



Stevenson University Department of Campus Recreation  
Intramural Flag Football Rules

Stevenson University Intramural Flag Football will follow the current rules of NFHS (National Federation of State High School Associations) and NIRSA (National Intramural and Recreational Association) unless modified to accommodate facility or program needs. Those who are subject to the rules are: team representatives (players, substitutes, coaches and spectators) and other persons affiliated with the team are subject to the rules of the game and shall be governed by the decisions of the Intramural Staff assigned to the game.

**Player Eligibility**

1. Participation is limited to all currently enrolled, fee-paying SU students, faculty members, and full-time staff.
2. In order to be eligible to participate, each eligible player MUST present his/her current, valid SU ID. Check-in takes place at designed sign-in locations at the facility, field or court (usually at the Scorekeeper's table). Individuals who are unable to provide a current, valid SU ID will not be permitted to participate. No other forms of identification will be accepted (email, class schedule, Driver's License, etc).
3. For additional information regarding player eligibility, team rosters and participant check-in refer to the SU Intramural Handbook available online at the SU Intramural Sports website and in the Intramural Sports office located in Garrison Hall North - Room 106.

**Team Composition**

1. Players can compete on only one team regardless of league classification. In addition, a player may compete for one Co-Rec team during the same season.
2. A minimum of seven (7) players are required to register a team. All players must show their current, valid SU ID at the game site in order to be eligible to participate. (Co-Rec = Minimum of 3 each gender)
3. A team must have five (5) players to start a game. Players who arrive late must check-in with the scorekeeper/s and must wait for a dead-ball situation in order to enter the game. (Co-Rec = Minimum of 2 each gender)
4. A player can enter and exit a game an unlimited amount of times. All substitutions must be made after play has been declared dead, but before the ball is mark ready for play again. Failure to do so will result in penalty – Illegal Participation (10 yards).

5. Team rosters will be formed based on the players who compete in the team's first regular season game and every subsequent regular season game. No new players can be added after a team's last regular season game.
6. In order for a player to be eligible for playoffs, he/she must participate in at least one regular season game for that team. \*No player may participate on more than one team\*
7. Any player who is injured or bleeding, has an open wound, or has an excessive amount of blood on the uniform must leave the game.

### **Equipment and Playing Field**

1. The Campus Recreation Staff will provide game balls only; teams must furnish their own practice footballs. Teams are permitted to utilize their own football while on offense as long as it meets the guidelines for official size according to the league (Women's league will use a Youth size football while Men's uses an Official size).
2. Teams are encouraged to wear their own like-colored jerseys. Scrimmage vests (pinnies) are available for checkout at the fields.
3. Individual Player Equipment must meet the following requirements:
  - a. Shirts: All shirts must be tucked in and remain tucked in throughout the game. If the shirt (jacket) has a hood, the hood must be tucked inside the shirt. Shirts must not have arm openings that are larger than four inches. Referees will measure the arm openings with their fist. Shirts that have been altered and are missing more than the length of the sleeve will not be permitted.
  - b. Pants: Players may not wear pants or shorts that have belt loops, metal, cargo pockets or exposed drawstrings. Players may not wear towels that hang from the waist.
  - c. Headgear: Baseball caps or other rigid headwear is not permitted. Players may wear rubber or cloth elastic headbands that are used to control hair. Bandanas with knots are prohibited.
  - d. 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 slow-recovery padding.
  - e. Shoes: All players must wear shoes. Athletic/Tennis shoes and solid (permanent) rubber molded cleats are permitted. Metal/baseball style spikes and cleats with metal exposed are prohibited. Any player caught wearing these types of spikes will be ejected immediately.
4. Jewelry is NOT allowed to be worn by any participant during the game. Jewelry consists of visible rings (wedding bands), watches, necklaces, earrings, studs (including tongue or lip rings), bracelets (metal or cloth) and any other such similar jewelry. Medical alert bracelets must be taped to the body or secured under clothing such as a sock to be worn during play. Taping of any other forms of jewelry, other than a medical bracelet, is prohibited. Players are subject to ejection for failure to remove jewelry.
5. During play, each player in the game must wear a three flag belt with one flag on each hip and one in the rear. The belt should be connected in the front by fastening the clip onto the belt. Special instructions will be communicated by the officials in order to properly fasten a belt.
  - a. All players must have three flags at the beginning of each play

- b. Failure to wear a flag belt at the start of the play, if noticed by the official prior to the snap will be a live ball penalty.
  - c. If a player loses his/her belt during play, play continues. If that player has the ball, the play ends when a defensive player touches the runner with one hand between the shoulders and knees.
  - d. Tampering with the flag belt in any way in order to gain an advantage such as: tying, taping, looping the clip or tucking the belt inside players' pants is prohibited. These actions are considered unsportsmanlike conduct and the player will be immediately disqualified.
6. The dimensions of the field are 80 yards x 40 yards. The playing area will contain two 10 yard end zones, and three 20 yards (1<sup>st</sup> down) zones.
  7. All additional players, coaches and spectators should be no less than 2 yards behind the sidelines. Officials will issue one sidelines warning before penalties are sanctioned.

### **Game Timing**

1. Game time is forfeit time. Any team that forfeits a game can jeopardize any playoff potential due to a low sportsmanship rating. Teams who forfeit more than once will be dropped from the league.
2. Games will consist of two 20-minute halves with a 5-minute halftime. Teams will switch sides after each half.
3. A coin toss will take place immediately after the Captain's Meeting to determine who gets the first possession of the ball. The winning captain of the coin toss will have the following options:
  - a. First possession of the ball.
  - b. Defend the goal of their choice (If the captain chooses to defend a goal first, the opposing team automatically gets the ball first).
  - c. Defend their option to the second half.
4. There will be no opening kickoffs. In all "kickoff" situations, the "receiving" team will get the ball on their own 14 yard line, in the center of the field (1<sup>st</sup> and 6 to gain). This will also serve as the starting point after all touchbacks, safeties and point after touchdowns.
5. Timing will be continuous throughout the first half and during the first 18-minutes of the second half. Only a team time-out or an Official's time-out can stop the clock. During the last two minutes of the second half the clock will stop only for:
  - a. Two-minute Warning (official will notify all players of the two minute warning) – restarts on the snap
  - b. Incomplete Pass – restarts on the snap
  - c. Out of Bounds – restarts on the snap
  - d. Time-Outs – restarts on the snap
  - e. Touchback – restarts on the snap
  - f. Penalty – restarts depending on results of previous play
  - g. 1<sup>st</sup> down – restarts depending on results of previous play
  - h. Score – restarts on the opponent's next snap after point after touchdown PAT (All point after attempts in the last two minutes of the game will be untimed)

6. Teams will receive one (1) time-out during each half of the game. Teams will receive only one additional time-out if overtime occurs regardless of how many overtime periods are played. All time-outs will be one (1) minute in length. Time-outs that are not used will not carry over between halves or overtime period/s.
7. Regular season games can end in a tie. Overtime will only occur during the playoffs. The rules for overtime are as follows:
  - a. A coin toss will start the overtime period. The winner has the choice of offense or defense. If the game continues to a second overtime period, the loser of the first coin toss will have the choice of offense or defense. The choice will continue to alternate for succeeding overtime periods.
  - b. Each team will have a series of four downs to score from their opponent's 10-yard line. Teams who begin their possession outside the 20-yard line, due to penalty, must score in four downs and will not receive an additional first down for crossing the zone- line-to-gain. Teams may receive a 1<sup>st</sup> down by penalty only (automatic 1<sup>st</sup> down).
  - c. When a team scores they will have their PAT point after touchdown (1, 2 or 3).
  - d. The team on defense first will also have a chance to score and attempt an extra point.
  - e. Overtime will continue until a winner is declared.
  - f. If the defense secures a possession in overtime (interception), the offense's series will be over and the ball declared dead. The defense may not return the ball for a touchdown.

## **Scoring**

1. Touchdowns will count for six (6) points
  - a. After a player scores a touchdown, their flag belt will be checked by an official to ensure that it has not been illegally fastened. If the official deems the flag has been illegally fastened, the player is disqualified and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is issued.
2. After a touchdown, the scoring team attempts a PAT (point after touchdown). The captain will indicate which distance the offense will attempt its PAT from:
  - a. From the 3-yard line – Worth 1 point.
  - b. From the 10-yard line – Worth 2 points.
  - c. From the 20-yard line – Worth 3 points.
3. If the defense secures possession of the ball during a PAT attempt, the ball will be declared dead and the play will be over. The defense cannot score during a PAT.
4. A safety shall count as two (2) points. The scoring team will keep possession of the ball starting on their own 14-yard line (kickoff).
5. (Mercy Rule) If a team leads by 19 or more points, in the final two minutes of the game, the game will end.

## **Playing Rules**

1. First Downs

- a. A team is awarded first down by when they cross or touch 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 that same line during that series of downs.
2. Line of Scrimmage, Players Required on the Line
    - a. The offense must have at least four (4) players on the line of scrimmage at the snap. A player is deemed on the line of scrimmage when they are facing their opponent's goal with their shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage and either his/her head or foot breaking the plane of an imaginary line drawn through the waistline of the snapper and parallel to the line of scrimmage.
    - b. Anytime at or after the ready for play signal, all offensive players must momentarily be at least 5-yards inbounds prior to the snap.
3. Fumbles
    - a. A fumble is dead at the point of contact with the ground, if it is fumbled backwards, or at the spot where the fumble occurred if fumbled forward. The ball goes to the team who had possession last with the resulting loss of down. A ball that has not hit the ground can be recovered and advanced by either team. This includes snaps by the center that are not caught by the offensive player (quarterback). Bad snaps are dead at the spot they hit the ground.
4. Handoffs
    - a. Any offensive player may hand the ball forward or backward behind the line of scrimmage and prior to either a runner advancing the ball across the line of scrimmage or a forward pass crossing the line of scrimmage. Once the ball has been advanced or thrown across the line of scrimmage (in any downfield plays), an offensive player may only hand the ball backward to another player. At all times, defensive players may only hand the ball backward to another player.
5. Forward Passes

Forward passes are legal when:

    - a. The passer's foot is behind the line of scrimmage when the ball leaves the hand
    - b. The pass occurs before a change of possession
    - c. It is the first and only forward pass made during a down, regardless whether the pass is completed beyond or behind the line of scrimmage.
      - i. An offensive player may cross the line of scrimmage, run back behind the line of scrimmage and then throw a forward pass or toss the ball backward to another player who can then throw a forward pass as long as it follows all forward pass rules.
6. Pass Receptions
    - a. All players on the field are eligible receivers. One foot must land inbounds before any part of the body lands out of bounds for a legal pass reception. One knee is equivalent.
7. Interceptions in the End Zone
    - a. 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.
8. Screen Blocking

The only type of blocking that is allowed is screen blocking. No contact is allowed between the offense and defense. In order for a screen block to be legal:

- a. The screen blocker must have their hands at his/her side or behind his/her back.
- b. Any use of the hands, arms, legs or body to initiate contact is illegal.
- c. The player must be on his/her feet before, during and after the screen block.
- d. 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.

#### 9. Retrieval of Ball After Play

- a. The offensive team must retrieve the ball after every play from scrimmage.

#### 10. Punting the Ball

On fourth down, the official will ask the offensive team captain to select if they wish to punt or try to reach the zone-line-to-gain ("go for it"). Once a decision is reached, the official will announce the decision to the defense. 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.

- a. All punts must be announced to the official. There are no quick kicks or fake punts.
- b. The kicking team must have 4 players on the line of scrimmage during a punt.
- c. The kicker must catch and kick the ball immediately in one continuous motion.
- d. Neither team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage line until the ball is kicked.
- e. Punts that have not been touched by a player are not dead while bouncing on the ground. When a punt touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, it is dead at that spot and belongs to the receiving team. 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. If caught in the air by the receiving team, they may advance the ball.
- f. When a punt breaks the plane of the receiving team's goal line, it is a touchback. Punts may not be returned out of the end zone.
- g. There are no fair catches. Fair catch signals shall be disregarded.

#### 11. Inadvertent Whistles

If an official inadvertently sounds their whistle:

- a. During a legal pass, while a snap is in flight, or while a kick is in-flight, the down will be replayed.
- b. When a player is in possession or during a backward pass, the team in possession at the time of the inadvertent whistle may choose either to accept the play where it is blown dead or to replay the down.

### **Explanation of General Penalties**

1. Delay of Game (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot and replay down)
  - a. The ball must be put in play properly and legally and any action or inaction by either team which prevents this is illegal delay of game. This includes:
    - i. Interrupting the 25 second count for any reason, except for a time-out.
    - ii. Consuming more than 25 seconds to put the ball in play after it is marked ready.
    - iii. Deliberately advancing the ball after it has been declared dead.
2. Encroachment or Offsides (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot and replay down)
  - a. Once the ball is declared the ready-to-play 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). Players do not have the

opportunity to cross the line and "get back" outside. It is a foul as soon as the player initially enters the neutral zone.

3. False Start (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot and replay down)
  - a. No offensive player shall simulate a charge, motion towards or cross the line of scrimmage.
4. Illegal Substitution (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot and replay down)
  - a. All substitutions should be made after play has stopped and before play is marked ready for play.
  - b. During a dead ball interval, no sub shall become a player and then withdraw, and no player shall withdraw and then re-enter as a sub unless a penalty is accepted, a dead ball foul occurs, there is a charged time-out, or a period ends.
5. Illegal Formation (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot and replay down)
  - a. If there are less than four (4) offensive players on the line of scrimmage at the snap. The player who receives the snap must be at least 2 yards behind the offensive scrimmage line.
6. Illegal Motion or Shift (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 5 yards from previous spot and replay down)
  - a. Only one offensive 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. If two or more players shift/go in motion simultaneously prior to the snap, both must come to a stop and reset prior to the snap.
7. Illegal Forward Pass or Intentional Grounding (Penalty: 5 yards from the spot of the foul AND loss of down)
  - a. A pass thrown in violation of the legal pass guidelines listed above is considered illegal. A pass that is intentionally thrown to the ground or out of bounds to avoid a loss of yardage is also illegal.
8. Illegal Batting (Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul)
  - a. Players shall not bat a loose ball other than a pass or fumble in flight. Exception: A backward pass in flight may not be batted or thrown forward by the passing team.
9. Flag Guarding (Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul)
  - a. The ball carrier shall not protect their flags by blocking with arms or hands in order to deny the opponents the opportunity to remove them. This includes the quarterback in possession of the ball. Note: Stiff arming is flag guarding. Running while holding the ball at hip-level, intentionally or unintentionally, may also be considered flag guarding.
10. Illegally Deflagging and Opponent (Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul)
  - a. 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.
11. Illegal Contact by the Ball Carrier (Penalty: 10 yards from the spot of the foul)
  - a. 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 the player will be disqualified.

12. Holding (Penalty: 10 yards [Defense] end of run, [Offense] spot of foul)
  - a. Holding is grasping or encircling an opponent with the hand or arm in any way that impedes their 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 deflagging.
13. Tripping (Penalty: 10 yards from the end of the run)
  - a. Tripping is using the lower leg or foot to obstruct an opponent (including the ball carrier) below the knees. If the official deems the trip to be intentional that player will also be given an Unsportsmanlike Conduct penalty and will be disqualified.
14. Illegal Contact by the Defense or Tackling (Penalty: 10 yards from the end of the run)
  - a. 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 official, would have scored except for being tackled, a touchdown shall be awarded. Deliberate tackles will result in disqualification.
15. Roughing the Passer (Penalty: 10 yards [Incomplete pass] from the previous spot, [Completed Pass] from end of the run AND automatic first down)
  - a. Defensive players must make a definitive effort to avoid charging into a passer. Contact with the passer shall be avoided except in cases where the defensive player is attempting to deflag the passer. Excessive contact is not permitted at any time. Contact with a thrown ball (hitting the ball then the passer in the same motion) does NOT affect this rule and roughing the passer may still be called. Roughing the passer does not apply on illegal forward passes; however, illegal contact may be called.
16. Offensive Pass Interference (Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot AND loss of down)
  - a. Offensive Pass interference occurs when a player on offense contacts an eligible defensive 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.
17. Defensive Pass Interference (Penalty: 10 yards from the previous spot AND automatic first down)
  - a. Restrictions exist for the defense from the time the pass is thrown until it has been touched by a receiver. Face guarding with no intent to catch, intercept, or bat the ball is also considered pass interference. Note: 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.
18. Personal Fouls (Penalty: 10 yards [Defense] end of run, [Offense] spot of foul)
  - a. Any act prohibited hereunder or any other act of unnecessary roughness is a personal foul.
    - i. No player shall punch, strike, strip, steal, or attempt to steal the ball from the player who has possession.
    - ii. There shall be no tripping or clipping.

- iii. There shall be no hurdling. Hurdling shall be interpreted as an attempt by the runner to jump with both feet or knees foremost over a player or between players. (You can jump or spin away from players to avoid having your flag pulled.)

19. Unsportsmanlike Conduct (Dead ball foul, Penalty: 10 yards from the dead ball spot)

- a. No player shall commit unsportsmanlike acts during play or intermission including:
  - i. Using words similar to offensive audibles or quarterback cadence prior to the snap in an effort to interfere with the offense's signals or movements.
  - ii. Intentionally kicking the ball (other than a punt)
  - iii. Intentionally kicking an opponent or swinging an arm, hand or fist at any opposing player or official.
  - iv. Disrespectfully addressing an official or indicating objections to an official's decision.
  - v. Using profanity, taunting, insulting or vulgar language or gestures.
  - vi. Fighting or leaving the sidelines and entering an alternation.

Two unsportsmanlike fouls by the same player or nonplayer results in disqualification from the league. A player or nonplayer can be disqualified following the first unsportsmanlike foul.

### **Sportsmanship**

1. The Sportsmanship Rating System is intended to be an objective scale by which teams' attitude and behavior can be assessed throughout the intramural sports league and playoff seasons. Behavior before, during, and after an intramural sports contest is included in the rating. The team captain is responsible for educating and informing all players and spectators affiliated with his/her team about the system.
2. A team is responsible for the actions of the individual team members and spectators related to it. Additionally, WCU Intramural Sports does not recognize the use of coaches. Only the team captain shall speak to the officials regarding administrative matters (ejections, disqualifications, etc). Furthermore, the team captain's efforts in assisting Intramural Staff to calm difficult situations and to restrain troubled teammates are key to controlling team conduct.
3. Sportsmanship is vital to the conduct of every Intramural contest. In order to encourage proper conduct during games, officials, administrative personnel, and supervisors shall make decisions on whether to warn, penalize or eject players or teams for poor sportsmanship. These decisions are final. The Intramural Sports administrative staff will rule on further penalties as a result of unsportsmanlike conduct.
4. Each participant should choose his or her team members carefully, as all team members will suffer the consequences of any disciplinary action taken by the Intramural Sports staff against that team for violation of the intramural rules and sportsmanship guidelines. Protests or appeals of sportsmanship ratings will not be recognized. The Intramural Sports administrative staff reserves the right to review any rating given to a team.
5. Additional information regarding team and participant sportsmanship including the rating method, factors, and scale is available in the Intramural Sports Handbook, available online at the WCU Campus Recreation web site.

### **Inclement Weather**

1. The SU Intramural Sports Staff reserves the right to cancel or reschedule a game if circumstances warrant such an action. Regular season games that are cancelled due to rain or snow do not have to be rescheduled. Games postponed due to other reasons may or may not be rescheduled at the discretion of the Intramural Staff.
2. Weather conditions at the playing field will be monitored by the Campus Recreation staff with postponements and cancellations that follow departmental weather policy.
3. In case of inclement weather, the Intramural Sports staff will not make a decision regarding the playing of games until after 4:00pm.
  - a. If inclement weather occurs after the closing of the Intramural Office, decisions regarding game status will be made on the field by the Intramural Site Supervisor.
  - b. When games are cancelled due to weather, the fields will not be open for practice.