



MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY Campus Recreation Intramural Sports

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

ELIGIBILITY RULES

1. You must have a MTSU ID to participate. NO ID, NO PLAY...NO EXCEPTIONS!
2. No Person shall play on more than one single sex and co-rec team per sport. If caught doing so by supervisor or official, Player shall be suspended for remainder of season and that game shall be forfeited. Opposing team does not have to protest if caught by supervisor or official.
3. No person shall use false identification in order to participate. If caught, person will be suspended from Intramural Sports and possibly Campus Recreation activities for a period of time determined by the Associate Director of Intramurals, Sport Clubs, and Wellness.

THE GAME:

1. **The Field:** The field is 100 yards in length and 40 yards in width. There are four 20 yard zones and two 10 yard end zones.
2. **Team:** Teams will consist of 7 players, but a team may begin with as few as 5 players.
3. **Game:** The game shall be played in two 20 –minute halves with a three minute half time. The clock will run continuously until the final 2 minutes of the game (clock will not run during injuries).
4. **Time-outs:** Teams will be given 3 time-outs per game.
5. **Substitutions:** Substitutions may occur during any “dead ball” situation. Multiple players can be substituted as long as each team has no more than 7 players on the field at 1 time.
6. **Equipment:** Hats, bandanas, metal cleats or spikes, shorts with pockets, or jewelry **MAY NOT** be worn while playing. Any player found wearing any of the above during the game will be removed from the game and not allowed to re-enter.
7. **Mercy Rules:** (Games will be called when the following situations occur)
40 points @ 15 minutes in the 2nd half, 25 points @ 8 minutes, and 19 points @ 2 minutes.



FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

GAME SITUATIONS:

- A toss of a coin will determine which team will gain possession of the ball first. The team that wins the coin toss has three options:
 - First possession of the ball.
 - Defend the goal of their choice. (Note: If a team with first option chooses to defend a goal, the other team automatically gets the ball.) This does not guarantee a team the ball to start the second half.
 - Defer their option to the second half. (This does **NOT** guarantee a team the ball to start 2nd half).
- There will be no kickoffs.
- Timing will be continuous for the entire first half and for the first 18 minutes of the second half. Only a team time-out and official's time-out can stop the clock. The clock will stop during the final two minutes of the second half for:
 - Incomplete pass - clock restarts on the snap.
 - Out of bounds - clock restarts on snap.
 - Penalty - clock restarts depending on the result of the previous play.
 - Score - clock restarts on opponent's next snap from scrimmage.
 - Time-outs - clock restarts on snap.
 - Fair catch (punts only) - clock restarts on snap.
 - Touchback - clock restarts on snap.
 - Inadvertent whistle - clock starts on the ready for play whistle.
 - First down - clock restarts, depending on result of the previous play.
- Approximately 2 minutes before the end of each half, the field judge shall inform both team captains of the playing time remaining in each half. The clock will stop in the 2nd half for the 2-minute warning and will restart on the next snap.
- The ball must be put into play no more than 25 seconds after the official has marked it ready for play.
- Three one-minute time-outs per game are allowed for each team. Timeouts may be used at any point during the game. Teams will receive one time-out for each overtime period. Time-outs do not carry over into the overtime period.
- Regular season games can end in a tie. Overtime will only be played during the playoffs.



FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

GAME SITUATIONS:

- Teams must use a time-out in the following situations:
 - If the team decides to change the point total of their “extra point try,” a time-out must be used and the new point total stated to the officials.
 - If the team decides to change a 4th down decision (Go For It or Punt) a time-out must be used and the change of decision stated to the officials.

OVERTIME:

- A coin toss will be conducted to start the overtime period. The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. If the game goes to a second overtime, the team which lost the toss at the beginning of the first overtime has the choice to start on offense or defense for the second overtime. The choice will then alternate for each succeeding overtime period.
- Each team will have a series of four downs to score from their opponent's 20-yard line. Teams which begin their overtime period outside of the 15-yard line due to penalty must score in 4 downs and will NOT receive any first downs for crossing zone-line-to-gains in the process. Teams may receive another set of downs by penalty only (automatic first down).
- When a team scores, they will attempt an extra point (1, 2, or 3).
- After the second overtime period, teams must go for a minimum of 2 points on their extra point try.
- The team on defense first will have its chance to score and attempt an extra point.
- Overtime will continue until a winner is declared.
- The defense may intercept the ball and return it for a touchdown. In this case, they will win the game. If they do not score, the overtime will proceed as necessary. The offensive team's series is over when the defense intercepts a pass.

SCORING:

- A touchdown shall count for six (6) points. After a player scores a touchdown or try after a TD, the player must raise their arms above their head so that the nearest official can deflag the player.
- After a touchdown, the scoring team attempts a PAT (point after touchdown). The captain will indicate from which distance the offense will attempt the PAT.
 - From the 3-yard line - Worth 1 point.
 - From the 10-yard line - Worth 2 points.
 - From the 20-yard line- Worth 3 points.



SCORING:

- An interception during a PAT can be returned by the defense for 3 points. If a penalty occurs in the end zone after a change of possession, a 1 point safety will be awarded to new defense.
- A safety shall count for 2 points. Afterwards, the ball will be put in play by the scoring team at their 14-yard line.

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

EQUIPMENT AND PLAYING FIELD:

Individual player equipment must meet the following requirements or he/she will be removed from the game:

- **Shirts:** All shirts must be tucked in at all times. Failure to do so will result in a failure to wear proper equipment penalty. Shirts that are cut off must be cut off above the player's belly button. Sleeves that are cut off can leave no more than a 2 inch space between the side of the shirt and the player's underarm.
- **Pants:** Players may not wear pants or shorts that have belt loops, pockets, or an exposed drawstring. Players may not wear towels that hang from the waist. If player wears a half shirt, it must be above the belly button. Shorts or pants may not be turned inside out in order to avoid a pocket equipment violation.
NOTE: Any player who is found to be wearing pockets after the game has started will be removed from the game and will not be allowed to re-enter.
- **Headgear:** Players may not wear baseball style caps or other rigid headwear. Knit and stocking caps are permitted. Players may wear a headband no wider than two inches and made of non-abrasive cloth, elastic, fiber, soft leather, or rubber. Bandanas with knots are prohibited. Rubber or cloth elastic bands may be used to control hair.
- **Pads or Braces:** No pads or braces may be worn above the waist. Leg and knee braces made of hard, unyielding material must be covered on both sides and all edges with appropriate slow-recovery padding.
- **Shoes:** All players must wear shoes. Tennis/running shoes and rubber molded cleats are permitted. Spikes and cleats with metal exposed are prohibited. Any player caught wearing spikes will be ejected from the game.



FLAG BELTS:

Each player must wear a three flag belt with one flag on each hip and one in the rear.

- All players must have three flags at the beginning of play.
 - Failure to wear a flag belt at the start of the play, if noticed by an official prior to the snap is a live ball penalty (5 yards).
 - If a runner loses his/her flag during the action, play continues.
 - The play ends when a defensive player touches the runner with one hand between the shoulders and the knees.

Tampering with the flag belt in any way to gain advantage, including tying, using foreign material, or other such acts is unsportsmanlike conduct. (10 yards, loss of down and player disqualification)

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

PLAYING RULES:

- The only type of blocking that is allowed is screen blocking. No contact is allowed between the offense and defense. **Penalty: Illegal Contact, 10 yards.**
 - The screen blocker must have hands at side, across chest, or behind back.
 - Any use of the hands, arms, legs or body to initiate contact is illegal.
 - The player must be on his/her feet before, during and after the screen block.
 - The blocker cannot take a position so close to a moving opponent that his/her opponent cannot avoid contact by stopping or changing direction. This position will vary from 1 to 2 steps depending on speed of the defensive player.
- The offensive team must retrieve the ball after every play from scrimmage. The snapper will maintain control of the ball and bring the ball from the huddle to the line of scrimmage.
- Four (4) offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage at the snap. A player is deemed on the line of scrimmage when facing his/her opponent's goal line with the line of his/her shoulders approximately parallel thereto and with his/her head or foot breaking the plane of the imaginary line drawn through the waistline of the snapper and parallel to the scrimmage line.



FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

- A team registers a first down when it crosses or touches one of the first down lines (zone lines-to-gain). Once the first down has been established, that team may not make another first down by crossing the same line during that series of downs.
- All punts must be announced to the referee. There are no quick kicks.
PENALTY: Illegal kicking, 10 yards from the previous spot.
 - Each team must have 4 players on the line of scrimmage during a punt.
PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
 - The kicker must catch and kick the ball immediately in one continuous motion.
PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.
 - Neither team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage line until the ball is kicked. **PENALTY: Illegal procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
 - If the offense declares to punt, then wants to change their decision, they may do so after a charged timeout or an accepted penalty in which the down is to be replayed.
 - Kickers may not punt barefoot. **PENALTY: Failure to wear proper equipment, 5 yards from the previous spot.**
 - Punts may be returned out of the end zone.
 - If a punt is muffed by the receiving team and caught in the air by the kicking team, it is dead at that spot and the kicking team retains possession, first and line-to-gain. If caught in the air by the receiving team, they may advance the ball.

FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

PLAYING RULES:

- If a player intercepts the ball in the end zone, the player may return it out of the end zone. If the player is deflagged while running in the end zone, it is a touchback.
- A fumble is dead as soon as the ball touches the ground. If the ball is fumbled backwards, it will be dead at the spot where it touches the ground. If fumbled forward, the ball is dead at the spot where the fumble occurred. The ball goes to the team who last had possession with the resulting loss of down. A ball that has not hit the ground can be recovered and advanced by either team.
- Any offensive or defensive player may hand the ball forward or backward to any player at any time.



FLAG FOOTBALL RULES HANDOUT

- A forward pass is LEGAL when:
 - The passer's feet are behind the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the hand.
 - The pass occurs before a change of possession (defense may not throw a forward pass following a fumble recovery or interception).
 - It is the first and only forward pass made during the down. Only one forward pass is permitted per down, regardless of whether the pass is completed beyond or behind the line of scrimmage.

NOTE: An offensive player may run through (across) 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 who can then throw a forward pass as long as such pass abides by the provisions of this section.

- All legal players are eligible to receive a pass. One foot must land in bounds before any part of the body lands in the out-of-bounds area for a legal pass reception. One knee is equivalent.
- When an official sounds his/her whistle inadvertently:
 - During a legal pass, while a snap is in flight, or while a kick is in flight, the down will be replayed.
 - When a player is in possession or during a backward pass, the team in possession may choose either to accept the play where it is blown dead or to replay the down.

EXPLANATION OF GENERAL PENALTIES:

- **Delay of Game: (dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot)** The ball must be put in play properly and legally and any action or inaction by either team which tends to prevent this is illegal delay of game. This includes:
 - Interrupting the 25 second count for any reason, except for a timeout allowed by the referee.
 - Consuming more than 25 seconds in putting the ball in play after it is marked ready for play.
 - Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.
- **Encroachment [Offside] (dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot)** Following the ready-to-play whistle and prior to the snap, no player on defense may encroach, touch the ball, or contact an opponent in any way. It is encroachment for any player to break his/her scrimmage line plane (yellow disk [defense], orange disk [offense]). **Players do NOT have the opportunity to jump across the line and "get back" inside. It is a foul as soon as the player initially enters the neutral zone.**
- **False Start (dead ball foul, 5 yards from the previous spot)** No offensive player shall simulate a charge or start of a play.



EXPLANATION OF GENERAL PENALTIES:

- **Illegal Procedure (5 yards from the previous spot)** When there are less than four (4) offensive players on the line of scrimmage at the snap, it is a live ball illegal procedure penalty. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.
- **Illegal Motion and Shift (5 yards from the previous spot)** Only one offense player may be in motion, but not in motion towards the opponent's goal line (or line of scrimmage), at the time of the snap. After a huddle, all offensive players must come to a stop and remain stationary for 1 second before an offensive player may go in motion.
- **Flag Guarding (10 yards from the spot of the foul)** The ball carrier shall not protect his/her flags by blocking with his/her arms or hands in order to deny the opponents the opportunity to remove them. Note: Stiff arming is flag guarding. Running while holding the ball at hip-level, intentionally or unintentionally, may also be considered flag guarding.
- **Illegally Deflating an Opponent (Personal foul, 10 yards)** An offensive player must have possession of the ball before they can be legally deflagged. Pulling or removing a flag belt from an offensive player without the ball is illegal. If the player is an eligible receiver, the violation may be considered pass interference.
- **Illegal Contact by the Ball Carrier (Personal foul, 10 yards from the spot of the foul)** The ball carrier must run to avoid tacklers. Deliberate charging of an opponent is against the rules. Officials will use the same judgment on charging and blocking by offensive and defensive players as in basketball. "Brushing contact" and unavoidable contact is not willful "charging." The ball carrier may spin or jump around defenders to avoid deflagging; however, the ball carrier must remain in control of his/her body during such moves. If the foul is intentional or unsportsmanlike, then 10 more yards will be added to the penalty and the player will be disqualified.
- **Holding (10 yards from the end of the run [defense], 10 yards from the spot of the foul [offense])** Holding is grasping or encircling an opponent with the hand or arm in any way that impedes his/her movement. A defensive player may not hold, push, or knock the ball carrier down in an attempt to remove the flag. Similarly, an offensive player may not hold an opponent to prevent a flag from being pulled.
- **Tripping (10 yards from the end of the run)** Tripping is using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent (including the ball carrier) below the knees. **PENALTY: 10 yards from the end of the run.**
- would have scored except for being tackled, a touchdown shall be awarded. **Deliberate tackles will result in immediate disqualification.**
- **Illegal Forward Pass & Intentional Grounding (5 yards from the spot of the foul and loss of down)** A pass thrown in violation of the legal pass guidelines listed above is

- **Illegal Contact by the Defense & Tackling (10 yards from the end of the run)** If a defensive player reaches across the body of the ball carrier to pull the flag and contact is made, the responsibility of the contact lies with the defensive player. A runner shall not be thrown to the ground. There shall be no contact with an opponent who is on the ground. If a defensive player tackles the ball carrier, who in the opinion of the referee, considered illegal. A pass that is intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds to avoid a loss of yardage is also illegal.
- **Offensive Pass Interference (10 yards from the previous spot & loss of down)** Pass interference occurs when a player contacts another eligible receiver who is beyond the line of scrimmage. Restrictions exist for the offense from the time that the ball is snapped until it has been touched by a receiver.
- **Defensive Pass Interference (10 yards from the previous spot & automatic first down)** Restrictions exist for the defense from the time the pass is thrown until it has been touched by a receiver. Contact or interference by the defense prior to when the pass is thrown is still considered illegal and will be penalized as a personal foul. Any attempt by a defender to block the receiver's line of sight to the ball, commonly known as "face-guarding" without attempting to make a play on the ball will be considered pass interference. Note: There is no such thing as an "uncatchable ball."
- **Roughing the Passer (10 yards from end of the run / previous spot & automatic first down)** Restrictions exist once the quarterback has received the snap from the center. Contact with the quarterback during or after the ball is released is considered illegal and will be penalized as a personal foul.

OTHER PERSONAL FOULS

- 10 yards from the end of the run [defense], 10 yards from the spot of the foul [offense]. Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul.
 - No player shall punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from the player who has possession.
 - There shall be no tripping or clipping.
 - There shall be no hurdling. Hurdling shall be interpreted as an attempt by the runner to jump with either feet or knees foremost over a player or between players. (You can jump, dive, or spin away from players to avoid having your flag pulled, as long as no contact is made with the opponent).
- **Unfair Acts: (10 yards from the spot of the foul, or previous spot)** No player, substitute, coach, or others subject to the rules shall use words or phrases to commit any act not in accordance with the spirit of fair play for the purposes of confusing the opponent.



THE CO-REC GAME:

- The game is played between two teams of 8 players each. Teams must begin and end each match with a minimum of 6 players. If teams have 4 females they must put 4 females on the field of play.
- Co-Rec matches may be played with an uneven male/female or female/male ratio according to the following premise:
 - Minus 1:** 4/3 male/female and vice versa;
 - Minus 2:** 5/3 or 4/2 male to female and vice versa (This may occur at the consent of both teams or at the discretion of the Intramural Sports Staff.)
- **Line of Scrimmage:** 5 offensive players must be on the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped (Penalty – Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot).
- **Male Runner:** The offensive team males cannot advance the ball past their scrimmage line. **(Penalty – Illegal Procedure, 5 yards from the previous spot).**
Restriction: A male runner can advance the ball no more than 2 steps forward on a free kick. A female runner only may advance the ball forward. However, after the receiving team has caught the free kick, if there is a subsequent change of team possession, any male or female player may advance, 5 yards.
- **Open vs. Closed Plays:**
Each drive will begin with the play being open. During the offensive team's possession there may not be 2 consecutive legal forward pass completions from a male passer to a male receiver. This rule applies to the Try. If a male passer completes a legal forward pass to a male receiver, the next legal forward pass must involve either a female passer or female receiver for **positive yards (i.e., all plays are Open until a forward pass is completed from a male QB to a male receiver)**. After a male to male completion, the next play shall be closed and will remain so until positive yards are gained in a play involving a female QB or receiver (Penalty – Illegal Forward Pass, 5 yards from previous spot and loss of down). Any foul, whether accepted or declined, shall have no effect on whether the next legal forward pass completing is "open" or "closed."

SCORING

- If a female passes, catches, or rushes for a touchdown = 9 points
All other touchdowns = 6 points. (Extra point attempts are normal point values)

Flag Football.....7/21/09

