

COACHING COLLEGE FLAG FOOTBALL

College rules are the most different. The field is 80 yards, with a first down every 20 yards. Games are 4 quarters of 12 minutes. Teams punt for real. Screens are legal without contact, and there is no rush line or pass clock. Teach those differences first.

You don't need to know football. Most new coaches are parents who said yes. This guide gets you through your first practice and your first game.

WHO

College coaches, including NAIA women's flag football programs.

AGES

College players

LEVEL

College, including NAIA women's

FORMAT

7v7

YOUR FIRST PRACTICE: 60 MINUTES

0:00

10 min

Warm-up: Dynamic warm-up

Movement prep, then sideline leverage at full speed.
Drills: 5-10-5 shuttle, Sideline leverage

10:00

20 min

Skill stations: Individual position work

Passers work through their reads. Receivers work on sideline catches. Defenders work on man coverage and the rush.
Drills: Read 1, 2, 3, Sideline catch, Hip pocket man coverage, Rush lane

30:00

15 min

Team period: Team period

Teach new plays against a practice defense. The passer reads the defense and picks a side.

45:00

10 min

Scrimmage: Situational scrimmage

Red zone, fourth down and two-minute, scored and officiated like a game.

55:00

5 min

Cooldown: Cooldown

Recovery stretching and a short film or stats review.

Full plan with coaching points: breakawaydata.com/coaching-flag-football/practice-plans/high-school/



POSITIONS IN 7V7

Carry 10 to 14 players. Plan substitutions by series so every player gets real snaps on offense and defense.

OFFENSE

Center

Snaps, then becomes a receiver underneath. A center who catches well turns every blitz into a free completion.

Quarterback

Reads the coverage before the snap, makes the call at the line and gets the ball out on time.

Running back

Handoffs, pitches and the check-down route. On pass plays she reads the rush and leaks out to the open side.

Wide receivers (2)

The outside threats. Their depth and speed move the safeties and open the middle.

Slot receivers (2)

Line up inside the wideouts and run the quick, option and crossing routes that move the chains.

DEFENSE

Rusher or rushers

Pressure the passer within the rules of your ruleset. Even a rush that never gets there speeds up the throw.

Cornerbacks (2)

Match the wide receivers. Teach outside leverage first: push routes back toward help.

Linebackers (2)

Drop into the short middle, wall off crossing routes and pull the flag on runs and short catches.

Safeties (1 or 2)

Deep help. Read the quarterback's eyes, break on the throw and finish with a sure flag pull.

WHAT TO TEACH FIRST

1. Flag pulling

Open-field pulls at full speed, with help defenders taking the right angle behind the first.

2. Route basics

Know where the next first down line is. On the down that needs it, run your route past it.

3. Snap and handoff

Shotgun snap consistency and one run concept that pairs with your best pass.

4. No-contact habits

Screens are legal only without starting contact. Teach the difference with walk-throughs, not with live reps.



8 RULES THAT CHANGE HOW YOU COACH (1 OF 2)

In our words, with the rulebook section to check. Your league can change some of these, so confirm before the first game.

1. Screens are legal, contact is not

The rule: Screen blocking is legal if the screener does not start the contact. A defender's illegal use of hands costs 5 yards and gives a first down.

A screener may stand in a path but may not start contact. Teach screens as body position, never as a shove, and coach defenders to go around.

College R2-2-1; R9-3; R9-4



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-penalty

2. No rush line, no pass clock

The rule: This rulebook has no rush line, no sack rule and no pass clock. Before the snap, defenders must stay back from the ball. Hitting the QB's throwing arm or hand is roughing. Penalty: 10 yards, plus a first down for the offense.

There is no rush line, sack rule or pass clock. Defenders just stay behind the ball until the snap. Protect your quarterback with quick throws and screens.

College R7-1-5; R9-1-7



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-sack

3. Four downs per 20-yard zone

The rule: 4 downs to reach the next line. Lines cross the field every 20 yards. No measuring with chains.

First downs come at the zone lines, with no measuring. Know where the next line is and call routes that cross it.

College R5-1-1 to R5-1-3; R1-2-2



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/move-the-ball

4. A real punt

The rule: Yes, a real punt. Tell the referee on 4th down, then kick within 4 seconds. No surprise punts. The other team can run it back. Into the end zone, they start at their 14.

Declared on 4th down, kicked within seconds, and returnable. Practice punt and punt return like any other phase.

College R6-2-1, 2, 4, 9; R2-23-6b; R8-5



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/4th-down-punt

5. Tries from the 3 or the 10

The rule: Touchdown: 6. The try after it: 1 point from the 3 or 2 from the 10. Changing your choice costs a timeout.

1 point from the 3, 2 from the 10. Changing your mind costs a timeout.

College R8-1-1; R8-3-1



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-an-extra-point-plus-1-or-plus-2-xp-attempt-after-td

6. Quarters and a running clock

The rule: Four 12-minute quarters. The clock runs nonstop through minute 22 of each half. Then comes a two-minute timeout. Play clock: 30 seconds. 3 timeouts per half.

Four 12-minute quarters, with the clock running for most of each half before a two-minute timeout. Practice the end-of-half sequence.

College R3-3-1; R3-6-1, R3-6-2; R4-1-5; R3-4-3a



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/halftime-quarters-or-running-clock



8 RULES THAT CHANGE HOW YOU COACH (2 OF 2)

7. Flag guarding is 5 yards and a down

The rule: Using the hands, arms or ball to make contact that stops a flag pull. Penalty: 5 yards from the spot and the down.

Hands, arms or the ball that cause contact and deny a pull are a foul. Teach carriers to keep their arms in.

College R2-5-3; R7-2-1



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-penalty

8. No hurdling

The rule: Hurdling a standing player costs 10 yards. Diving into the end zone with no one near you is unsportsmanlike.

Hurdling a standing opponent is 10 yards, and an unopposed dive into the end zone is unsportsmanlike. Run through the pylon, not over people.

College R9-1-8; R9-2



Watch how to stat it:
breakawaydata.com/breakaway-u/record-a-flag-pull



GAME-DAY CHECKLIST

- ☐ A flag belt and flags for every player, plus spares, in a color that does not match anyone's shorts.
- ☐ Mouth guards, water and a first aid kit.
- ☐ Game balls in the size your ruleset sets for this age.
- ☐ Your roster with jersey numbers, and who starts at quarterback and center.
- ☐ A short play sheet: three or four plays, one for the goal line, one for the try.
- ☐ A quick word with the other coach and the official on the rules you are playing.
- ☐ Someone to stat the game in the BreakAway app. Families follow along, and every player gets a stat card.
- ☐ Punt team set, and who declares the punt to the referee.

FOR YOUR LEVEL

Overtime starts at the 10

Each team gets a drive from the other team's 10. From the third overtime, it is 1 try from the 3. Practice both.

College R3-2-3, R3-2-4

THE OFFICIAL RULEBOOK

2025-26 and 2026-27 College Flag Football Rules (2025-26 and 2026-27)

https://www.naia.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/2025-26_and_2026-27_College_Flag_Football_Rule_Book.pdf

NAIA 2026-27 Women's Flag Football Coaches Manual (2026-27)

<https://www.naia.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/WFLAG-Coaches-Manual.pdf>

STAT YOUR GAMES FREE IN BREAKAWAY

- Statting is free.
- Pick the College Flag Football preset in the app. Change what your league does differently. Then stat every game.
- 100,000+ ruleset combinations, so your league's rules fit.
- Every game you stat gets a live game center families can follow from anywhere. You also get a box score and a stat card for every athlete. Team leaderboards, season totals and recaps come with it.

