

2026 Flag Football Rules Summary

31-Jul-25

All rules not mentioned in this packet will be governed by the NIRSA flag football rules.

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Uniform

- All players on a team must wear matching jerseys.
 - Players **are not allowed** to wear other jerseys that were provided for another sport.
- At minimum, any participants shorts must be loose-fitting and able to reach the top of the kneecap while they are idle or standing.
 - Shorts **are not allowed** to be modified by having the band rolled up or legs tucked in.
- If a jersey or shorts given by the Collegian Sports department cannot be worn due to not meeting the dress code outlined by the [Student Handbook](#), the player can wear their own shirt or shorts that meet the dress code and that matches the team's uniforms as much as possible.

Equipment

- A regulation ball will be used as provided by the Collegian Sports Department.
- Clothing regulations:
 - Players must wear shorts or pants **without** pockets, belt loops, or zippers.
 - Shirts must be tucked in during play.
 - If wearing a hoodie, the hood must remain under the jersey.
 - Two players from the same team may not share the same jersey number during the same game.
 - Shoes are required. Metal spikes and metal cleats are prohibited.
- Equipment representing possible hazards to participants will not be permitted.
 - NO bandannas, jewelry, exposed metal or hard, unyielding plastic on braces, casts, etc. will be allowed. Only medical alert bracelets are permitted and must be taped to the wrist.
 - For piercings that cannot be easily removed, a clear, pliable, narrow plastic stem may be used to keep the hole from closing. However, this must be approved by the referee and deemed not dangerous to other players.
- Players must wear athletic-type shoes with non-marking soles that cover the foot completely. Sandals, boots, and open-toe shoes are not allowed.
 - The officials and supervisors on duty have the authority to disallow any shoe that they believe could endanger the person wearing the shoe or his opponents.
- Players may wear a knitted cap without a bill.

Penalty: *If a player is found wearing illegal equipment during the game, the team will be assessed a 10-yard penalty.*

Team Composition

- Games are 7-on-7 and must have a minimum of 4 players. Game time is forfeit time.
- If the number of players is reduced to fewer than 4 during the game, the game may continue as long as the referee believes the team has a chance of winning.

Collegian Sports:

Student Activities Office, AC-1
850-478-8496, ext. 2740

Game Line:

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- Team rosters may include a minimum of 10 players and a maximum of 16. A player must be added to both electronic and paper team rosters before they are eligible to participate. Collegian athletic directors are responsible for keeping their collegian's electronic and paper team rosters current.

Safety

- Any player visibly bleeding must leave the field and may return with the official's permission after the wound is cleaned and bandaged; clothing must be changed before a player may reenter the match if blood is visible and/or present.
- If in the opinion of the official, a player is exhibiting symptoms/signs or behavior consistent with an "apparent concussion," that player will be removed to seek medical attention and may not return to play until cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional.
 - A written medical clearance must be submitted to the Student Activities Office **before** the participant may resume participation in any Collegian Sports competition.

Game Format

- Games consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute halftime. The officials will keep the time on the field.
 - The clock will run for the first 19 minutes of the 1st half, and the first 18 minutes of the 2nd half.
 - During the last minute of the 1st half and the last two minutes of the 2nd half, the clock will stop for timeouts, out-of-bounds plays, incomplete passes, and after a touchdown or safety.
- The captain of the visiting team will call the coin toss for the start of the game. The captain winning the toss will have a choice of options for the 1st half or shall defer his option to the 2nd half. The options for each half will be as follows:
 - Start on offense or defense
 - Which goal his team will defend
 - The captain not having the first choice of options for a half will exercise the remaining option.
- Each team receives one timeout per half.
 - Time-outs are 1 minute in length.
 - Any team, coach, or player may call a timeout.
 - Unused timeouts do not carry over to the following period.
- All regular season games can end in a tie. Overtime will be played in playoff games.
- **Overtime (OT):**
 - A coin toss will determine the options at the start of the game.
 - The home team captain will call the toss.
 - There will be only one coin toss during overtime.
 - If additional overtime periods are played, field captains will alternate choices.
 - All overtime periods are played toward the same goal line.
 - An overtime period consists of a series of downs for each team starting at 10 yards from the goal line.
 - Each team is entitled to 1 timeout during the entire overtime.

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- **Mercy rule:** The mercy rule will take effect when any of the following conditions are met:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Point Difference</u>
2 minutes or less remaining	19+ points
Anytime in the 2 nd half	34+ points

Game Procedures

Blocking

- The only permitted type of blocking is screen blocking. Screen blocking is essentially non-contact, similar to basketball.
 - A defender must avoid contacting the blocker in any way.
 - The blocker may not initiate contact.
 - Any number of defenders may rush the quarterback at any time.

First downs

- Teams obtain a first down by crossing a line-to-gain. Lines-to-gain are the 20- and 40-yard lines.

Fumbles

- Fumbles are immediately dead when the ball touches the ground. Defenders may not bat a ball in the possession of a player or attempt to force a fumble. For timing purposes, fumbles and bad snaps are considered running plays.

Guarding the flag belt

- A runner shall not flag guard by using his hands, arms, or the ball to cause contact between the runner and an opponent that denies the opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Placing or swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt
 - Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt
 - Lowering the shoulders in such a manner that places the arm over the flag belt.

Handoffs

- Any player may hand off the ball in any direction, anywhere on the field.

Illegal contact

- Excessive contact by any player against an opponent will be considered a personal foul.

Line of scrimmage

- The snapper is the *only* offensive player required to be on his scrimmage line at the snap.

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- At the time of reception, the player receiving the snap must maintain a distance of at least 2 yards from the snapper. Direct snaps are not allowed.
- Defensive players who enter the neutral zone before the snap are immediately offside and do not have the opportunity to jump back onside.

Pass interference

- During a down in which a legal forward pass crosses the offensive team's line of scrimmage, contact that interferes with an eligible receiver who is beyond the offensive'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.
- An eligible receiver is deflagged/tagged prior to touching a forward pass thrown beyond the offense's scrimmage line.
- Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on offensive and defensive pass interference.

Point after touchdown (PAT)

- PAT point values per respective yard line:
 - 1 point (3-yard line)
 - 2 points (10-yard line)
 - 3 points (20-yard line)
- A turnover ends the PAT attempt immediately.
- Interceptions during a PAT attempt cannot be returned for a defensive score.

Punts

- All punts must be announced.
- On the fourth down, the referee will ask the team captain to declare a punt or play. Once announced, the decision is final unless a team timeout is called, period ends, a foul occurs, or an advertent whistle is blown any time prior to or during this down which results in the kicking team having the right to repeat the down again. The referee must ask the offensive team captain whether or not he wants punt and communicate this decision to the defensive team's captain.
- Neither team may advance beyond its respective scrimmage line until the ball is punted.

Receptions

- All players on the field are eligible receivers.
- The first part of a receiver's body to contact the ground on a reception will determine if the receiver is inbounds or out-of-bounds.
- Only one foot, knee, or elbow is required to be inbounds.

Running plays and forward passes

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- An offensive player may run through or cross the line of scrimmage, then run back behind the line of scrimmage, and throw a forward pass *or* toss the ball backward to another player. That player can then throw a forward pass, as long as such pass is the first and only forward pass in the down and is thrown when the passer's feet are behind or on the line of scrimmage at the time of the pass.
- Only 1 legal forward pass is permitted per down.

Substitutions

- Between downs, any number of eligible substitutes may replace players provided the substitution is completed by having the replaced player(s) off the field before the ball is snapped.
 - An incoming substitute must enter the field directly from his team area.
 - A replaced player must leave the field immediately at the sideline nearest his team area before the ball is snapped.

Unsportsmanlike conduct

- The 2nd unsportsmanlike conduct by the same player or non-player results in an ejection from the game. The ejected player or non-player must leave the playing field and its surroundings.
- A 3rd unsportsmanlike conduct by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.

Game Cancellations

- A game may be canceled at any point.
- If a game is stopped and the 1st half is complete, it is considered a complete game. The score will stand as it was when the game was stopped.

Example: A game stopped 0:01 second into halftime is a completed game, and the score at the time of stoppage is the final score.
- If a game is stopped (excluding forfeits) and the 1st half is *not* complete, the game will be rescheduled. The rescheduled game will begin where the game stopped (i.e., time remaining, score, possession of the ball, etc.) Example: If a game is stopped at the 15:55 mark of the 1st half with the score of 6 – 7 in Team A's favor, and Team A has possession of the ball on the 40 yd. line, the game will resume at the rescheduled date with the score of 6 – 7, a time of 15:55 in the 1st half, and the team in possession of the ball (Team A possession at the 40 yd. line) as it was when the game was stopped.
- Games that are canceled prior to being played, excluding forfeits, will be rescheduled. Please check [Eagles Nest](#) for exact game times, dates, and locations.

Teams will meet for prayer on the field 1 minute before the start of each game. The captain of the *home* team prays.

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