 20 yards = 3 points

8.2.2. The Try begins when the ball is marked ready for play. The try will end if B secures possession or the try is good.

8.3. After a safety is scored, the team that is awarded 2 points will automatically gain possession at their own 10 yard line.

Mercy Rule:

8.4. If a team is ahead by 25 points with **four** minutes or less remaining in the second half, the game will be ended.

9. Players' Conduct

9.1. All guidelines and penalties will be followed according to the NIRSA 7-on-7 Flag Football rules.

9.1.1. **All 10 yard penalties (as assessed in 7-on-7 flag football) will be 5 yards, and all 5 yard penalties will be 3 yards.**

9.2. It is illegal to steal or attempt to steal (strip) the ball from a player in possession.

9.2.1. *Penalty: 5 yards from the end of the run.*

9.3. *Roughing the passer*: Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear that the ball has been thrown and may not make contact with the throwing arm.

9.3.1. *Penalty: 5 yards and automatic first down, assessed at the end of the play (if positive yards have been gained), or 5 yards from the original spot and automatic first down if no positive yardage.*

9.4. *Guarding the flag belt*: Ball carriers shall not guard their flags by blocking, with arms, hands or ball, the opportunity for an opponent to pull or remove the flag belt.

9.4.1. *Penalty: 5 yards from spot of the foul.*


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- 9.5.** The defensive player shall not (intentionally or accidentally) hold, grasp, or obstruct forward progress of a ball carrier when in the act of removing the flag belt.
9.5.1. Penalty: 5 yards at the end of the run.
- 9.6.** Intentionally pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball by a defensive player is illegal.
9.6.1. Penalty: 5 yards.
- 9.7. Offensive 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 arms, elbows, legs, or knees to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal. A blocker may use his/her feet in order to gain position before, during and after screen blocking.
9.7.1. Penalty: 5 yards from the spot of the penalty.
- 9.8. Screen blocking fundamentals:** a player who screens shall not:
- A. when he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than a normal step from him or her
 - B. when he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with him/her
 - C. take a position so close to a moving opponent that his 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 one to two normal steps or strides from the opponent.
 - D. After assuming his/her legal screening position, move to maintain it, unless he/she moves in the same direction and path of his/her opponent.
- 9.8.1. Penalty: 5 yards from the spot of the penalty.*
- 9.9. 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.
9.9.1. Penalty: 5 yards from the spot of the penalty.
- 9.10. 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 to grab or push the opponent aside. The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official. A rusher may use his/her arms or hands to break a fall or retain his/her balance.
9.10.1. Penalty: 3 yards from end of the play.
- 9.11.** There shall be no bumping, checking, or other intentional contact between a defender and an offensive pass receiver. Both offense and defense have a right to the football. While the ball is in flight, there should be no interference by either the offense or defense to prevent the opponent from catching the football.
- 9.12.** If a player attempting a diving flag removal trips the ball carrier the *penalty is 5 yards from the end of the run.*



10. Co-ed Rules

- 10.1.** A team consists of four players - Two females must be on the field at all times.
- 10.2.** The offensive team must have one player on the line of scrimmage.
- 10.3.** If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass must involve either a female passer or female receiver. To be considered legal, the forward pass must cross the line of scrimmage in the air.
- 10.4.** During the offensive team's possession, there may not be two consecutive completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This applies to the point after touchdown attempt.
- 10.4.1.** If a female passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver behind the team A scrimmage line and any male on team A runs beyond the scrimmage line, it is an illegal forward pass. *Penalty: Illegal forward pass, 3 yards from the spot where the pass male-to-male pass was released, and loss of down.*
- 10.5.** If a female scores a touchdown or throws a completed forward pass for a touchdown, the point value is 9.
- 10.6.** "Open and Closed" Plays
- 10.6.1.** **"Open"**- If a team is eligible to make a male-to-male forward pass during a down, that down is said to be "open".
- 10.6.2.** **"Closed"**- If a team has thrown a male-to-male forward pass, all of the downs during the series after that play are said to be "closed" until a legal forward pass involving a female "opens it back up".
- 10.6.3.** Whether or not penalties offset, or are declined or accepted, have no effect on a down's "open" or "closed" status.
- 10.6.4.** When a new series of downs have begun, the first play is always "open".