

Flag Football Rules

The NIRSA Flag Football Rules will govern play for any rules not mentioned in the following LU IMS Flag Football rules. These rules are highlights or modifications of the rules used by NIRSA. The LU IMS Supervisor will make final interpretations of any rule on site. All rules are subject to change at the discretion of the LU IMS Administrative staff.

I. Equipment

- No excess equipment (i.e. pads, helmets, etc.) All protective medical equipment (tape, braces, etc.) must be approved by head official.
- Molded cleats or tennis shoes are the only footwear allowed. No metal cleats are to be worn. (1st offense: ejection from game; 2nd offense: ejection from league)
- Shirts or jerseys must be long enough to be tucked in, and short enough to be a minimum of four inches above the belt.
- No belt loops or pockets are allowed on pants or shorts. Pants or shorts must be a different color than the flags.
- You can bring your own ball to use otherwise one will be provided for you. Ball must be approved by head official.
- Players may wear a stocking cap (no billed caps) or headband. No bandanas are allowed.
- Sunglasses may be worn provided they are pliable and non-rigid.
- No jewelry of any kind may be worn.
- No towels may be worn from a player's waist.

II. Playing Field

- Field dimensions are 100 yards long (2 ten yard end zones and 4 twenty yard zones)
- The lines bounding the sidelines and the end zones are out-of-bounds.
- Players and spectators must stay between the 20-yard lines.

III. Players

- Only seven players per team are allowed on the field at one time.
- Six players are required to start and finish a game.
- The offense must have at least four players on the offensive line of scrimmage at all times before "line set" can be called.
- All plays must originate with a snap to someone who is two yards behind the line of scrimmage.
- Only one offensive player can be in motion when the ball is snapped. The motion must be parallel to or away from the line of scrimmage.
- No defensive player may be closer than one yard to the line of scrimmage during all scrimmage downs. Defensive players may not break this buffer zone before the ball is snapped.
- Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after a down has ended. The snapper may have the ball spotted or carry it with him in order to keep it clean and dry. A towel may be used to help keep the ball dry and placed under the ball during inclement weather.

- All substitutions must occur after a play has been stopped or during a timeout. Players may not substitute during a play. Players must enter the field directly from the team area and must be a yard off the sideline to be eligible to play.

IV. Timing

- A game shall consist of two 20-minute halves with a running clock the first 18 minutes of each half.
- The clock can only be stopped by a timeout or an injury during the first 18 minutes of each half.
- During the last 2 minutes of each half, the clock will be stopped at all whistles other than deflagging. Teams will be notified of the two-minute warning.
- Anytime during the game, the playing time of the remaining periods may be shortened by mutual agreement of captains and referees.
- The clock will run during the point after touchdown (P.A.T.) attempt except during the last two minutes of each half.
- During the last 2 minutes of each half the clock will stop for a:
 - Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass - starts on the snap.
 - Out-of-bounds – start on the snap.
 - Safety – starts on the snap.
 - Team Timeout – start on the snap.
 - First down – depends on the previous play.
 - Touchdown – starts on the next offensive snap (P.A.T.'s are untimed).
 - Penalty and Administration – depends on the previous play (except delay of game –starts on snap).
 - Referees' Timeout – starts at his/her discretion.
 - Touchback – starts on snap.
 - Team attempting to conserve time illegally – starts on whistle.
 - Team attempting to consume time illegally – starts on snap.
- Each team is allowed two sixty second timeouts per game.
- After a stopped clock, time will begin at the snap of the ball, unless in the final two minutes as dictated by the previous play.
- Once the ball has been marked, a team has 20 seconds to snap the ball.
- Before a play can be run the official must announce, "Line set". Before the official can do so, four players must be on the line of scrimmage.
- A team may defer its toss option to the second half. If not the team must choose whether to receive the ball or choose which goal to defend. The opposing team may choose if the option is deferred.
- Once a team captain declares a punt, a field goal, or to go for a one or two point conversion, he or she may change the decision only by taking a charged timeout.
- Mercy Rule- A game is complete if any team is ahead by 18 points with 2 minutes or less in the game.
- A half may be extended using an untimed down if the half ends on a defensive penalty or a touchdown. If the touchdown occurs at the end of the second half and the P.A.T. will not affect the outcome the game will be over.

V. Overtime

- During the regular season and playoffs, overtime will continue until a winner is determined. After the first overtime, teams must go for two points.
- There will be only one coin flip in overtime.
- All overtime periods are played toward the same goal.
- Each team will start first down and goal from the 20-yard line. The team will have four downs to score, unless awarded first down automatically, or a penalty allows for repeating a down. If the defense intercepts a pass and returns it for a touchdown (except on a P.A.T.) the game is over.
- Each team is entitled to one timeout per overtime period.

VI. First Downs

- A first down is awarded to a team whenever they advance the ball across a 20-yard marker (zone line-to-gain). A team will be allowed four downs to achieve a first down.
- Only one first down per series of possession can be obtained at each 20-yard marker.
- A new series of downs shall be awarded:
 - When a team moves the ball into the next zone on a play free from penalty
 - Penalty against the defense moves the ball into the next zone
 - An accepted penalty against the defense involves an automatic first down
 - Either team has obtained legal possession of a ball because of a penalty, punt, touchback, pass interception or turnover on downs.

VII. Carrying the Ball

- A ball carrier is down when flag is pulled off, when one knee touches the ground, or when the player is touched after the flag has inadvertently fallen off.
- A ball carrier is not down if he/she maintains balance by placing a hand on the ground. The ball is considered part of the hand.
- A player may not be pushed, blocked, or tackled (this results in a penalty).
- NO "stiff arms"
- NO "power sweeps".
- NO teammates may precede the ball carrier as he/she runs. However, any # of teammates may position themselves ahead of the ball carrier's intended route and "screen" opponents as the ball carrier arrives in that area.
- NO "guarding of flags" (i.e. any obstruction), ball must be carried above the waist.
- Ball carrier may not be "stripped" of the ball.
- Ball carrier has unlimited spins.
- Ball carrier may jump or dive to avoid deflagging. However, if player initiates contact with another player there will be a penalty.
- If a player inadvertently loses his or her flag or if pulled by the opposition before gaining possession of the ball, the play will continue until the player is one-hand touched by a defensive player.
- A fumbled ball is dead when it strikes the ground.
- When an inadvertent whistle occurs, the offensive team will have the option of taking the play as whistled or running the play over.

VIII. Blocking and Rushing

- Blocker must have his/her hands by their sides or behind their back.

- NO “shoving”
- NO “dropping of the shoulder”
- Blocker may not leave his/her feet.
- NO blocking from behind or cross body
- Blocking will be by screening only. That is, a blocker must hinder a defender’s movement through positioning rather than body contact.
- While incidental contact will occur, blocking and rushing penalties will be called against the player who initiates the contact.
- The defense may not use hands, arms, or legs to gain an advantage over a blocker.

IX. Passing

- A forward pass may be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage.
- All incomplete passes, lateral or backward, shall be marked at the point of ground contact.
- A forward pass is illegal:
 - If the passer’s foot is beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the hand
 - If thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
 - If intentionally thrown to the ground or out-of-bounds to save loss of yardage
 - If a passer catches his/her untouched forward or backwards pass.If there is more than one forward pass per down.
- A forward pass is completed when caught by a member of the passing team inbounds (one foot constitutes being inbounds).
- A forward pass is intercepted when caught by a member of the opposing team inbounds (one foot constitutes being inbounds).
- If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of the opposing teams, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the offensive team at the spot of the catch.
- All players except the passer are eligible to receive the pass.
- A pass intercepted in the end zone may be advanced.
- If the passer’s flags are pulled prior to releasing the ball, the ball is dead and the play has ended.
- If an offensive player goes out of bounds on his/her own, that player loses eligibility to receive the ball until someone else has touched the ball.
- Roughing the passer- Defensive players must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward. 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.

X. Kicking

- No kickoff is used to begin a half. The ball will be placed at the 14-yard line.
- On fourth down, the offense must announce whether or not it will punt. Once the decision has been made, it cannot be changed except after a timeout.
- If kick is to be made the following procedures must be followed:
 - The offense must have a minimum of four players on the line of scrimmage.
 - The kick must be made immediately upon receiving the snap.
 - All offensive players must remain motionless until the kick is made.

- Only the receiving team may advance a punt. A punt may contact the ground and then advanced. If the ball is touched and then contacts the ground the ball is dead at the spot of contact with the ground.
- A ball that goes into the end zone after it is kicked shall be a touchback.

XI. Scoring

- Touchdown- 6 points
- Safety- 2 points
- P.A.T. from the three-yard line- one point
- P.A.T. from the 10-yard line- two points
- P.A.T. from the 20-yard line- three points
- The player scoring the touchdown must raise his or her arms so the nearest official can deflag the player. If the player is not deflagged with one pull and the official determines the flag belt has been secured illegally, the touchdown is disallowed, the player is ejected, and a penalty occurs. The ball must cross the line for a score to occur. The body does not count.

XII. Ejections

- You will be ejected from the game for the following:
 - Cursing, Fighting, Illegal equipment, Unsportsmanlike conduct
 - Anything else deemed necessary by the Intramural Sports Supervisor

XIII. Penalties

	<u>Distance</u>	<u>Replay Down?</u>	<u>Where Marked</u>
Offensive:			
Offside	5 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
False Start	5 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Delay of Game	5 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Illegal Blocking	10 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Holding	10 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Clipping	10 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Intentional Grounding	10 yards	No	Previous Spot
Pass Interference	10 yards	No	Previous Spot
Illegal Forward Pass	10 yards	No	Previous Spot
Guarding of Flag	10 yards	Yes	Spot of Foul
Initiating Contact	10 yards	Yes	Spot of Foul
Illegal Forward Pitch	NONE	No	Spot of Foul
Defensive:			
Offside	5 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Illegal Contact	10 yards	Yes	Previous Spot
Holding	10 yards	Yes	Spot of Foul
Stripping	10 yards	Yes	Spot of Foul
Pass Interference	0 yards	First	Spot of Foul
Roughing the Passer	10 yards	First	Previous Spot
Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Flagrant-ejection)	10 yards	First	From end of play

XIV. Sportsmanship

- The mission of LU IMS is to provide a recreational environment for the LU community that is safe and enjoyable. While the game atmosphere is often competitive, ensuring participant safety, providing a fun, social atmosphere, and promoting sportsmanlike behavior among participants, spectators, and team followers are our primary concerns. The game atmosphere should remain good-natured at all times. Participants shall maintain good sportsmanship throughout their participation in all facets of LU IMS.
- The LU IMS Sportsmanship Rating System is intended to be an objective scale by which teams' attitude and behavior can be assessed throughout the LU IMS league and playoff seasons. Behavior before, during, and after an LU IMS contest is included in the rating. The team captain is responsible for educating and informing all players and spectators affiliated with his/her team about the system.
- A team is responsible for the actions of the individual team members and spectators related to it. Additionally, LU IMS does not recognize the use of coaches. Only the team captain shall speak to the officials regarding administrative matters (protests, ejections, disqualifications, etc.). Furthermore, the team captain's effort in assisting officials/staff to calm difficult situations and to restrain troubled teammates is vital in controlling team conduct.
- Sportsmanship is vital to the conduct of every LU IMS contest. In order to encourage proper conduct during games, officials, administrative personnel, and supervisors shall make decisions on whether to warn, penalize, or eject players or teams for poor sportsmanship. These decisions are final! The LU IMS administrative staff will rule on further penalties due to unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Each participant should choose his/her team members carefully, as all team members will suffer the consequences of any disciplinary action taken by the LU IMS staff against that team for violation of the LU IMS rules and sportsmanship guidelines. Protest or appeals of sportsmanship ratings will not be recognized. The LU IMS administrative staff reserves the right to review any rating given to a team.
- Additional information regarding team and participant sportsmanship including the rating method, factors, and scale is available in the Sportsmanship section of the LU IMS Handbook, available online at www.liberty.edu/ims.