



UC MERCED INTRAMURAL SPORTS

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES

All Rules Not Covered By This Supplement Shall Be Governed By Current National Intramural-Recreational Sports Association (Nirsa) Football Rules.

RULE 1: THE GAME, FIELD, AND PLAYERS

- 1.1 The Game. The game shall be played between two teams of seven (7) players. A team may start a game with less than seven players, but no less than five (5).
- 1.2 The Field. The field shall be a rectangular area 40 yards wide, and 100 yards in length. It shall be divided into four (4) 20-yard zones, with a 10-yard end zone at both ends of the field.
- 1.3 Participation Restrictions. No player may participate on more than one team.
- 1.4 ID Requirements. A current UC Merced Cat Card must be presented prior to each contest in order to participate.

RULE 2: EQUIPMENT

- 2.1 Shoes. Each player must wear shoes. No metal cleats shall be worn.
- 2.2 Uniforms. Shirts must be tucked in and/or not covering the flag belt.
- *2.3 Balls. A Ball will be provided by the Intramural Department, though teams may choose to use their own if both captains consent.
- *2.4 Hats may be worn, as long there is no protruding brim.

RULE 3: DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Flag Guarding. A player is considered to be flag guarding if he/she uses his/her hands, arms, or the ball, to deny the opportunity for an opponent to remove the flag belt. A player whose shirt is untucked and covering his/her flag belt may be considered to be flag guarding if the official believes that the untucked shirt prevented an opponent from removing the flag belt.
Comment: Intentionally tying flags on is considered unsportsmanlike conduct in addition to flag guarding. (PENALTY: 10 yds spot foul; disqualification of player)
- 3.2 Hurdling/Jumping. A player in possession of the ball cannot jump or hurdle directly over an opponent.
- 3.3 Screen Blocking. Screen blocking is legally obstructing an opponent without initiating contact with any part of the blocker's body. The screen blocker's hands must be at his/her side or behind his/her back.
- 3.4 Basic Spot. The spot where the play ends, or the previous spot. The basic spot is established from the point where the ball is when the ball carrier's flag is pulled.
- 3.5 Previous Spot. The spot where the ball was last put in play.

- 3.6 Out of Bounds. A ball or a player in possession of the ball is out of bounds when either the ball or any part of the ball carrier touches the ground or anything else that is on or outside a boundary line (except another player or game official). A ball not in player possession is out of bounds when it touches the ground, a player or anything else that is on or outside a boundary line.
- 3.7 Complete Pass. A receiver only needs to have 1 foot land inbounds for a complete pass.
- 3.8 Neutral Zone. The neutral zone shall be marked by two pucks, one on the offensive line of scrimmage and the other 1 yard away towards the zone line to gain.

RULE 4: PERIODS, TIME FACTORS AND SUBSTITUTIONS

- 4.1 Playing Time. The first half will consist of 22 minutes of running time. The second half will be comprised of 22 minutes of running time followed by eight consecutive downs (not plays).
- 4.2 Overtime. If game should end in a tie, the procedure outlined in Rule 5.2 shall be used to break the tie.
- 4.3 Timeouts. Each team will be allowed one (1) 30-second timeout per half and one (1) 30-second timeout per overtime period. Timeouts may be shortened if both teams are ready to play.
- 4.4 25 Second Play Clock. A team shall not take more than 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it has been declared ready for play.
- 4.5 Forfeits. A game shall be forfeited if a team is not ready to play within 10 minutes of their regularly scheduled game time, or if a team has fewer than 5 players. A score of a forfeited contest shall be 7-0.
- 4.6 Substitutes. Substitutes may only enter the game when the ball is dead.
- 4.7 Mercy Rule: At or beyond the 10 minute mark of the second half, if a team is losing by 3 touchdowns or more, the supervisor on duty has the option to end the game.

RULE 5: BALL IN PLAY, DEAD BALL, OUT OF BOUNDS

- 5.1 Ball in Play - First & Second Half
- a) Coin Toss. Five minutes prior to game time, the referee shall conduct a coin toss in the presence of the two team captains: appointing one of the captains to call the fall of the coin. The winner of the coin toss may chose one of the options below for the first or second half. The loser of the coin toss shall receive the remaining option.
1. To designate the team starting on offense.
 2. To designate which goal his/her team will defend.
- b) Ball in Play. Each half shall start by putting the ball in play on their opponent's 15-yard line. The offense will then have four downs to advance the ball beyond the next zone line.
1. After each touchdown, the ball is put back into play by the

non-scoring team on their opposing team's 15-yard line (there are no kick-offs).

2. Following a safety, the scoring team puts the ball back in play on their own 20-yard line.

5.2 Putting Ball in Play - Overtime

- a) Coin Toss. A coin toss shall be conducted in the presence of the two team captains. The winner of the coin toss shall:
 1. have a choice of offense or defense
 2. The loser of the toss shall receive the remaining option.
- b) Ball in Play. The ball will be put in play at the defensive 20-yard line. Each team will be given a series of 4 downs from the same 20-yard line. The object will be to score a touchdown. If the first team that is awarded the ball scores, the second team will still have 4 downs to attempt to win the game.
- c) Try for points will still be attempted in a normal manner by any team who scores a touchdown. If the defense intercepts the ball 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 20-yard line to begin their series of 4 downs.
- d) During the regular season, only one set of downs per team will be allowed. If the score is still tied, the game will be declared a tie. During playoffs, if additional overtimes are needed, the team captains will alternate their choices from the original coin toss.

5.3 Dead Ball. The ball is dead in the following cases:

- a) When it goes out of bounds,
- b) When any part of the ball carrier's body other than a hand or foot touches the ground,
- c) When a backward pass, fumble, or snap touches the ground,
- d) When a touchdown, touch back, safety, rouge, or successful try-for-point is made,
- e) When a punt is muffed, or touched first by the kicking team,
- f) When a forward pass is incomplete,
- g) When the ball carrier has his/her flag belt legally removed by his/her opponent,
- h) When the passer has his/her flag belt legally removed by his/her opponent while the ball is still in his/her possession,
- i) When the ball carrier/passers is legally tagged with one hand after his/her flag belt has been inadvertently removed,
- j) When the official's whistle is blown (even if inadvertently).

RULE 6: SERIES OF DOWNS, LINE TO GAIN

- 6.1 Series of Downs. A team in possession of the ball shall have four consecutive downs to advance the ball to the next zone line (by scrimmage).
- 6.2 Foul Before Change of Team Possession. When a foul occurs before a change of team possession on a play from scrimmage, possession of the ball belongs to the offensive team and the down shall be repeated, unless the penalty involves loss of down, mandates a first down or leaves the ball beyond the zone line to gain.
- 6.3 Foul After Change of Team Possession. When a foul occurs after a change of team possession, the ball belongs to the team in possession when the foul occurred.

RULE 7: KICKS

- 7.1 Free Kicks. Free kicks (kick-offs) have been eliminated from the game.
- 7.2 Protected Scrimmage Kicks (Punt). A protected scrimmage kick (punt) can be made during any scrimmage down provided that the kicking team announces their intent to the opposing team and to the officials prior to the ball being declared ready for play.
- 7.3 Positioning for a Scrimmage Kick. Both teams must have 3 players on the line of scrimmage within 3 yards of the ball at the time of the snap. No one may cross the line of scrimmage until the ball has been kicked.
PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT.
- 7.4 Blocking During a Scrimmage Kick. The receiving team may put hands up to block the punt, but cannot jump.
PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM BASIC SPOT.
- 7.5 Kick Behind the Line of Scrimmage. A kick which fails to cross the line of scrimmage is dead where the ball hits the ground.
- 7.6 Kick Beyond the Line of Scrimmage. A kick which crosses the line of scrimmage may only be advanced by the receiving team. No member of the kicking team may advance the ball after it crosses the line of scrimmage.
PENALTY: DEAD BALL WHERE KICK TEAM MADE CONTACT. SHOULD A MEMBER OF THE RECEIVING TEAM FUMBLE OR MUFF THE KICK, THE BALL IS DEAD WHERE IT HIT THE GROUND.
- 7.7 Kick Out of Bounds Between the Goal Lines or at Rest. If a scrimmage kick goes out of bounds between the goal lines, or comes to rest in bounds and no player attempts to secure it, the ball is dead at the point where it crossed the boundary line or came to rest.
- 7.8 Kick Out of Bounds Behind the Goal Lines. A scrimmage kick which lands on the fly, bounces, or rolls into and/or through the end zone, or which is caught in the end zone and not returned across the goal line is a touchback. The ball shall be put in play on the 15-yard

line.

7.9 Opportunity to Catch. No player of the kicking team may be within 2 yards of a player on the receiving team positioned to catch a scrimmage kick.

PENALTY: 10 YARDS SPOT FOUL.

RULE 8: SNAPPING, PASSING, AND RUNNING THE BALL

8.1 Offensive Positions. The offensive team is required to have at least three (3) players on the line of scrimmage within 3 yards of the ball at the time of the snap. All offensive players must be at least 5 yards from the sideline.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. REPLAY DOWN.

8.2 Offensive Shift. Following an offensive shift, players must remain stationary at least one second before the ball is snapped.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. REPLAY DOWN.

8.3 Motion. The offensive team may have one player in motion when the ball is snapped provided:

a) the player in motion has been stationary one second prior to beginning his/her motion,

b) The player's motion is not toward his/her opponent's goal line.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. REPLAY DOWN.

8.4 Encroachment. After the ball is ready for play and until the ball is snapped, no defensive player may be beyond the line of scrimmage.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. REPLAY DOWN.

8.5 Illegal Procedure. After the ball is ready for play, no offensive player shall contact an opponent or make a false start, which includes:

a) Feigning a charge.

b) A shift of movement that simulates the beginning of a play.

(Exceptions: It is not a false start if a player on the offensive line of scrimmage moves back when threatened by a defensive player who has crossed the line of scrimmage.)

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. REPLAY DOWN.

8.6 The Snap. The center may adjust the ball prior to the snap, but once it is adjusted, any further movement of the ball prior to the snap shall be considered illegal procedure (center sneaks are illegal). The ball must be snapped between the center's legs.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. REPLAY DOWN.

8.7 Defensive Offsides. After the ball is ready for play and until it is snapped, no defensive player may be beyond the line of scrimmage.

PENALTY: (RULES 8.1-8.7) DEAD BALL FOUL. 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT.

8.8 Forward Passes. All players are eligible to receive a pass. All forward passes must be thrown from behind the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass may be made on a play that starts from

scrimmage. A shovel pass is a legal forward pass. An incomplete forward pass is put back into play at the line of scrimmage.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT AND LOSS OF DOWN.

8.9 Intentional Grounding. No offensive player may intentionally throw into an area not occupied by his/her teammate to save loss of yardage.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT AND LOSS OF DOWN.

8.10 Receiver Out of Bounds. Any offensive player who goes out of bounds during a down is not eligible to receive a pass until the ball has been touched by an opponent.

PENALTY: LOSS OF DOWN AT PREVIOUS SPOT.

8.11 Backward or Lateral Passes. Any number of backward or lateral passes are allowed. An incomplete or fumbled backward or lateral pass behind the line of scrimmage is dead at the point where it first touches the ground. An incomplete or fumbled backward pass or lateral beyond the line of scrimmage is dead at the point where it first touched the ground unless the ball is fumbled forward of the ball carrier, in which case the ball shall be put into play from the point where possession was lost. If the ball is deflected by a defensive player, it is down where it touches the ground and offense retains possession.

8.12 Offensive Pass Interference. No offensive player shall contact a defensive player.

PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT, LOSS OF DOWN.

8.13 Defensive Pass Interference. No defensive player shall contact an offensive player.

PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT. AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN.

8.14 Roughing the Passer. Defensive player must make a definite effort to avoid charging into a passer after it is clear the ball has been thrown forward legally. 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. Roughing the passer restrictions do not apply if the forward pass is thrown from beyond the offensive team's scrimmage line.

PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM LINE OF SCRIMMAGE AND AN AUTOMATIC FIRST DOWN.

8.15 Diving. Players may dive provided that one foot is kept in contact with the ground at all times.

PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM POINT OF INFRACTION WHERE THE DIVING RESTRICTION IS VIOLATED.

8.16 Spinning. Unlimited spinning is allowed.

8.17 Flag Guarding. The ball carrier shall not use his/her hands, arms or the ball to deny the opponent an opportunity to remove his/her

flags. Examples of flag guarding include, but are not limited to: 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 which places the arm over the flag belt. A player's untucked shirt covering the flags can also be considered flag guarding.

Comment: Intentionally tying flags on is considered unsportsmanlike conduct in addition to flag guarding.
PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM POINT OF INFRACTION. PLAYER DISQUALIFICATION IF FLAGS ARE TIED ON.

8.18 Bump and Run. In flag football, there is NO bump and run. A defensive player may not make contact with an opponent.
PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM LINE OF SCRIMMAGE FOR ILLEGAL DOWNFIELD BLOCKING.

RULE 9: BLOCKING

9.1 Blocking - Line of Scrimmage. Contact blocking of any type is illegal. Screen blocking, as defined in Rule 3.3, is legal.
PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM BASIC SPOT.

9.2 Blocking - Beyond Line of Scrimmage. Contact blocking of any type is illegal. Screen blocking is the only form of blocking allowed 3 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Comment. A player who is setting a screen block shall not:

- a) Take a position closer than one (1) step behind a stationary opponent,
- b) Take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent does not have the opportunity to stop or change direction.

PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM THE SPOT OF THE INFRACTION.

9.3 Blocking - Punt Return. Screen blocking is the only form of blocking allowed on a punt return.
PENALTY (RULES 9.1-9.3): 10 YARDS FROM THE BASIC SPOT.

9.4 Blocking Stance. All players on the line of scrimmage must use a two (2) point stance.
PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM LINE OF SCRIMMAGE.

9.5 Illegal Use of Hands. All players may not use their hands on or behind the line of scrimmage to aid them in getting around the opponent. No player may grab, hold, rip, hit or play through an opponent.
PENALTY: 10 YARDS FROM THE BASIC SPOT.

RULE 10: SCORING

10.1 Scoring Plays. The point value of scoring plays shall be:

Touchdown	6 points
Safety	2 points
PAT from 15 yard.....	3 Points

PAT from 10 yards.....2 points
PAT from 5 yards.....1 point

10.2 Scoring a PAT. Either team has the opportunity to score additional points on a PAT attempt. The offensive team may score 2 points on a successful try from the 10 yard line and 1 point on a successful try from the 5 yard line. The defending team may score 3 points if it intercepts a forward pass, or recovers a lateral or fumble before it touches the ground, and returns the ball into the opponent's end zone.

RULE 11: CONDUCT OF PLAYERS

11.1 Contact Fouls. No player shall:

- a) Steal, attempt to steal, or bat the ball from another player
- b) Trip or tackle an opponent
- c) Hold or grasp an opponent or his/her clothing
- d) Comment: Two arm encirclement or partial encirclement of an opponent's body while attempting to pull his/her flags shall be considered holding.
- e) While in possession of the ball, charge or deliberately drive, run into, or straight arm an opponent
- f) While on defense, block or push the ball carrier out-of-bounds

11.2 Non-Contact Conduct. No player shall:

- a) Use profanity, insulting, or vulgar language or gestures
 - b) Kick or throw the ball any distance that requires an official to retrieve it
 - c) Intentionally ties on his/her flag belts
- PENALTY (RULES 11.1 AND 11.2): 10 YARDS FROM BASIC SPOT - (FLAGRANT OFFENDERS SHALL BE DISQUALIFIED).

RULE 12: COED MODIFICATIONS

12.1 The Game. The game shall be played between two teams of eight (8) players; four (4) men and four (4) women. A team may start a game with less than eight players, but no less than six (6). If a game is played with less than eight players, at no time may the number of players for either sex exceed the number of players of opposite sex by more than one player.

12.2 The Ball. Coed leagues may use either a regulation or junior size football (both will be provided).

12.3 Returning a Protected Scrimmage Kick. A male player on the receiving team may not cross the initial point of contact with the ball. A male player may catch the ball but only female players may advance the ball forward from the initial point of contact.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM POINT OF INFRACTION.

12.4 Ball Carrier. A male player on the offensive team may not cross the line of scrimmage with the ball. A male player may only carry the ball behind the line of scrimmage with and/or beyond the line of scrimmage. Only a female player on the offensive team may advance the ball across the line of scrimmage.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM LINE OF SCRIMMAGE AND LOSS OF DOWN.

12.5 Passing. During the offensive team's possession, there may not be two (2) consecutive legal forward pass competitions on downs from a male passer to a male receiver. The term "CLOSED" means a male player may not complete a legal forward pass to a male. The term "OPEN" means any player can complete a pass to any other players. After a male to male completion, the next forward pass completion must involve either a female passer or receiver for positive yards.

PENALTY: 5 YARDS FROM PREVIOUS SPOT AND LOSS OF DOWN.