

ULTIMATE FOR BEGINNERS

“Ultimate for Beginners” is part of an ongoing project to provide high-quality educational material for those learning the sport of Ultimate Frisbee.

Check out the online site:

www.ultimatehandbook.com

A 10 minute video introduction to the sport of Ultimate Frisbee is now available!

“**Play Ultimate**” navigates the Ultimate player through the basics of one of the fastest growing sports in North America - Ultimate Frisbee.

To order this video:

www.playulty.com

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Introduction

*When a ball dreams...
It dreams it's a Frisbee*

Dr. Stancil B. Johnson,
International Frisbee Hall of Fame

Ultimate is a noncontact, fast paced field sport played with two teams of seven. The object is to throw a frisbee up the field from teammate to teammate until it's caught in the opponent's endzone. The game combines elements from other sports - the running of soccer, the jumping, pivoting, passing and continual turnovers from offence to defense of basketball, and the long bombs into the endzone of football. It's played year-round.

Ultimate began in 1968 in Maplewood, New Jersey by a bunch of students from Columbia High School. The staff members of the school newspaper, the Colombian, and its student council developed a new game as a gag and activity for their high-school evenings.

“Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of mutual respect between players and the basic joy of play”



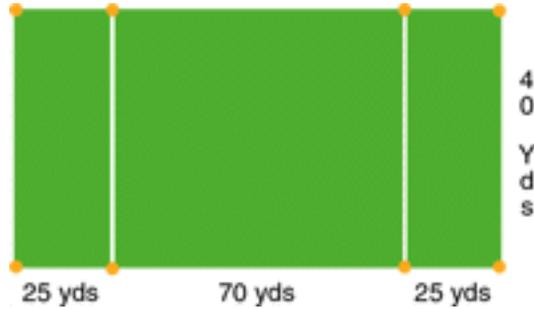
The game was freeform early on, with as many as 20 or 30 players allowed per team. Initially played as Frisbee Football, the rules were slowly modified, eventually eliminating running with the disc and the system of downs, and establishing a set of rules for the defense. As the students graduated the game spread to the college level.

Today, Ultimate is played by people from all walks of life in 35 countries throughout the world. From the 25,000 amateur athletes that compete through the UPA (Ultimate Players Association) and the WFDF (World Flying Disc Federation) to the even greater number that play in informal leagues and casual pickup games; Ultimate is a sport for everyone.

The best way to learn Ultimate is to play it. Take the opportunity to join local pick-up games. This will give you chance to play with some experienced players and perhaps ask them questions. Some cities and leagues even offer skill clinics which is a great way to receive top-notch coaching.

The 10 Rules of Ultimate

1. The Field -- A regulation ultimate field is 70 yards by 40 yards. The endzones are 25 yards deep.



2. Starting Play - There are seven players per team. Each team lines up across the front of their endzone at the beginning of each point. The team with the disc will pull (i.e. throw) the disc to the other team. This starts gameplay.

3. Movement of the disc - The offensive team can move the disc in any direction by successfully completing a pass to a teammate. Once a player has the disc they cannot run with it. Only one defensive player is allowed to guard the handler (i.e. the player who currently holds the disc). All other defensive players must be at least 10 feet away.

4. The Stall Count -The player with the disc (i.e. the thrower or handler) has ten seconds to throw it. The defender guarding the thrower (i.e. the marker) will establish this ten count (or stall count).

5. Change of possession (Turnover) -- When a pass is not completed (e.g. out of bounds, drop, block, interception) or a ten count occurs, the defense immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offense. This is called a turnover.

6. Scoring - When the offense completes a pass into the opposing endzone, this is a point.

7. Contact - No physical contact is allowed in the game of ultimate. Picks and screens are also prohibited as they often lead to injury.

8. Fouls - When a player initiates contact on another player a foul occurs. The player who was fouled must immediately yell “foul” and gameplay promptly stops. If a foul call 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-Refereeing - Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes. There are no referees.

10. Spirit of the Game - Ultimate’s underlying philosophy is sportsmanship and fair play. Competitive play is encouraged, but never be at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play.

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Spirit of the Game

The rules of Ultimate, like any sport, take a while to learn. But the most important concept is “Spirit”

“Spirit of the Game”, or SOTG, is the underlying philosophy of Ultimate. Players are among the most courteous of athletes and always maintain a high level of sportsmanship and respect for their opponent. There are no referees in Ultimate, which means that players must govern their own conduct on the pitch. A player would never intentionally violate the rules of the game, so there are no harsh penalties to enforce these rules. If there is an infraction, it is the responsibility of the players involved to call the foul. This includes calling a foul on yourself if the person you fouled does not call the infraction. In essence, Ultimate relies on the honour system with the belief that no one would ever intentionally cheat.



“There are no referees in Ultimate, which means that players must govern their own conduct on the pitch”

The rules of Ultimate, like any sport, take a while to learn. But the most important concept is “Spirit”. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of mutual respect between players and the basic joy of play.

Five Ways to Bring More Spirit to Your Games.

1. Always praise and support players on both teams. If someone makes a great catch get your whole team to make some noise. Alternatively, if someone makes a mistake and is angry with themselves, it helps to encourage them with a “Nice try red team, go get it back!!”.
2. Introduce yourself to your opponents on the field. While you are both stacking up, reach out a hand and introduce yourself and wish them a good game.
3. Challenge your opponents to a silly point. All hammer throws, skipping, holding hands, left handed etc.
4. Share your food! Bring some extra cookies, cake or fruit to the game and pass it around.
5. Maintain a positive attitude at all times. The most challenging part of SOTG is to keep it going when the going gets tough. You may be down 11- 2 but remember that Ultimate is just a game and tomorrow the sun will still rise if you lose. So you might as well lose with style, spirit and class!



THE CHEER

One of the unique aspects of Ultimate is that you must cheer the other team at the end of each game. We're not talking a quick hip-hip-hooray, just doesn't cut it. You want to create something that commemorates the fun you had with your opponents. It usually involves taking a well-known song and re-writing the lyrics, perhaps throwing in some choreography, and most importantly, having lots of fun.

Remember, enthusiasm counts more than talent. No matter how bad or good your team does during the game, it's hard to take yourself seriously when a bunch of people are massacring a perfectly good song.

There are a lot of approaches you can take when developing a cheer. Get your entire team together in a circle immediately after the game. It always helps to have a leader when developing your cheer. The song leader plays an important role in activating the creative spark in your team. Keep the team on track and attentive by involving everyone. Lead a quick team brainstorm and ask the following questions:

1. Does your opponents' name fit with a popular song, nursery rhyme or TV commercial? Switch the words so that they relate to your game.
2. Did something happen during the game that was funny, embarrassing or worthy of praise? Add a line to your song about it.
3. If neither of the above apply, you are going to have to turn up the creative juices!! Perhaps

a short skit, opera spoof or dramatic performance is in order?

Once you have determined the direction your cheer will take, you have a choice: write your cheer down or commit it to memory. We are going to suggest you don't write down your cheers! Memorizing cheers forces the whole team to either participate or at least listen during the cheer writing process. When cheers are written down, your teams' eyes are glued to piece of paper during the presentation and only a couple of people will really know the song. At first, it's always hard to convince your team that memorization is the easiest way.

“No matter how bad or good your teams does during the game, it's hard to take yourself seriously when a bunch of people are massacring a perfectly good song!”

Start by “talking” the cheer, line by line, until you reach the point where you run out of words. Every time you add a new line or verse, start from the beginning. Now you are using all of the brains on your team to come up with more lyrics! Add the singing when people get used to the new version of the song.

Rehearse your cheer a few times so that you are putting just as much effort into praising the other team as you put into playing a great game! Remember, enthusiasm is everything! You are not being judged on singing or acting ability. People will appreciate an honest effort.

The cheer is what makes Ultimate so unique. It allows your team to express how much fun you had and shows them you appreciated the great time. The best way to clear the air after an intense game is to give them a cheer they won't forget!!!

To the tune of "Call Me" by Blondie

Call me, down the line,
you can throw it to me anytime,
Call me, its just fine
If you huck it, I'll be there in time
Call me!

Cover me with dirt and grass,
we're sliding in the zone
throw the disc to me baby
I'm standing all alone
Pressures on, I can't stand still
if I don't get it someone will
Call me!



To the tune of "Help from my friends" Sung by Illegal Smile to Hello My Name Is, Vancouver Ultimate League

What would you do if we gave you a name
like Fuzzy, Rudolph or Jane?

How would you feel at the end of the game
now that we'll never see you again?

We'll get by with a little help from your food

Do you feed everybody?

And give them nametags too?

Will you play us on Sunday and give us all
something to do?

We'll get by if you say you're our friend

We can try if you say you're our friends



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Throwing

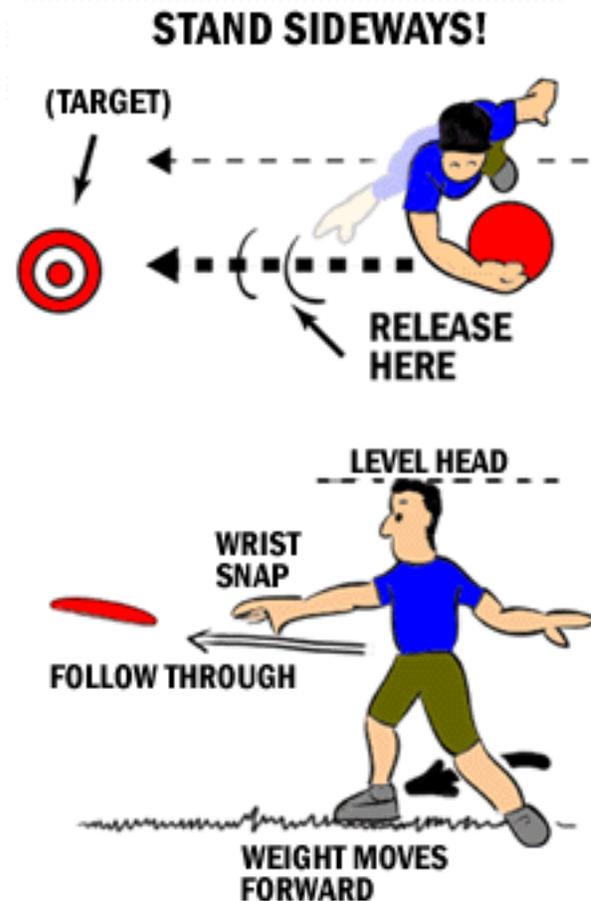
Backhand

To throw a proper backhand your grip should have all four fingers curled around the rim. The thumb lies on top of the disc, close to the rim. Make sure to keep the grip relatively tight, as this gives the disc stability.



As a beginner, your natural tendency will be to face the person you're trying to throw to. This often results in a throw that goes way off target. If you are a right-handed thrower, stand with your right shoulder facing your receiver or target. Left handers use their left shoulder. It's important to remember that the force of the throw not only comes from arm strength, but also from your weight imparting energy to the disc. Remember to keep your knees a bit flexed so your body isn't rigid.

Swing your arm forward with moderate force. You don't want to heave the disc, but rather have a smooth controlled motion. Shift your weight for-



ward as you're doing this and take a slight step ahead with your front foot. This will give you added extension around your defense and balance during the throw.

The point where you release the disc will determine which direction it goes: left, right, or straight. As you release the disc, snap your wrist forward. As it propels off of your index finger, the disc will begin to spin. The harder you snap your wrist, the more spin the disc will have, and it's the spin which keeps the disc stable during flight.

Be careful that you keep your wrist in line with your arm as you snap the disc. If your thumb lifts upward during the throw, the disc will lose control.

Just like a golf swing, continue your arm motion even after the disc has left your fingers. This is known as "follow through" and helps your throw to maintain a nice fluid consistency.

Forehand (Flick)

The basic forehand grip is shown below. The index finger points to the center of the disc, giving you control of the disc angle. The middle finger lies across the inside rim. The other two fingers are curled into your palm. The thumb lies on top of the disc.



If you're a right handed thrower, stand with your left shoulder forward and your torso pointed slightly towards your target. Left-handers should do the opposite. Your feet should be shoulder width apart with your throwing arm behind your rear leg. Keep your knees flexed so your body isn't rigid.

Bring your arm backwards so the disc is above your rear leg and your weight is shifted slightly back. The disc shouldn't be parallel to the ground but dropped down to about 45 degrees by bending at the wrist.

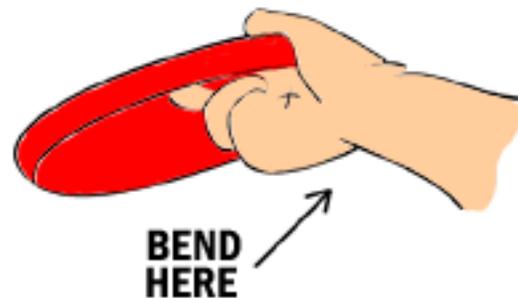
Your elbow is the pivot point and should not move during the entire throwing process. Swing your arm forwards with considerable force. To launch the disc, you want to stop your hand with a jerk and snap your wrist. Essentially all the energy from your arm and body will focus to the middle finger along the rim of the disc.

Because your arm only travels a short distance, the possible release points are much closer together. A good point of release is just after your wrist crosses your rear leg. Follow through is not necessary during the forehand throw.



Beginners often throw off the wrong foot. Make sure your weight is on the same foot as the hand that's holding the disc

FOREHAND GRIP



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The Basics of Ultimate

Before starting a game of Ultimate, the captains from each team will flip a disc. A third player calls “same” or “different” before the discs hit the ground. If the call is correct, then that person’s team has the choice to throw or receive the first “pull”, or alternatively to choose the endzone they would like to defend for the first point.

Each team lines up seven players across their respective goal line. The receiving team should maintain their positions relative to each other until the pull is thrown. This allows the opposing team to figure out who they will check (i.e. defend).

The Pull

Everyone is in position, happy, smiling, ready to play. The person pulling the disc will raise their hand, indicating that their team is ready. The opposing team will raise their hand in turn and the game begins. The pull is thrown, the disc sails gracefully through the air to the other end zone, and the pulling team runs down the field to pick up their ‘checks’.

“LET THE GAMES BEGIN!!!”

The receiving team doesn’t have to catch the pull. Whoever touches the disc first (either by catching it or picking it up from the ground) becomes the first handler. A good idea is to designate someone on your team to be the first handler; This will

minimize confusion. If by chance the disc hits the ground and starts rolling, any player on the receiving team can stop the disc without becoming the first handler.

Unless you are confident that you will catch the pull, let the disc hit the ground. If you try to catch the disc and fail, it’s a turnover (and usually just a few meters away from your endzone).

If the disc lands inside your end zone, then the receiving team has the choice to play immediately from within the endzone or walk the disc to their goal line. To put the disc into play, touch it to the ground. Note: You cannot decide to play from the goal line, and then change your mind and throw the disc prior to reaching the goal line.

If the disc flies out of bounds, someone from the receiving team should raise his arms and yell “middle”. This allows you to play the disc from the middle of the field at the point where the disc crosses the sideline. If you don’t call “middle”, then you must play it from the sideline.

Marking the Handler

The disc is pulled to the other team, a player from this team picks up the disc (he becomes the “handler”), and a defender from the opposing team (i.e. the “marker”) sets up to block the throw. Once the disc is put into play, the marker starts a stall count (at one second intervals) “Stall one, Stall two, ... up to “Stall Ten”. If the marker reaches stall ten (the “T” of ten to be exact) before the handler initiates a pass then it’s a turnover. If the disc is thrown, the “marker” should yell “UP” to let teammates know the disc is in the air.

A fast stall count is against the rules. In the event of a fast count call by the thrower, two seconds are deducted from the count and play is continued without interruption. A second fast count results in a foul. When this happens, play is reset with a count of zero.

The marker must be closer than three meters and greater than one disc length from the handler

before they can initiate a stall count. You cannot straddle the thrower's pivot foot or prevent the thrower from pivoting.

Only one player can mark the handler at any one time. All other defensive players must be at least 3 meters away.

The Stack

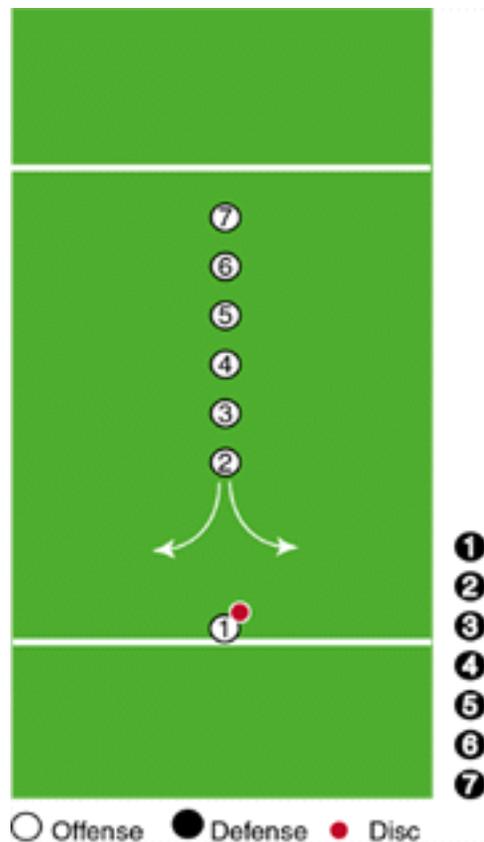
The handler is looking for an open teammate. He has ten seconds to throw the disc but there are fourteen players on the field, twelve of which are running in order to get open for a pass. Needless to say, things very quickly get chaotic and disorganized. Players will find it difficult to get open because someone is always in their way. You will also find that occasionally you must stop so that you don't inadvertently pick an opponent.

You cannot use any other player on the field to impede the progress of your check. This is called a "pick" and was instituted to prevent injuries, primarily high-speed collisions between players.

The most common strategy for reducing clogging is to form a "stack". The idea behind the stack is to try and make room on the field for your receivers. The first player lines up 15-20 yards away from the handler, and the other players line up behind him. Try to keep 5-10 yards between players in the stack. Because ultimate is commonly played using a 'player-on-player' type defense, this will force the opposing team into a similar stack configuration. The field 10-20 yards in front of the handler is now open for receiving throws.

Players in the stack will make running plays to try and get open for a pass. This is usually done in a series of cuts that open up space between you and your defender. The player at the front of the stack runs towards the thrower and then cuts SHARPLY to the right or left. The sharper the cut, the easier it is to get a few steps in front of the defense.

If your team is running hard, there should be an abundance of passing opportunities. The most important thing for the handler to do is 'lead' the receiver by throwing the disc ahead of them, not at



them. If the throw is made directly at the receiver it will cause them to stop. Because the defender is running behind him, he/she will be right there to intercept the pass. Remember, if the defender is too close to your teammate, wait for the next cut. It's also a good idea to make eye contact with your receiver just before they make the cut. This will give you an indication of what's going to happen.

If the thrower does not pass to you as a cutter, circle around and run like crazy to the back of the stack (farthest from the disc). By the time the first runner is circling back, the second runner should already be making a cut. Timing is essential. You

want the thrower to have a new pass option immediately after an old one evaporates. Remember, the handler only has 10 seconds to throw.

Holding the Force

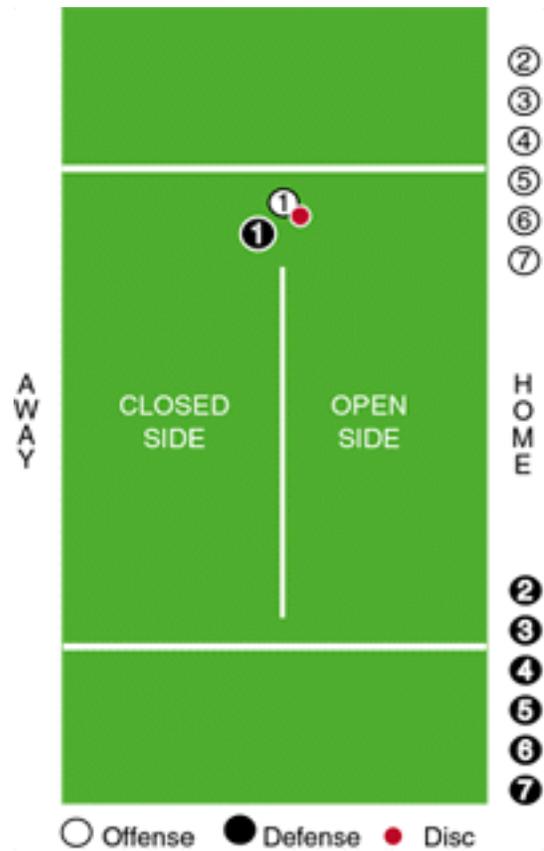
The offense has set up a stack formation which has opened up a lot of space on the field. As a countermeasure, the defensive team wants to limit the area where passes can be made by forcing the disc to one side.

Pretend the field has an imaginary line that originates from the disc and runs from endzone to endzone. All your stuff and your teammate's stuff is called the "home" side of the field. The other side is the "away" side. At the beginning of every point, your team should decide which way you are going to force your opponent to throw. Your players can now anticipate where to mark if their player catches the disc, and what area to guard when their check is cutting for a pass.

For example, let's say you are forcing the thrower "home". This means you are making a commitment to your teammates that you will not let the thrower throw the disc to the "away" or "closed" side of the field. In order to do this, you position your body and arms (not wrapping around the thrower as this is a foul) anywhere from a 45 to 90 degree angle to the thrower. Maintaining this force is essential because your teammates are depending on you to make the thrower throw in one particular direction. If you're forcing to the "Home" side of the field, your teammates are trying not to let their checks get open on the "Home" or "Open" side.

Offensive Flow

The disc is in play and the stack and force have been established. One of the best ways to move the disc up the field in this situation is through "flow" offense. The first cutter from the stack gets open and catches the disc. Someone further along in the stack should immediately begin to run. This way, when the receiver (now handler) turns around, a pass option opens up right away. The new handler completes the second pass up the field. This flow continues until a final pass is made into the endzone, and a point is scored. It's



this cyclical type of play, with a series of cutting runners, that allows for very fast "flowing" offense. The tempo of quick passes, with the opportunity of surprise long passes, makes flow offense a powerful strategy. If the flow breaks down, reset the stack and begin again.

How to Score

To score, you need a member of your team to catch the disc in the endzone. If you're close to the endzone when you catch the disc.... STOP!!! If teammates are yelling "Check Feet", that means you're probably in the endzone. The reason for their insistence is that if you pass the disc after catching it in the endzone, and the receiver misses it, no point is scored and it's a turnover. If you catch the disc outside the endzone then play continues. If you were running when catching the disc and momentum carries you into the endzone, go back to the place where you caught the disc and resume play from there.

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Advanced Strategy

Getting Open for the Disc

As an offensive player you are making running plays to try and get open for a pass. That means speed, sudden changes in direction, anything that will help you break away from your “check” (i.e. the defensive player covering you). The defensive player will try to anticipate your movements. As an offensive player you need to think ahead and plan your cuts wisely. If you find a certain type of cut works against your defender, don’t be afraid to exploit it a few times until they catch on. As a defensive player, you need to try and anticipate your checks behaviour so you can prevent, intercept, or block an incoming throw.



The closer you are to your defender, the harder it is for them to react to your movement. If you make a cut out in front of them, the defender can

see which way you are going. If you run up close and break to one side, by the time the defender can start moving you will be past them.

Another great way to get open is start running deep. By running down the field you force your defender to cover you since they don’t want you to catch a long pass. Once you go deep the defense will often run past you, or will at least be running near you at high speeds. Either way you can hit the brakes and cut back in towards the disc and usually end up with the defender behind you.

Catching

The best catch is a successful one. For incoming discs that are below your shoulder height and above your knees, your best bet is to “pancake” the disc between your two palms. For more extreme situations, a two or one-handed rim catch may be necessary. These are things you should practice during warm-up, when doing drills with your team, or just throwing around the disc with your friends. Not only will your hand-eye coordination improve but you will be more adaptive in a game situation. The most important thing is to watch the disc all the way into your hands. Make sure you have a secure grip on the disc before looking for the next receiver.

Transition

Ultimate is a high paced game and turnovers occur quite frequently. If you see the disc hit the ground, yell “turnover” or “TO” to let the other members of your team know what’s happening. At the same time, find a check. When in doubt, find the person that was checking you.

The ability to become a defensive player is not natural. One moment you’re going one way, in control of everything, and the next moment all that control is taken away from your team and given to the opponent. But there is something that you can do about it. Get the disc back by playing some hard defense!!!



Drills

Throwing in Pairs

Each pair stands a comfortable distance apart and completes passes between each other. Both backhand and forehand throws should be made.

Variations:

Get the throwers to throw high, floating passes to practice high catches.

Increase the distance between the throwers to practice longer passes.

Throw to a running target.

Have the thrower pivot across before throwing. This gets the player used to using their pivot foot.

Three Player Drill

This is a great warm-up drill before starting practice. It consists of three positions: thrower, receiver, and marker. The thrower and receiver setup 20 feet apart. The marker starts his stall count at 6 (i.e. “Stall 6, 7, 8, 9, 10”) and the thrower tries to complete a pass to the receiver. After releasing the disc, the roles change; The receiver has the disc and becomes the thrower, the old thrower becomes the marker and must

run down to mark the disc. If the throw is incomplete, keep trying until you make a completion.

The more pressure the marker puts on the handler, the more effective the drill. It’s an excellent way to learn how to make a successful throw when there’s a defender in front of you.

Piggy in the Middle

Split into groups of three. Have the thrower and receiver stand 10m apart with the third player (i.e. the “piggy”) in between them. The goal is to connect passes without the piggy getting the disc. The players are not allowed to move. Practice banking the disc around the piggy using both backhand and forehand throws.

Wheel Relay

Form a large circle of players all facing inwards and with one person holding the disc. The first person passes the disc to their right (make sure everyone is spaced well apart) and then runs around the circle in the opposite direction (i.e. clockwise). The disc is passed around the circle and should meet the original thrower just as they arrive back in place. They pass it on to the next player (to their right) who does the same thing. This relay continues until it is the original thrower’s turn.

Variation:

Change the directions of passing and running so that both forehands and backhands are practiced.

Basic Cutting Drill

This drill will help your team work on timing, agility and coordination.

There are a few things the offensive player can do

to help get open.

Avoid “banana cuts”. This is when a player cuts but doesn’t make sharp changes in motion and the shape of their line resembles an arc.

Draw a picture in your head of the line you are going to run. Just like the guys with the white pen drawing on the TV screen during football replays!

Take 3 steps, plant a foot and change direction sharply.

Fake with your upper body. As you plant a foot, fake your arms, head and upper body in the opposite direction you are about to go.

Most importantly, run hard!!!



For the defender:

Stand off your mark about 2 metres/10 feet. This distance becomes a personal preference after a while so try different marking distances to see what works for you.

Usually if you are marking at the front of the stack, you want to be between the thrower and your check.

Don’t take your eyes off the cutter. Watch

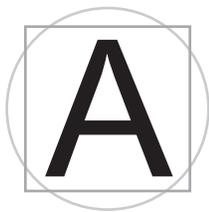
their hips for hints as to which direction they are going to cut

Clear the passing lane after your cut and return to the back of the stack. This will allow other cuts right after you. Take turns playing offense and defense. Be sure to try a variety of cuts. Cheer your teammates when they make a good cut, a nice catch or a D block. This drill is a great way to warm up before a game.



Set up a stack with offense and defense facing the thrower. The first offensive player in the stack will try and get open for a pass. The defensive mark will try and stop the pass.

Pick one person to handle the disc. This person should be a skilled thrower. Make several passes to one side of the stack. Switch the pass once everyone has had a chance to



A Glossary of Ultimate Jargon

(descriptions presuppose a right-handed thrower)

backhand: a standard throw; right-handed player places thumb on top of disc, curls fingers underneath, extends arm to left side of body.

bid: an impressive (but failing) diving attempt to catch the frisbee. Often used in a positive way, ex. "Nice bid"

clog: to prevent good cuts by standing in the way of your teammates.

check: The player you are defending.

chilly: slow it down, be patient, wait a moment for the game to get reorganized again.

cut: a run by a receiver to shake his defender.

D: defense

disk in: a verbal shout signalling that the disc is in play.

force: guarding on only one side of the thrower to make them throw to the other side. The direction you want them to throw is the direction of the force.

Types of Force:

Force In: force to the middle of the field

Force Out: force to the outside of the field

Force Sidelines: force to the near sidelines

Force Home/Away: force to the home or away side

Force Forehand: force the thrower to use a forehand throw

Force Backhand: force the thrower to use a backhand throw

forehand: a difficult but useful throw; the thrower leads with middle finger along rim, index finger supporting disc; also called a flick.

handler: The offensive player with the disc

marker: the defensive player covering the thrower.

layout: dive!!! "If you didn't catch it, you should have laid out"

O offense

pick: an intentional or unintentional block where a player gets between you and the player you are covering

pull: like a kickoff in football, the throw that begins the possession.

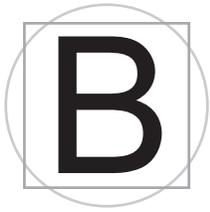
run through: what you shout to tell another player to run past the disc without picking it up

stack: offensive strategy in which all the players line up down the middle of the field and alternately make cuts to the side.

stall count: The defensive player counts up to 10 while defending the offensive player. The offensive player must throw the disc before the 't' of ten otherwise it's a turnover.

swill: a bad throw.

up! what you shout to alert players that the disk is in the air.



Resources

THE ULTIMATE HANDBOOK

www.ultimatehandbook.com

A complete guide to playing Ultimate from the beginner to advanced level.

PLAY ULTIMATE

www.playulty.com

If you didn't get this booklet with a video, Play Ultimate is a 10 minute video designed to introduce Ultimate to new players. Hosts John and Heather break down the rules, skills and spirit so you can get started quickly.

UPA

www.upa.org

Serves to promote and support the sport of Ultimate and needs of its members.

UTILINKS

www.utilinks.com

A great source of links to other ultimate sites throughout the world.

DISCRAFT

www.discraft.com

Supplier of Ultimate Discs