Western Washington University Intramural Sports
Flag Football Rules

All participants must read the Intramural Handbook and sign a Holds Harmless Agreement before participating. Both of these can be found on our website: www.wwu.edu/campusrec.

Current NIRSA flag & touch football rules will govern play. Intramural Policies, Procedures, Eligibility Requirements, etc. and specific rule modifications will take precedent.

I. GAME, FIELD, PLAYERS, AND EQUIPMENT
   A. The Playing Field
      1. The field shall measure 40 yards wide and 50 to 60 yards long plus 10-yard end zones.
      2. The playing fields will be divided into three (3) zones by two (2) lines.
   B. Equipment
      1. A regulation rubber or leather ball shall be used as provided by the Campus Recreation Office or another ball may be used if mutually agreed upon by both teams, and the referee. Men's leagues will use a regulation size ball, while women's and coed leagues may use an intermediate size ball. The referee shall approve the game ball(s).
      2. The offensive team is responsible for securing the ball after each play. The offensive team should secure the ball and take it back to their team huddle after every play.
      3. Two ball spotters will be used to mark the neutral zone. An orange color mark will serve as the offensive scrimmage line. A yellow color mark will serve as the defensive scrimmage line. The marks will be one (1) yard apart.
      4. Players must wear athletic type shoes that cover the foot completely. Sandals, boots, and open toe shoes are NOT allowed. Sports cleats are limited to studs with projections which do not exceed ½ inch in length and are made with nonabrasive rubber or rubber-type synthetic material which does not chip or develop a cutting edge. The officials and supervisors on duty have the authority to disallow any shoe, which they feel would endanger the person wearing the shoe or his/her opponents. No protest regarding shoes will be accepted by the Intramural Staff.
      5. Flags:
         a. Each player must have a set of flags on at all times. Flags will be supplied by the Intramural department. Failure to wear a flag belt may be called a live ball or dead ball penalty. Penalty--Failure to wear proper equipment.
         b. Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain an advantage including tying, using foreign materials, or other such acts is illegal. Infractions will result in penalty or player disqualification.
      6. Shirts:
         a. must be either long enough so they remain tucked in the pants during the entire down, or
         b. short enough so there is a minimum of 4" from the bottom of the jersey to the player's waistline. (The Referee will use a closed fist to measure the distance between the waistline and the bottom of the jersey.)
      7. Players are strongly encouraged to wear long pants and long sleeves to prevent cuts, scrapes, etc. Any person with exposed cuts or scrapes must substitute out of the game until all bleeding is stopped and covered.
      8. No stickum or similar substance will be allowed. Infractions will result in player disqualification.
      9. Football pads, casts, or metal braces are not allowed (knee/elbow pads are legal.)
     10. Players may wear the Navy Watch - Style knit or stocking cap. The cap may have no bill.
     11. Jewelry is illegal equipment.
      12. It is strongly recommended that all players wear mouth guards.
13. **BLOOD RULE:** Any player who is bleeding must be substituted for until the bleeding stops. An intramural staff member or game official has the authority to remove the player. If by removing the player who is bleeding, the team falls below the minimum number necessary to play, the following will apply: The game clock will stop and a maximum of five (5) minutes will be allowed for the player to stop the bleeding. Either an intramural staff member or game official must approve the player to re-enter. If the bleeding is not stopped within the allotted five (5) minutes the team will forfeit the game. THE TIME ALLOWANCE IS ONLY FOR PLAYERS WHO ARE BLEEDING, AND THE TEAM CANNOT CONTINUE TO PLAY WITHOUT THEM.

C. The Game
1. Men, Women: Seven (7) players will constitute a team. Coed: Eight (8) players will constitute a team
2. A minimum number of five (5) players in men's and women's and six (6) players in coed must be ready to play at game time or the team will forfeit. **The game official's watch is the "official" game time.** **GAME TIME IS FORFEIT TIME.** A team must finish the game with the minimum starting number.
3. The captain winning the toss shall have first choice of options for either the first or second half. The loser shall have the first choice of options for the half the winner of the toss did not select. The options for each half shall be:
   a. To choose whether his/her team will begin on offense or defense.
   b. To choose the goal his/her team will defend. The captain, not having the first choice of option for a half, shall exercise the remaining option.
   c. **If a team allows their opponents 10 minutes to avoid a forfeit, they shall automatically receive the first choice of options.**
4. The game will consist of two halves; each made up of a 20 minute running clock. The game clock will stop for all time-outs and in the last two (2) minute of the second (2nd) half only. In the last two minutes of the second half the clock will stop for: incomplete forward passes, out of bounds, time-outs, injuries, first downs, penalties, scores, inadvertent whistles, and change of possession only.
5. Each team is allowed two (2) time-out per game. Time-out will be limited to 30 seconds in duration. Teams will not be charged a time-out for an injured player. (All injured players must leave the game for a minimum of one play)
6. Unnecessary delay of the game is prohibited. If the ball is not put into play within 25 seconds after being spotted by the referee, it will be considered delay of the game.
7. The ball will be placed on the offensive team's 10 yard line at the beginning of each half, as well as following touchdowns, touchbacks, and safeties.
8. A team in possession of the ball has four (4) downs to score or advance into the next zone.
   a. If a penalty occurs during a play the zone to gain will be established after the enforcement of the penalty.
   b. If a penalty moves the ball beyond the zone to gain or a penalty calls for a first down the next line will be the zone to gain.
   c. Declined penalties will have no effect on the zone to gain and the number of the next down will be whatever it would have been had the foul not occurred.
9. When the ball becomes dead, the spot of the ball is directly under the position of the ball (foremost point of the ball).
10. **Kicking**
   a. A punt may be declared by the offensive team on any down. All scrimmage line rules still apply.
b. Once a team has declared they will punt, they may not change their decision unless there is a penalty or a time-out is called.

c. **Neither team may leave or cross the line of scrimmage until the ball is kicked.**
   **Penalty – Live Ball Illegal Procedure**

d. If a punt has been declared, it must be executed immediately after receiving the snap.
   **Penalty - Illegal Procedure**

e. The declared punt may be executed from anywhere behind the line of scrimmage.

f. A punt which has hit the ground without being blocked is not dead until it has been touched, muffed, or fumbled.

g. All punts must be announced. Quick kicks are illegal.  **Penalty - Illegal Kick**

h. Punts that cross the goal line will immediately be blown dead and result in a touchback.

i. If a kick goes out of bounds or comes to rest it will become a dead ball at the spot and belong to the receivers.

j. There are no fair catches. Any fair catch signal shall be ignored. No foul occurs.

11. **Snapping**

   a. Men and Women: On offense, at least four (4) players must be on the line of scrimmage (within a 1-yard zone from a line parallel with the ball). Coed: At least five (5) players must be on the line of scrimmage. Players in motion do not count as being on the line of scrimmage.  **Penalty - Illegal Procedure**

   b. The player who receives the center snap must be at least two (2) yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.  **Penalty - Illegal Procedure**

   c. “Sleeper” plays are not allowed. After the ball is ready for play, each offensive player must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap. **Penalty - Illegal Procedure**

   d. Players may use 2, 3 or 4 point stance.

12. **Passing, Handing the ball.**

   a. Any player may hand the ball backward at any time. A runner may pass the ball backward or lose player possession by a fumble at any time.

   b. Forward passes may be made from any place behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass is allowed per down.  **Penalty - Illegal Forward Pass**

   c. Lateral or backward passes may be made anywhere on the field and there is no limit to the number that may be attempted in each scrimmage down.

   d. Every member of a team is eligible to receive a pass. The passer becomes eligible to catch his/her own pass only after a defensive player touches the ball.  **Penalty - Illegal Forward Pass**

   e. Intercepted passes may be returned from the opponent’s endzone.

   f. The quarterback may catch the snap from center and IMMEDIATELY throw the ball to the ground to stop the clock, the quarterback may not do so to avoid loss of yardage.  **Penalty - Intentional Grounding**

13. **Screen Blocking**

   a. 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, torso, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player's screen block is illegal, this applies to the offensive as well as defensive players. A blocker may use his/her hand or arm to break a fall or to retain his/her balance. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. **Penalty: Personal Foul.**

   b. A player who screens shall not:

      1. When he/she is behind a stationary opponent, take a position closer than a normal step from him or her.

      2. When he/she assumes a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent, make contact with him/her.
3. Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her 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 1 to 2 normal steps or strides from the opponent. If the screener violates any of these provisions and contact results, he/she has committed a personal foul. **Penalty: Personal Foul.**

5. **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 as a wedge to contact the opponent. *The application of this rule depends entirely on the judgment of the official.* **Penalty: Personal Foul.**

14. **Running**
   a. Runners shall not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to deny the opportunity for opponents to pull or remove the flag belt. Flag guarding includes:
      1. Swinging the hand or arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
      2. Placing the ball in possession over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging.
      3. Lowering the shoulders in such a manner which places the arm over the flag belt to prevent an opponent from deflagging. **Penalty: Flag Guarding.**
   b. The runner shall be prohibited from contacting an opponent with extended hand or arm. This includes the use of a "stiff arm" extended to ward off an opponent attempting to deflag/tag.
   c. The runner shall not grasp a teammate or be grasped, pulled or pushed by a teammate.
   d. The runner shall not lower his/her head or shoulders to avoid being deflagged.
   e. Spinning while running is considered part of running and is allowed provided the runner maintains contact with the ground.
   f. Hurdling in an attempt to gain yardage by a ball carrier is illegal and will constitute a personal foul. Hurdling is an attempt by a player to jump with one or both feet or knees foremost over an opponent who is contacting the ground with no part of his/her body, except one or both feet.
   g. **Obstruction of Runner.** The defensive player shall not hold, grasp, or obstruct the forward progress of a runner when in the act of removing the flag belt or making a legal tag. **Penalty: Holding.**
   h. Charging. A runner shall not charge into an opponent in his/her path nor attempt to run between two opponents, unless the space is such as to provide a reasonable chance for him/her to go through without contact. **Penalty: Personal Foul.**

15. Dead Ball
   a. A fumble, muffed ball, center snap and lateral or backward pass which strikes the ground is dead at the spot. The ball shall go to the team that fumbled it at that spot, unless the play occurred on fourth down. NOTE: Any fumble that does not hit the ground may be advanced by the player catching it.
   b. When any part of the runner other than a hand or foot touches the ground, the ball is dead.
   c. A runner is down: When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player. A flag belt is removed when the clip is detached from the belt.
   d. When a runner is legally tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees, including the hand and arm, once the flag belt is no longer attached.

16. Scoring
   a. The player scoring the touchdown must raise his/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. **Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot. If by Team A, loss of down. If by Team B, automatic first down.**
   b. The point value of scoring plays shall be:
1. a. Touchdown 6 points
   b. In coed play a touchdown scored by a woman, by pass, catch, or run 9 points
2. Safety 2 points
3. Extra Points: -Originally from 3-yard line 1 point
   -Originally from 10-yard line 2 points
c. Extra Points:
   1. After a touchdown is scored, the offensive team may try for either a one (1) point or two (2) points.
   2. The ball shall be placed on the three (3) yard line for the one (1) point attempt or the ten (10) yard line for the two (2) point attempt.
   3. Defenses who intercept a pass or fumble during the try and returns it for a touchdown shall score 2 points regardless of the try by the offense.
   4. Once the captain has made the decision for a one (1) or two (2) point attempt a team may not change its mind without using a time-out. If the distance of the attempt is changed by penalty, the attempt will be for the point value of where the penalty is enforced.
d. Tie Games:
   1. Regular season - if the game is tied, no overtime will be played, the game will be recorded as a tie.
   2. Tournament play - A coin will be flipped by the Referee to determine the options as in the start of the game. Unless moved by penalty, each team will start 1st and goal from the Team B 10 yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. An overtime period consists of a series of 4 downs by each team. If the score is still tied after one period, play will proceed to a second period or as many as are needed to determine a winner. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the opponent will still have a chance to win the game. Unless moved by penalty, they will start 1st and goal from the Team B 10 yard line. Try-for-points will be attempted and scored as indicated in Rule 16 c). If the defensive team intercepts the pass or fumble and returns it for a touchdown, they win the game. If they do not return the interception for a touchdown, the ball will be placed at the Team B 10 yard line to begin their series of 4 downs, if applicable. **No time-outs will be allowed during overtime.**
e. Mercy Rule: If a team secures a 35 point lead or more at half-time or any time during the second (2nd) half, the game shall be over.

17. Force Safeties, and Touchbacks
a. The team responsible for the ball being behind the goal line is the team whose player:
   1. Carries the ball across that goal line.
   2. Applies an initial force which carries the ball across that line (kick, pass, snap, fumble)
   3. Incurs a penalty which leaves the ball behind the line
b. Safety:
   1. It is a safety when a runner carries the ball from the field of play across his/her own goal line and then it becomes dead behind the goal line in his/her team’s possession.
      (Exception: Momentum Rule)
   2. It is a safety when a player kicks, passes, fumbles, snuffs, muffs, or bats a loose ball from the field of play across his/her goal line and the ball subsequently becomes dead behind the goal line in his/her team’s possession.
   3. A player on offense commits any foul for which the penalty is accepted and measurement is from a spot in his/her own endzone.
   4. The ball then belongs to the opposing team at their 10 yard line.
c. Momentum Rule: When a Team B player intercepts a forward pass or catches a legal kick between his/her 5 yard line and the goal line and his/her original momentum carries him/her into
the endzone where the ball becomes dead in his/her teams possession behind the goal line, the ball belongs to Team B at the spot where possession was gained.

f. Touchback:
1. It is a touchback when R downs a scrimmage kick that touches anything while the ball is on or behind R’s goal line unless otherwise chosen by first touching.
2. It is a touchback when the ball is out-of-bounds behind a goal line (except for incomplete forward pass), when the ball becomes dead in possession of a player behind the player’s goal own goal line, or when the ball becomes dead not in possession behind a team’s own goal line, and the opposing team is responsible for putting it there.
3. Any punt that breaks the plane of the goal line shall be immediately dead and result in a touchback
4. All touchbacks will be spotted on the team’s 10 yard line unless moved by penalty.

18. Player Restrictions
No player shall commit a personal foul during a period or an intermission. Any act prohibited here under or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul. No player shall:

a. Punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from a player in possession.
b. Trip an opponent.
c. Contact an opponent who is on the ground.
d. Throw the runner to the ground.
e. Hurdle any other player.
f. Contact an opponent either before or after the ball is declared dead.
g. Make any contact with an opponent which is deemed unnecessary of any nature including using fist, locked hands, elbows or any part of the forearm or hand, as well as the legs, knees, and/or feet.
h. Deliberately drive or run into a defensive player.
i. Clip an opponent.
j. Position himself/herself on the shoulders or body of a teammate or opponent to gain an advantage.
k. Tackle the runner by grasping or encircling with the hand(s) or arm(s) and taking the opponent toward the ground as in tackle football. This will result in player disqualification.

Penalty: 10 yards, and if flagrant, the offender shall be disqualified.

II. PENALTY ENFORCEMENT
A. Types of Foul
1. Dead Ball - A foul which occurs in the time interval after a down has ended and before the ball is next snapped.
2. Live Ball - A foul which occurs during a down
3. Simultaneous with the Snap - An act which becomes a foul when the ball is snapped.
B. When a dead ball foul occurs the officials shall not permit the ball to become alive. The penalty for any dead ball foul shall be enforced from the succeeding spot. The succeeding spot it the spot where the ball would next be snapped.
C. When a live ball foul by one team is followed by a dead ball foul by the opponent, the penalties are administered separately and in the order of occurrence. When the same team commits a live ball foul followed by one or more dead balls, all fouls may be penalized.
D. Line to Gain.
1. All live ball fouls shall be administered before determining the line to gain.
2. All dead ball fouls that occur before the ready for play whistle shall be administered before determining the line to gain.
3. All dead ball fouls that occur after the ready for play whistle shall be administered after determining the line to gain.
E. **Basic Spot**—The basic spot is the spot where a penalty will be enforced from.

1. For all fouls that occur simultaneous with the snap the basic spot will be the previous spot.
2. For all unsportsmanlike fouls the basic spot will be the succeeding spot.
3. On all running plays the basic spot is the end of the run (Exception: All-But-One Rule)
4. On all loose ball plays the basic spot is the previous spot (Exception: All-But-One Rule)
5. All-But-One Rule: Any foul committed by the offense behind the basic spot is administered from the spot of the foul.

6. Special Enforcements:
   a. Roughing the Passer: The penalty for roughing the passer on a completed forward pass will be enforced from the end of the run when it is beyond the neutral zone.
   b. Half the Distance: A measurement cannot take the ball more than half of the distance from the enforcement spot to the offending team’s goal line. If greater than this the ball will be placed half way between the enforcement spot and the goal line.
   c. If the offensive team commits any foul behind their own goal line where the penalty is accepted and enforced from behind the goal line the result of the play is a safety.
   d. Kick Catch Interference: Kick catch interference may be enforced from the previous spot or an awarded catch as the spot of the foul.
   e. If both teams commit a live ball foul in the same down, in which there is no change of possession, the fouls will nullify each other and the down will be replayed.
   f. If each team fouls during a down in which there is a change of possession, the team last gaining possession may retain the ball, provided the foul is not prior to obtaining possession and it declines all fouls against the opponent other than unsportsmanlike fouls. This is known as the “clean hands” principle. (This rule does not apply to trys or overtime)

### III. COED FLAG FOOTBALL RULE MODIFICATIONS

A. **PLAYERS**: Eight (8) players, four men and four women shall constitute a team. A team must have at least six (6) players, three men and three women, to start and finish a game. If they play with seven (7) they can have four (4) women, three (3) men or four (4) men and three (3) women. At least five (5) offensive players must be on their respective line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped.

B. **BALL CARRIER(S)**: Advancement of the ball is restricted by the following circumstances, depending on the sex of the ball carrier:
   1. Scrimmage play via the run - advancement from behind the line of scrimmage to beyond the line of scrimmage is restricted to women only. **Penalty Illegal Procedure**
   2. There are no advancement restrictions to a male once possession of the ball has been obtained beyond the line of scrimmage.

C. **KICKING GAME**: The kicking team must have 5 players on line of scrimmage. A punt may be made and returned by either sex with no restrictions.

D. **PASSING GAME**: The passer may be either male or female. The receivers are restricted by the following:
   1. Male Passer - during the offensive team's possession there may not be two (2) consecutive forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. If a male passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver, the next forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or a female receiver. This rule applies to the **Try** also.
   2. Female Passer - can complete her forward pass to either sex with no advancement restriction unless it is to a male receiver, who must be beyond the line of scrimmage.
3. If a female passer completes a forward pass to a male receiver behind the line of scrimmage and runs beyond the scrimmage line, it is an illegal forward pass. (Penalty 5 yards from the spot of pass and loss of down)

General Intramurals:

1. Sportsmanship Rating
   (a) Teams receiving two (2) unacceptable sportsmanship ratings during the season will automatically be dropped from any further competition.
   (b) Any team that receives an unacceptable rating is suspended from any further games until they have met with the intramural coordinator.
   (c) Any ejected player must meet with the Intramural Coordinator before that person can participate in any future intramural event/sport.
   (d) If an ejected participant or suspended team plays in any future intramural event/sport before meeting with Intramural Coordinator that game will result in an automatic forfeit.
   (e) It is the individual or captains responsibility to make contact with the intramural coordinator within 14 days of ejection or unacceptable sportsmanship rating, to have continued participation in intramural events/sports. Intramural Office: 360-650-7261, intramurals@wwu.edu

2. Playoffs
   (a) To compete in playoffs, an individual must be on the roster (via IMleagues) the day before playoffs is scheduled to start.
   (b) Participants must play in at least three regular season games and one playoff game in order to receive the intramural championship tee.
   (c) Playoff brackets will be posted on IMLeagues (www.IMLeagues.com/wwu) following the end of regular season play.
   (d) During playoffs, a team that receives an unacceptable sportsmanship rating will be suspended and removed from the tournament/playoffs.

*Rules not outlined in this sheet will follow the National Federation of State High School Association Rules
**For other policies regarding sportsmanship ratings, forfeits, protests, eligibility, inclement weather, defaults etc, please review the intramural handbook which can be found online at (www.wwu.edu/campusrec)