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 ten.

**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.

**Transit** – 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.

Tournaments

Teams will generally pre-register or qualify for a tournament. Tournaments are usually Saturday and Sunday with each team playing approximately 2–4 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 75–125 minutes). Each team plays other teams in a predetermined format with the winning teams advancing to the finals. Teams eliminated from contention for the finals will often be scheduled to play elimination games.

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 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
  - USA Ultimate Spectator Guide
  - event program/game schedule

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 fans 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.

Players and Positions

Teams participating in the Club Championship Series may have a maximum of 27 players on their roster. Most other series and events do not have roster limits, but a common team size is between 1-4-24 players. A squad of 7 teammates play on the field at any given time.

**offensive positions**

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

**defensive strategies**

- **Man** – 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.

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.
Ultimate was developed in 1968 by a group of students at Columbia University in New York City. The sport was designed to be a unique, non-contact sport that emphasized fair play, sportsmanship, and community. The sport quickly gained popularity, and in 1989, USA Ultimate was founded as the governing body for the sport in the United States. USA Ultimate works to promote the sport of ultimate, support its players, and increase participation at all levels.

Coaching

USA Ultimate offers two levels of coaching education, covering topics from Coaching Ethics & Coaching Performance to Advanced Strategies & Tactics. The need for coaches is high, especially at the youth level. Consider hosting a local Coaching Development Program Workshop by visiting usaultimate.org/coaching. Those who host local CDP workshops receive free registration. Think about volunteering to host a workshop or coaching a team in your hometown.

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 and progressing down the field, with a team member catching the final pass in the opponent’s end zone. A typical game is played in 15 points and usually lasts about 90 minutes.

USA Ultimate provides a variety of competition opportunities within the structure of our Youth, College, and Club divisions. Ultimate is played by men and women and alliances/teams may include Men’s, Mixed, and Women’s. A Mixed team must include both male and female players.

Initiating 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.

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 ten 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 turnover.

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.

Officiating

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 is the foundation of our sport. Ultimates’ officials are called “observers.” Observers are either friends, family, or casual spectators. Observers are not official, but are responsible for making calls.

Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. When a player believes there has been an infraction, they must make the call. A player can call “foul” on the action. If the observers agree that they committed a foul, they may call “violation” and say “No Contest.” If they disagree on the outcome of the call (i.e., the call is “contested”), there will be a coin toss to determine the score. If there is no contest, the disc is sent back to the thrower who lost possession of the disc prior to the supposed infraction and play will continue from there.

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 25 yards deep.

2. Initiate Play: Each point begins with both teams lining up on the front of their respective end zone line. The offense throws (“pulls”) the disc to the offense. A regulation game has seven players per team.

3. Scoring: Each time the offense completes a pass into 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 (see definition below under Common Terms).

5. 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 turnover.

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 are 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 player is red-carded. If more than two fouls occur, the referees will seek out another observer to make the decision.

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 mutual respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play. Any actions such as taunting, aggression, intentional infractions or other “win-at-all-costs” behavior are contrary to Spirit of the Game and must be avoided.

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.

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 that event safety requirements for all USAU official and sanctioned events continue to meet or exceed national standards. Review our Event Safety Standards at usaultimate.org/safety. Additionally, all USAU official and sanctioned events are covered by our insurance policies.