

Introduction to Flag Rugby

A Guidebook



What Is **Flag Rugby**?

- A fast-paced & exciting rugby variation
- A non-contact form of rugby
- Rugby with easy-to-learn rules
- A good way to introduce new players to rugby
- A vehicle for skill development



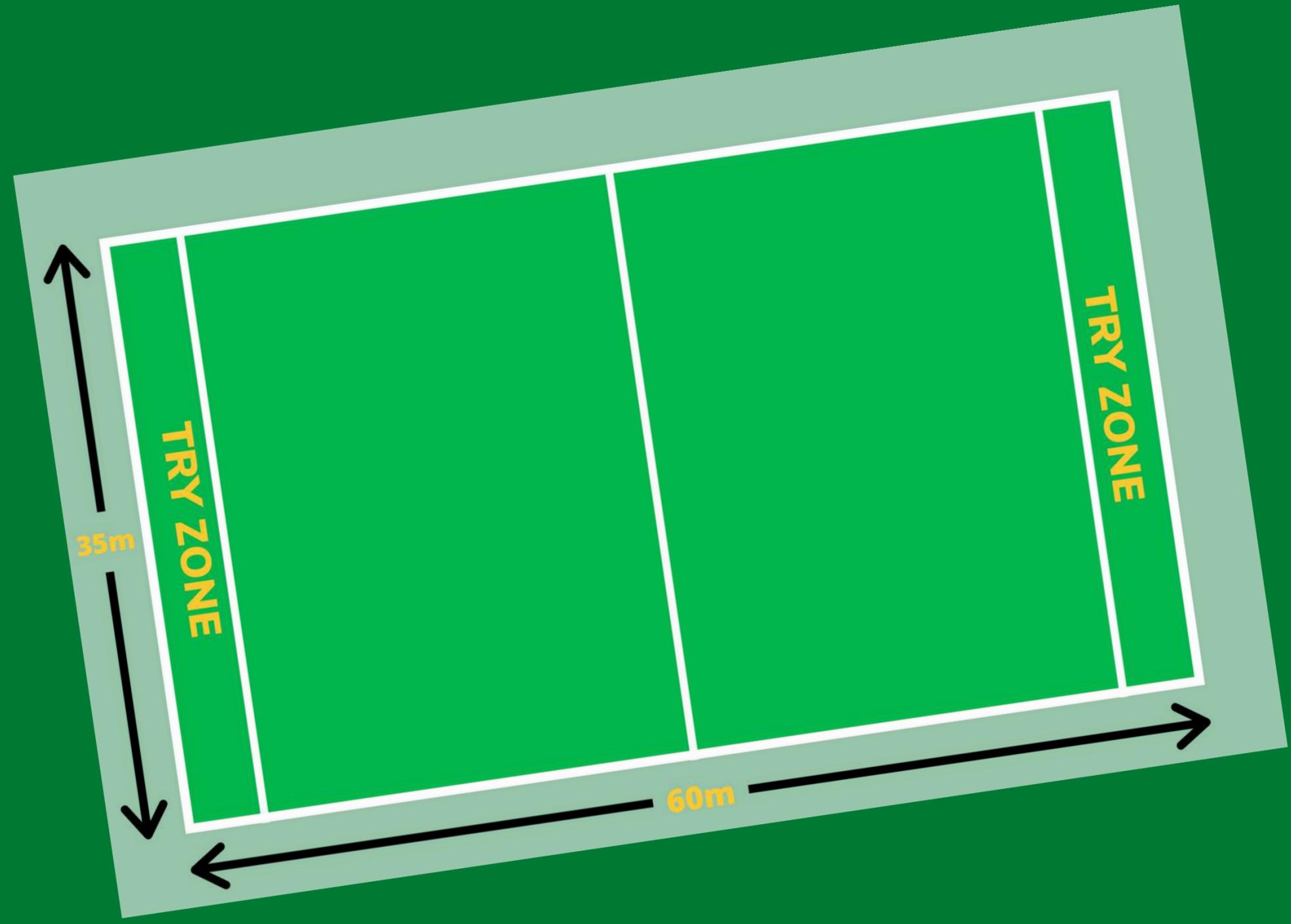
Flag rugby strives to exemplify physical literacy components within each game. These fundamental movements will help participants develop the competence, confidence, and motivation to continue playing rugby and remain active throughout their lives.

The top priority of any form of rugby, including flag rugby, is the safety of its players. Coaches, Referees and players must understand how to play rugby in order to enjoy the game while also being safe. Though playing with flags reduces the chance of injury, risk is always present in any field sport.

Safety & Physical Literacy

The Field

Flag rugby can be played in any open space of any size. You can play outside on grass, in a parking lot, and even inside of a gym! A full-sized field can be lined for several flag rugby fields. It is recommended that the playing area be no longer than 60m long and 35m wide. The width can be adjusted to the number of players per team (by using a rough measurement of 5m per player). The sidelines, endlines, try lines, and halfway line should be clearly marked with either lines or cones. The try area should be at least 5m in depth.



Equipment

The Ball

A standard rugby ball should be used for flag rugby. Different sizes of ball may be used for different age groups to promote skill development.



Field Markers

Use cones or painted field lines to clearly mark the sidelines, halfway line, and scoring areas.



Footwear

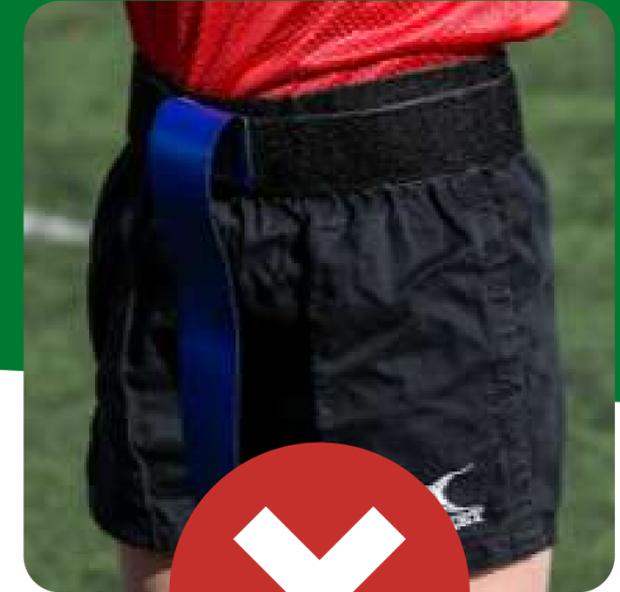
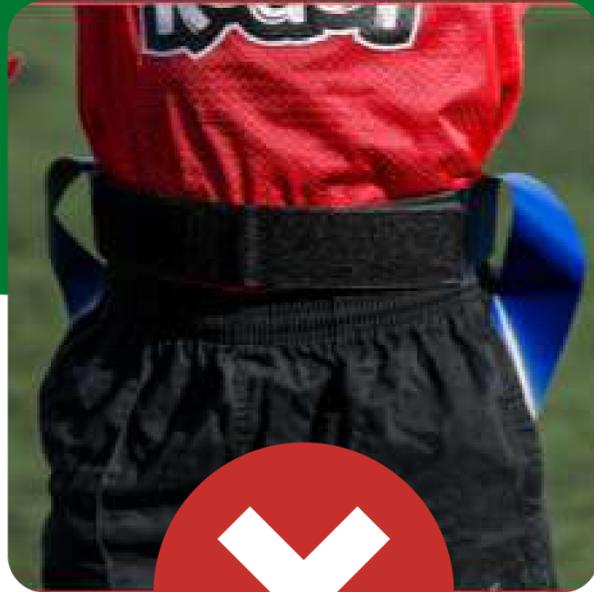
Players should wear appropriate footwear for the playing surface, including obeying any facility rules about the use of cleats (particularly metal).





Flag Positioning

As the name implies, flag rugby replaces tackling with the pulling of a flag. Each player that steps onto the field will wear an adjustable belt strap and two Velcro flags. Flags must be worn with one flag on each hip, with no articles of clothing obstructing another player from pulling the flags (as shown in the images above). Players must have both flags attached to their belt before they may participate in play on both offense and defense.



Improper Flag Position

The images above are examples of how NOT to wear the flags. From left to right these are:

1. Wrapping flags around the belt.
2. Flags tucked into pockets.
3. Clothing worn over the belt and flags.
4. Flags not worn on hips.

Players



Flag rugby is typically played with 5 players per side on the field at any given time. More players per team may be used but more players on the field means less opportunity for each player to pass, run, catch, defend, and score.

Each team may have an agreed number of substitute players. Substituted players may return to play during any stoppage in play; this is referred to as “rolling substitutions.” Each player is encouraged to play every position on the field.

It is recommended that flag rugby games be at least 7 minutes in length and no more than 30 minutes in length. Games over 12 minutes in length should include a short halftime break, but this is not necessary depending on the format.

Each game of flag rugby will end when the time allotted for the game expires and will not play until the next in-game stoppage. If the game is scheduled for 12 minutes then the game will end exactly at the end of the 12 minutes regardless of the current action on the field.



Time

Playing Flag Rugby

The following pages will discuss the technical aspects of playing flag rugby such as scoring, flag etiquette, penalties, and offside..

Objective of the Game

To score more points than the opposing team. To earn points, the offensive team will work to move the ball forward until one player can run past the goal line and into the try zone and touch the ball to the ground.

Scoring

A score, or "try," in rugby is accomplished when the player touches the ball down to the ground across the opposition's goal line. In flag rugby, a try is worth 1 point.



Possession



The offence will have 6 attempts (flag pulls) to score a try per possession. If the offence is unsuccessful in scoring a try in these 6 attempts, the ball will be turned over to the opposing team. The referee will keep a running “flag count” during gameplay. Anytime a turnover occurs in open play, the “flag count” will resume at zero for the new attacking team.

Players advance the ball by running towards the opposition’s try zone. Players run forward, passing the ball from one player to another. All passes must be thrown sideways or backwards. Offensive players will attempt to score by evading defenders or creating gaps between them through which to pass and run. The defense will aim to stop the offense by taking away the time and space in which the offense can manoeuvre.



Open Play

Flag Etiquette

While the offensive team attempts to move the ball forward, the defensive team will attempt to slow them down by pulling the ball carrier's flag, simulating a tackle. A player is "tackled" or "tagged" at any time a flag falls off, whether caused by the defense or falls off by other means. Flags must be worn over t-shirts to allow defenders access to the flag.

Flag rugby is a continuous game, meaning that play does NOT stop when a flag is pulled. Referees will attempt to play advantage whenever possible and only penalize an infraction when play is affected (e.g. the ball carrier taking more than two steps before passing or an offensive player receives a pass before returning their flag to their belt).

Once the ball carrier's flag is removed the game will continue by using the flag etiquette on the next slide.



Step 1

Defender removes the flag, holds it up in the air and yells, “FLAG!” The defender must then drop the flag to the ground at the place where it was pulled. The defender should not throw the flag away, particularly in an attempt to prevent the attacker from reclaiming their flag. The defender may return to play once they have dropped the flag to the ground.

Step 2

The ball carrier must pass the ball to a teammate within two steps of where the flag was pulled. If a pass cannot be made within two steps, the ball carrier should retreat to the mark of the flag and restart with a free pass. After the pass, the player with a flag missing is out of play until they reclaim their missing flag.

Step 3

The referee will shout out the number of flags that have been pulled on each possession. The referee’s call will be the official indication that a flag has been pulled.

Restart & Free Pass



The game is always restarted with a “free pass.” A free pass is an uncontested pass allowed from one player to a teammate following a “tap” of the ball with the foot. The player performing the free pass should perform the tap action by either a) placing the ball on the ground and gently nudging it forward with the foot before picking it up or b) dropping the ball a short distance onto the player’s foot and catching it again. Players performing a free pass must pass the ball and may not “tap and run.”

Starting the Game

The team who did not score or is starting the game takes a free pass from the centre of the playing field. The defense must be at least 5m back during a free pass in these situations. Players are encouraged to restart play as quickly as possible after a score, but may only restart when the defending team has 5 players on its side of the field.

Out of Bounds

If the ball travels out of play over one of the sidelines, play will be restarted with a free pass by the team who did not touch the ball last at the point where the ball exited the field of play. If the ball travels out of play through the back of the try scoring area (over the dead ball line), the free pass will be taken at the point that it was last touched in the field of play. The defence should retreat 1m in this situation.

Open Play

If a pass cannot be made within two steps of where the flag is pulled, play should be restarted with a free pass from the point where the flag was pulled. The defensive line should retreat 1m from where the flag is pulled for this type of restart.

Penalties & Infringements

After any violation of flag rugby laws which result in a stoppage of play (remember, the referee will look to play advantage whenever possible), the following sequence will occur:

1. Possession will be awarded to the non-offending team.
2. The offending team (now the defending team) must retreat 5m from the point of the infringement.
3. The non-offending team will restart play with a free pass. The ball is deemed to be back in play once it leaves the hands of the passer.

Penalties & Infringements

Knock-On: A knock-on occurs when a player fumbles the ball forwards and cannot re-gather the ball before it hits the ground.

Spinning/Diving: Players may not spin or dive to prevent another player from pulling a flag, including while scoring a try.

Forward Pass: When a player passes or throws the ball in a forward direction, rather than backwards or sideways.

Fending or Guarding of Flags: Players must not obstruct a defender from making a flag pull with any part of their body or the ball.

Penalties & Infringements

Obstruction:

Players may not impede a player running without the ball, particularly for the purposes of preventing them from pulling a flag.

Playing Without

Flags: Players may not participate in play without having their two flags worn in the proper fashion.

Contact: Flag rugby is a non-contact sport. Any contact that is deemed to not be incidental or unavoidable will be penalized.

Offside: When a defending player has not retreated the required amount before the next phase or advances before the ball is back in play.

The Law of Advantage

The law of advantage is used to help the game retain a continuous flow. This law allows the referee to continue play without stoppage after an infringement provided that the non-offending team is able to gain a material advantage, such as gaining/retaining possession of the ball or territory.

The next page will include some potential scenarios where advantage may or may not be played.





Scenario 1 – Advantage

A player on the defensive team is offside in open play and makes a tag – the third in that possession – on the attacking player. The attacking team retains the ball. Instead of stopping the play for the infringement, the referee allows play to continue and resets the flag count for the attacking team to zero (from three previously).

Scenario 2 – No Advantage

The defensive team knocks-on while attempting an intercept but the attacking team recovers the ball 10m back from where the knock-on happened. The ball-carrier's flag is pulled immediately. The referee stops play and awards a free pass at the spot of the infringement since the knock-on has resulted in a loss of 10m in territory.

Scenario 3 – Advantage

The attacking team knocks-on and the ball is recovered by the defensive team. The player who recovers the ball has time and space to pass or run. The referee allows play to continue, with the non-infringing team that recovered the ball becoming the attacking team.

Offside – An Overview

The offside line is an imaginary line across the field (i.e. parallel with the try line) through a specific mark that the defense must retreat behind in open play and at restarts. Players are considered to be offside if they a) fail to retreat behind the offside line before participating in play or b) advance past the offside line before play has been restarted (e.g. the ball has left the hands of the player making a free pass).

The exact location of the offside line in flag rugby varies depending upon the specific game situation. Offside can occur in the following scenarios (covered on the next slide): when a flag has been pulled, play is being restarted from an infringement, or the ball has travelled out of play.





- 1. Restart After Scoring or Infringement:** The offside line is 5m from the halfway line or the point where the infringement occurred.
- 2. Ball in Touch or Free Pass Following Flag Pull (Pass from the Mark of the Flag):** The offside line is 1m from the mark where the ball went into touch or where the flag was pulled.
- 3. Open Play within Two Steps of Flag Pull:** The offside line is at the mark where the flag was pulled and defenders will be considered onside if they have retreated past the point where the flag was pulled even if they have not retreated past the current location of the ball.

Kicking



There is no kicking of the ball in flag rugby. Kicking the ball will result in a free pass to the non-offending team.

All players must play games in a positive spirit following the principles of good sportsmanship and fair play. In instances of verbal abuse, physical abuse, poor sportsmanship, intentional offending, persistent re-offending, or any other offending deemed unnecessary the referee will send a player from the playing area and further sanction may apply as deemed appropriate by the match organizer.



Fair Play

Important Referee Signals



Try

The referee will signal that a try has been scored by raising one arm straight in the air above the head.



No Try

The referee may signal that a try has not been scored by crossing and uncrossing both arms in front of the body



Free Pass / Advantage

An arm extended straight out to the side of the body parallel to the ground will indicate a free pass or advantage is being awarded.



Offside

The referee will wave an arm in front of the body, pointed at the ground, as if drawing an invisible offside line.

Important Referee Signals



Knock-On

A knock-on is indicated by the referee waving one hand over their head in the direction that the ball has travelled.



Forward Pass

The referee will make a passing motion with one or two hands indicating the direction (forward) that the ball has travelled.



Obstruction

Crossed arms in front of the body indicate that obstruction has occurred.



Contact

Contact between players is indicated by a pushing motion with one or both arms.

Important Referee Signals



Fending or Guarding Flag

Guarding or fending the flag will be indicated by a swatting motion alongside the body (as if pushing away a defender's hand).



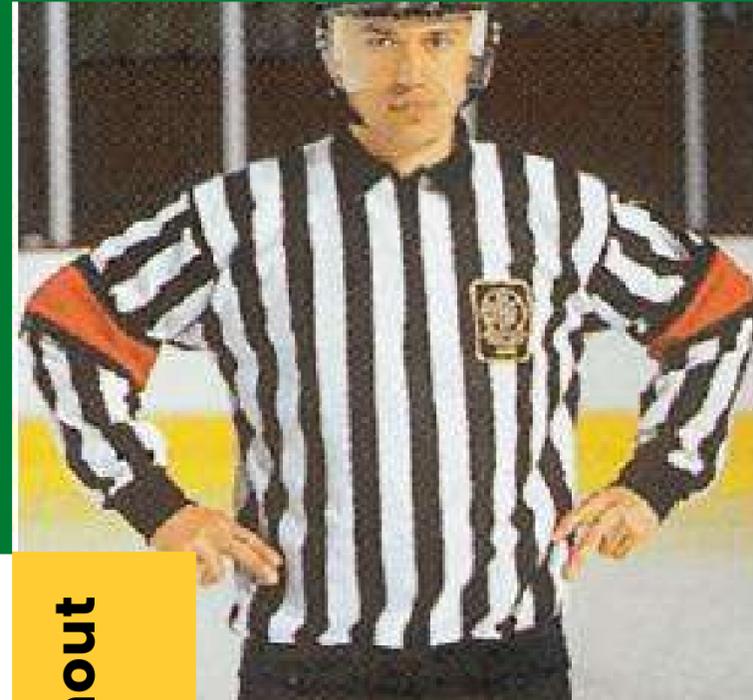
Spinning

An illegal spin move will be indicated with a whirling motion of a hand above the head.



Diving

A player diving to the ground will be indicated by an arm moving in a downwards angle across the body.



Playing Without Flags

The referee will indicate that a player's two flags are not properly attached at the hips by placing one or both hands on their hip area.

**You are now ready to
play **flag rugby!****

If you have any further questions about the flag rugby rules or how to join or start a flag rugby league, please contact rdo@saskrugby.com.

