

**Ultimate** (often called **Ultimate Frisbee** in reference to the [trademarked brand name](#)) is a [limited-contact team sport](#) played with a 175 gram [flying disc](#). The object of the sport is to score points by passing the disc to a player in the opposing [end zone](#), similar to an [end zone](#) in [American football](#) or [rugby](#). Players may not run while holding the disc. Ultimate is distinguished by its [spirit of the game](#) — the principles of fair play, [sportsmanship](#), and the joy of play.

While originally called "Ultimate Frisbee," the sport is often simply called "Ultimate." This is because "[Frisbee](#)" is the trademark for the line of discs made by the [Wham-O](#) toy company. In fact, discs made by Wham-O competitor [Discraft](#) are the standard discs for the sport, because they are more streamlined and have a softer curved edge for easier handling. For this reason, the sport has also been called "Ultimate Disc" by many teams and clubs. Today, the sport is simply known as "Ultimate."

## History

### [\[edit\]](#) Origin

[Joel Silver](#), a graduate of [Lafayette College](#), proposed a school Frisbee team on a whim in the fall of 1968. The following spring, a group of students got together to play what Silver claimed to be the "ultimate game experience," adapting the sport from a form of Frisbee football, likely learned from Jared Kass while attending a summer camp at [Northfield Mount Hermon, Massachusetts](#) where Kass was teaching. The students who played and codified the rules at [Columbia High School](#) in [Maplewood, New Jersey](#), were an eclectic group of students including leaders in academics, student politics, the student newspaper, and school dramatic productions. One member of the original team was [Walter Sabo](#), who went on to be a major figure in the American radio business. The sport became identified as a [counterculture](#) activity.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> The first definitive history of the sport was published in December 2005, *ULTIMATE: The First Four Decades*.<sup>[1]</sup>

While the rules governing movement and scoring of the disc have not changed, the early Columbia High School games had sidelines that were defined by the parking lot of the school and team sizes based on the number of players that showed up. Gentlemanly behavior and gracefulness were held high. (A foul was defined as contact "sufficient to arouse the ire of the player fouled.") No referees were present, which still holds true today: all ultimate matches (even at high level events) are self-officiated. At higher levels of play 'observers' are often present. Observers only make calls when appealed to by one of the teams, at which point the result is binding.<sup>[2]</sup>

### [\[edit\]](#) Collegiate clubs

The first collegiate ultimate club was formed by Silver when he arrived at [Lafayette College](#) in 1970.<sup>[3]</sup>

The first intercollegiate competition was held at [Rutgers's](#) New Brunswick campus between Rutgers and [Princeton](#) on [November 6, 1972](#), the 103rd anniversary of the [first intercollegiate game of American football](#) featuring the same schools competing in the same location.

By 1975, dozens of colleges had teams, and in April 1975, players organized the first ultimate tournament, an eight-team invitational called the "Intercollegiate Ultimate Frisbee Championships," to be played at [Yale](#). Rutgers beat [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute](#) 26-23 in the finals.

By 1976, teams were organizing in areas outside the [Northeast](#). A 16-team single elimination tournament was set up at [Amherst, Massachusetts](#), to include 13 East Coast teams and 3 [Midwest](#) teams. Rutgers again took the title, beating [Hampshire College](#) in the finals. [Penn State](#) and Princeton were the other semi-finalists. While it was called the "National Ultimate Frisbee Championships", ultimate was starting to appear in the [Los Angeles](#) and [Santa Barbara](#) area.

Penn State hosted the first five-region National Ultimate Championships in May 1979. There were five regional representatives: three college and two club teams. They were as follows: [Cornell University](#)-(Northeast), [Glassboro State](#)- (Middle Atlantic), [Michigan State](#)-(Central), Orlando Fling-(South), Santa Barbara Condors-(West). Each team played the other in a [round robin](#) format to produce a Glassboro-Condors final. The Condors had gone undefeated up to this point; however Glassboro prevailed 19-18 to become the 1979 national champions. They repeated as champions in 1980 as well.

The first College Nationals made up exclusively of college teams took place in 1984 in Somerville, MA. The event, hosted by the Tufts University E-Men crowned [Stanford](#) its winner, as they beat Glassboro State in the finals.

## **[[edit](#)] Club and international play**

In [California](#) clubs were sprouting in the Los Angeles - Santa Barbara area, while in the east, where the sport developed at the high school and college level, the first college graduates were beginning to found club teams, such as the Philadelphia Frisbee Club, the Washington Area Frisbee Club, the Knights of Nee in New Jersey, the Hostages in [Boston](#) and so forth. Arkansas also has a few formidable teams located in the towns of Pocahontas, Newport, and Batesville.

In the same year, ultimate arrived in the [United Kingdom](#), with the UK's first clubs forming at the [University of Warwick](#) and the [University of Cambridge](#), and [Purley high school](#),<sup>[1]</sup> by the late 1970s and early 1980s there were also clubs at the [University of Southampton](#), [University of Leicester](#), and [University of Bradford](#).

## **[[edit](#)] Players associations**

In 1979 and 1980 the [Ultimate Players Association](#) (UPA) was formed. The UPA organized regional tournaments and has crowned a national champion every year since 1979.

The popularity of the sport quickly spread, taking hold as a free-spirited alternative to traditional organized sports. In recent years college ultimate has attracted a greater number of traditional athletes, raising the level of competition and athleticism and providing a challenge to its laid back, free-spirited roots.

In 1981 the [European Flying Disc Federation](#) (EFDF) was formed.<sup>[4]</sup> In 1984 the [World Flying Disc Federation](#) was formed by the EFDF to be the international governing body for disc sports.<sup>[4]</sup>

Founded in 1986, incorporated in 1993 the [Ottawa-Carleton Ultimate Association](#) based in [Ottawa, Ontario, Canada](#), has the largest summer league in the world with 354 teams and over 5000 players as of 2004.<sup>[5]</sup>

In 2006 ultimate became a [BUCS](#) accredited sport at UK universities for both indoor and outdoor open division events.

## Rules of play

There are two sets of nearly identical rules in common use: the [Ultimate Players Association rules](#) used in [North America](#) and the [World Flying Disc Federation rules](#) used in all other parts of the world. The two rule sets are mostly the same with some minor differences. This section provides an overview of the rules that are common between both sets.

### [\[edit\]](#) Objective

The objective of ultimate is to score points by receiving a teammate's [pass](#) in the opponent's end zone. The outcome of a match is usually determined by one team achieving a predetermined number of points first. This ensures that a team can only win by scoring, rather than by running the clock down.

### [\[edit\]](#) Teams

Regulation ultimate is played between two teams of seven players. In informal pick-up games, the number of players varies. Substitutions are allowed between points, and teams are usually able to have around 20 players on their roster in a major tournament. A shortage of players may force teams to play the entire game without substitutions, a condition known as *savage*.

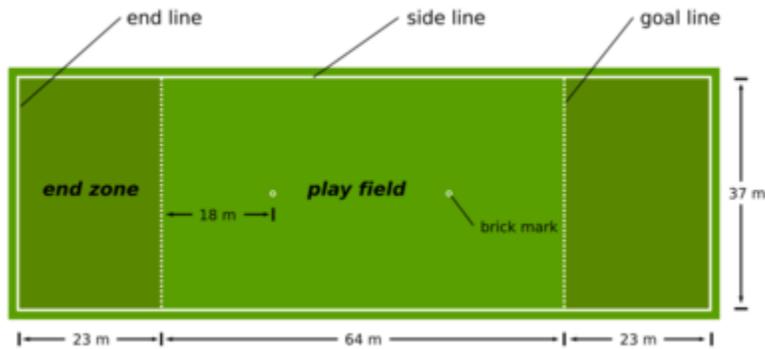
### [\[edit\]](#) Equipment

The sport is played using a 175 gram disc; for some national and international tournaments, only discs that have been approved by the governing body responsible for that tournament may be used. The governing body is defined as the UPA or the Ultimate Players Association.

### [\[edit\]](#) Shoes

Soccer as well as football [cleats](#) are often worn. While soccer cleats are used more commonly, football cleats are preferred by some for their arch support, ankle support, and extra padding. Ultimate-specific cleats are produced by ultimate equipment manufacturer and retailer *Gaia*, although only a minority of players wear their footwear.

## [\[edit\]](#) Bounds



The UPA outdoor ultimate field

Regulation games are played on a field of 70 [yards](#) (64 [meters](#)) by 40 yards (37 meters). Under UPA rules, endzones are 25 yards (23 meters) deep, while under WFDF rules, endzones are 19.5 yards (18 metres) deep. Normally, ultimate is played outdoors on grass. Boundaries are marked by chalklines and cones.

## [\[edit\]](#) Gameplay

### [\[edit\]](#) Pull

The players line up at the edge of their respective endzones, and the defensive team throws, or **pulls**, the disc to the offensive team to begin play. Pulls are the first throws in a game. Pulls are normally long, hanging throws, giving the [offense](#) poor field position and the [defense](#) an opportunity to move up the field.

The pull is often started by a member of the defending team raising one arm with the disc to show that they are ready to pull the disc and begin play. The team that pulls to start the game is usually decided in a manner similar to a coin toss. One popular way to decide which team pulls involves a player from both teams flipping a disc into the air while a third player calls "same" or "different" depending on how the discs land. If the player guesses correctly, their team gets to decide if they who gets the disc to start the game or choose the side that they wish to start on.

[\[edit\]](#) *Movement of the disc*

The disc may be moved in any direction by completing a pass to a teammate. After catching a pass, a player is required to come to a stop as quickly as possible, and then can only move their non-pivot foot. A common misconception is that a player must setup a pivot foot before they can throw the disc. In fact, the player can throw the disc before stopping within the first couple of steps after they gain possession of the disc. It is this fact that makes the "Greatest" rule possible. A "Greatest" occurs when a player jumps from within bounds to catch a disc that has passed out-of-bounds, this is also known as an "ultimate play". The player must then throw the disc back in-bounds before his feet or any other part of his body touches the ground. The thrower may only catch their own throw if another player touches it in the air.

Upon receiving the disc, a player has ten seconds to pass it. This period is known as the "stall", and each second is counted out (a *stall count*) by a defender (the *marker*), who must be standing within three meters of the thrower. A player may keep the disc for longer than ten seconds if no marker is within three meters, or if the marker is not counting the stall; if there is a change of marker, the new marker must restart the stall from zero.

[\[edit\]](#) *Scoring*

A point is scored when a player catches a pass in the endzone his team is attacking. In older versions of the rules, only offensive players could score. However, current UPA and WFDF rules allow a defensive team to score by intercepting a pass in the opposing endzone. This play is referred to as a *Callahan goal* or simply a *Callahan*. It is named after well-known ultimate player [Henry Callahan](#).

After a point is scored, the teams exchange ends. The team who just scored remains in that end zone, and the opposing team takes the opposite end zone. This can be commonly referred to in the phrase: "Losers walk." Play is re-initiated with a pull by the scoring team.

[\[edit\]](#) *Change of possession*

An incomplete pass results in a change of possession. When this happens the defense immediately becomes the offense and gains possession of the disc where it comes to a stop on the field of play, or where it first traveled out of bounds. Play does not stop because of a turnover.

Reasons for turnovers:

- Throw-away — the thrower misses his target and the disc falls to the ground.
- Drop — the receiver is not able to catch the disc.
- Block — a defender deflects the disc in mid flight, causing it to hit the ground.
- Interception — a defender catches a disc thrown by the offense.
- Out of bounds — the disc lands out of bounds, hits an object out of bounds or is caught by a player who lands out of bounds or leaps from outside the playing field.

- Stall — a player on offense does not release the disc before the defender has counted out ten seconds.

### *Stoppage of play*

Play may stop for the following reasons

### Fouls

A foul is the result of contact between players, although incidental contact (not affecting the play) does not constitute a foul. When a foul disrupts possession, the play resumes as if the possession were retained. If the player committing the foul disagrees with ([contests](#)) the foul call, the disc is returned to the last thrower.

### Violations

A violation occurs when a player violates the rules but does not initiate physical contact. Common violations include traveling with the disc, double teaming, and picking (moving in a manner so as to obstruct the movement of any player on the defensive team).

### [\[edit\]](#) Time outs and half-time

By Eleventh Edition rules, each team is allowed two time outs per half. The halftime break occurs when one team reaches the half-way marker in the score. Since most games are played to odd numbers, the number for half-time is rounded up. For instance, if the game is to 13, half comes when one team scores 7. A break may also occur if an injury occurs.

### [\[edit\]](#) Injuries

Play stops whenever a player is injured—this is considered an injury time-out. During the duration, it is customary for players on the field to kneel or sit to ensure that they stay in their original positions. The injured person can then leave the field, and a substitute can come in. If an injured player is substituted for, the opposing team may also substitute a player. It is important to note that a player calling injury is not required to leave the field unless the injury was in no way inflicted or related to another play on the field proper. A player calling injury as a result of person to person contact is not required to leave the field, but may if they wish to.

[\[edit\]](#) [Weather](#)

While Ultimate may be played in a myriad of weather conditions including heavy rain and deep snow, nearby lightning should result in stoppage of play with players seeking shelter. Many times, precipitation will result in a hiatus in order to protect the playing field.

[\[edit\]](#) [Substitutions](#)

Teams are allowed to substitute players after a point is scored or for injured player after an injury time out. In the case of an injury substitution, the opposing team is allowed to make a substitution for a non-injured player.

[\[edit\]](#) [Refereeing](#)

Players are responsible for foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes. This creates a spirit of honesty and respect on the playing field. It is the duty of the player who committed the foul to speak up and admit his infraction. Occasionally, official observers are used to aid players in refereeing, known as observers.

[\[edit\]](#) [Observers](#)

Some additional rules have been introduced in the United States and Canada which can optionally overlay the standard rules and allow for referees called *observers*. An observer can only resolve a dispute if the players involved ask for his judgment. Although in some cases, observers have the power to make calls without being asked: such as line calls (to determine out of bounds or goals) and off-sides calls (players crossing their end zone line before the pull is released). Misconduct fouls can also be given by an observer for violations such as aggressive taunting, fighting, cheating, etc., and are reminiscent of the Yellow/Red card system in [football](#); however, misconduct fouls are rare, and their ramifications not well defined. Observers are also charged with enforcing time limits for the game itself and many parts within the game, such as the amount of time defense has to set up after a time out or the time allowed between pulls, are honored.

The introduction of observers is, in part, an attempt by the UPA to allow games to run more smoothly and become more spectator-friendly. Because of the nature of play and the unique nature of [self-refereeing](#), ultimate games are often subject to regular and long stoppages of play. This effort and the intensity that has arisen in the highest levels of competition have led many members of the ultimate community to lament the loss of the Spirit of the Game.

[Strategy and tactics](#)

[\[edit\]](#) **Offensive strategies**

Teams employ many different offensive strategies with different goals. Most basic strategies are an attempt to create open lanes on the field for the exchange of the disc between the thrower and the receiver. Organized teams assign positions to the players based on their specific strengths. Designated throwers are called *handlers* and designated receivers are called *cutters*. The amount of autonomy or overlap between these positions depends on the make-up of the team.

One of the most common offensive strategies is the **vertical stack**. In this strategy, the offense lines up in a straight line along the length of the field. From this position, players in the stack make cuts (sudden sprints out of the stack) towards or away from the handler in an attempt to get open and receive the disc. The stack generally lines up in the middle of the field, thereby opening up two lanes along the sidelines for cuts, although a captain may occasionally call for the stack to line up closer to one sideline, leaving open just one larger cutting lane on the other side.

Another popular offensive strategy is the **horizontal stack**. In the most popular form of this offense, three handlers line up across the width of the field with four cutters upfield, also lined up across the field. It is the handler's job to throw the disc upfield to the cutters. If no upfield options are available, the handlers swing the disc side to side in an attempt to reset the stall count while also getting the defense out of position.

Many advanced teams develop specific offenses that are variations on the basics in order to take advantage of the strengths of specific players. Frequently, these offenses are meant to isolate a few key players in one-on-one situations, allowing them more freedom of movement and the ability to make most of the plays, while the others play a supporting role.

Players making cuts have two major options in how they cut. They may cut in towards the disc and attempt to find an open avenue between defenders for a short pass, or they may cut away from the disc towards the deep field. The deep field is usually sparsely defended but requires the handler to throw a huck (a long downfield throw).

A variation on the horizontal stack offense is called a **feature**. In this offensive strategy three of the cutters line up deeper than usual (roughly 5 yards farther downfield) while the remaining cutter lines up closer to the handlers. This closest cutter is known as the "feature." The idea behind this strategy is that it opens up space for the feature to cut, and at the same time it allows handlers to focus all of their attention on only one cutter. This maximizes the ability for give-and-go strategies between the feature and the handlers. It is also an excellent strategy if one cutter is superior to other cutters, or if he is guarded by someone slower than him. While the main focus is on the handlers and the feature, the remaining three cutters can be used if the feature cannot get open, if there is an open deep look, or for a continuation throw from the feature itself. Typically, however, these three remaining cutters do all they can to get out of the feature's way.

## [\[edit\]](#) Defensive strategies

The force

One of the most basic defensive principles is the **force**. The marker effectively cuts off the handler's access to half of the field, by aggressively blocking only one side of the handler and leaving the other side open. The unguarded side is called the force side because the thrower is generally forced to throw to that side of the field. The guarded side is called the break-force side because the thrower would have to "break" the force in order to throw to that side.

This is done because, assuming evenly matched players, the advantage is almost always with the handler and against the marker. It is relatively easy for the handler to fake out or outmaneuver a marker who is trying to block the whole field. On the other hand, it is generally possible to effectively block half of the field.

The marker calls out the force side ("force home" or "force away") before starting the stall count in order to alert the other defenders which side of the field is open to the handler. The team can choose the force side ahead of time, or change it on the fly from throw to throw. Aside from forcing home or away, other forces are "force sideline" (force towards the closest sideline), "force center" (force towards the center of the field), and "force up" (force towards either sideline but prevent a throw straight up the field). Another common tactic is to "force forehand" (force the thrower to use their forehand throw) since most players, especially at lower levels of play, have a stronger backhand throw. "Force flick" refers to the forehand; "force back" refers to the backhand.

When the marker calls out the force side, the team can then rely on the marker to block off half the field and position themselves to aggressively cover just the open/force side. If they are playing one-to-one defense, they should position themselves on the force side of their marks, since that is the side that they are most likely to cut to.

The opposite of the "force" is the "straight-up" mark (also called the "no-huck" mark). In this defense, the player marking the handler positions himself directly between the handler and the end zone and actively tries to block both forehands and backhands. Although the handler can make throws to either side, this is the best defense against long throws ("hucks") to the center of the field.

[\[edit\]](#) *One-on-one defense*

The simplest and often most effective defensive strategy is the **one-on-one** defense (also known as "man-on-man" or simply "man"), where each defender guards a specific offensive player, called their "mark". The one-on-one defense emphasizes speed, stamina, and individual positioning and reading of the field. Often players will mark the same person throughout the game, giving them an opportunity to pick up on their opponent's strengths and weaknesses as they play. One-on-one defense can also play a part role in other more complex zone defense strategies.

[\[edit\]](#) *Zone defense*

With a zone defense strategy, the defenders cover an area rather than a specific person. The area they cover moves with the disc as it progresses down the field. Zone defense is frequently used

when the other team is substantially more athletic (faster) making one-on-one difficult to keep up with, because it requires less speed and stamina. It is also useful in a long tournament to avoid tiring out the team, or when it is very windy and long passes are more difficult.

A zone defense usually has two components. The first is a group of players close to the handlers who attempt to contain the disc and prevent forward movement, called the "wedge", "cup", "wall", or "clam" (depending on the specific play). These close defenders always position themselves relative to the disc, meaning that they have to move quickly as it passes from handler to handler.

The wedge is a configuration of two close defenders. One of them marks the handler with a force, and the other stands away and to the force side of the handler, blocking any throw or cut on that side. The wedge allows more defenders to play up the field but does little to prevent cross-field passes.

The cup involves three players, arranged in a semi-circular cup-shaped formation, one in the middle and back, the other two on the sides and forward. One of the side players marks the handler with a force, while the other two guard the open side. Therefore the handler will normally have to throw into the cup, allowing the defenders to more easily make blocks. With a cup, usually the center cup blocks the up-field lane to cutters, while the side cup blocks the cross-field swing pass to other handlers. The center cup usually also has the responsibility to call out which of the two sides should mark the thrower, usually the defender closest to the sideline of the field.

The wall involves four players in the close defense. One player is the marker, also called the "rabbit" or "chaser" because they often have to run quickly between multiple handlers spread out across the field. The other three defenders form a horizontal "wall" or line across the field in front of the handler to stop throws to cuts and prevent forward progress. The players in the second group of a zone defense, called "mids" and "deeps", position themselves further out to stop throws that escape the cup and fly upfield. Because a zone defense focuses defenders on stopping short passes, it leaves a large portion of the field to be covered by the remaining mid and deep players. Assuming that there are seven players on the field, and that a cup is in effect, this leaves four players to cover the rest of the field. In fact, usually only one deep player is used to cover hucks (the "deep-deep"), with two others defending the sidelines and possibly a single "mid-mid".

Alternately, the mids and deeps can play a one-to-one defense on the players who are outside of the cup or cutting deep, although frequent switching might be necessary.

[\[edit\]](#) *Junk defense*

A junk defense is a defense using elements of both zone and man defenses; the most famous is known as the "clam" or "chrome wall". In clam defenses, defenders cover cutting lanes rather than zones of the field or individual players. The clam can be used by several players on a team while the rest are running a man defense. This defensive strategy is often referred to as "bait and switch". In this case, when the two players the defenders are covering are standing close to each

other in the stack, one defender will move over to shade them deep, and the other will move slightly more towards the thrower. When one of the receivers makes a deep cut, the first defender picks them up, and if one makes an in-cut, the second defender covers them. The defenders communicate and switch their marks if their respective charges change their cuts from in to deep, or vice versa. The clam can also be used by the entire team, with different defenders covering in cuts, deep cuts, break side cuts, and dump cuts.

[\[edit\]](#) Spirit of the game

Ultimate is known for its "Spirit of the Game", often abbreviated SOTG. Ultimate's self-officiated nature demands a strong spirit of sportsmanship and respect. The following description is from the official ultimate rules established by the Ultimate Players Association:

“ 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. ”

Many tournaments give awards for the most spirited team, as voted for by all the teams taking part in the tournament