

UPA Rules of Ultimate, Ninth Edition
Incorporating 1991, 1992, and 1995 Clarifications and Amendments

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Preface

The purpose of the rules of Ultimate is to provide a guideline which describes the way the game is played. It is assumed that no Ultimate player will intentionally violate the rules; thus there are no harsh penalties for inadvertent infractions, but rather a method for resuming play in a manner which simulates what would most likely have occurred had there been no infraction.

In Ultimate, an intentional foul would be considered cheating and a gross offense against the spirit of sportsmanship. Often a player is in a position where it is clearly to the player's advantage to foul or commit some violation, but that player is morally bound to abide by the rules. The integrity of Ultimate depends on each player's responsibility to uphold the spirit of the game, and this responsibility should not be taken lightly.

I. Introduction

Description Ultimate is a non-contact sport played by two seven player teams. The object of the game is to score goals. The disc may only be moved by passing as the thrower is not allowed to take any steps. Any time a pass is incomplete, intercepted, knocked-down, or contacts an out-of-bounds area, a turnover occurs, resulting in an immediate change of possession of the disc. A goal is scored when a player successfully passes the disc to a teammate in the endzone which that team is attacking.

Spirit of the Game Ultimate has traditionally relied upon a spirit of sportsmanship which places the responsibility for fair play on the player. Highly competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of the bond of mutual respect between players, adherence to the agreed upon rules of the game, or the basic joy of play. Protection of these vital elements serves to eliminate adverse conduct from the Ultimate field. Such actions as taunting of opposing players, dangerous aggression, intentional fouling, or other "win-at-all-costs" behavior are contrary to the spirit of the game and must be avoided by all players.

Captain's Clause A game may be played under any variations of the rules agreed upon by the captains of the two teams. In tournament play, such variations are subject to the approval of the tournament director. Such things as length of game, dimensions of the field, and stalling count can easily be altered to suit the level of play.

II. Clarifying Statements

Phrases:

A player is any of the fourteen (14) persons who are actually participating in the game at any one time. To put the disc into play means that the thrower establishes a pivot foot and is ready to throw. To put the disc into play at a particular point on the field means to place the pivot foot at that point on the field. [1992]

Where the disc stops refers to the location where the disc is caught, comes to rest naturally, or where it is stopped from rolling or sliding.

Throw-off position is the particular arrangement of positions (which end zone each team is defending) and possession (which team is to throw-off) in effect before a throw-off. [1992]

Ground Contact: All player contact with the ground directly related to a specific event or maneuver, including landing or recovery after being off-balance, e.g., jumping, diving, leaning, or falling. [1995]

Possession of the disc: Sustained contact with, and control of, the non-spinning disc. [1995]

To catch a pass is equivalent to establishing possession of that pass.

Loss of control due to ground contact related to a pass reception negates that receiver's possession up to that point.

There are no scrimmage lines or off-sides (except on throw-offs) in Ultimate.

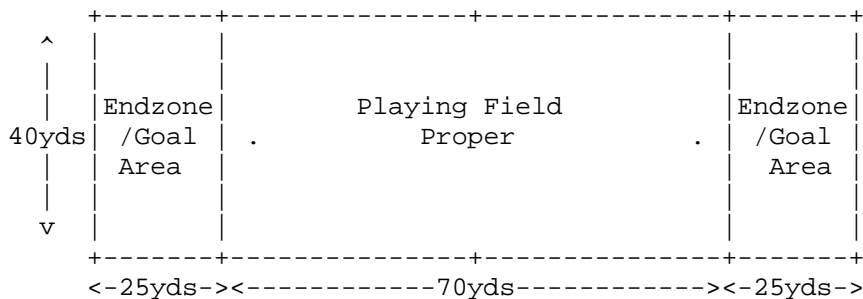
The disc may be passed in any direction.

A rolling or sliding disc may be stopped by any player, but it may not be purposefully advanced in any direction. Possession is gained where the disc stops.

No defensive player may ever pick up the disc.

III. Field of Play

The field of play is a rectangular area with dimensions as shown on the accompanying diagram.



The period (.) marks the Brick Rule Mark, 10 yds from Goal line. The plus sign (+) indicates the location of cones to be placed ON the boundary lines.

A variation of this basic structure may be used to accommodate special competitions, number of players, age of players, available space, etc. Lined fields are not necessary for the purposes of practice or other non-formal games of Ultimate.

The playing field may have any surface (although well trimmed grass is suggested) which is essentially flat, free of obstructions and holes, and affords reasonable player safety.

The playing field proper is the playing field excluding the endzones.

The goal lines are the lines which separate the playing field proper from the endzones and are part of the playing field proper.

The perimeter lines (sidelines and endlines) are not part of the playing fields.

The corners of the playing field proper and the endzones are marked by cones made of a brightly colored, flexible material.

An additional restraining line is established five (5) meters away from the entire field to ensure that the sidelines remain clear during play.

All lines are marked with a non-caustic material and are between two and four inches wide (2"-4").

IV. Equipment

Any flying disc may be used as long as it is acceptable to both team captains. If the captains cannot agree, the current Official Disc of the Ultimate Players Association shall be used.

Individual players may wear any soft protective clothing as long as it does not endanger the safety of any other player.

Cleats which have any metal exposed are not allowed.

Each player must wear a uniform or other clothing that distinguishes that player from the players on the other team.

V. Length of Game

Time

Each half lasts for twenty-four (24) minutes of stopped time.

Each overtime period lasts for five (5) minutes of stopped time.

The clock starts when:

An offensive player gains possession of a throw-off and establishes a pivot foot;

The marker touches the disc after a check;

The thrower puts the disc into play after it has been out of bounds.

The clock stops:

After a goal;

At the end of a period of play;

For time-outs;

For injuries;

For fouls and violations;

When the disc contacts an out-of-bounds area.

Points

A goal is worth one (1) point.

A game to points lasts until one team scores twenty-one (21) goals with a margin of victory of at least two (2) goals.

A game with a score of twenty-to-twenty (20-20) goes into overtime, and play continues until a two-goal margin is achieved or one team scores twenty-five (25) goals.

Halftime occurs when one team reaches eleven (11) goals.

Halftime lasts for ten (10) minutes.

At the end of the game, the team with the most goals is declared the winner.

VI. Time-Outs

Time-Out

Each team is permitted two (2) time-outs per half in games to 17 or less, and three (3) time-outs per half in games to 18 or more. Each team is permitted exactly one (1) time-out in overtime. Overtime occurs when the score is tied at one point less than the number of points for which the game was originally scheduled. (Example: In a game to 19 points, overtime occurs when the score reaches 18-18.)

Each time-out lasts up to two (2) minutes.

The player calling the time-out must form a "T" with his/her hands and call "time-out" loudly.

A time-out may be called by either team after a goal and before the ensuing accepted throw-off.

During play, only a player who has established a pivot foot and who has possession of the disc can call a time-out. [1995]

When play resumes after a time-out: [1995]

The player who had possession puts the disc into play.

The disc is put into play at the location where the disc was when the time-out was called.

Play is resumed through the use of a check and all other players may set up in any position on the field.

It is a turnover if a player calls a time-out when his/her team no time-outs remaining. There is a check on the disc.

Injury Time-Out

Injury time-out can be called by any member of the injured player's team. The time-out call is in effect at the time of the injury. In other words, the call is retroactive to the time that the injury occurred. If the disc is in the air during the time-out call, the play is completed.

Injury time-out results in a team time-out if the injured player does not leave the game. A "spirit of the game" exception is made when the injury is caused by an opposing player.

When play resumes after an injury time-out:

The player who had possession of the disc when the injury occurred puts the disc into play. If that player leaves the field due to injury, the replacing player puts the disc into play.

If the disc was in the air at the time of the injury, play continues until the disc is caught or it contacts the ground. If the disc is caught, the player who caught the disc puts the disc into play after the injury time-out.

The disc is put into play at the location where the disc was when play was stopped.

The play is resumed through the use of a check and all players must assume their respective positions on the field when the time-out was called. Players may not set up when restarting play after an injury time-out, unless it is also a team time-out.

VII. Substitutions

Substitutions can be made only:

After a goal and before the ensuing accepted throw-off.

Before the beginning of a period of play;

To replace an injured player(s).

If a team replaces an injured player(s), the opposing team has the option of substituting a like number of, or fewer players.

Substitutions other than injury substitutions cannot be made during a time-out taken during play.

VIII. Starting and Restarting Play

Before a game starts, each team designates one captain to represent that team in disagreements and arbitration.

Start of periods of play:

Representatives of the two teams each flip a disc. The representative of one team calls "same" or "different" while the discs are in the air. The team winning the flip has the choice of:

Receiving or throwing the initial throw-off; or

Selecting which goal they wish to defend initially.

The team losing the flip is given the remaining choice. [1992]

The second half begins with an automatic reversal of the initial throw-off position. [1992]

In a game to time, if overtime periods are needed, the disc flipping procedure is repeated for the first overtime period. The initial throw-off position of subsequent overtime periods is the reverse of the throw-off position that started the previous overtime period. [1992]

Throw Off

Play starts at the beginning of each period of play and after each goal with a throw-off.

Each time a goal is scored, the teams switch the direction of their attack and the team which scored throws off.

Positioning prior to the throw-off:

The players on the throwing team are free to move anywhere in their defending endzone, but may not cross the goal line until the disc is released.

The players on the receiving team must stand with one foot on their defending goal line without changing position relative to one another.

The throw-off may be made only after the thrower and a player on the receiving team raise a hand to signal that team's readiness to begin play.

The throw-off consists of one player on the throwing team throwing the disc toward the opposite goal line to begin play.

As soon as the disc is released, all players may move in any direction.

No player on the throwing team may touch the throw-off in the air before it is touched by a member of the receiving team.

If a member of the receiving team catches the throw-off on the playing field proper, that player must put the disc into play from the spot. If the throw-off is caught in either endzone, the player takes possession at that point, and puts the disc in play as described in Section X (ENDZONES). If the throw-off is caught out-of-bounds, it is put into play as described in Section IX.7 (OUT-OF-BOUNDS). [1995]

If a member of the receiving team touches the disc during flight of the throw-off (whether in- or out-of-bounds) and the receiving team fails to catch it, the team which threw-off gains possession of the disc at the nearest point on the playing field proper. If a player drops the disc while carrying it to the point where the disc will be put into play, the team which threw-off gains possession of the disc at the nearest point on the playing field proper.

If the receiving team allows the throw-off to fall untouched to the ground, and the disc initially lands in-bounds, the receiving team gains possession of the disc where it stops. If the disc initially lands in-bounds, then goes out-of-bounds, the receiving team gains possession at the point on the playing field proper nearest to where the disc first went out-of-bounds.

If the throw-off lands out-of-bounds, the receiving team, before touching the disc, makes a choice of: Putting the disc into play at the nearest point on the playing field proper to where the disc crossed the perimeter line.

Requesting a re-throw. To request a re-throw, any member of the receiving team must fully extend one hand above the head and call "Over." Once this re-throw signal is given, that throw-off can no longer be put into play.

Invoking the Middle/Brick Rule. If the throw-off lands outside the field of play, the receiving team may choose to put the disc into play at the halfway between the two sidelines either at the point where the disc went out-of-bounds or at a point 10 yards upfield from the goal line they are defending. To invoke the "middle/brick rule," the member of the receiving team who is going to receive the throw-off shall fully extend one hand above his/her head and call "middle" or "brick". The player must let the disc hit the ground. On such a call, the offensive player may use a "self check," meaning he/she picks up the disc and the nearest defensive player says "in play." If the nearest player does not immediately say "in play," the offensive player may touch the disc to the ground and yell "disc in play." [1992]

The Check

When play stops, the player who was in possession retains possession.

All players must come to a stop as quickly as possible when play is halted, and remain in their respective locations until play is restarted.

The marker restarts play by touching the disc in possession of the thrower. If the thrower attempts a pass before the marker touches the disc, the pass does not count regardless of whether it is complete or incomplete, and possession reverts back to the thrower.

IX. Out-of-Bounds

Any area not on the playing field is out-of-bounds. The perimeter lines themselves are out-of-bounds.

A disc is out-of-bounds when it first contacts an out-of-bounds area or contacts anything out-of-bounds.

The disc may fly outside a perimeter line and return to the playing field, and defensive players may go out-of-bounds in order to make a play on the disc.

A player is out-of-bounds when s/he is contacting an out-of-bounds area. When a player is in the air, his/her in or out-of-bounds is determined by where the ground was last contacted by the player.

For a receiver to be considered in bounds after gaining possession of the disc, the first point of contact with the ground must be completely in-bounds. If any portion of the first point of contact is out-of-bounds, the player is considered out-of-bounds.

Should the momentum of a player carry him/her out-of-bounds after making a catch and landing in-bounds, the player is considered in-bounds. The player carries the disc to the point where s/he went out-of-bounds and puts the disc into play at that point.

To start or restart play after the disc has gone out-of-bounds, a member of the team gaining possession of the disc must carry the disc to the point of the playing field proper nearest where the disc last crossed the perimeter line, and put the disc into play at that point. [1995]

The thrower may pivot in- and out-of-bounds, providing that some part of the pivot foot contacts the playing field.

If a pass does not come in bounds the opposing team gains possession of the disc where it left the field of play only if the defense did not contact the disc. If the defense contacted the disc, the disc must be put into play at the point on the playing field proper closest to where the contact occurred.

X. Endzones

If a team gains possession in the endzone which it is defending:

The player taking possession must make the immediate decision to either:

Put the disc into play from that spot, or

Carry it directly to the closest point on the goal line and put it into play from there. If this option is chosen, the player taking possession commits the player to put the disc into play at that point.

To fake or pause after gaining possession commits the player to put the disc into play at that point.

If, as a result of a pass from a teammate, a player receives the disc in the endzone which they are defending, that player does not have a choice of advancing the disc to the goal line.

If a team gains possession in the endzone which it is attacking, the player taking possession must carry the disc directly to the closest point on the goal line and put the disc into play from there.

XI. Scoring

A goal is scored when an offensive player completes a pass to a teammate in the endzone which his/her team is attacking.

In order for the receiver to be considered in the endzone after gaining possession of the disc, his/her first point of contact with the ground must be completely in the endzone.

A player cannot score by running into the endzone with the disc. Should a receiver's momentum carry him/her into the endzone after gaining possession, the receiver must carry the disc back to the closest point on the goal line and put the disc into play from there.

A player must be completely in the endzone and acknowledge that s/he has scored a goal. If that player plays the disc unknowingly into a turnover, then no goal is awarded.

XII. Turnovers

An incomplete, intercepted, knocked down, or out-of-bounds pass results in a loss of possession.

A pass is considered intercepted if a defensive player catches a pass. If a defensive player catches a pass and accidentally loses possession of it before or during ground contact related to that catch (II.1.F.b), the defender is considered to have blocked rather than intercepted the pass. [1995]

The following actions result in a loss of possession and a check:

If the marker's count reaches the maximum number;

If the disc is handed from player to player;

If the thrower intentionally deflects a pass to him/herself off another player;

If the thrower catches his/her own throw. However, if the disc is touched by another player during its flight it is considered a complete pass and is not a turnover.

XIII. The Thrower

The thrower is the offensive player in possession of the disc, or the player who has just released the disc.

If the disc is on the ground, whether in- or out-of-bounds, any member of the team becoming offense may take possession of the disc. Once an offensive player has picked up the disc, that player is required to put the disc into play.

The thrower must establish a pivot foot and may not change that pivot foot until the throw is released except in the case where the thrower has just received a pass and is throwing before the third ground contact in accordance with XV.5. [1995]

The thrower has the right to pivot in any direction. However, once the marker has established a legal defensive position, the thrower may not pivot into the marker.

If the disc is dropped by the thrower without defensive interference, it is considered an incomplete pass.

The thrower may throw the disc in any way s/he wishes.

A defensive player who establishes possession of the disc becomes the thrower, but may not throw the disc before s/he establishes a legal pivot foot. To do so is a travelling violation. [1995]

XIV. The Marker

Only one defensive player may guard the thrower at any one time; that player is the marker.

The marker may not straddle (i.e., place his/her foot on either side of) the pivot foot of the thrower.

There must be at least one disc's diameter between the upper bodies of the thrower and the marker at all times. It is the mutual responsibility of both players to respect each other's position and not encroach into this area once it is established.

The marker cannot position his/her arms in such a manner as to restrict the thrower from pivoting.

Stalling:

A defensive player within three (3) meters of the pivot foot of the thrower may initiate a stall count. If an offensive player moving into the throwing position "stands over the disc" (i.e., within three meters) without putting the disc into play, the marker may issue a "Delay of Game" warning. If the disc is not picked up, the marker may initiate a stall count.

The count consists of the marker calling "Stalling" or "Counting" and counting at one second intervals from one to ten (1, 10) loudly enough for the thrower to hear.

If the thrower has not released the disc at the first utterance of the word "ten" ("10"), a turnover and a check result.

If the defense decides to switch markers; and if the new marker wishes to initiate a stalling count, s/he must start again from "one" ("1").

In the event of a stall, the once marker, now offensive player, does not have to take the disc after the check. The once thrower, now marker, checks the disc to the new thrower, if s/he does not want the disc, the marker "checks" the disc by placing it on the ground and calling "in play."

The thrower may contest a stall call if s/he feels that s/he had released the disc before the first utterance of the word "ten".

In the event of a contested stall, if the pass is completed, play stops, and possession reverts back to the thrower. After a check, the marker starts the stall count at eight (8).

In the event of a contested stall, if the pass is incomplete, it is a turnover, and play continues without interruption.

XV. The Receiver

The receiver is any offensive player either in the act of catching the disc, or not in possession of the disc.

Bobbling to gain control of the disc is permitted, but purposeful, controlled bobbling to oneself (i.e., tipping, delaying, guiding, or brushing) in order to advance the disc is considered travelling and is not allowed.

There is NO rule XV.3! (With apologies to Monty Python, it was deleted in 1995.) [1995]

After catching a pass, the receiver is only allowed the fewest number of steps required to come to a stop and establish a pivot foot.

If the receiver is running or jumping as s/he catches the disc, the receiver may throw a pass before the third ground contact after catching the disc without coming to a complete stop; however, change in direction or increase in speed while in possession of the disc is a travelling violation. [1995]

If the disc is caught simultaneously by offensive and defensive players, the offense retains possession.

If a pass arrives in such a manner that it is unclear whether a catch was made before the disc contacted the ground (grass is considered part of the ground), the player(s) with the best perspective makes the call (usually the receiver).

If it is ever unclear where a receiver was in- or out-of-bounds at the point of making a catch, the player(s) with the best perspective makes the call.

Force-Out Foul: If an airborne receiver catches the disc, and is contacted by a defensive player before landing, and that contact caused the receiver to land out-of-bounds instead of landing in-bounds, the receiver must either call him/herself out-of-bounds, or call a force-out foul on the defensive player. If this foul occurs in the end zone and it is uncontested, a goal is awarded.

There is NO rule XV.10 either! (It was also deleted in 1995.) [1995]

XVI. Fouls

Fouls are the result of physical contact between opposing players. A foul can only be called by the player who has been fouled and must be announced by calling out the word "Foul!" loudly immediately after the foul has occurred.

The player initiating contact is guilty of a foul.

Throwing Fouls:

A throwing foul may be called when there is contact between the thrower and the marker.

Contact occurring during the follow through (after the disc has been released) is not sufficient grounds for a foul, but should still be avoided whenever possible.

When a foul is committed by a thrower or the marker, play stops and possession reverts back to the thrower after a check.

If the thrower is fouled in the act of throwing and the pass is completed, the foul is automatically declined and play continues without interruption.

If the marker is fouled in the act of throwing and the pass is not completed, play continues without interruption.

Catching Fouls:

A catching foul may be called when there is contact between opposing players in the process of attempting a catch, interception, or knock down. A certain amount of incidental contact during or immediately after the catching attempt is often unavoidable and is not a foul.

If a player contacts an opponent before the disc arrives and thereby interferes with that opponent's attempt to make a play on the disc, that player has committed a foul.

If a player's attempt to make a play on the disc causes significant impact with a legitimately positioned stationary opponent, before or after the disc arrives, it is considered "harmful endangerment" and is a foul.

Dangerous, aggressive behavior or reckless disregard for the safety of fellow players is always a foul.

If a catching foul occurs and is uncontested, the player fouled gains possession at the point of the infraction. If the call is disputed, the disc goes back to the thrower. If an uncontested foul (with the exception of a force-out foul [XV.9]) occurs in the end zone, the player fouled gains possession at the closest point on the goal line to the infraction.

XVII. Violations

A violation occurs when a player violates the rules in a manner which does not result in physical contact. (e.g. illegal guarding position by the marker, not establishing a pivot foot on the sideline after carrying the disc in from out-of-bounds, etc.)

A violation may be called by any player who recognizes that a violation has occurred. The player must immediately call "violation" or the name of the specific violation loudly.

Travelling:

The thrower must keep all or part of the pivot foot in contact with a single spot on the field. Should the thrower lose contact with that spot, the thrower has traveled.

If the receiver obviously takes more steps than are required to stop after catching a pass, that player has traveled.

If a receiver, after receiving a pass on the run, releases a pass after the third ground contact and before coming to a complete stop, that receiver has traveled.

Strip:

No defensive player may touch the disc while it is in possession of the thrower or receiver. If a defensive player does so, the player in possession calls "Strip."

The player in possession then picks up the disc and play continues unhalting from the point where s/he regained possession.

If a count was in progress as the disc was stripped, the count is halted, and when the player in possession regains possession, the count restarts at zero (0).

A contested strip of the receiver is treated the same as a contested foul; an uncontested strip in the end zone is a goal.

Double-Team:

Only one marker is permitted to guard the thrower.

No other defensive player may establish a position within three(3) meters of the pivot foot of the thrower, unless s/he is guarding another offensive player in that area.

Should the thrower recognize a double-team situation, s/he first calls "Double-Team" as a warning. On the first "Double-Team" call, the marker must subtract 2 from the stall count. If "double-team" is called again within the same 10 seconds, play stops and is resumed after a check with the count reset to zero (0).

XVIII. Positioning

It is the responsibility of all players to avoid contact in any way possible. Violent impact with legitimately positioned opponents constitutes harmful endangerment, a foul, and must be strictly avoided.

Every player (excluding the thrower) is entitled to occupy any position on the field not occupied by any opposing player, provided that s/he does not cause personal contact in taking such a position.

Picks:

No player may establish a position, or move in such a manner, so as to obstruct the movement of any player on the opposing team; to do so is a "pick".

In the event of a pick, the obstructed player must immediately call "Pick" loudly; play stops and is resumed after a check, unless the continuation rule [XIX.2] applies.

When the disc is in the air, players must play the disc, not the opponent.

The Principle of Verticality: All players have the right to the space immediately above them. Thus, a player cannot prevent an opponent from making an attempt on a pass by placing his/her arms above an opponent. Should contact occur, the player restricting the vertical area is responsible.

A player who jumped is entitled to land at the same spot without hindrance by opponents. S/he may also land at another spot provided the landing spot was not already occupied at the time of take-off and that the direct path between the take-off and landing spot was not already occupied.

XIX. Clarifying Statements on Fouls, Violations and Picks

Cardinal Rule:

Whenever an infringement of the rules or a time out occurs, play is halted and the disc is put back into play at the point of the last possession before play was stopped. (Note exceptions under Turnovers (XII.4) and Catching Fouls (XVI.4).)

Continuation Rule:

Disc In the Air

If a foul, violation, or pick is called while the disc is in the air, the play is always completed.

If the team which called the foul, violation, or pick gains possession as a result of that pass (e.g., an incomplete pass following a travelling violation, or offensive foul), play continues unhalting. In this situation, players should call "play on."

If the pass is completed, but the defensive effort on the pass was affected by the violation (e.g. picks), the pass does not count and possession reverts back to the thrower.

Disc Not in the Air

If a foul, violation, or pick is called while the disc is not in the air, and a player attempts a pass before play has stopped, and the pass is incomplete, it is a turnover.

If a foul, violation, or pick is called while the disc is not in the air, and a player attempts a pass before play has stopped, and the pass is completed, the pass does not count, and possession reverts back to the original thrower.

It is the responsibility of the player who made the call to call out "Play on" to indicate that this rule has been invoked.

If there is ever a failure to come to an agreement over any call, the disc reverts back to the thrower after a check.

If offsetting catching fouls are called by offensive and defensive players on the same play, the disc reverts back to the thrower after a check.

Any time the marker's count is interrupted by the call of a foul, violation, pick, or time-out, the count is resumed as follows:

Defensive Foul Uncontested	0
Defensive Foul Contested	same or 5 if over 5
Offensive Foul	same
Travel or Pick	same or 5 if over 5
Strip.	0
Fast Count / Double Team	
- First Call	subtract 2; no check
- Second Call	0
Time Out	same
Contested Stall.	8

When play resumes after a time-out, the stall count is continued from where it was when time-out was called. The marker must initiate the count by calling "Stalling" or "Counting".

If the marker counts too fast, the thrower may call "fast count."

The first "fast count" call is a warning. On the first "fast count" call, the marker must subtract 2 from the stall count.

If "fast count" is called again within the same 10 seconds, play stops and is resumed after a check with the count reset to zero (0).

The continuation rule [XIX.2] applies to fast counts.

If the fast count occurs in such a manner that the thrower does not have a reasonable opportunity to call "fast count" before the utterance of the word "ten," the play is treated the same as a contested stall [XIV.5(F)].

Should a foul or violation result in possession reverting to a thrower who was airborne while releasing the disc, play shall be restarted at the point on the playing field proper closest to the location from which the throw was made. [1995]

A. Observers

Before the game, the captains may decide to select up to six (6) experienced non-players to act as Observers. In this role, their job is to carefully watch the action of the game. They do not actively call any fouls, violations, picks, or line calls.

When a dispute arises concerning a foul, violation, pick, line call, or an interpretation of the rules which cannot be resolved by the captains to make the call,

The observer with the best view of the play makes the call. If the observers so choose, they may discuss the play among themselves before rendering a decision.

By calling in the observers, the teams agree to abide by the observers decision.

B. Etiquette

If a foul is committed and not called, the player who commits the foul should inform the infringed player of the foul.

It is the responsibility of both teams to minimize the time taken between each goal and the ensuing throw-off.

If the receiving team wishes to have an out-of-bounds throw-off re-thrown, they should give the re-throw signal as soon as possible.

It is a violation against the spirit of the game for a defensive player to call for a pass from the thrower.

Should a dispute or confusion arise on the field, it should be common practice to stop play, and resume play with a check when the matter is resolved.

In the case where a novice player commits a violation out of sincere ignorance of rules, it is common practice to stop play and explain the violation.

C. Historical Record of Clarifications and Amendments

This section describes the various Clarifications and Amendments that have been made to the rules over the years. Note that these changes have already been included in the rules as presented in this document. They are listed here together with clarifying commentary for those who are interested in how and why the rules have changed. Additions are shown in bold, deletions are marked with [square brackets], and clarifying comments are in italics. Follow the link to jump to the affected rule.

1995 Clarifications and Amendments

II. CLARIFYING STATEMENTS

Phrases:

Ground Contact: All player contact with the ground directly related to a specific event or maneuver, including landing or recovery after being off-balance, e.g., jumping, diving, leaning, or falling.

Possession of the disc: Sustained contact with, and control of, the non-spinning disc.

To catch a pass is equivalent to establishing possession of that pass

Loss of control due to ground contact related to a pass reception negates that receiver's possession up to that point.

(These added definitions add a great deal of clarity within the rules, much of which will be explained below. Among other things, it enables us to get rid of XV.10, see below. It also defines a "catch" for the first time, and makes that definition (by adding the words "and control of") closer to the ordinary usage of the word. Without this clause, a person on the ground who is unaware of the disc resting on his/her back, to cite an extreme example, would be in possession of the disc. No longer.)

VI. TIME-OUTS

Time-out

During play, only [the person with] a player who has established a pivot foot and who has possession of the disc can call a time-out.

(This makes it clear that a person executing "the greatest," i.e., a person who jumps up catches the disc, and throws it before s/he lands, can not call a time out while in mid-air.)

When play resumes after a time-out:

The player who had possession puts the disc into play.

The disc is put into play at the location where the disc was when the time-out was called. [If the disc was out-of-bounds when the time-out was called, the disc is put into play at the point on the playing field proper nearest to where the disc went out-of-bounds. If the disc was in the end zone when the time-out was called, the disc is put into play at the point in the end zone where the time out was called.]

(Between the new clarification that you need a new pivot foot to put the disc into play, and a clarification in section XIX, this rule is not needed. In any event, a player now needs to have a pivot foot when s/he calls a time-out, and so it can not be called from out of bounds.)

VIII. STARTING AND RESTARTING PLAY

Throw-offs:

If a member of the receiving team catches the throw-off on the playing field proper, that player must put the disc into play from that spot. If the throw-off is caught in either endzone, the player takes possession at that point, and puts the disc in play as described in section X (ENDZONES). If the throw-off is caught out-of-bounds, it is put into play as described in section IX.7 (OUT-OF-BOUNDS).

(The rules do not currently state what happens when a player, who is not standing on the playing field proper, catches the throw-off. This addition codifies the way we all already play.)

IX. OUT-OF-BOUNDS

To start or restart play after the disc has gone out-of-bounds, a member of the team gaining possession of the disc must carry the disc to the point on the playing field proper nearest where the disc [went out of bounds] last crossed the perimeter line, and put the disc into play at that point.

(This amendment is technical in nature, and makes the wording more accurate as to how the game is currently played.)

XII. TURNOVERS

A pass is considered intercepted if a defensive player catches a pass. If a defensive player catches a pass and accidentally loses possession of it before or during ground contact related to that catch (II.1.F.b), the defender is considered to have blocked rather than intercepted the pass.

(This change clarifies what happens when a player intercepts the disc and accidentally drops it when (or before) s/he hits the ground. In such an instance, the disc goes to the defender's team, and the play is considered as though it were a block. This is the way we already play, although the rules were not clear. The definitions added in section II also come into play here.)

XIII. THE THROWER

The thrower must establish a pivot foot and may not change that pivot foot until the throw is released, except in the case where the thrower has just received a pass and is throwing before the third ground contact in accordance with XV.5.

(This FINALLY clears up the long standing contradiction between XV.5 -- the third ground contact rule -- and the fact that this rule requires a pivot foot in order to throw. We simply make an explicit exception in that case. It also makes clear that "the greatest" is legal.)

A defensive player who establishes possession of the disc becomes the thrower, but may not throw the disc before s/he establishes a legal pivot foot. To do so is a travelling violation.

(And this section finally defines when a defensive person becomes an offensive person. It also makes clear that the "third ground contact rule" does not apply to a defensive person--s/he must have a pivot foot. Additionally, a "defensive greatest" would be a travelling violation.)

XV. THE RECEIVER

[The receiver gains possession by demonstrating sustained contact with a non-spinning disc.]

(This section is not needed anymore, because of our new definitions in section II.)

If the receiver is running or jumping as s/he catches the disc, the receiver may throw a pass before the third ground contact after catching the disc without coming to a complete stop; however, change in direction or increase in speed while in possession of the disc is a travelling violation.

(This makes more clear the conditions under which an offensive player does not have to establish a pivot foot without travelling, and also makes it clear that "the greatest" is a legal play.)

[First ground contact determines possession. The ground can cause an incomplete pass, resulting in a turnover.]

(We have finally deleted what is probably the worst written rule in Ultimate. The problem is not only that no one plays that way, but the two sentences themselves contradict each other. Suppose a receiver lays out in the endzone, catches the disc, smashes to the ground, and drops it. Everyone plays that as a turnover. And, in fact, the second sentence in this clause says it's a turnover, but the first sentence above says that receiver has possession. Not only that, but the first sentence contradicts the old XV.3 rule which

says that possession is determined by sustained contact with a non-spinning disc. With our new definitions in section II, we can get rid of this.)

XIX. CLARIFYING STATEMENTS ON FOULS, VIOLATIONS AND PICKS

Should a foul or violation result in possession reverting to a thrower who was airborne while releasing the disc, play shall be restarted at the point on the playing field proper closest to the location from which the throw was made.

(This answers the question of where to start play when a player making "the greatest", leaps out of bounds, and because of a foul, gets the disc back and must restart play.)

1992 Amendments and Changes

II. CLARIFYING STATEMENTS

Phrases:

To "put the disc into play" means that the thrower establishes a pivot foot and is ready to throw. To put the disc into play at a particular point on the field means to place the pivot foot at that point on the field. "Throw-off position" is the particular arrangement of positions (which end zone each team is defending) and possession (which team is to throw-off) in effect before a throw-off.

VIII. Starting and Restarting Play

Start of periods of play:

Representatives of the two teams each flip a disc. The representative of one team calls "same" or "different" while the discs are in the air. The team winning the flip has the choice of:

The second half begins with an automatic reversal of the initial throw-off position.

In a game to time, if overtime periods are needed, the disc flipping procedure is repeated for the first overtime period. The initial throw-off position of subsequent overtime periods is the reverse of the throw-off position that started the previous overtime period.

Throw Off

If the throw-off lands out-of-bounds, the receiving team, before touching the disc, makes a choice of: Invoking the Middle/Brick Rule. If the throw-off lands outside the field of play, the receiving team may choose to put the disc into play at the halfway between the two sidelines either at the point where the disc went out-of-bounds or at a point 10 yards upfield from the goal line they are defending. To invoke the "middle/brick rule," the member of the receiving team who is going to receive the throw-off shall fully extend one hand above his/her head and call "middle" or "brick". The player must let the disc hit the ground. On such a call, the offensive player may use a "self check," meaning he/she picks up the disc and the nearest defensive player says "in play." If the nearest player does not immediately say "in play," the offensive player may touch the disc to the ground and yell "disc in play."
