

G e o r g e M a s o n U n i v e r s i t y

7v7 Flag Football - Rules

Revised Fall 2021

Intramural 7v7 flag football games will be conducted under the 2021-2022 NIRSA Flag & Touch Football rules, with any exceptions listed below. Final interpretations and modifications shall be determined by the Coordinator of Competitive Sports.

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General Intramural Sports Policies and Procedures

Signing-In and Rosters

1. All players must present a valid Mason ID in order to sign-in and participate in an intramural contest.
2. A player that does not have their Mason ID may still sign-in using a valid government issued photo ID (i.e. a driver's license or passport), *if* their name is already listed on the IMLeagues roster.
3. An individual is bound to the *first* team they sign-in for.
4. A participant can only play on 1 Co-Rec team and 1 single-gender team (i.e. Men's or Fraternity).

Forfeits and Defaults

1. Teams that are not present at their scheduled contest by game time, or are unable to produce enough eligible players to field a team, will be assessed a forfeit.
2. The prepared team must allow the other team a grace period of 5-minutes to acquire a properly equipped team. The game clock will start at game time. The 5-Minute Rule comes into effect when:
 - a. At least 1 (one) person from the team is properly checked in.
 - b. The captain/team that is not properly prepared to play with the minimum number of players will have 5 minutes to become ready to play.
 - c. If the 5-minute time limit expires and the team still does not have the minimum number of players, the game will be forfeited to the team that has the minimum number of players present.
 - d. If at any time, during the 5-minute limit, the team acquires the minimum number of players, the game will begin. The game clock will remain at the time that has passed and will continue in accordance with sport rules.
3. The captain of the forfeited team will be assessed a \$25 Forfeit Buy-Back fee. Additionally, the team will be ineligible to play in their next scheduled game until the forfeit fee is paid.

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4. If a team knows in advance that they will be unable to field a team on a given night; they may avoid the forfeit fee and loss of playoff eligibility by completing a Default Notification form by 1:00pm on the business day of the contest.
 - a. For Sunday games, this form must be completed by 1:00pm the Friday before.

Sportsmanship

To be eligible for playoffs, intramural flag football teams **MUST** have an average sportsmanship rating of a 2.5.

Competitive Sports expects all participants and spectators to conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner. Unsportsmanlike conduct or other inappropriate behavior occurring in Mason Recreation indoor or outdoor facilities before, during, or after intramural events will not be tolerated. Teams will be held accountable for the actions of their players (both participating and non-participating) and their fans. Officials and the Mason Recreation staff have the authority to impose and enforce penalties on teams, players and/or fans that have committed offenses. Penalties for post-game, playoff, and tournament play violations may be carried over into subsequent games and/or sport seasons. The officials will rate each team in each contest. The authority of the officials' rating exists prior to, during, and following all contests to which that official is assigned, and extends to all persons on, at, or near the playing site. Sportsmanship ratings shall be marked on the score sheet. In all cases the Competitive Sports Supervisors and administrative staff may provide input, which may raise or lower the rating. Supervisors may amend the rating for inappropriate conduct or use of an ineligible player.

- **0** - Team is completely uncooperative and out of control before, during, or after a contest. The team captain exhibits poor or no control over themselves, the team, and/or the spectators. The team has multiple ejections or blatant unsportsmanlike conduct that endangers participants, fans, officials, or supervisors. Team fails to cooperate/comply with intramural sports administrative staff, university officials, or law enforcement while performing their duties; falsely represents or withholds any requested information.
 - **Teams that receive a "0" rating are subject to immediate dismissal from the league or tournament**
- **1** - Teams constantly comment to the officials and/or opposing teams from the field and/or sidelines. The team captain exhibits little or no control over teammates or himself/herself. Majority of individuals on this team are disrespectful of opponents or officials on a regular basis. Teams that receive a second unacceptable rating ("1") in the same sport or activity are subject to immediate dismissal from league or tournament play.
- **2**- Team members or spectators are disrespectful of opponents or officials on a number of occasions, which may or may not warrant a penalty. Captain exhibits minor control over his/herself and his/her teammates and spectators. Teams receiving multiple warnings or having a player ejected for an unsportsmanlike act should receive no higher than a "2" rating.
- **3**- Team members and spectators are respectful of opponents and officials except for one or two minor incidents, which may or may not merit a warning from the game officials or supervisor.

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- **4-** Players cooperate fully with the officials about rule interpretations and calls. The captain also has full control of his/her teammates. Team members and spectators were respectful of opponents and officials and encouraged each other's efforts. At no time was this team disrespectful towards participants or officials.

Protest

1. A team captain may protest player eligibility and rule interpretation, but *not* the judgement of officials.
2. To file a protest, notification of the protest must be made to a game official prior to the *next live ball*.
3. A player's eligibility must be protested *prior to the start of the contest*.

For more information regarding the policies and procedures of Intramural Sports, please see the Intramural Sports Handbook on IMLeagues and the Mason Recreation website.

Inclement Weather

1. Information regarding postponement or cancellation of intramural sports contests due to inclement weather will be available through announcements on IMLeagues, through email, or by phone.
 - a. Every effort will be made to announce decisions to cancel outdoor games by 3:00pm on weekdays and 12:00pm on Sunday.
 - b. The decision may also be determined at game time by the Competitive Sports staff.
2. Regular season games cancelled due to inclement weather will not be rescheduled and both teams will receive a sportsmanship rating of a 3.
3. Playoff games cancelled due to inclement weather will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

Equipment

1. Players must wear pants or shorts **WITHOUT any pockets or loose flaps of material**. This includes exposed drawstrings, belt loop(s), or holes.
 - a. Shorts/pants *may not* be turned inside out, and pockets *may not* be taped.
 - b. Shorts/pants must be a different color than flag belts.
 - c. Towels may be worn from the waist; however, they will count as an additional flag.
 - d. Handwarmers are not permitted.
 - e. Players may carry a playbook on their arms or inside their clothing as long as it is not made of unyielding material.
2. All players on the field must be equipped with a flag belt. Flag belts will be provided by the Competitive Sports program.
 - a. The belt must be worn so that the flags fall two at the side and one in the back.
 - b. Belts *may not* be tied or tucked.
3. All players must wear athletic shoes made of canvas, leather, or synthetic material which cover the entire foot.

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4. The Competitive Sports office highly encourages participants to remove any jewelry prior to participation. Participants that choose to wear jewelry do so at their own risk.
 - a. The Competitive Sports staff reserves the right to remove a participant from play if they deem the jewelry to be unsafe to themselves or others.
 - b. The safety of a piece may depend on the sport or activity being played.
5. Casts (plaster, metal, or other hard substances in their final form) or any other item judged to be dangerous by any Competitive Sports staff (including the Athletic Trainer) may not be worn during the game.
 - a. Knee braces made of hard, unyielding substances covered on both sides with all edges overlapped and any other hard substances covered with slow recovery rubber or similar material will be allowed.
6. Teams must wear jerseys/shirts with the same shade of color.
 - a. Home teams should play in white shirts, and away teams should play in dark colors.
 - b. All shirts/jackets/sweatshirts **must** be tucked in, or placed under the flag belt.
 - c. All hoods on jackets or sweatshirts must be tucked in prior to the snap and they cannot have an exposed pocket.
7. Failure to wear appropriate attire will result in not be permitted to play
 - a. Players who are caught with a clothing infraction will be asked to step off the field
8. Game balls will be provided by the Competitive Sports programs.
 - a. Teams may provide their own game ball provided that the ball is pebble-grained lather or rubber covered and meets recommendations of size and shape for regulation football.
 - b. Men shall use a regular size ball and women shall use the men's intermediate, youth, or junior sized ball.

Contest Timing

1. Contests will start at the time they are scheduled on IMLeagues. Teams should check-in with the Competitive Sports Supervisor 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time.
2. Teams will have 50 minutes to complete their scheduled intramural 7v7 flag football contest (or game).
3. One game (or contest) will consist of two (2), twenty-minute (20) halves of continuous running time until the last two minutes of each half and a three (3) minute intermission between halves.
 - a. Teams will be altered to the clock stopping with a 2-minute warning. The clock will stop/restart according to the following:
 - i. On the snap:
 1. Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass
 2. Out-of-bounds
 3. Safety
 4. Team time-out
 5. First down that ends out of bounds
 6. Touchdown (on the next offensive snap – extra points are untimed)

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7. Touchback
 8. Illegally consuming time
 - ii. On the whistle:
 1. First down that ends in-bound
 2. Illegally conserving time
 - iii. Penalty administration depends on the previous play (except delay of game).
 1. With under 2 minutes remaining in the second half, the offended team of any foul will have the option to start the game clock on the snap.
 - iv. Referee's timeout restarts at their discretion.
4. Teams will have three (3) timeouts per half, lasting no more than one (1) minute.
 - a. Timeouts may only be requested by a player on the field during a dead ball period.
 - b. Timeouts will not carry over into an overtime period.
 5. If the game is tied at the end of regulation during a playoff game, an overtime will occur.
 - a. Overtime does not occur during regular season games.
 - b. See rules below for overtime procedures.
 6. If a team is ahead by forty (40) or more points with five (5) minutes remaining in the second half, the game will end.
 7. If a team is ahead by twenty (20) or more points with two (2) minutes remaining in the second half, the game will end.
 8. If a Co-Rec team is ahead by twenty five (25) or more points with two (2) minutes remaining in the second half, the game will end.

Players

1. Team rosters on IMLeagues are unlimited.
2. Teams will play with seven (7) players on the field at one time. A minimum of five (5) players is needed to start or continue a game.
 - a. Four (4) players are allowed if an individual cannot continue due to injury.
 - b. One (1) offensive player must be designated as the snapper on the line of scrimmage.
3. When a team has forfeited, the opposing team must have at least five (5) players checked in with the Competitive Sports Supervisor to receive a win.
4. Substitutions are unlimited. Substitutions must occur at mid-field, between downs prior to the ball being snapped.
5. During a Co-Rec flag football game, a team consists of four (4) women and four (4) men.
 - a. A team may play with uneven numbers of men and women, as long as the number of either gender does not drop below three (3).

Game Rules

Intramural 7v7 flag football games will be conducted under modified NIRSA rules. The following contains an overview of the major rules and modifications with some exceptions.

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Start of the Game

1. Prior to the game there will be a captains meeting and coin toss. The options for the team winning the coin toss will be:
 - a. Offense/Defense
 - b. Side
 - c. Defer (if the winning team defers, the other team is advised to pick offense)
2. The game will begin with the ball placed on the fourteen (14) yard line, possession being given to the team starting with the ball.
3. At halftime, teams switch sides and the team that did not start with the ball in the first half, will start on offense in the second half.

Starting Play and the Snap

1. Once the ball is marked ready for play by a referee, a team has twenty-five (25) seconds within which to snap the ball.
2. Offense must have *at least* one (1) player on the line of scrimmage that is designated as the snapper. All plays must originate with a snap from this player.
 - a. The snap must be at least two (2) yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.
 - b. The snap does not need to be made between the legs of the snapper.
 - c. The snap *cannot* be taken from the cone.
 - d. The snapper may not receive the snap.
3. Only one offensive player may be in motion when the ball is snapped.
 - a. This motion must begin more than one second before the ball is snapped, and must be parallel to, or away from the line of scrimmage.
 - b. A player may go in motion from the line but **is not** considered to be on the line.
4. No defensive player may be closer than one (1) yard to the line of scrimmage during all scrimmage downs.
 - a. Defensive plays may not break the neutral zone until the ball is snapped.
5. Once the down has ended, offensive players are responsible for retrieving the ball.

Carrying the Ball

1. A ball carrier, or runner, may not flag guard by using their hands, arms, or the ball to cause contact between the runner and an opponent that denies the opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt.
 - a. Slapping with the hand or stiff-arming are examples of flag-guarding.
 - b. Spinning or jumping to avoid being deflagged is permitted.
 - c. A ball carrier may not hurdle a player to avoid being deflagged. Hurdling is interpreted as an attempt by a runner to jump over a player still on their feet with the feet or knees of the runner foremost.
2. If a player inadvertently loses their flag or it is pulled by the opposition before gaining possession of the ball, the play will continue and the player must be downed by a one-hand touch between the shoulder and knees, including the arm and hand.
3. A defender may:

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- a. Not play the person, nor may they hold or tackle the runner while deflagging the ball carrier.
- b. Not attempt to steal the ball in player possession.
- c. A defender's feet may leave the ground in an attempt to pull a flag, however, the diving player is still responsible for any contact which they initiate.
4. A player will be ruled "down" when any part of the body other than the hand or foot touches the ground, or under the provision of section 2 (see above).
5. A fumbled or muffed ball is dead when it strikes the ground.
6. Any player may hand the ball backward or forward at any time.

Blocking & Rushing

1. Blocking will be by **SCREENING ONLY**. A blocker must hinder a defender's movement through positioning rather than body contact.
 - a. No part of the body except the feet shall be in contact with the ground and the feet must remain on the ground for the duration of the block.
 - b. The body must remain upright with elbows and hands touching the body at the side or behind the back.
 - c. Players may not interlock block (e.g. grasping or encircling one another around the runner).
2. The defense may not use hands, arms, or legs as a wedge to gain an advantage over a blocker.
3. While incidental contact may occur, blocking/rushing penalties will be called against the player who initiates contact.

Passing

1. A forward pass may be thrown from any point behind the line of scrimmage.
 - a. Both feet must be behind the line of scrimmage.
 - b. Only one forward pass may be attempted from behind the line of scrimmage on a given play.
2. A forward pass is *illegal* if:
 - a. It is thrown from beyond the line of scrimmage.
 - b. It is intentional grounding.
 - c. It is thrown after a change of possession.
 - d. The passer catches their untouched forward/backward pass.
 - e. It is the second forward pass during the play.
3. If the passer is deflagged prior to releasing the ball, the ball is dead at that spot and the down has ended.
 - a. Defensive players must make a definitive effort to avoid contact with a passer after it is clear that the ball has been thrown.
 - b. No defensive player shall contact the passer who is standing still or fading back as they are considered out of the play after the pass.
4. All incomplete backward passes will be marked down at the point of ground contact.
5. All players except the passer are eligible to receive a pass.

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- a. An offensive player that goes out-of-bounds on their own accord and returns inbounds, is considered an illegal participant.
6. A player must have complete possession of the ball and land with the first part of their body inbounds, normally one foot, to be a legal reception.
7. A pass intercepted in the end zone may be advanced, *except* during an extra point.

Kicking

1. There will be no kickoffs or free kicks.
2. On fourth down, the offense must announce prior to the ball being marked read-for-play whether or not they will punt.
 - a. Once the decision is made, it cannot be changed except through the use of a charged time-out by either team, a foul occurs, or an inadvertent whistle is blown that causes the down to be replayed.
 - b. If a kick is to be made the following procedures must be followed:
 - i. The kicker must receive the snap two yards behind the center.
 - ii. The kick must be made immediately upon receiving the snap.
 - iii. Players of the kicking or receiving team may not advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked. The receiving team may attempt to block the kick after it crosses the scrimmage line.
 - iv. Once the ball is punted, any receiving player may block the kick. If a player on the kicking team catches the kick behind the receiving team's line of scrimmage they may advance.
 - c. The kicking team may catch, touch, muff, or bat a punt in flight beyond their line of scrimmage if no receiving team player is in position to catch the ball.
 - d. When a punt breaks the plane of the receiver's goal line it is a touch back.
 - i. The ball will be placed on the fourteen (14) yard line.

Individuals on the Sideline

1. All players that are not in the field of play, and all coaches on the sidelines must stay within the bench area between the twenty (20) yard line markers and two yards off the sidelines.
2. Team representatives, including players, substitutes, replaced players, coaches, trainers, spectators, and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game and shall be governed by decisions of officials assigned to the game.

Scoring

1. A play is considered a touchdown when a runner advances from the field of play so that the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent's goal line *or* if a loose ball is caught by a player while the ball is on or behind the opponent's goal line.
2. A touchdown is worth six (6) points and a safety is worth two (2) points.
3. Once a touchdown is scored, teams will be given the opportunity to score extra points. Once a decision has been announced, a team may only change if there is a charged timeout.
 - a. One (1) point will be attempted from the three (3) yard line.

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- b. Two (2) points will be attempted from the ten (10) yard line.
 - c. Three (3) points will be attempted from the twenty (20) yard line.
 - d. Extra point attempts that are intercepted are immediately blown dead.
4. Following any touchdown, the ball shall be placed on the fourteen (14) yard line, possession being given to the opponent of the scoring team.
5. Following any safety, the ball shall be snapped by the scoring team on their own thirty (30) yard line.
6. In the event that a *playoff* game ends in a tie after regulation time, an overtime period will occur with the following procedures:
 - a. A coin-toss will occur. The winning team will select offense/defense or the goal line they will play towards.
 - b. Each team will start first down and goal from the ten (10) yard line, unless moved by penalty.
 - c. The team will have four (4) downs to score, unless awarded first down automatically, or a penalty allows for repeating the down.
 - d. Any turnovers will result in the play being blown dead immediately, and the ball awarded the opposing team at the ten (10) yard line.
 - e. Extra point attempts will be as follows:
 - i. First overtime teams may go for one (1), two (2), or three (3).
 - ii. Second overtime teams must go for two (2) or three (3).
 - iii. Third overtime teams must go for three (3).
 - f. There will be no timeouts during an overtime period.

Penalties

1. The offended team may have its choice of the penalty or the result of the play.
 - a. If there is a foul that occurs by the defense during a down that results in a touchdown, the scoring team may accept the result of the play, then choose to enforce the foul at the succeeding spot (during the try) or on the next drive on the fourteen (14) yard line.
 - b. If after a touchdown and prior to the ready-for-play signal for the try, either team commits any foul for which the basic spot is the succeeding spot (try), the offended team may have the penalty enforced from the succeeding spot (try) or after the try on the fourteen (14) yard line.
 - c. If a defensive foul occurs, and the enforcement spot (which is now the basic spot), is on or behind the offended team's goal line, the measurement will be from the succeeding spot.
 - d. If roughing the passer penalty is called on a *completed forward pass*, the enforcement will occur from the end of the run, when the run ends beyond the neutral zone and no change of possession has occurred.
2. When both teams commit a foul during the same live ball period, regardless of the severity, the down is automatically replayed, provided there is no change in possession.
 - a. If an ejection is warranted, this may occur even though no yardage is assessed.
3. When a live ball and a dead ball penalty occurs, each is handled on its own merit, regardless of whether the penalties are on the same or opposing teams.

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4. Live ball fouls committed by either team after Team B (the team that gains possession on defense at the start of the down) gains possession during a try or overtime shall be enforced at the succeeding spot (where the ball will next be snapped or free kicked).
5. Establishing Zone-Line-To-Gain-Penalties for fouls with succeeding spot enforcement which occur:
 - a. *Prior* to the ready for play signal, shall be administered *before* setting the zone line to gain for a new series.
 - b. *After* the ready for play signal, shall be administered *AFTER* setting the zone line to gain for a new series.
6. A period will not be extended for a foul which specifies loss of down, if accepted. Also, any score by the team which fouled is cancelled.
7. All unsportsmanlike conduct penalties are penalized as a dead ball foul.
 - a. A player receiving an unsportsmanlike conduct foul must sub out for the subsequent down.
 - b. If a penalty occurs on the subsequent down which results in repeating the down the player may reenter the game.
 - c. If a dead ball penalty occurs between downs the player may still not re-enter until after the subsequent down.
 - d. The second unsportsmanlike conduct foul by the same player or non-player results in disqualification.
 - e. The third unsportsmanlike conduct foul by the same team results in their forfeiture of the game.
8. The following fouls will be assessed with a loss of five (5) yards:
 - a. Failure to wear proper equipment
 - b. Delay of Game
 - c. Illegal Substitution
 - d. Illegal Procedure
 - e. Encroachment
 - f. False Start
 - g. Illegal Snap
 - h. Illegal Motion
 - i. Illegal Shift
 - j. Illegal Advancement (Co-Rec)
 - k. Illegal Backward Pass (Loss of down)
 - l. Illegal Forward Pass (Loss of down if by A prior to a change of possession)
 - m. Intentional Grounding (Loss of down)
 - n. Illegal Reception: Man to Man Forward Pass Completion on a Closed Play (Co-Rec)
9. The following fouls will be assessed with a loss of ten (10) yards:
 - a. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
 - i. Illegal player equipment
 - b. Illegal Kick, Quick Punt
 - c. Kick Catching Interference
 - d. Offensive Pass Interference
 - e. Defensive Pass Interference
 - f. Personal Foul:

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- i. Strip, or attempt to strip the ball
 - ii. Throw runner to the ground
 - iii. Hurdling
 - iv. Contact before or after the ball is dead
 - v. Nonplayer contact with official in restricted area
 - vi. Illegal Contact
 - g. Roughing the passer (automatic first down)
 - h. Flag guarding
 - i. Holding
 - j. Illegal participation
10. The following fouls will be assessed with a loss of ten (10) yards in addition to a disqualification:
- a. Tampering with the flag belt (loss of down if by A, automatic first down if by B)
 - b. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
 - i. Flagrant
 - ii. Intentionally contacting an official
 - c. Flagrant personal fouls
 - d. Tackling the runner
 - e. Fighting an opponent
 - f. Non-player deflagging or interfering with a runner

Co-Rec Specific Rules

1. After any change of possession, a team will begin their offensive series with an “open” play.
 - a. In “open” plays, any gender passer may complete a pass to any gender receiver.
2. A play becomes “closed” when a man passer completes a pass to a man receiver. In “closed” plays, a man passer cannot pass to a man receiver.
 - a. During the offensive team’s possession, there may not be two (2) consecutive forward pass completions from a man passer to a man receiver.
 - b. To re-open the play the following requirements must be met:
 - i. A woman must be either the passer, or the receiver
 - ii. There must be a legal, completed forward pass
 - iii. Positive yards must be gained
 - c. The above requirements must also be met during the try.
 - d. If a man to man pass completion occurs during a closed play, it will be an Illegal Reception, five (5) yards from the previous spot and a loss of down. The next play will remain closed.
3. A runner who is a man is prohibited from advancing the ball across the offensive line of scrimmage prior to the ball being beyond the offensive team’s scrimmage line, *unless* a legal forward pass precedes this run.
 - a. If this does occur, it will be an illegal procedure with a five (5) yard penalty from the previous spot.

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Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Competitive Sports Office via email at imsports@gmu.edu. Our office is open Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm.