

Arkansas State University

Intramural Sports

Arena Flag Football Rules

**General Rules:**

1. A game will consist of two 15 minute halves. The clock will stop during the last 2 minutes of the second half.
2. Game time is forfeit time. If a team has the minimum amount of players (5) to begin a game at game time and their opponent does not AT GAME TIME, the game shall be forfeited. The opposing team shall win the game 6-0.
3. Timeouts: Each team is permitted 3 timeouts per game. Each timeout will last 30 seconds. The clock stops during all timeouts.
4. Overtime: If the score remains ties at the end of regulation play, overtime tries will be played to break the tie. An overtime try consists of one attempt by each team to score either a touchdown or field goal. Both teams will be given an attempt.
5. Substitutions: Substitutions are allowed at any time that the ball is dead, but games must not be delayed by them. Each substitute shall be in uniform and ready for play with flags in position. Substitutes used with the obvious attempt to confuse or deceive the opposing team will results in an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
6. A half may be extended by an un-timed down when, during the last timed down there was:
   1. A foul by the defensive team and the penalty is accepted:
      1. If a penalty causes a half to be extended a safety (2 points) will be awarded to the offensive team.
   2. There was a double foul
   3. There was an inadvertent whistle
   4. There was a touchdown scored

**Scoring Plays:**

1. Touchdown values: All touchdowns are 6 points. The player scoring the TD must raise their arms so the nearest official can de-flag the player. If the official determines that the flag belt has been secured illegally, the TD is disallowed. The player is disqualified and a penalty will result.
2. P.A.T: The P.A.T can be a 1 point conversion KICKED from the 10 yard line, a 2 point conversion from the 15 yard line, or a 3 point conversion from the 20 yard line.
3. Mercy Rule: If a team is ahead by 15 or more points when the officials announces the two-minute warning in the second half, the game shall be declared over. If a team is ahead by 30 points or more at halftime, or anytime in the second half the game shall be called.

**Definitions:**

1. Flag Belt Removal: When the flag belt is clearly taken from the runner with possession of the ball, the ball is declared dead and the down shall end. A player may leave their feet to remove the flag belt. When does a run end?
   1. When the flag belt is clearly taken from the ball carrier (flag belt is detached or the flag tears off of the belt), the ball is declared dead.
   2. When a defensive player is responsible for the flag falling by swiping at the flag.
   3. If a flag belt inadvertently falls to the ground, a one-hand touch between the shoulders and knees constitutes capture.
   4. Any part of the knee touches the ground.
2. Line of scrimmage:
   1. Offensive scrimmage line-the yard line and its vertical plane which passes through the forward point of the ball. Indicated by an orange cone.
   2. Defensive scrimmage line-the yard line and its vertical plane which passes one yard from the point of the ball nearest its own goal line. Indicated by a yellow cone.
   3. Minimum line players-the offensive team must have at least 4 players on the offensive line of scrimmage at the snap. The remaining players must either be on their scrimmage line or behind their backfield line. A player in motion is not counted as one of the minimum number of players on the scrimmage line.
3. Penalties:
   1. Penalty accepted-the down shall remain the same unless otherwise specified by the rules regarding change of team possession, penalty enforcement, or the ball is left beyond the zone line to gain.
   2. Penalty declined-the number of the next down shall be whatever it would have been if that foul had not occurred.

**Ball in play, dead ball, out of bounds:**

1. The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the referee has put the ball in play (sounding whistle and dropping hand).
2. Ball declared dead:
   1. When a forward pass strikes the ground or is caught simultaneously by opposing players.
   2. When a backward pass or fumble by a player strikes the ground.
   3. When a runner has a flag belt removed legally by a defensive player.
   4. When a runner is legally touched with one hand between the shoulder and knees, including the hand and arm, once the flag belt is no longer attached.
   5. When a snap hits the ground.
   6. When the passer is de-flagged before releasing the ball.
   7. When the defense secures possession of the ball during a try or overtime.
3. Fumbles: A fumble or backward pass is dead at the point it hits the ground. The ball goes to the team that last had possession. Just touching the ball is not sufficient for legal possession. A fumble by the offense into the opposing team’s end zone will result in a touchback.
4. Out of bounds: A ball in player possession is out of bounds when either the ball or any part of the runner touches the ground or anything else, except a player or game officials, which is on or outside a boundary line. If the runner in-bounds bumps into or is touched by a player or an official on the sidelines out of bounds the ball is still in play.

**Series of downs and line to gain:**

1. Series of downs: A team in possession of the ball shall have 4 consecutive downs to advance to the next zone line to gain (unless in over time).
2. Ball will be placed at the 50 yard line to begin the game.
3. Zone line to gain: The zone line to gain in any series shall be the zone in advance of the ball, unless distance has been lost due to penalty or failure to gain. In such cases, the original zone in advance of the ball at the beginning of the series of downs is the zone line to gain. The zones formed by the marking of the 50 and 25 yard lines are used to determine the distance to be gained. The most forward point of the ball, when declared dead between the goal lines, shall be the determining factor.

**Snapping and passing the ball:**

1. The ball must be snapped backwards and off the ground. A small towel may be placed under the ball, regardless of weather conditions. In a legal snap, the movement must be a quick and continuous motion of the hand or hand backwards. Once the ball leaves the ground, the defense may rush. **Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
2. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line. **Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
3. Any time at or after the ball is ready for play, each offensive player must momentarily be within 15 yards of the ball before the snap. **Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
4. The offensive team must have a minimum of 4 players on their line of scrimmage at the snap. **Penalty: Illegal Formation, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
5. Fumbles:
   1. A backward pass or fumble which touches the ground between the goal lines is dead immediately at the spot where the ball hits the ground and belongs to the team last in possession unless lost on 4th down.
6. Out of bounds:
   1. A backward pass or fumble going out of bounds between the goal lines remains in possession of the fumbling team at the out of bounds spot. If a team snaps, fumbles, or laterals a ball out of bounds in their own end zone, a safety is scored by the opposing side. If the ball is fumbled out of bounds through the opponent’s end zone, a touchback will be awarded to the opposing side.
7. Offside: After the snapper has made their final adjustment of the ball, it is offside for any offensive player to break the plane of their scrimmage line. (Exception: the snapper/center has the right to be over the ball). **Penalty: False Start, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
8. Encroachment: After the snapper has made their final adjustment of the ball, it is encroachment for a defender to break the plane of their scrimmage line. **Penalty: Encroachment, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
9. Offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball after each scrimmage down. The snapper will bring the ball from the huddle to the scrimmage line (first ball spotter-orange)
10. Offensive player in motion: One offensive player may be in motion, but not in motion toward the opponent’s goal line. Such a player must be behind the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped. A player in motion is not counted as one of the required 4 players on the scrimmage line. Only one offensive player may be in motion at a given time. **Penalty: Illegal Motion, 5 yards from the previous spot.** Other offensive players may not draw the defense offside.
11. An offensive player that shifts (other than going illegally in motion) must stop for one full second before the snap. **Penalty: Illegal Shift, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
12. Handling the ball: any player may hand the ball backward or forward at any time anywhere.
13. Forward pass: All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass. During a scrimmage down and before team possession has changed, a forward pass may be thrown provided the passer’s feet are behind the offensive scrimmage line when the ball leaves the passer’s hand. Only 1 forward pass can be thrown per down.
14. A forward pass is completed when caught by a member of the passing team in bounds. A forward pass is intercepted when caught by a member of the opposing team in bounds. It is counted as a completion or interception as long as the first part or the person to make contact with the ground after the catch, usually one foot, touches in bounds.
15. A forward pass is illegal if:
    1. The passer’s foot is beyond Team A’s scrimmage line (orange ball spotter) when the ball leaves their hand.
    2. Thrown after team possession has changed during the down.
    3. Intentionally grounded to save a loss of yardage.
    4. A passer catches his/her untouched forward pass.
    5. It is the second forward pass during a down.
    6. **Penalty: Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from the spot, loss of down, if prior to change of possession.**
16. Simultaneous Catch: If a forward pass is caught simultaneously by members of opposing teams, the ball becomes dead and belongs to the team that snapped the ball at the spot of the catch.

**Blocking, rushing and conduct:**

1. Offensive screen blocking: Screen blocking is permitted and shall take place without contact. The screen blocker shall have their hands and arms at their side or behind their back. Any use of the hands, arms, legs, elbows, or body to initiate contact by an offensive player is illegal. A player must be on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking. **Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards from the spot of the foul.**
2. 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. **Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards from the previous spot or end of the run.**
3. Player restrictions:
   1. No player shall make unnecessary contact with an opponent.
   2. There shall be no clipping or tripping.
   3. There shall be no bumping the receiver. The defensive player must play the ball and shall not interfere with a receiver. However, defensive and offensive players are equally entitled to a passed ball.
   4. Pulling or removing the flag belt from an offensive player as the ball is snapped or before a pass reception with the obvious intent of confusing the offensive player as an eligible pass receiver or ball carrier is illegal.
   5. A defensive player may not bump or push a runner out of bounds.
   6. Offensive charging is not permitted. The ball carrier may not run through a defensive player but must attempt to evade the defensive player. The runner is allowed to spin in order to avoid being de-flagged as long as they do not charge during the spin.
   7. The ball carrier shall not guard their flags by blocking with hands or the ball, thereby denying an opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt. **Penalty: Flag Guarding, 10 yards from the spot of the foul.**
   8. Stiff arming by the ball carrier is illegal. Holding or swinging the arm near the flag to ward off attempts to seize the flag is illegal and results in flag guarding.
   9. Defensive players may not steal or strip the ball from an offensive player once he/she has control.
   10. The flag belt is to be fastened around the waist by use of the end clip. Any tampering to secure the flags so as to make them more difficult to pull is illegal and will result in ejection from the game. **Penalty: Unsportsmanlike Conduct, 10 yards from the previous spot, loss of down, and player disqualification.**
   11. Players, coaches, and spectators are to position themselves between the 20 yards line markers on their team’s respective sideline.
4. Pass interference: Once a pass is in the air, the ball belongs to anyone who can get it. Any contact which occurs between two or more players making a legal attempt to catch or bat the pass is considered incidental. Screening a player’s eyes or waving the hands or arms in his/her face to distract a receiver is considered interference. Whether a pass is catchable or uncatchable has no bearing on offensive or defensive pass interference. Offensive pass interference and defensive pass interference is a 10 yard penalty, repeat the down.
5. Roughing the passer: Defensive players must make a definitive effort to avoid charging into a passer after the ball has been thrown. No defensive player shall contact the passer.
6. Personal fouls: There shall be no personal fouls committed by players, substitutes, or coaches. Personal fouls include:
   1. Using fist, foot, knee, or leg to contact an opponent
   2. Tackling the ball player (disqualification)
   3. Illegal contact
   4. Unnecessary roughness, hurdling, roughing the passer (when the defender contacts any part of the passer during his/her motion or follow through)

**Enforcement of penalties:**

1. Penalty enforcement at the basic spot:
   1. Pass plays or during the protected scrimmage kick (before possession is gained)-basic enforcement spot is the scrimmage line (where ball was snapped).
   2. During protective scrimmage kicks (before possession is gained)-basic enforcement spot is previous spot (from where ball is kicked).
   3. On all running plays-basic enforcement spot is the end of the run.
   4. All fouls are marked from the basic enforcement spot (Exception: an offensive foul behind the basic enforcement spot which becomes a spot foul).
2. Summary of NIRSA football penalties:
   1. Dead Ball Fouls-5 yard penalty
      1. Delay of game
      2. Encroachment
      3. False Start
      4. Illegal Snap
      5. Leaving the field from the wrong side
      6. Illegal Substitution
   2. Live Ball Fouls-5 yard penalty
      1. Aiding the Runner
      2. Improper Equipment
      3. Illegal Forward Pass
      4. Illegal Procedure
      5. Illegal Motion
      6. Illegal Shift
      7. Illegal Substitution
      8. Intentional Grounding
      9. Illegal Formation
      10. Direct Snap
   3. Live Ball Fouls-10 Yard Penalty
      1. Flag Guarding
      2. Illegally Secured Flag Belt
      3. Illegal batting/kicking
      4. Illegal Participation
      5. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
      6. Illegal Contact
      7. Pass Interference
      8. Roughing the Passer