

# GUIDE TO PLAYING ULTIMATE



*Photo by Jane Rock*

**By Creighton Gerber, Eagle Scout, Troop 552**



*Photo by Kristine Gerber*

## INTRODUCTION

My name is Creighton Gerber and I am an Eagle Scout in Troop 552 in Omaha, Nebraska. As a part of the Mid-America Council's Scout Fit Program, I have created this booklet to teach scouts how to play Ultimate and help Cub Scouts fulfill the requirements for the Ultimate Belt Loop and Sports Pin. Ultimate is an easy sport to learn that only requires a disc to play. I learned about Ultimate through my own troop and it has been a staple game to play during campouts and occasionally after meetings (a disc was even brought along on my troop's backpacking journey at Philmont Scout Ranch in Cimarron, New Mexico). This activity is fun at all levels and a great aerobic workout. I find it great and I'm sure you will too.

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# CUB SCOUT REQUIREMENTS

## ULTIMATE BELT LOOP

### and SPORTS PIN



Ultimate

### BELT LOOP

Complete these three requirements:

1. Explain the rules of Ultimate or disc golf to your leader or adult partner.
2. Spend at least 30 minutes practicing Ultimate or disc golf skills.
3. Participate in a game of Ultimate or disc golf.

### SPORTS PIN

Earn the Ultimate belt loop and complete five of the following requirements:

1. Compete in a pack or community Ultimate or disc golf tournament.
2. Demonstrate effective pivoting while throwing. Use some of the following throwing styles: bachand pass, sidearm pass, and upside-down pass, and/or roller throw.
3. Demonstrate skill in the following catching techniques: one-handed, clapping, and sandwich.
4. On three different occasions, practice 20 minutes of Ultimate or disc golf.
5. Keep track of your time on a chart.
6. Explain the flight dynamics of the flying disc. Draw a diagram if needed.
7. Accurately lay out an Ultimate playing field or diagram three typical disc golf holes.
8. Play five games of Ultimate or disc golf.
9. Participate in an Ultimate skills or disc golf skills development clinic.
10. Explain the history of Ultimate or disc golf and how it became a sport.
11. Explain the differences between Ultimate and golf discs.

## **Boy Scout Physical Fitness Badge Requirements**

Ultimate requires lots of running and counts as an aerobic activity in the Physical Fitness Merit Badge exercise log.

1. Outline a comprehensive 12-week physical fitness program using the results of your fitness tests. Be sure your program incorporates the endurance, intensity, and warm-up guidelines discussed in the Personal Fitness merit badge pamphlet. Before beginning your exercises, have the program approved by your counselor and parents.
2. Complete the physical fitness program you outlined in requirement 7.
3. Keep a log of your fitness program activity (how long you exercised; how far you ran, swam, or biked; how many exercise repetitions you completed; your exercise heart rate; etc.).
4. Repeat the aerobic fitness, muscular strength, and flexibility tests every two weeks and record your results. After the 12th week, repeat all four tests, record your results, and show improvement in each one. Compare and analyze your preprogram and postprogram body composition measurements.
5. Discuss the meaning and benefit of your experience, and describe your long-term plans regarding your personal fitness.

## **ULTIMATE HISTORY**

Founders Joel Silver, Bernard Hellring and Jonathan Hines created Ultimate in 1968 after Silver observed a “Frisbee football” game in an educational program at Mount Hermon High School in Northfield, Massachusetts. The idea was brought back to Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey, and the rules were modified, naming the new sport “Ultimate Frisbee.” Gaining popularity, Ultimate spread to different colleges around the country and eventually got enough recognition that unofficial National Championships were played in the mid to late 1970s.

Ultimate soon became one of the fastest growing sports in the nation. In 1979, the Ultimate Players Association (UPA) was created to regulate Ultimate in the United States. Several different leagues in Ultimate have been made since then, including College, Womens, Mixed, Masters and Youth divisions. The UPA soon reached 30,000 participating members as of 2009, before the organization transitioned into USA Ultimate in May of 2010.



## **DIFFERENCE between ULTIMATE DISCS and DISC GOLF DISCS**

There are several differences between the discs of Ultimate and disc golf. The official Ultimate disc, according to UPA regulations, has a 10-3/4 inch diameter and has a mass of 175 grams. The disc is round and has a curved lip. A disc golf disc typically has a smaller diameter of 8 to 9 inches and a mass of 150 to 200 grams. The disc also has an extended lip that is often sharper than an Ultimate disc and a thinner profile for better aerodynamics.

## **PHYSICS of a FLYING DISC**

A flying disc stays in flight through lift and inertia. Because of how the disc is shaped, when air travels over the top, it travels faster than air on the bottom creating a low pressure zone on the top. The higher pressure zone on the bottom lifts the disc up towards the low pressure zone to keep it in the air. The disc also has spin that keeps it stable during flight by giving it inertia. Inertia is what keeps the disc flying in the same plane without it twisting or turning, which helps it from turning over on either side. A flying disc has several factors that keep it in flight that should be considered when trying to throw.

**Spin:** when throwing a disc, there should be a good amount of spin put on the disc. Spin is what gives the disc its inertia that keeps it flying smoothly. Discs with little spin tend to either turn over to one side or not go nearly as far as a disc with more spin.

**Speed:** the amount of speed put on a disc is a major factor in how far it travels. The speed of the disc and the amount of spin are also related. If too much speed is put on a disc with little spin, the disc will not be as stable in flight and fall over. If not enough speed is put on and disc with lots of spin, the pass will fall short. Finding a balance between the two is important to making good passes.

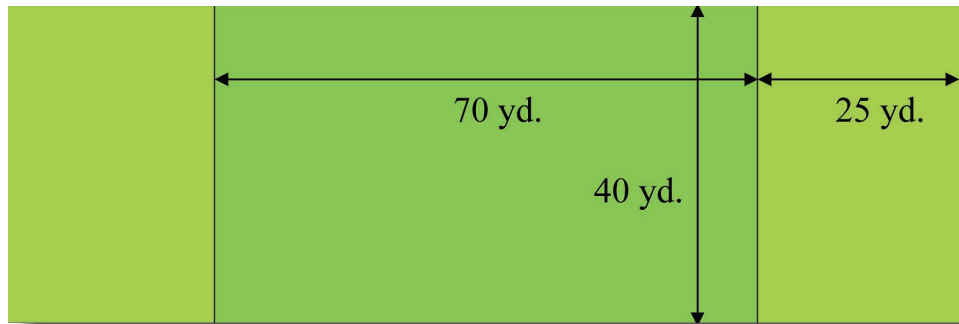
**Altitude (Pitch):** the pitch of a disc refers to how far up or down the front edge of the disc is when it is thrown. This plays another factor in how far the disc travels. If the front edge is high, the disc will travel high into the air and will most likely slow down and 'float'. A lower front edge will travel faster, but not as high in the air.

**Roll (Bank):** the bank of a throw refers to how low or high the outside edge of the disc is when it is thrown. By changing the angle of the outside edge, the angle the disc is rotating will change and curve towards the lower edge. Players often will use this to curve the disc around opponents to their own team.

**Wind:** wind can have an effect on all of the factors. When throwing a disc with wind, it is important to remember that the closer to the ground the disc is, the less wind there will be to affect it. When throwing into the wind, throws should have lots of spin and a low pitch to avoid the affects of a higher apparent air speed and the possibility of lifting a disc with a high pitch into the air. Throwing with the wind is the opposite. While not as much spin is necessary, the pitch needs to be higher because of a drop in lift. Crosswinds affect the bank of a disc by either lifting the higher edge up or pushing the lower edge down into a dive. The disc will be hard to keep flat, so it is important to adjust the bank according to the wind.

# Ultimate in 10 Simple Rules

**1. The Field:** A rectangular shape with end zones at each end. A regulation field is 70 yards by 40 yards, with end zones 25 yards deep.



*Graph by Creighton Gerber*

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

**3. Scoring:** Each time the offense completes a pass in the defense’s end zone, the offense scores a point. Play is initiated after each score.

**4. Movement of the Disc:** The disc may be advanced in any direction by completing a pass to a teammate. Players may not run with the disc. The person with the disc (“thrower”) has ten seconds to throw the disc. The defender guarding the thrower (“marker”) counts out the stall count.

**5. Change of Possession:** When a pass is not completed (e.g. out of bounds, drop, block, interception), the defense immediately takes possession of the disc and becomes the offense.

**6. Substitutions:** Players not in the game may replace players in the game after a score and during an injury timeout.

**7. Non-contact:** No physical contact is allowed between players. Picks and screens are also prohibited. A foul occurs when contact is made.



**8. Fouls:** When a player initiates contact on another player a foul occurs. When a foul disrupts possession, the play resumes as if the possession was retained. If the player committing the foul disagrees with the foul call, the play is redone.

**9. Self-Officiating:** Players are responsible for their own foul and line calls. Players resolve their own disputes.

**10. Spirit of the Game:** Ultimate stresses sportsmanship and fair play. Competitive play is encouraged, but never at the expense of respect between players, adherence to the rules, and the basic joy of play.

*For further rules, check out the 11th Edition Rules  
(Current Official USA Ultimate Rules of Ultimate) that can be found at  
[http://www.usaUltimate.org/resources/officiating/rules/11th\\_edition\\_rules.aspx](http://www.usaUltimate.org/resources/officiating/rules/11th_edition_rules.aspx)*

# THROWING

One of the major aspects of Ultimate is how to throw. After receiving the disc, the player is not allowed to move and needs to establish a pivot foot (typically the opposite foot of the player's throwing hand). Like in basketball, the pivot foot cannot be lifted from the ground, but can only be rotated on. In Ultimate, it is important to know different types of passing styles to have a wide throwing range. With all of the passes, try to get lots of spin on the disc. The more spin, the more smooth the flight of the disc will be. It is also important to keep the disc level. If there is trouble with the disc curving to the side, try adjusting the angle the disc is being thrown at.

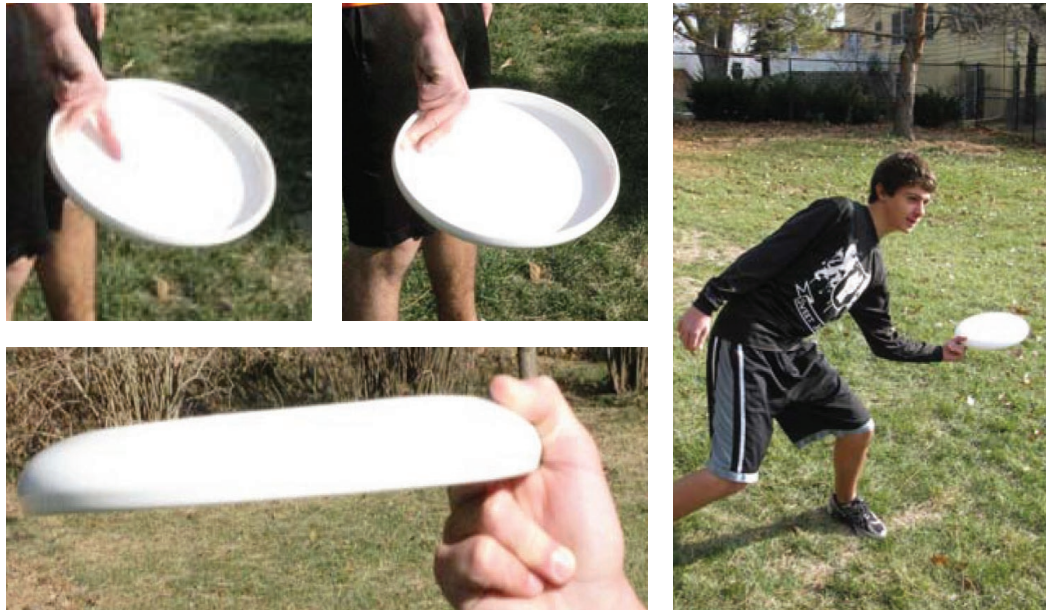
## Backhand Pass:



*Photos by Creighton Gerber*

The backhand pass is done by grabbing the disc as if shaking someone's hand, making sure the fingers are on the inside and your thumb on top. Close the fingers on the inside rim. For beginning players, it may be easier to place the index finger on the outside of the rim for more control. When throwing, try to snap the wrist while extending the arm in a sweeping motion out and pointing to the target.

## Forehand (Sidearm) Pass:



*Photos by Creighton Gerber*

The forehand pass is done by first making a piece sign with the hand and then grabbing the disc. Put the middle finger on the inside rim of the disc and the index finger extended under the disc, while keeping the thumb on top. The ring and little finger will be down on the hand, not touching the disc. More experienced players may want to bring the index finger on top of the middle finger on the inside rim. When throwing, lean over and step out on the side of the throwing hand while bringing the arm with the inside of the forearm facing out. Flick the wrist while sweeping the arm toward your target.

## Hammer (Upside-Down Pass):

The hammer has the same hand positioning as the forehand pass, the only difference being how it is thrown. To throw the hammer, bring the arm above the head with the disc at a 45-degree angle. Bring the arm down like throwing a baseball or football, while flicking the wrist. This pass can be difficult and may need lots of practice to perfect.



# CATCHING

Just like throwing, catching is also important in Ultimate. There are several ways to catch the disc depending on where the disc is as it comes to the player. Whenever possible, try to position the body in front of the disc.

## Clap (Sandwich) Catch:



The clap catch is done by putting a hand above and below the disc horizontally and “clapping” the disc as it comes in. This is the safest way to catch the disc and is used when the disc is in front of the player and around the midsection.

## Two-Hand Rim Catch:



The two-hand rim catch is done by grabbing the disc in both hands with the fingers on top and thumbs on the bottom if the throw is higher up and thumbs on top and fingers on the bottom if the throw is low. This catch involves more risk than the clap catch and is used when the disc is still in front of the player, but too high or low to use the clap catch.

## One-Hand Rim Catch:



The one-hand rim catch is the same as the two-hand rim catch, but only using one hand. This catch involves the most risk and is used when the disc is either very high or low, or far to the right or left of the player.

*Photos by Creighton Gerber*



# OFFENSE POSITIONS

The offense in Ultimate doesn't always need positions to play, but it is very common to see the team broken up into two positions when trying to move the disc up the field.

## **Handler:**

The handlers on the offense are a lot like the “quarterbacks” of the team. These players usually have most control over the disc and are usually trusted to make the best passes. This position requires good passing and decision making skills that will keep the disc away from the defense.

## **Cutter:**

The players that run around the field and act as “receivers” are called the cutters. The cutters cut up and down the field and try to get open for a pass. Once receiving a pass, they can either pass it further up field or “dump” the disc back to the handler.

# DEFENSE POSITIONS

The defense in Ultimate is the team that is trying to prevent the offense from scoring in the end zone. Depending on which offensive player the defensive player is trying to cover, the positions will change.

## Marker:



*Photos by Kristine Gerber*

The marker is the defensive player that covers the disc holder. It is the marker's job to try preventing the disc holder from throwing to the other players on offense. The marker can also move to different sides of the disc holder to try controlling which way the disc is thrown. This is called a force. When forcing backhand, the marker is forcing the disc holder to throw a backhand pass by standing on the side of the throwing arm. Forcing forehand (forcing flick) is done by standing on the side opposite of the throwing hand. It is also the markers job to call the stall count. The marker counts to ten and if the disc hasn't been thrown, it results in a turnover.

## Defender:

A defender is any other defensive player guarding an offensive player that does not have the disc. It is the defenders job to make sure the passes are not caught by the offense. The defensive player usually wants to position themselves between the player they are guarding and the disc holder. It is also important that the offensive player doesn't get far behind the defender for a long pass.



## **SPIRIT OF THE GAME**

Spirit of the game is an important aspect of Ultimate that allows players to make the foul calls during the game instead of referees or umpires in other sports. If players disagree with a foul call they can 'contest' the call and the foul will be disputed between the players to decide what the call should be. Because of this, it is very important that players are honest and fair in their calls and do not use this system to their own advantage. This goes right along with first point of the Scout Law that states a scout must be Trustworthy. If certain players are consistently calling non-existent fouls for their own benefit, a spirit foul can be called that kicks the player out of the game.

To help build spirit between competing teams, spirit games can be played between teams before the game starts. These games can be any teambuilding game that helps build trust between opposing players, hopefully allowing the players to play fair and enjoy the game. As long as the players are enjoying the game, they are more likely to play fair.

## HOW TO START

All Ultimate requires are a disc, a playing space, and a group of people willing to play. Grab a group of friends and start by tossing a disc back and forth and get them interested. This can be suggested as an activity that can be played after troop meetings or on campouts that is fun to play and easy to learn. There are also many youth, college, and club teams around the nation looking for participants. One can go on USA Ultimate's website to look for teams or register a new team. Either way, Ultimate is a great way to meet new people and a fun way to stay in shape.

For more information, visit USA Ultimate at [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org)

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## WHY PLAY?

Ultimate is a fast growing, flexible sport that can be played however the players want and comes with several benefits. Ultimate is one of the fastest growing sports in America, nearly doubling the amount of high school members in the last seven years, and for a great reason. The sport allows players to play at any pace they want, either jogging around the field or running in short sprints depending on how they like to play. With lots of running, Ultimate is highly aerobic and provides a great cardiovascular workout. For Boy Scouts that want to play, Ultimate counts as an aerobic exercise towards the Physical Fitness merit badge or to pursue the Presidential Fitness Award. Playing Ultimate can also be a great way to reduce stress and the fun sport can distract people from getting tired and allow them to play longer and get in better shape.

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For more information contact:

USA Ultimate (USAU) on their website [www.usultimate.org](http://www.usultimate.org)

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