

Introduction

Ultimate was developed in 1968 by a group of students at Columbia High School in Maplewood, N.J. Although ultimate resembles many traditional sports in its basic athletic requirements, it is unlike most sports due to its focus on self-officiating, even at the highest levels of competition. This concept, called Spirit of the Game, is integrated into the basic philosophy of the sport, written into the rules and practiced at all levels of the game, from local leagues to the World Games.



Where Is Ultimate Played?

Ultimate can be found in communities everywhere and is played at all levels from recreational pick up games in your neighborhood to a competitive series of national events attracting the best players from across the country. Programs exist for youth, college, club and masters players. Many cities have a local league organization, and an increasing number of community-based organizations are offering ultimate. This can be a great place for beginners to start playing.

USA Ultimate

With over 60,000 members, USA Ultimate, a not-for-profit, is the national governing body for the sport of ultimate in the U.S. and the largest membership organization in the world devoted to ultimate. Founded as the Ultimate Players Association in 1979, USA Ultimate strives to promote the sport of ultimate, support its players, and increase participation at all levels.

USA Ultimate's mission is to advance the sport of ultimate in the United States by enhancing and promoting Character, Community and Competition.

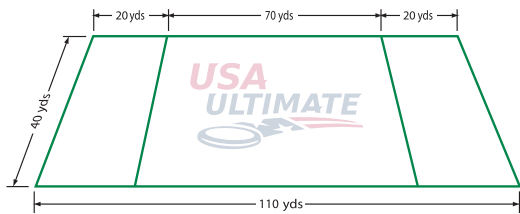
Coaching

USA Ultimate offers three coach certifications: Middle School, High School and College. Each of the certifications look at age-appropriate coach behavior on and off the field to help make sure our athletes have a positive and safe playing experience. The need for coaches is high, especially at the youth level. Talk to your local disc organization about hosting a workshop.



The Playing Field

A regulation ultimate field is 70 yards by 40 yards with end zones 20 yards deep. Play and scoring must occur within the lines. Perimeter lines are out of bounds. The official rules recommend that spectators and gear should remain 15 feet away from the field of play (or whatever distance is designated by the event organizer) to keep the perimeter safe and clear during play.



The Disc

Ultimate is traditionally played with a 175g molded plastic disc which is approximately 10.75 inches in diameter. USA Ultimate has approved a variety of discs for use in ultimate play at both the adult and youth levels.

Safety First

USA Ultimate takes event quality and safety very seriously. USAU staff and the USAU Medical Advisory Committee regularly review our event guidelines to ensure event safety requirements for all USAU official and sanctioned events continue to meet or exceed national standards. Additionally, all USAU official and sanctioned events are covered by our liability and participant accident insurance policies. You can find out more at usultimate.org/athlete-safety.

Playing the Game

Ultimate is a non-contact sport played by two teams of seven players. The object is simple. Each team plays “keep away” from the other team by completing successive passes to progress down the field, with a team member catching the final pass in the opponent’s end zone. A typical game is played to 15 points and usually lasts about 90 minutes.

USA Ultimate provides a variety of competition opportunities within the structure of our youth, college, club and masters divisions. Gender divisions include men’s, mixed and women’s. Mixed teams include both male-matching and female-matching players.

Starting Play: Each point begins with both teams lining up on the front line of their respective end zone. The defense throws (“pulls”) the disc to the offense.

Scoring: Each time the offense completes a pass into the defense’s end zone, the offense scores a point.

Movement of the Disc: The disc may be advanced in any direction by completing a pass to a teammate. Players may not run with the disc. The person with the disc (“thrower”) has 10 seconds to throw the disc. The defender guarding the thrower (“marker”) counts out the stall count (see definition below under Common Terms).

Change of Possession: When a pass is not completed (e.g., out of bounds, drop, block, interception), the defense immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offense. Just like basketball, ultimate is a transition game in which players move quickly from offense to defense on turnovers.

Substitutions: Players not in the game may replace players in the game after a score or during an injury timeout.

Non-contact: No physical contact is allowed between players. Picks are prohibited. A foul occurs when contact is made.

Officiation

There are no referees in ultimate. Part of the game’s official rules, Spirit of the Game is based on the belief that respect and honor between competitors make it possible for control of the game to be in the players’ hands. Each athlete is obliged to trust every other player on the field to act as an official throughout play.² Players are responsible for making their own calls.

When a player believes there has been an infraction, they must make the call. A player called for an infraction can either agree that they committed a foul/violation and say, “no contest,” or they may “contest” that call if they believe the infraction did not occur. Play will temporarily stop while the call is being discussed. If opponents cannot agree on the outcome of a call (i.e., that call is “contested”), there is a do over. The disc is sent back to the thrower who possessed it before the supposed infraction, and play will continue from there.

Spirit of the Game: Ultimate relies on a spirit of sportsmanship that places the responsibility for fair play on the player. Highly competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of mutual respect among players, adherence to the agreed upon rules, or the basic joy of play. Such actions as taunting, aggression, intentional infractions or other win-at-all-costs behavior are contrary to Spirit of the Game and must be avoided.

Self-Officiating: Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes.

Observers: Observers are non-players whose role is to carefully watch the action of the game and perform any or all of the following duties: track time limits, resolve player disputes, censure or eject players for sportsmanship infractions, and issue rulings on line calls, off-sides calls, and some time limits. The difference between an observer and a referee is that, in general, observers only make rulings on infractions called by players, and only after the players have failed to resolve the issue themselves.

Ultimate in 10 Simple Rules

- 1. The Field:** A rectangular shape with end zones at each end. A regulation field is 70 yards by 40 yards, with end zones 20 yards deep.
- 2. Starting Play:** Each point begins with both teams lining up on the front of their respective end zone line. The defense throws (“pulls”) the disc to the offense. A regulation game has seven players per team.
- 3. Scoring:** Each time the offense completes a pass in the defense’s end zone, the offense scores a point. Play is initiated after each score.
- 4. Movement of the Disc:** The disc may be advanced in any direction by completing a pass to a teammate. Players may not run with the disc. The person with the disc (“thrower”) has ten seconds to throw the disc. The defender guarding the thrower (“marker”) counts out the stall count.
- 5. Change of Possession:** When a pass is not completed (e.g., out of bounds, drop, block, interception, stalled), the defense immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offense
- 6. Substitutions:** Players not in the game may replace players in the game after a score and during an injury timeout.
- 7. Non-contact:** No physical contact is allowed between players. Picks and screens are also prohibited. A foul occurs when contact is made.
- 8. Fouls:** When a player initiates contact on another player, a foul occurs. When a foul disrupts possession, the play resumes as if the possession was retained. If the player committing the foul disagrees with the foul call, the play is redone.
- 9. Self-Officiating:** Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes.
- 10. Spirit of the Game:** Ultimate stresses sportsmanship and fair play. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules



Players and Positions

Teams commonly include between 14 and 25 players. Seven teammates play on the field together at any one time. In ultimate, athletes play both offense and defense but may specialize in one or the other.

Offensive Positions

- Handlers** – A team's primary throwers.
- Cutters** – A team's primary downfield receivers.

Defensive Strategies

- Person** – When each person on the defensive team matches up to play defense against one person on the other team (one on one).
- Zone** – When defenders are assigned to cover areas of the field rather than individual opponents.³

Common Throws

- Backhand** – A pass in which the back of the thrower's hand faces the direction of the throw, and the throwing motion is across the body.
- Forehand (or Flick)** – A pass in which the palm of the thrower's hand faces the direction of the throw, and the throwing motion is on one side of the body.
- Hammer** – An overhead throw which delivers the disc upside down.

Common Terms

- Contact** – A thrower may call “contact” instead of “foul” when contact with the marker occurs. Play does not stop, and the marker resets the stall count.
- Dump Pass** – A short lateral or backward pass.
- Foul** – When a player initiates contact with another player that affects continued play.
- Marker** – The defensive player within three meters of the thrower who counts out the stall count.
- Pick** – Occurs whenever an offensive player moves in a manner that causes a guarding defensive player to be obstructed by another player. Obstruction may result from contact with, or the need to avoid, the obstructing player. This is a violation.
- Pivot** – The part of the body (usually the foot) in continuous contact with a single spot on the field during a thrower's possession once the thrower has come to a stop.
- Pull** – The throw from one team to the other that starts play at the beginning of each point.
- Stall** – A turnover occurring when a thrower has not released the disc by the count of 10.
- Stall Count** – The amount of time the offensive player with the disc has to throw the disc. Each thrower is permitted 10 seconds to release the disc. The stall count must be called aloud by the marker. The stall count cannot be started until the marker is within 10 feet of the thrower.
- Strip** – When a defensive player initiates contact with the disc after an offensive player has gained possession of the disc, and the offensive player loses possession as a result. This is a foul.
- Travel** – When a thrower fails to establish a pivot at the appropriate spot on the field and/or keep in contact with that spot until their throw is released. This is a violation.
- Violation** – Any infraction of the rules other than a foul.

Where to Play

Tournaments are one of the primary competition formats in ultimate; they are typically held on Saturday and Sunday, with each team playing 2-3 games per day. Games are played to a certain point total (a game to 15 is standard) or until a time cap is reached (often between 75 and 105 minutes) with winning teams advancing through a championship bracket. Local leagues are also a popular place to play ultimate and are typically very welcoming to beginners. Clinics and camps are other great ways to experience ultimate. Find out where to play near you at usultimate.org/local.

Watching from the Sidelines

Some tournaments will provide water or have vendors selling food and drinks, but many may not. It is always a good idea to come prepared. Here are health and safety recommendations to keep in mind while watching on the sideline. Check the event website ahead of time to see what amenities will be available.

- Keep yourself and personal items, including but not limited to coolers, tents, strollers, bags and chairs, 15 feet (or whatever distance is designated by the event organizer) away from the sideline.
- Seek safe shelter during a lightning delay.
- Drink water; stay hydrated.
- Items you may want to bring:
 - ☐ folding chair
 - ☐ sun block
 - ☐ appropriate clothing for weather
 - ☐ camera and/or video camera
 - ☐ event program/game schedule
 - ☐ hat
 - ☐ sunglasses
 - ☐ food and drinks

Spirit of the Sideline

On an ultimate sideline, encouragement and support are stressed. Cheering is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect for all players, fans and officials. Friends and family can support their teams in many ways. Some things you can do to show support:

- Create and share a team roster with other friends and family.
- Provide team drinks and snacks to maintain energy necessary for competing and remaining healthy.
- Bring tents for shade in hot or rainy weather.
- Cheer for the team and individuals.
- Encourage spirit and conflict resolution amongst players by listening quietly when calls are made and permitting them to make the final decision without receiving feedback from the crowd.
- Take pictures to share with the team after the event.
- Wear team colors and make posters or banners.
- Stay positive! Celebrate good plays and defense; refrain from booing or negative comments.



SPECTATOR'S GUIDE TO Ultimate





USA Ultimate
(719) 219-8322

www.usultimate.org





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^{1,2} J. Parinella and E. Zaslow, 2004, Ultimate Techniques and Tactic (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics), 190.
³ M. Baccarini and T. Booth, 2008, Essential Ultimate: Teaching, Coaching, Playing (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics), 3.