



Intro to Ultimate Frisbee for Students

This document is intended to provide a brief overview of rules and skills of ultimate frisbee for the purpose of teaching a PE unit about the sport. The national governing body, USA Ultimate, has their own [Youth Ultimate Starter Guide](#) from which some of this information is pulled. Feel free to check that out as well. For these same topics covered in more depth, check out this [PE Teacher Guidance](#) document.

Why Ultimate is GREAT!

- **Minimal Equipment:** All players need are shoes, some cones, and a disc!
- **Sportsmanship is a core focus:** Ultimate is a self-officiated sport, which teaches kids the importance of respect from a physical and emotional sense.
- **Less coordination required** than some other sports: there is no aspect of dribbling in ultimate, as you cannot move with the disc in your hands, so kids with less athletic abilities can find success!
- **It's easily adaptable** to accommodate different numbers of players and indoor/outdoor spaces of all sizes.

Recommended Things to Cover:

Throwing

Catching

Spirit of the Game

Basic Rules of Ultimate

Modifications:

Some of the rules in the Learn to Play Materials I will give you have more complicated rules, which are good to add in as players advance and learn. To begin with, I'd recommend the following activities and not focus on a lot of the nitpicky rules.

Throwing:

Backhand & Forehand are the two most common throws:

BACKHAND



FOREHAND



Basic steps: Grip > Pivot/Step > Release

[How to Throw a Backhand Video](#)

[How to Throw a Forehand Video](#)

Make an L shape with your thumb, index & middle fingers

Place upside-down disc in, wrap thumb underneath, and index & middle fingers go inside to sit along the inner edge of the disc.

Videos are a little more technical than kids need to know, but this should help you know how to teach!

Catching:

There are two options I recommend to teach kids: PANCAKE and CLAW

Pancake Catch (also called Clap Catch) is when catching the disc with one hand on the bottom, one hand on top, like a pancake, or an alligator. This is the best technique for almost all catching scenarios, as it's most successful for catching.

Claw Catch is for catching when the disc is above, below, or out to the side of our range for pancake catching. Hands make a claw like a lobster or a lego hand.

Activities & Games

Skill Activities:

1. **Throw with a partner:** simple, good old-fashioned partner throwing. They pick a partner, either a pal or an adult, and throw back and forth for a while. Hopefully, an adult with a stronger grasp on throwing can walk around offering corrections.
2. **Cutting Drill:** This is good for basic skill building with catching while running. Players start in a line, facing a thrower, about 15 yards apart. They run forward, one at a time, towards the thrower and receive a pass. They are focusing on running and catching, ideally using their pancake catch if the throw is in their “bread box” area (generally within the confines of the torso). They throw the disc back to the thrower, then go to the back of the line.

Game Options: Find more [HERE](#)

1. **Throwing Contest:** Two players partner up and stand opposite of each other. They pass the disc back and forth. Each time they complete a pass, they take a step apart. If they drop a pass, they step closer together. The first team to cross a defined line, or the furthest apart after a time is up, wins!
2. **Dog:** This is a great game for the more active kids. Players can run individually or with a partner and both run for a long pass and try to catch the disc. Have adults with better throws do the throwing.
3. **Hot Box:** This is the best game for using “ultimate” rules and is often the favorite game.
 - a. Set up a box with 4 cones in the center of a large area. This is the target box to score in.
 - b. Create two teams, ideally an even number. I’d recommend no larger than 8 on each team.
 - c. Teams work with their teammates to catch a pass INSIDE the target box, not with one foot in and one foot outside the box.
 - d. If a team scores, the other team then gets to start. They have to take the disc outside of the box at least 15 yards (wherever seems good) in order to make their scoring attempt.
 - e. Impress upon the kids the concept of Offense and Defense. At the beginning of the game, they choose someone on the opposite team to “mark” up against and play defense on, trying to stop them from getting the disc. If there is a turnover, then those players switch roles.

Drill Options: Diagrams [HERE](#)

1. **Line Drill:** Set up two cones ~20 yards apart and have players line up behind them. Players take turns running towards the opposite cone and receiving a throw from the first player in that line. The player that just threw the disc takes their turn running towards the opposite cone. After catching the disc, players should go to the back of the line behind the cone they were just running towards.
2. **Come-To Drill:** Similar to the Line Drill, except there should be two cones set up diagonally behind the throwing line cones on opposite sides from each other. After throwing the disc, a player cuts behind themselves to this cone before running towards the opposite throwing line. This better simulates how players should set up cuts in a real game.
3. **7 Cut Drill:** Similar to the Line Drill, except the cutter will receive the throw after stopping their cut towards the thrower and changing directions so that they are now running almost perpendicular to their original cut direction. The complete cut should mimic the shape of the number 7.
 - a. Drills 1-3 can be run with or without someone guarding the thrower (called a “mark”) depending on skill level of the players. Have the person second in line be the mark, such that they will then throw on the next rep.

Other basic rules to remember:



Spirit of the Game and Self-Officiation:

1. Players advocate for their own selves and bodies. This means they can call fouls in a game.

- Examples of throwing fouls:** Player A has the disc and is trying to make a throw. Player B hits their hand, causing the disc to either drop or make the pass go wild. This is a foul. Player A says "Foul" out loud. Player B *should* react calmly, respecting Player A's space. Player B can either say, "Yes, I do think I hit you," or "No, I don't think I hit your hand, I hit the disc." If Player B agrees, Player A keeps the disc and gets to throw. If Player B doesn't agree, then the pass counts as a turnover.

This can be a place where adults can step in and hold Player B accountable for their actions. If they did in fact hit the hand of Player A, then it is a foul. If they didn't, then Player B still gets their space to make a respectful and honest argument.

2. Ultimate is technically a non-contact sport. Being overly physical is not allowed at the expense of the other team.

- Example of a foul caused by body contact:** Player A and Player B are both running for a deep pass. Player B (on defense) accidentally trips Player A and A falls to the ground. Player A can call a foul here, even if it was an accident, because Player B's actions prevented them from getting to the disc. The same discussion that happens in the example above can occur, where Player A and B discuss the situation and see if they agree.
- Another example:** Player A and Player B are both running for a deep pass and jump simultaneously. Player B (on defense) uses their hands to push off of Player A in that action, making it so Player A can't really jump. This is also a foul, as Player B cannot take physical action that may impede Player A. The same discussion that happens in the example above can occur, where Player A and B discuss the situation and see if they agree.

Modifications Based on Age

1. Youngest Kids (K-4th Grade)

- a. Stay focused on throwing and catching. Throwing competitions and something similar to the classic “Egg Toss” are good frisbee games for this age group.
 - i. For throwing, stick with backhands. The motor skills (and hand size/finger length) necessary for a forehand throw make it quite difficult for kids of this age. This same limitation also makes it difficult to play a true game of ultimate frisbee when throws to one side of the field are significantly harder.

2. Older Elementary School Children (5th-8th Grade)

- a. Teach [basic rules](#). Try to keep games to 5v5 instead of 7v7.
 - i. Make the field smaller to accommodate 5v5. A basketball court can fit a decent 5v5 field. If outside, dimensions of 25 yards wide and 40 yards long with 15 yard endzones should work well.

3. High School Children (9th-12th Grade)

- a. Move to 7v7 and a full field if you have enough kids and space.
- b. Be sure to encourage more active discussion around foul calls. Kids this age should be able to have a respectful, productive conversation in these situations. They often need encouragement to loudly vocalize a call when they're first learning

RULES	UNDER 12	UNDER 15	UNDER 20
PRE-STALL	None	None	Standard rules
FIELD SIZE LENGTH: GOAL LINE TO GOAL LINE	3v3 Length: 25-35 yards Width: 15-20 yards End Zone: 5-10 yards Brick: 7-10 yards 4v4 Length: 35-45 yards Width: 20-25 yards End Zone: 10-15 yards Brick: 10-13 yards	5v5 Length: 45-55 yards Width: 25-35 yards End Zone: 12-18 yards Brick: 13-16 yards 6v6 Length: 55-65 yards Wide 30-35 yards End Zone 15-20 yards Brick: 16-18 yards	Standard rules
DROPPED PULL	Not a turnover. Play from where disc was dropped. No stoppage. Intended to teach catching the pull, not to be used simply to knock the pull out of the air.	Not a turnover. Play restarts with a defensive check after players on both teams have set up. Intended to teach catching the pull, not to be used simply to knock the pull out of the air.	Standard rules
DISC SPACE	Marking distance extended from disc width to arms-length.	Marking distance extended from disc width to arms-length.	Standard rules
SPIKING	Not allowed by default. Only allowed if spirit captains/coaches agree ahead of time.		
ZONE DEFENSE	Not allowed. Must play match-up or person-to-person. Switching and poaching to provide help are allowed, but no defense designed to cover spaces rather than players.	Standard rules	Standard rules
DANGEROUS PLAY/ RECEIVING FOULS	ULTIMATE IS A NON-CONTACT SPORT. Incidental contact can occur, but unlike some sports, blatant bumping and physicality are not acceptable. Please play safely and avoid contact whenever possible.		