2016 INTRAMURAL SPORTS 4-on-4 FLAG FOOTBALL RULES
(Updated 12/15)

The rules for The University of Iowa Intramural 4-on-4 Flag Football are derived from the National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association’s (NIRSA) rules with the following exceptions. The current NIRSA Flag and Touch Football Rules Book will apply in all cases not specifically covered below. Copies of the rules are available at www.nirsa.org. Recent rule changes appear in hi-lighted and italicized font.

RULE 1: Facility
1. All games will be played at the Hawkeye Tennis & Recreation Complex (HTRC) Iowa Turf, unless otherwise noted.
   a. The field will be 44 yards long and 21 yards wide
   b. Each end zone will be 6 yards long.
2. Specific facility rules:
   a. No drinks other than water are allowed in the facility. Sugar base drinks e.g. Gatorade/PowerAde will not be allowed.
   b. No spitting! Any person seen spitting will be asked to leave the facility.
   c. No chewing gum allowed in the facility.
   d. All other HTRC policies apply and will be enforced.

Rule 2: Player Eligibility
1. All Intramural Sports eligibility rules apply. Please check the Intramural Sports Rules and Regulations carefully.
2. All players must check-in with their state-issued photo ID or University ID cards with the game officials prior to the start of each game.

Rule 3: Team Composition
1. The game shall be played between two teams, each with four players on the field at one time. A minimum of three players must be checked-in to start a game. Roster size is unlimited.

Rule 4: Equipment
1. Each player on the field must wear a one-piece belt at the waistline with three flags permanently attached, one flag to each hip and one to the center of the back.
   a. (Failure to wear required equipment – PENALTY: 3 yards)
2. Players are not allowed to wear pants or shorts with pockets. Players are allowed to reverse pants or shorts as long as the pants or shorts have a lining, which makes the pockets not visible.
3. Players may wear a stocking cap. It is allowed to have a knit ball attached. The cap must have no bill. Players may wear a headband no wider than two inches and made of non-abrasive single-colored cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Rubber or elastic bands may only be used to control hair. Bandannas are not permitted.
4. Illegal equipment consists of pads, shoulder pads, some jewelry, or any unyielding or dangerous equipment, which include shoes with detachable cleats unless the screw is part of the cleat. Any slippery or sticky substance of a foreign nature on equipment or exposed parts of the body is illegal.
   a. Jewelry. Hand jewelry is not permitted to be worn during participation in Flag Football. Wrist jewelry must be taped down, and must stay taped down throughout the contest. Necklaces must be taped down inside the shirt, and must stay taped down throughout the contest. Stud earrings, or earrings that do not extend beyond the earlobe, are permitted, but must be
covered throughout the contest. Intramural Sports will not provide tape for the taping of jewelry. The Intramural Sports staff retains the right to require any jewelry deemed dangerous to be removed prior to participation, or continued participation.

6. **ALL PLAYERS MUST KEEP SHIRTS TUCKED IN AT ALL TIMES.** A cut-off shirt short enough not to interfere with the flags is permissible. Jerseys that have an arm opening more than 4” below the armpit will not be permitted. The referee will use a fist to measure the distance of the jersey opening.

7. Cutoff or sleeveless shirt openings may not hang lower than 4 inches from the waist line.
   a. *(Illegal equipment - PENALTY: UnSportsmanlike Conduct, 5 yards)*

8. If illegal equipment is found on a player in the field they must remove it immediately; if removal takes more than 25 seconds, that player must be replaced for at least 1 down, or the team may call a team time-out.
   a. Any players entering the field wearing any illegal equipment will be assessed an UnSportsmanlike Conduct penalty: 5 yards.

**Rule 5. Beginning a Game**

1. Before the start of the game the referee shall toss a coin in the presence of the opposing captains, after first designating which captain shall call the coin toss.
   a. The captain of the winning toss shall choose one of the following options.
      i. Offense.
      ii. Defense.
      iii. To designate which goal his/her team will defend.
      iv. To have the choice of the above options to begin the second half (defer).
   b. The loser of the toss shall make a choice of the remaining options.
   c. Before the coin toss, the referee will approve each team’s game ball. If needed, a football will be provided by the Recreational Services Intramural Sports Department.
      i. Men shall use the regular size ball only. A regular, intermediate, youth, or junior size football shall be used for Women’s games.
   d. Putting the ball into play. The ball shall be put into play at the beginning of the game, at the beginning of the second half, after a turnover on downs, after a score, and a safety by a scrimmage down on the 5-yard line.

**Rule 6. Game Time and Time-Outs**

1. Playing time shall be 24 minutes, divided into two 12-minute halves. There will be an intermission no longer than four minutes between halves.
   a. At approximately two minutes before the end of the second half, the referee shall stop the clock and inform both captains of the playing time remaining in the half. The starting of the clock depends on the previous play.
   b. During the final two minutes of the second half:
      i. Incomplete Pass – starts on the snap.
      iii. Penalty and Administration – depends on the previous play. (Exception: following delay of game, clock starts on the snap).
      iv. Touchdown – starts on the succeeding snap after the extra point try.
      v. Team Time-Out – starts on the snap.
      vi. First Down – depends on the previous play.
      vii. Official’s Time-Out – starts at the referee’s discretion.
viii. Touchback – starts on the snap.
ix. Safety – starts on the snap.
x. New series for Team B – starts on the snap.
c. The clock will start when the ball is legally snapped and will run continuously during the
first half and first 10 minutes of the second half, except for a team time out or an official’s
time-out.

2. Each team is entitled to two time-outs per game. Time-outs will be no longer than one minute. No
time-outs will be granted after a team uses both their time-outs. In case of overtime, each team is
entitled to only one time-out for all overtime periods.

3. If the game is tied at the end of the second half the following procedures are used:
   a. Overtime Periods – All overtime periods are played towards the same goal line. A coin toss,
as in the beginning of the game, will determine the options. If additional overtime periods
are played, field captains will alternate option choices. Each team will have a series of
downs to score a touchdown beginning from the 10-yard line.
   b. Penalties shall be assessed according to the regular rules of the game.
   c. Intercepted passes may be returned. If the ball is not returned for a touchdown, the ball
will be placed at the 10-yard line and play will begin as in Rule 6-3-a.
   d. The goal line shall always be the line-to-gain in overtime.

Rule 7: Flag Belts
1. All players must wear flags while on the playing field.
   a. The flags will be fastened to the belt in such a manner as not to be twisted under or
fastened to the inside of the belt.
   b. Two flags are to hang down vertically along the side seam of the trousers and one down the
   center of the back.
   c. Solid belts will be comprised of three flags. The ball carrier will be declared down when the
   belt clip becomes unfastened when pulled by a defensive player, the belt is torn into more
   than one piece, or the flag is torn off the belt. If the defensive player pulls the belt and it
does not immediately become unfastened, the ball carrier will not be considered down
until the belt does become unfastened.
   d. If the flag belt should become unfastened without being pulled by a defensive player, the
play will remain live until a defensive player contacts the runner between the shoulders
and knees with one hand.
   e. If a defensive player unfastens an offensive player’s belt after a forward or backward pass is
thrown, but before the ball is possessed by that player, the player is still eligible to advance
the ball. He/she must be tagged with one hand between the shoulders and knees if he/she
  catches a pass.
      i. Ex: A1 releases a forward pass to A2. B1 pulls the flags of A2 before the ball reaches
the player. A2 then catches the ball. In this instance the defensive player pulled the
flag too soon and A2 can advance the ball until touched down.
   f. A defensive player intentionally pulling a flag from an offensive player without the ball is
illegal. (PENALTY – Personal Foul – 5 yards)
   g. It is illegal for any player to participate in a play with an illegally secured flag belt. (PENALTY
   – Personal Foul – 5 yards from previous spot – player ejection – loss of down if player is
on offense, automatic 1st down if player is on defense)
Rule 8. Definitions of Playing Terms

1. **CATCH**: A catch is the act of establishing player possession of a live ball which is 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. Sideline cones are considered out-of-bounds.
   a. If one foot first lands inbounds and the receiver has possession and control of the ball, it is a catch even though a subsequent step or fall takes the receiver out-of-bounds.

2. **FIGHTING**: Fighting is an attempt by a player or non-player to strike or engage an opponent in a combative manner unrelated to football. Such acts include, but are not limited to: attempts to strike an opponent(s) with the arm(s), hand(s), leg(s), or foot (feet) whether or not there is contact.

Rule 9. Ball in Play, Dead Ball, Out-of-Bounds

1. A live ball becomes dead when:
   a. an official sounds his/her whistle or declares it dead.
   b. the ball touches the ground (Exception: Refer to Rule 9, Article 1-h).
   c. the ball carrier touches out-of-bounds.
   d. When any part of the ball carrier’s person other than the hand or foot touches the ground.
      i. NOTE: The ball carrier may contact the ball to the ground and the ball will remain live as long as the ball carrier maintains possession of the ball and as long as no other body parts other than the foot or hand are in contact with the ground. The ball is considered to be part of the hand.
   e. When a touchdown, touchback, safety, or try for point is made.
   f. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
   g. When a backward pass or fumble by a player touches the ground.
      i. **EXAMPLE**: A snap.
      ii. **NOTE**: Backward passes and fumbles may be caught in flight, inbounds by any player and advanced (Exception: Refer to Rule 16, Article 4)
   h. When a ball carrier has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
      i. When a ball carrier is legally touched with 1 hand below the shoulders once the flag belt is no longer attached, having fallen off incidentally without being pulled by a defender.

2. **BALL BLOWN DEAD**: In Flag Football, it is not uncommon for a play to be mistakenly blown dead (inadvertent whistle). In these cases, the offensive team shall have the option of replaying the down or accepting the ball at the spot where it was blown dead. On loose balls such as a pass in flight, the down must be replayed. After a change of possession the team in possession at the time the ball is blown dead shall have the option of accepting the play or replaying the down.

3. **In 4-on-4 Flag Football, if the ball hits the ceiling, a goal, or a batting cage affixed to the ceiling, the play will be blown dead and the down will be replayed.**

Rule 10. Series of Downs, Number of Downs

1. There are only two zones. The offensive team has three downs to advance the ball from the 5-yard-line, past mid field, and then another three downs to score. If it fails to reach the next line-to-gain it will result in a turnover on downs, and the ball will be put back into play at the opposing team’s 5-yard-line.

Rule 11. Snapping, Handing, Passing, and Running The Ball

1. Any member of the passing team is an eligible receiver.
   a. All forward passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage.
b. Only one forward pass per down is permitted.
2. BALL IN PLAY: A team gets 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it is signaled ready for play by the referee. (PENALTY – Delay of Game – 3 yards)
   a. The snapper need not have his/her shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage or snap the ball between his/her legs in order for the snap to be legal.
   b. The snapper may not snap the ball to him/herself.
   c. A team may legally spike the ball to prevent loss of time in the final minutes of each half.
3. LEGAL POSITION: Anytime on or after the ball is marked ready for play, each offensive player must momentarily be at least 5 yards inbounds before the snap. (PENALTY – Illegal Formation – 3 yards.)
4. MINIMUM LINE PLAYERS: The offensive team must have at least one player on its scrimmage line at the snap. The offensive team’s remaining players must be either on its scrimmage line or behind its backfield line. All players must be inbounds. (PENALTY – Illegal Formation – 3 yards.)
5. Teams are allowed to advance the ball past the line-of-scrimmage via running play.

Rule 12. Scoring Plays and Touchback
1. SCORING: Touchdown is worth six points; extra point try one point from three yards; two points from 10 yards; three points from 20 yards; safety is two points. (After a safety, the team who scored the safety will put the ball into play on its own 5-yard line with a new series of scrimmage downs.)
   a. If, during a try, the defense intercepts a ball that is thrown or fumbled in flight, the play is blown dead immediately, and the try is over.
2. MERCY RULE: If a team is ahead by 19 or more points when the referee announces the two minute warning for the second half, or any time after that, the game is over.
3. FOULS ON A SCORE: If there is a foul by the defensive team during a down that results in a successful touchdown, the scoring team may choose to have the foul enforced at the succeeding spot or after the try on the 5-yard-line. If there is a foul by the defensive team during a successful try, the foul will be enforced at the succeeding spot on the 5-yard-line.

Rule 13. Conduct of Players and Others
1) BLOCKING: Offensive screen blocking should take place without an attempt to make contact with an opponent. The screen blocker shall position her/his hands and arms at his/her sides or behind his/her back. Any use of the hands, arms, elbows, legs, or body to initiate contact during a screen block is illegal. A player must be on his/her feet before, during, and after screen blocking. Some legal incidental contact may occur. (PENALTY – Personal Foul – 5 yards)
   a. Screen Blocking Fundamentals. A player who screens shall not:
      i. Take a position closer than a normal step when behind a stationary opponent.
      ii. Initiate contact when assuming a position at the side or in front of a stationary opponent.
      iii. 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 one to two normal strides from the opponent.
2) DEFENSIVE RESTRICTION: Defensive players may not use their hands on blockers. They must attempt to avoid blockers. Incidental contact with the hands will be allowed, but should the defender gain an advantage by use of the hands, he/she will be penalized. (PENALTY – Personal Foul – 5 yards)
   a. A defensive player may rush the ball-handler any time after the ball has been snapped into play.
3) **TACKLING:** It is a foul to tackle, trip, kick, push, shove, or elbow the ball carrier or blocker. It is also a foul for a defensive player to strip or attempt to strip the ball by punching, striking, or stealing it. The runner’s forward progress cannot be impeded in any way. (PENALTY – Personal Foul – 5 yards. If flagrant ADDITIONAL PENALTY – Disqualification)

4) **BALL CARRIER AND RUNNING WITH THE BALL:** It is a penalty for the ball carrier to “stiff arm”, charge into, knee, kick, or try to knock over a player at any time. This is judged like a block/charge foul in basketball. (PENALTY – Personal Foul – 5 yards).
   a. Spinning is legal; however, the ball carrier must be in control of his/her person at all times.
   c. Diving is allowed, however, the ball carrier cannot make contact with a defender while in the act of diving.
   d. **THE BALL CARRIER MUST TRY TO AVOID CONTACT WITH ALL DEFENSIVE PLAYERS AT ALL TIMES.**

5) **ROUGH TACTICS:** Any rough tactics, such as lowering one’s shoulder in an attempt to run over an opponent, must be penalized as flagrant and unnecessary roughness. (PENALTY – Personal Foul – 5 yards, ejection, and suspension)

6) **UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS:** For unnecessary roughness, the penalty is 5 yards and disqualification if flagrant.

7) **DISQUALIFICATION:** Whenever, in the judgment of the officials, or field supervisor, player or players may be involved in any deliberate or flagrant violation of the rules, the person will be ejected and his/her team penalized 5 yards. This includes foul, dirty or abusive language or violent protest by either word or action against any official or other players. In the judgment of any official or supervisor any type of unsportsmanlike conduct by any player or team will be penalized by a 5-yard penalty and if the official feels it necessary, he/she can eject players or forfeit the game. Players or spectators will be automatically ejected if they physically (or attempt to) contact an official or supervisor.
   a. Any player ejected will be required to sit out of Intramural competition for at least the remainder of the tournament.

8) **FOULS TO PREVENT PLAY:** If the defensive team commits a foul so near its own goal line that they can be penalized only by halving the distance to the goal line, the object being (in the opinion of the referee) to consume time, it shall be regarded as a refusal to allow play to proceed. In that event, the referee shall warn the offending team once and then if the offense is repeated, it will be a touchdown.

9) **TEAMS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYERS AND FANS:** Players and fans must remain at least three yards from the sideline and in the middle 20 yards of the field. (PENALTY: First Offense - warning, Second Offense – 3 yards, Thereafter – 5 yards)

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**Rule 14. Enforcement of Penalties**

1. **PENALTIES:**

3 Yard Penalties: 5 Yard Penalties:

1. Delay of Game 1. Illegal Contact
2. False Start 2. Illegal Participation
3. Encroachment (5 yards for 2 or more 3. Offensive Pass Interference
   Consecutive encroachments by the same team) 4. Defensive Pass Interference
4. Illegal Procedure 5. Roughing the Passer^*
5. Illegal Motion 6. Unsportsmanlike Conduct*^*
6. Illegal Shift 7. Sideline Interference
8. Illegal Formation 10. Kick Catch Interference
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9. Illegal Forward Pass*  
10. Illegal Backward Pass*  
11. Intentional Grounding*  
12. Illegal Substitution  
13. Failure to wear required equipment  
14. Illegal Advancement*  
15. Helping the Runner

*Loss of Down Fouls:
1. Illegal Forward Pass  
2. Illegal Backward Pass  
3. Intentional Grounding  
4. Illegally Secured Flag Belt  
5. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

^Automatic First Down Fouls:
1. Roughing the Passer  
2. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Rule 15. Other Rules
1. PROTESTS: If a team feels an official has misinterpreted a rule, it must lodge a protest at the time of the ruling. The team must call a time-out at the time of the ruling and inform the official it wishes to protest a misapplication or misinterpretation of a rule. The game will be stopped to obtain a ruling from the Intramural Supervisor. Failure to call time-out and obtain an immediate ruling from the Intramural Supervisor at the time of the rule in question will void any future right to protest. If the official’s ruling stands, the protesting team will be charged the time-out. If the official’s ruling is changed, the team is not charged a time-out. No protest concerning officials’ judgment will be considered. If the protesting team still feels the ruling is incorrect, it must then lodge a written protest form to the Director of Intramural Sports by NOON of the business day following the game in question.