University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Campus Recreation
Intramural Sports
Flag Football Rules

Intramural flag football games will be conducted under the National Intramural/Recreational Sports Association Flag and Touch Football Rules. This document covers the major rules with some exceptions.

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General Intramural Sports Policies and Procedures

Signing-In and Rosters
1. All players must present a valid I-Card/Safer Illinois App to the Intramural Supervisor in order to sign-in and participate in an intramural contest.
2. An individual is bound to the first team they sign in for.
3. A participant can only play on 1 Co-Rec team and 1 single gender team (i.e. Men’s or Fraternity Greek Cup).
4. If a player is found participating in the contest without having signed in with the Intramural Supervisor and doesn’t have their I-Card/Safer Illinois App present, said team will forfeit the game and all forfeit fees and consequences will apply.

Forfeits and Defaults
1. Teams that are not present at their scheduled contest by game time or are unable to produce enough eligible players to field a team, will be assessed a forfeit aside from the Grace Period Exception.
2. A team may delay its right to win by forfeit and allow the other team a grace period of 10 minutes to acquire a properly equipped team through the Grace Period Exception:
   a. Once a 10 minute grace period is granted by the team who is ready, they may not rescind their decision and take a forfeit before the 10 minutes passes.
   b. If 10 minutes passes after the scheduled game time, and the minimum number of eligible players required to play for the opposing team has not arrived, then that team that is ready to play must accept the forfeit.
   c. If the forfeiting team is able to obtain the minimum number of properly equipped players before the 10 minute grace period expires, game starting procedures will occur.
3. The team captain of a team that has forfeited will be assessed a $5 forfeit fee. Additionally, the team will be ineligible for playoffs.
4. If a team knows in advance that they will be unable to field a team on a given night; they may avoid the forfeit fee and loss of playoff eligibility by filing a default by 2:00pm on the business day of the contest.
5. A team that has one less than the minimum number of players required to start the contest will receive a default.

Sportsmanship
1. The Intramural Activities Program expects all participants to respect and abide by all rules and policies, show respect and concern for the intramural staff, and refrain from abusive language, poor attitude, and manipulation of the rules to further their chance of winning.
2. Sportsmanship ratings are given to teams after each contest by Intramural Sports Leads, Supervisors, and game officials. These ratings reflect behavior before, during, and after a contest. For purposes of our sportsmanship ratings, we will not count administrative technical fouls and rule technicalities against a team’s overall sportsmanship. The decision will be final and ratings will exist on the following scale:
   4. Team shows excellent sportsmanship and go out of their way to keep the game safe and fun. Team receives no unsportsmanlike conduct penalties.
   3. Team shows good-to-average sportsmanship, or one (1) unsportsmanlike conduct penalty is assessed.
   2. Team shows below-average sportsmanship and displays dissent to game officials before, during, or after contest. Two (2) unsportsmanlike conduct penalties is assessed during the contest on either two separate participants, or on a single participant resulting in an ejection.
   1. The intramural contest has been terminated due to three (3) unsportsmanlike conduct penalties being assessed on one team throughout the contest. The three penalties can all be on separate participants or on one participant receiving two unsportsmanlike conduct penalties (resulting in an ejection) and a separate participant receiving an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.
   0. Team displays unacceptable conduct and sportsmanship. Game is canceled due to any of the following conduct:
      • Fighting or abusive, violent behavior.
      • Team repeatedly exhibits unnecessary roughness that jeopardizes the safety of other participants.
      • Spectator or player clearly gestures or shouts obscenities.
      • A game where more than 3 unsportsmanlike conduct penalties have been assessed to one team.

Playoffs
1. To advance to playoffs during a five (5) week regular season, a team must win three (3) contests out of four (4), or more.
2. To advance to playoffs during a four (4) week regular season, a team must win two (2) contests out of three (3), or more.
3. Teams must have a sportsmanship rating average of at least 2.5 to advance to playoffs.
4. Captain must have completed the online Captain’s Quiz prior to the end of regular season to advance to playoffs.
5. Teams must have NO regular season forfeits to advance to playoffs.
6. Teams that advance will be seeded in the bracket according to winning percentage, head to head results, sportsmanship and point differential at the end of regular season.

Protests
1. A team captain may protest player eligibility and rule interpretation, but not the judgement of the officials.
2. To file a protest, notification of the protest must be made to a game official at the time of the alleged infraction prior to the next live ball.
3. A player’s eligibility must be protested prior to the end of the contest. No more than three (3) participants can have their eligibility protested during a single contest.

For more information regarding the policies and procedures of Intramural Activities please see the Intramural Activities Handbook on Active Illini and the Campus Recreation website.

Inclement Weather
1. Information regarding cancellations will be relayed to captains either in an email or phone call from the Intramural Office or the on-site Intramural Supervisor.
   a. Emails from the Intramural Office may come through Active Illini.
2. Unless teams have received an explicit cancellation message in regards to their sport via email or phone, teams should assume that all intramural contests will be played as scheduled.
3. In the event that a contest must be ended early due to inclement weather as determined by the on-site supervisor:
   a. A game shall be considered “official” and the result final if after the conclusion of the first half of the game, the contest is cancelled due to inclement weather.
   b. If the first half of the game is complete, but the contest was tied, an overtime period will be scheduled to determine a winner provided there is time and space available in the remainder of the regular season.
   c. If the first half of the game is not completed when the contest was stopped, the contest will be rescheduled and started over from the beginning on a rescheduled date provided there is time and space available in the remainder of the regular season.

Equipment
1. All players are required to bring a valid I-Card/Safer Illinois App or show their Illini ID on the Illinois App at all Intramural contests.
2. Jewelry is not allowed during any Intramural contest. Jewelry must be removed and not taped over.
   a. If a participant would like to wear medical alert bracelets or religious jewelry or headgear, they can have the pieces approved by the Assistant Director of
Competitive Sports and Community Programs. If approved, these pieces will still need to be covered during play. To learn more about this process, please reference our Intramural Activities Handbook.

3. All players must wear athletic apparel (shorts, sweat pants, t-shirts, etc.) with no exposed metal, *belt loops, zippers, or pockets*. Baseball style hats, bandannas, or any other headwear with knots or dangerous materials is not allowed.
   a. Casts or splints are not permitted. Any knee brace with exposed metal or metal hinges is required to be covered.
   b. Players are allowed to wear gloves if they desire.
   c. Sunglasses are not permitted.
   d. If a player is bleeding, or if any of their clothing is stained with blood, they must be removed from the contest until an Intramural Supervisor clears them to play.
   e. *Pockets may not be taped. Shorts/pants may not be turned inside out with pockets exposed and hanging off the shorts/pants.*

4. Participants will receive two intramural jerseys as part of the membership fee upon registering for Intramurals.
   a. Each participant will receive a navy blue and orange numbered jersey at no additional cost each semester they register for an intramural sport.
      i. A team can choose to wear their own uniform jerseys with printed numbers (not taped or drawn).
   b. The home team will wear orange while the away team will wear navy blue, but participants are encouraged to bring both jerseys to their scheduled games.
   c. Failure to abide by the jersey policy may result in a forfeit, or technical foul/unsportsmanlike conduct penalty being assessed against your team at the beginning of the contest.
   d. Intramural Staff on duty will have the final say whether a team has acceptable jerseys to begin a contest.

5. Flag belts will provided to each team. Each player on the field is required to wear a flag belt on the outside of all clothing with the clip in the front, one flag on each hip, and one flag on the back.

6. Closed-toed, athletic type shoes are required. Soccer, running, court, or turf shoes with or without molded plastic or rubber cleats are allowed.
   a. All cleats must be less than ½ inch.
   b. Metal cleats are not permitted.

7. All equipment is subject to the approval of the intramural staff on duty.

**Contest Timing**

1. Contests will start at the time they are scheduled on Active Illini. Teams should check in with the Intramural Supervisor 15 minutes prior to the scheduled game time.
2. Teams will have 50 minutes to complete their schedule Intramural flag football contest (or game).
3. One game (or contest) will consist of four (4), ten (10) minute running clock quarters and a five (5) minute half-time.
a. The final two (2) minutes of the first half (second quarter) and second half (fourth quarter) shall utilize a stop clock. During the final two minutes, clock will stop in the following scenarios:

i. Incomplete legal or illegal forward pass (clock restarts on the snap).
ii. Out-of-bounds (clock restarts on the snap).
iii. Safety (clock restarts on the snap).
iv. Team time-out (clock restarts on the snap).
v. Offense achieves a first down (clock restarts depends on the play achieving the first down).
vi. Touchdown (clock restarts after the try).
vii. Penalty flag is thrown (clock restart depends on the play, except for a delay of game penalty, where the clock restarts on the snap).
viii. Official’s time out (clock restarts at the official’s discretion).
ix. Touchback (clock restarts on the snap).
x. Change of possession (clock restarts depends on previous play).
xi. Team B is awarded a new series (clock restarts on the snap).
xii. Inadvertent whistle (clock restarts on the ready).
xiii. Team attempts to illegally conserve time (clock restarts on the ready).
xiv. Team attempts to illegally consumer time (clock restarts on the snap).

4. Each team is allowed one 30-second time-out per half.
   a. Time-outs do not carry over from the first to the second half.
   b. There are no time-outs in an overtime period.
5. If the game is tied at the end of regulation, an overtime will occur.
   a. See rules below for overtime procedures.
6. If at any time after the eight (8) minute mark in the fourth quarter a men’s/women’s team is leading by 19 points or a co-rec team is leading by 25 points the game shall end due to the mercy rule.
7. If at any time during the second half a team is winning by 50 points or more, the game shall end due to the mercy rule.

**Players**

1. Team rosters on Active Illini are unlimited.
2. Teams will play with seven (7) players on the field at one time. A minimum of four (4) players is needed to start or continue a match.
3. Substitutions are unlimited. Substitutions may occur at any time between downs, provided they are ready to play.
4. During a Co-Rec flag football game, a team must use a legal line up on the field at all times. A legal line up consists of using a set minimum number of players of each gender. Teams will play with eight (8) players on the field. A minimum of five (5) players are required to start a game. The gender ratio cannot be larger than one (1). Legal line ups are as follows:
   a. 4 women and 4 men.
   b. 4 women and 3 men or 3 women and 4 men.
   c. 3 women and 2 men or 2 women and 3 men.
d. 3 women and 3 men.
e. Co-Rec substitutions must be made to maintain the legal line up at all times.
f. The Intramural Activities program aims to offer opportunities for all students and Campus Recreation members. While our leagues are based on traditional gender binary of men and women, our program is eager to accommodate participants whose gender identity may not fit within this framework. Please choose the team that best suits your gender-identification. For more information or questions please contact the Assistant Director of Competitive Sports and Community Programs.

**Game Rules**

Intramural flag football games will be conducted under modified NIRSA Flag and Touch Football Rules. The following contains an overview of the major rules and modifications with some exceptions.

**Playing Area**

1. The playing area will consist of lines to gain (point to pass to achieve a first down). The lines to gain are the 20, 40, 20 and the goal line.
   a. The point of the ball determines if it crosses the line.
2. Hash marks will divide the width of the field into thirds that are 15 yards each.
   a. When the spot of the ball is between the hash mark and sideline, the ball will be put in play on the hash mark creating a wide and short side.
   b. When the spot of the ball is between the hash marks, the ball will be put in play where the previous play ended.
3. The side and end lines are out of bounds.
   a. A player or loose ball is out-of-bounds when any part of them or the ball touches anything, other than another player or game official who is on or outside the sideline or end line.
4. Players and fans must stay between the 20-yard lines at all times.
5. The offensive scrimmage line will be marked with an orange cone (ball spotter). The defensive line will be marked with a yellow cone (ball spotter).
   a. The two ball spotters will always be one yard apart.
   b. Only the game officials are permitted to move the ball spotters.
   c. The line of scrimmage is determined by the previous play and is the point of the ball where the player was de-flagged.

**Start of the Game**

1. Prior to the start of the game, the game official will conduct a coin toss or an odd/even finger guess. The winner will select to defer their option until the second half, to start on offense or to defend a specific goal.
2. Each half of the game will begin with the ball placed on the 14-yard line.

**Scoring**

1. A touchdown is worth six (6) points.
a. A touchdown is scored when a runner legally advances so the ball penetrates the vertical plane of the opponent’s goal line.

b. In a co-rec game, if a female is involved in the touchdown, the touchdown is worth nine (9) points.

c. Following a scoring play, the player who scored the touchdown must have their flags checked by the nearest official to ensure legal securing of the flag belt.

2. After scoring a touchdown, the captain has the option to try for extra points. The point values and distance from the goal line are as follows:
   a. One (1) point – three (3) yard line.
   b. Two (2) points – ten (10) yard line.
   c. Three (3) points – twenty (20) yard line.
   d. If defense forces a turnover on a try, they cannot return it for point. The play is dead.

3. A safety is worth two (2 points).
   a. A safety is scored when a runner carries the ball from the field of play across their own goal line, and it becomes dead while in their possession.

4. Following any scoring play, the ball shall be placed in play at the opposing team’s 14-yard line, unless it is moved due to a penalty.

**Basic Game Rules**

1. The offense must snap the ball within 25 seconds after the Referee has blown the whistle to put the ball in play.
   a. Following the ready whistle, no defensive players may break the plane of the defensive scrimmage line until the snap.
   b. No offensive player shall make a false start or any action that stimulates the start of play.

2. The ball becomes live after a legal snap.
   a. A legal snap consists of one fluid motion from the ground to a player who is at least two yards behind the line of scrimmage.
   b. The snapper does not have to snap the ball between their legs.
   c. Both of the feet of the snapper must be behind the line of scrimmage.

3. All players are subject to motion, position, and illegal procedure rules.
   a. The snapper is the only offensive player required to be on the scrimmage line (orange ball spotter) at the snap.
   b. One player may be in motion (but not forward motion) at the snap.
   c. Following a huddle or shift, each offensive player must come to a full stop for one second before the snap.

4. The offensive team has four (4) consecutive downs to advance the ball across the next zone line-to-gain. A new series is awarded:
   a. To the office if the line-to-gain is reached or a penalty which carries an automatic first down is accepted.
   b. To the defense if the offense fails to reach the line-to-gain after four (4) consecutive downs.
   c. To either team if a change of possession or a kick occurs during the down.
Passing the Ball

1. A pass is any exchange of the ball that involves airtime. This can be forward or backward, overhand pass, underhand pitch, or any other toss or flip of the ball.
   a. All players are eligible to touch or catch a pass.
   b. Only one forward pass may be thrown per scrimmage down, but not on kicks, punts, or interceptions.
   c. The pass begins when the ball is released from the passer’s hand. The ball is dead if the passer is deflagged before the release.
   d. The following constitutes an illegal pass:
      i. If the player’s entire body and the ball are beyond the line of scrimmage when the ball is released.
      ii. The ball is intentionally grounded.
      iii. The passer catches their own untouched pass.
      iv. When there is more than one forward pass during a scrimmage down.
      v. If a forward pass is thrown after a change in team possession.
2. A player may pass the ball backward at any time. The initial direction of a pass determines whether a pass is forward or backward.
   a. Backward passes that hit the ground in play are dead at the spot.
   b. Backward passes that go out of bounds belong to the offense unless the ball goes out of bounds behind a goal line, and then the play will result in a touchback or safety.
   c. Backward passes are unlimited.
3. A forward pass is completed when caught by a player inbounds.
   a. It is a catch as long as one foot, or first part of the body to touch the ground, is inbounds and the player simultaneously has possession of the ball.
4. If a forward, or backward pass is caught simultaneously by opposing players the ball becomes dead.
   a. It is considered a completed pass and belongs to the offensive team.
5. Any player may hand the ball forward or backward at any time.
   a. If the ball is tossed or there is airtime between the ball and the catch, then passing rules will apply.
6. Pass interference is defined as bumping, pushing, or unnecessary contact with an opponent.
   a. Contact is required for interference to be called.

Running the Ball

1. A runner is an offensive player carrying or acting as the ball carrier.
2. The runner is down once their flags are removed, their knee or body touches the ground, or they run out of bounds.
3. The action of removing the flags from the runner is deflagging. A player must have possession of the ball before they can be legally deflagged.
   a. Once a player in possession of the ball is legally deflagged, the play is dead.
4. When a runner previously loses their flag belt or is lost by a non-defensive player, play continues and the defense will be required to touch the player with one hand from the shoulders to the knees to down the runner.
a. If this situation occurs a game official will verbally indicate one hand touch is in effect.
b. An offensive player may not intentionally remove their flag belt.

5. If an offensive player loses control of the ball, the defense may catch the ball prior to it hitting the ground. Once the ball touches the ground, the ball is dead and is awarded to the team last in possession.

6. A runner shall not flag guard by using their hand, arms, or the ball to cause contact between the opponent and the runner that denies the opponent the opportunity to pull or remove the flag belt.

Screening
1. Offensive players may protect the runner by screening.
2. The offensive screen block shall take place without contact and the screener may maintain position (moving or stationary) between the defensive player or the runner.
3. The screen blocker shall have their arms at their sides or behind their back. Any use of arms, elbows, or legs to initiate contact during an offensive player’s screen block is illegal.
   a. A blocker may use a hand or arm to break a fall or retain balance.
   b. Players must remain on their feet before, during, and after screen blocking. No part of the screener’s body, except their feet, may be in contact with the ground.
4. Defensive players must avoid the offensive player’s screen block, and may not use their arms or hands as a wedge to contact the offensive blocker.
5. Illegal contact between the blocker/rusher will be called against the player determined to have initiated contact.
6. Offensive screen blocking beyond the line of scrimmage when a forward pass crosses the line is illegal.

Dead Ball
1. The ball becomes dead when the following occurs:
   a. The whistle is blown.
   b. The ball goes out of bounds.
   c. Any part of the runner’s body other than a hand or foot touches the ground.
      i. Ball in possession is considered part of the hand.
   d. After any score.
   e. Any kick or punt comes to rest on the ground and no player attempts to secure it, or a muff hits the ground.
   f. A forward or backward pass, fumble, or snap hits the ground.
      i. The ball is dead at the spot on a backward pass, fumble, and snap.
   g. The flag belt is removed legally.
      i. If the belt falls off, one hand touch between shoulders and knees.
   h. If a player or ball from an adjoining field interferes with the result of a play.
      i. The game official will stop play and offer the team in possession of the ball the option of replaying the down or taking the ball at the spot of interruption.
Punting the Ball
1. On fourth down, the referee will ask the offensive captain if they want to punt.
2. There are no fake punts.
   a. If the offense wants to change their decision to punt they must call a time-out.
3. Neither the kicking nor receiving team may advance beyond their respective scrimmage lines until the ball is kicked.
   a. Defensive players may jump in an attempt to block the kick provided they do not cross the defensive scrimmage line before the ball is kicked.
4. After receiving the snap, the kicker must kick immediately and in a continuous motion.
   a. The kicker may not kick the ball to themselves or any other member of the kicking team.
5. If a punt touches a player on either team and then hits the ground it is dead and belongs to the receiving team.
6. If a punt hits a receiving player, and:
   a. Is caught in the air by the receiving team, the ball can be advanced.
   b. Is caught in the air by the kicking team, the ball belongs to the kicking team at that spot.
   c. A punt that is blocked by the receiving team and caught in the air by the kicking team behind their line of scrimmage, the ball may be advanced by the kicking team.
7. If a punt goes out of bounds any time before being touched, or comes to rest between the goal lines, it shall belong to the receiving team at that spot.
8. There are no fair catches. The punting team may not interfere with the receiving team’s ability to catch the ball.
   a. If the punting team touches the ball first, the receiving team can take the ball at that spot or the result of the play.

Penalty Enforcement
1. Flag football is a non-contact sport. However, incident contact may occur.
2. A captain’s first choice of any penalty option shall be irrevocable. Decisions involving penalties shall be made before any charged time-out is granted to either team.
3. A dead ball foul is a foul that occurs before or simultaneous to the snap.
4. A live ball foul is a foul that occurs during the scrimmage down.
5. The following fouls result in a loss of five (5) yards:
   a. Dead ball fouls:
      i. Delay of Game.
      ii. Encroachment.
         1. The second consecutive encroachment will result in a loss of 10 yards.
      iii. False Start.
      iv. Illegal Snap.
      v. Illegal Formation.
      vi. Illegal Substitution.
   b. Live ball fouls:
      i. Aiding the Runner by a Teammate.
ii. Failure to Wear Required Equipment.

iii. Illegal Forward Pass
    1. If committed by offense (Team A), there will also be a loss of down.

iv. Illegal Motion.
v. Illegal Procedure.
vi. Illegal Shift.
vii. Illegal-Male Advancement
    1. Co-Rec specific.
viii. Intentional Grounding.
    1. Also a loss of down.

6. The following fouls will result in a loss of ten (10) yards:
   a. Dead ball fouls:
      i. Unsportsmanlike Conduct
   b. Live ball fouls:
      i. Illegal Player Equipment.
      ii. Kick Catching Interference.
          1. Only occurs during a punt.
      iii. Flag Guarding.
      iv. Illegal Flag Belt Removal.
      v. Illegal Bat or Kick.
      vi. Illegal Participation.
      vii. Illegal Contact.
      viii. Hurdling Over a Player.
      ix. Illegally Secured Flag Belt.
          1. Also a loss of down.
   x. Pass Interference.
      1. Offense or defense.
   xi. Personal Foul.
   xii. Roughing the Passer.
      1. Automatic first down.

7. The following penalties will result in a ten (10) yard penalty and an automatic ejection:
   a. Flagrant unsportsmanlike conduct by players or non-players.
   b. Flagrant spiking, kicking, or throwing the ball.
   c. Flagrant personal fouls.
   d. Tackling.
   e. Fighting.
   f. Intentional tampering with a flag belt.

8. The following actions conducted by any player will be considered illegal contact/personal fouls:
   a. Punching, striking, stripping, stealing, or attempting to steal the ball from a player in possession.
   b. Tripping, clipping, or hurdling any player.
   c. Contacting an opponent who is on the ground, or after the ball has been declared dead.
d. Throwing a runner to the ground.
e. Deliberately driving or running into a defensive player or lowering the shoulder.
f. Tackling a runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms.
g. Holding or slowing a runner by grasping or encircling with the hands or arms.
h. Aiding the runner.
   i. Grabbing, pushing, or pulling a teammate with the ball.
   i. Stiff-arming an opponent.
j. Using hands or the body to block an opponent.

Overtime Procedures
1. If a game is tied at the end of regulation, overtime will commence. A coin toss shall occur and the winner will be given the option offense, defense, or what direction to play.
   a. Field captains will alternate choices if additional overtime periods are played.
   b. Both team will go the same direction in overtime.
2. Each team will be given a series of downs (four), from the same 20-yard line.
3. If the first team which is awarded the ball scores, the second team will still have four downs to attempt to tie or win the game.
4. Following an intercepted pass or lateral, the ball automatically becomes dead and the offensive team’s possession is over.
5. Try for points will still be attempted in a normal manner by any team who scores a touchdown.
6. If two cycles of overtime play have been completed (both teams have played offense and defense twice), it is required that teams try for two (2) or three (3) points instead of one (1) point.

Co-Rec Modifications
1. A male runner cannot be the first player to advance the ball through the scrimmage line.
   a. There are not restrictions concerning runs by a female.
   b. There are no restrictions after a legal forward pass.
2. On a closed play, a male player may not complete a legal forward pass to a male.
3. On an open play, any player may complete a pass to any other player.
   a. On a male-to-male completion, the male receiver must be beyond the line of scrimmage.
4. During the offensive team’s possession there may not be two (2) consecutive legal forward pass completions on downs from a male passer to a male receiver (including on a try).
   a. Once a pass is completed from a male passer to a male receiver, the play becomes closed.
5. To open a play, a legally thrown pass must meet the following criteria:
   a. Female involvement (either as a passer or a receiver).
   b. Legal forward pass.
   c. The play results in positive yards.
   d. A male to male completion and a subsequent lateral to a female does not open the play, and would result in a penalty if the play was already closed.
6. If a female scores a touchdown, the point value is nine (9).
a. If a female throws a legal forward pass, and a touchdown is scored by any team player and there has been no change of possession, the point value is nine (9). The following contains a list of example scenarios and their associated point value:
   i. Woman completes a forward pass to a male who scores a touchdown (9 points).
   ii. Male completes a forward pass to a female who scores a touchdown (9 points).
   iii. A male completes a forward pass to a male who backwards passes the ball to a female who then scores a touchdown (9 points).
   iv. A male completes a forward pass to a female who backwards passes the ball to a male who then scores a touchdown (6 points).

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Intramural Office via email at intramurals@illinois.edu or via phone at 217-244-1344. Our office is open Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm.