

U.P.A.F.A.

Uttar Pradesh American Football Association

Coach Certification — L1 — Foundation Coach

Grassroots Entry Level — Instructor Guide & Participant Handouts

Total contact time: 8 hours (2 hrs pre-work + 6 hrs in-person)

Program Manual — Version 1.0 | July 2026

Session Schedule

This guide covers all 7 modules for Coach L1 — Foundation Coach, combining an instructor script with printable participant handouts for each module.

1. Introduction to Flag Football & the LA 2028 Pathway	0.5 hr
2. Core Rules & Field Setup	1.5 hr
3. Fundamental Skills: Throwing, Catching, Agility & Flag-Pulling	2 hr
4. Basic Session Planning & Age-Appropriate Coaching	1 hr
5. Safety, Injury Prevention & First Aid Basics	1 hr
6. Child Safeguarding & Code of Conduct	1 hr
7. Practical Teaching Demo & Feedback	1 hr

How to Use This Manual

Each module below contains two parts: an Instructor Guide (learning objectives, a full delivery script, key teaching points, and a structured activity) followed immediately by a Participant Handout page designed to be photocopied and given to each attendee (notes/worksheet items, reflection prompts, and quick-check questions). An Instructor Answer Key for all quick-check questions is provided as an appendix at the end of this manual — it is not intended for participant distribution.

Module 1: Introduction to Flag Football & the LA 2028 Pathway

Duration: 0.5 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Describe what flag football is and how it differs from tackle football.
- Explain the LA 2028 Olympic context and why it matters for grassroots coaching.
- Locate L1 within U.P.A.F.A.'s three-tier certification pathway.

Instructor Script

Flag football is a fast, non-contact variant of American football played 5-a-side on a smaller field (roughly 70 yards including end zones, 25–30 yards wide). Instead of tackling, defenders end a play by pulling a flag attached to the ball carrier's belt. There is no blocking and no linemen, and possessions typically last under two minutes — the game moves quickly and rewards space and decision-making over size.

This matters right now because flag football is on the program for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, in both men's and women's competitions — the first time an American-football-derived sport has been part of the Olympics. That changes what 'good coaching' means at grassroots level: we are the first rung of a ladder that could realistically take a young player from a school field in Uttar Pradesh to national trials.

Walk through the U.P.A.F.A. certification structure: L1 Foundation (today), L2 Certified (state/development), L3 Elite (national/Olympic pathway). L1 is deliberately broad and safety-first — the goal today is not to produce tacticians, it's to produce coaches who can run a safe, well-organized, enjoyable first experience of the sport.

Key Teaching Points

- 5-a-side, non-contact format
- Flag-pull ends the play, not a tackle
- LA 2028 context and why it raises the bar for grassroots
- L1 → L2 → L3 pathway overview

Activity: Pathway Discussion

1. Show the badge/pathway diagram on the whiteboard.
2. Ask: ‘What’s one difference between flag and tackle football you’ll need to explain to a first-time parent?’
3. Collect 3–4 answers as a group before moving on.

Participant Handout — Module 1: Introduction to Flag Football & the LA 2028 Pathway

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Draw and label a blank flag-football field diagram (end zones, playing area, approximate width).
- ☐ List 2 things you will tell a parent who asks ‘isn’t this just soft tackle football?’

Reflection & Application

What would you say to a nervous first-time parent about player safety in flag football?

Quick Check

1. Flag football at LA 2028 is played 5-a-side. True or False?
2. What ends a play in flag football instead of a tackle?

Module 2: Core Rules & Field Setup

Duration: 1.5 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- State field dimensions and zones.
- Explain scoring values and the downs system.
- Distinguish legal flag-pulling from illegal contact.
- Identify the neutral zone and rush rules at the line of scrimmage.

Instructor Script

The field runs about 70 yards long: two 10-yard end zones plus a 50-yard playing area, split at midfield by a line the offense must cross within 4 downs, then has 4 more downs to score. Width is roughly 25–30 yards. Five offensive players face five defenders; most grassroots formats have no kicking, and possessions start from a set spot rather than a kickoff.

Scoring: a touchdown is worth 6 points (or 7 with a 1-point conversion from close range, 8 with a 2-point conversion from further out), and a safety is worth 2. The defense ends a play legally by pulling one of the two flags on the ball carrier’s belt — grabbing, tackling, or using the body to block is illegal contact and results in a penalty.

The neutral zone sits at the line of scrimmage: rushers must start 5–7 yards back (rulesets vary) and cannot cross until the snap. This is the single rule a new coach must enforce most consistently, because early or illegal contact at the rush is where most disputes and near-misses happen. Also cover illegal contact basics for the ball carrier: stiff-arming, spin moves that lead with the arm, and using a hand to ‘guard’ the flag from being pulled are not allowed.

Key Teaching Points

- Field zones and the downs system
- Scoring values (TD, conversions, safety)
- Legal flag-pull vs. illegal contact
- Neutral zone / rush timing at the snap
- Illegal ‘guarding the flag’ by the ball carrier

Activity: Field Chalk-Talk + Mock Possession

1. Draw the field and zones on a whiteboard or with cones on the actual field.
2. Walk the group through a 3-play mock possession, pointing out each rule live as it would apply.
3. Ask participants to call out ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ as you demonstrate contact scenarios.

Participant Handout — Module 2: Core Rules & Field Setup

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Label a blank field diagram: end zones, 50-yard area, midfield line.
- ☐ Match each scoring situation (TD, conversion, safety) to its point value.

Reflection & Application

Think of a rule in this module that would be hardest to explain to an 8-year-old. How would you simplify it?

Quick Check

1. How many points is a touchdown worth before any conversion?
2. A defender grabs the ball carrier's jersey instead of the flag. Legal or illegal?

Module 3: Fundamental Skills: Throwing, Catching, Agility & Flag-Pulling

Duration: 2 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Teach correct throwing grip and mechanics.
- Teach correct catching technique for different ball heights.
- Introduce basic change-of-direction agility work.
- Teach the safe, legal flag-pulling technique.

Instructor Script

Throwing: grip across the laces, elbow up near ear height, step toward the target with the opposite foot, and follow through toward the receiver. The most common beginner error is throwing from the shoulder without the step — this kills both accuracy and distance, so the step is the first thing to correct.

Catching: hands form a triangle or diamond shape at chest height for chest-high balls, or a 'W' shape above the head for high balls. Eyes should track the ball all the way into the hands, not into the body — players who look away early drop otherwise-easy catches.

Agility: a simple 2-cone or ladder change-of-direction drill teaches a controlled plant-and-cut instead of a straight sprint, since evading a flag-pull is about deception and change of direction, not just raw speed.

Flag-pull technique for defenders: approach at an angle rather than head-on (this avoids a collision), reach for the flag with one hand while the other hand stays open at the side — never grabbing cloth or extending an arm across the body in a 'clothesline' motion — and pull down and away in one clean motion.

Key Teaching Points

- Throw mechanics: grip, elbow height, step, follow-through
- Catch shape: triangle/diamond and 'W'
- Agility: controlled plant-and-cut footwork
- Safe flag-pull angle and one-handed technique

Activity: Four-Station Skill Circuit

1. Set up four stations: throwing partners, catching partners, cone agility, flag-pull partner drill.
2. Rotate groups through each station for 5 minutes.
3. Give one correction per player per station — don't try to fix everything at once.

Participant Handout — Module 3: Fundamental Skills: Throwing, Catching, Agility & Flag-Pulling

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Sketch the correct hand shape for a chest-high catch and a high catch.
- ☐ Write the 3-step flag-pull technique in your own words.

Reflection & Application

Which of the four skills (throw/catch/agility/flag-pull) do you feel least confident teaching, and what would help?

Quick Check

1. What is the most common beginner throwing error?
2. Should a defender approach a ball carrier head-on to pull the flag?

Module 4: Basic Session Planning & Age-Appropriate Coaching

Duration: 1 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Structure a session using a warm-up / skill / game / cool-down arc.
- Adapt drills and field size for different age bands.
- Apply the 'two-minute explanation' rule to keep engagement high.

Instructor Script

A good first session for players aged 8–14 follows a simple arc: a 10-minute dynamic warm-up (no static stretching for kids), a 20-minute skill block broken into 2–3 short stations so nobody stands idle for long, a 20-minute small-sided game (3v3 or 4v4 gives more reps than a full 5v5), and a 5-minute cool-down ending with a simple question like ‘what’s one thing you got better at today?’

For younger or first-time groups, shrink the field and simplify — remove the downs system entirely and just play ‘flag tag with a ball’ until flag-pulling itself is second nature. For a more experienced group, introduce a route or two and increase field size.

The single biggest planning mistake new coaches make is over-explaining before players have touched a ball. Aim for a strict 2-minute explanation ceiling before any drill — if you can’t explain it in two minutes, simplify the drill, not the explanation.

Key Teaching Points

- Warm-up / skill / game / cool-down arc
- Small-sided games over full 5v5 for more reps
- Age-band scaling (shrink field, remove downs for beginners)
- The 2-minute explanation rule

Activity: Draft a Session Plan

1. Give each participant an age group (e.g., 8–10, 11–14).
2. Have them draft a 60-minute session using the provided template.
3. Pair up and peer-review each other’s plans against the checklist.

Participant Handout — Module 4: Basic Session Planning & Age-Appropriate Coaching

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete the blank 60-minute session plan template for your assigned age group.
- ☐ Check your plan against the self-review checklist.

Reflection & Application

Where in your draft plan might you be tempted to over-explain? How would you cut it down?

Quick Check

1. What is the recommended explanation-time ceiling before a drill?
2. Why use small-sided games (3v3/4v4) over full 5v5 in a first session?

Module 5: Safety, Injury Prevention & First Aid Basics

Duration: 1 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Identify common flag-football injury types.
- Explain how a proper warm-up prevents injury.
- Build a basic Emergency Action Plan.
- Apply the STOP rule for a suspected injury.

Instructor Script

Because flag football is non-contact by design, most injuries are non-contact soft-tissue injuries — ankle sprains from cutting, hamstring strains from sprinting, and finger/hand injuries from catching — rather than collision injuries. Prevention starts with a proper dynamic warm-up every session, and with coaching correct cutting mechanics as covered in the skills module.

Every session needs a basic Emergency Action Plan: know the location of the nearest medical help before you start, keep a basic first-aid kit pitch-side, and decide in advance who calls for help if needed — not during the emergency itself.

Teach the simple STOP rule for a suspected injury: Stop the session, Talk to the player, Observe for swelling or deformity, Prevent further play if in doubt. A coach’s job is to be cautious, not to diagnose — when unsure, always err toward stopping play and referring to medical help.

Key Teaching Points

- Common injury types in a non-contact sport
- Warm-up as the primary prevention tool
- Emergency Action Plan basics
- The STOP rule
- When to refer to a medical professional

Activity: Injury Scenario Cards

1. Give small groups an injury scenario card (e.g., ankle roll, finger jam).
2. Have them talk through the correct immediate response using STOP.

3. Debrief as a full group, correcting any gaps.

Participant Handout — Module 5: Safety, Injury Prevention & First Aid Basics

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete an Emergency Action Plan template for your own coaching venue.
- ☐ Write the STOP rule from memory.

Reflection & Application

What's the nearest source of medical help at the venue where you coach, and do you know how to reach it quickly?

Quick Check

1. What does the 'O' in the STOP rule stand for?
2. Is a coach expected to diagnose an injury on the field?

Module 6: Child Safeguarding & Code of Conduct

Duration: 1 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Understand U.P.A.F.A.'s safeguarding expectations.
- Know how to respond if a child discloses a concern.
- Know the reporting pathway.
- Commit to the Coach Code of Conduct.

Instructor Script

Every certified coach carries a safeguarding responsibility, whether or not children are the majority of their group. Key behaviours: never be alone with a single child in an enclosed space, keep communication with minors through parents/guardians rather than direct messaging, and treat any disclosure a child makes seriously and calmly.

If a child discloses a concern: don't promise secrecy, don't investigate it yourself, and pass it immediately to the designated safeguarding contact named in the U.P.A.F.A. reporting pathway. Acting outside this pathway — even with good intentions — is itself a risk.

Review the Code of Conduct: athlete welfare before results, zero tolerance for abusive language or conduct, declaring conflicts of interest (e.g. coaching a competitive fixture that includes your own child), and representing U.P.A.F.A. appropriately in public and online.

Key Teaching Points

- General safeguarding behaviours
- How to receive a disclosure correctly
- The U.P.A.F.A. reporting pathway
- Code of Conduct pillars

Activity: Code of Conduct Read-Through & Sign-Off

1. Read the Code of Conduct aloud as a group.
2. Discuss two 'grey area' scenarios (e.g., messaging a player directly to reschedule).
3. Each participant signs the Code of Conduct sign-off sheet.

Participant Handout — Module 6: Child Safeguarding & Code of Conduct

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Sign the Code of Conduct acknowledgment.
- ☐ Fill in the safeguarding contact card for your district.

Reflection & Application

Can you think of a situation in your own coaching context where the 'never alone with one child' rule might be easy to accidentally break?

Quick Check

1. If a child discloses a concern to you, what should you NOT do?
2. Who should you contact after receiving a disclosure?

Module 7: Practical Teaching Demo & Feedback

Duration: 1 hr

INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

Learning Objectives

- Deliver a short coaching segment live.
- Receive structured feedback against the L1 competency rubric.

Instructor Script

Each participant delivers a 5–10 minute segment teaching one skill from the Fundamental Skills module to the rest of the cohort (acting as players). The assessor and peers observe against the rubric: clear, brief explanation; correct demonstration of technique; safe organisation of the group; and the ability to give one useful correction during the drill.

Immediately after each demo, the assessor gives two things that worked and one thing to adjust. Feedback should be specific and actionable — not just ‘good job’ — so the participant leaves with something concrete to work on.

Key Teaching Points

- Brief, clear explanation
- Correct demonstration of technique
- Safe group organisation
- One live, specific correction during the drill

Activity: Round-Robin Teaching Demos

1. Each participant delivers a 5–10 minute teaching segment in turn.
2. Peers and assessor score against the rubric.
3. Assessor gives 2 strengths + 1 adjustment immediately after each demo.

Participant Handout — Module 7: Practical Teaching Demo & Feedback

Notes & Worksheet

- ☐ Complete your self-score on the L1 practical rubric before receiving assessor feedback.
- ☐ Note down the one adjustment you received.

Reflection & Application

What's the one thing you'll do differently next time you teach this skill?

Quick Check

1. How many things should feedback highlight to work on, ideally?
2. What are the four things the L1 rubric scores?

Appendix: Instructor Answer Key

For instructor/assessor use only — not for participant distribution.

Module 1: Introduction to Flag Football & the LA 2028 Pathway

1. Flag football at LA 2028 is played 5-a-side. True or False? — True.
2. What ends a play in flag football instead of a tackle? — Pulling one of the flags from the ball carrier's belt.

Module 2: Core Rules & Field Setup

1. How many points is a touchdown worth before any conversion? — 6 points.
2. A defender grabs the ball carrier's jersey instead of the flag. Legal or illegal? — Illegal — this is illegal contact, not a legal flag pull.

Module 3: Fundamental Skills: Throwing, Catching, Agility & Flag-Pulling

1. What is the most common beginner throwing error? — Throwing from the shoulder without stepping toward the target.
2. Should a defender approach a ball carrier head-on to pull the flag? — No — approach at an angle to avoid a collision.

Module 4: Basic Session Planning & Age-Appropriate Coaching

1. What is the recommended explanation-time ceiling before a drill? — About 2 minutes.
2. Why use small-sided games (3v3/4v4) over full 5v5 in a first session? — They give players more touches/ reps than a full-sided game.

Module 5: Safety, Injury Prevention & First Aid Basics

1. What does the ‘O’ in the STOP rule stand for? — Observe (for swelling or deformity).
2. Is a coach expected to diagnose an injury on the field? — No — the coach's job is to be cautious and refer to medical help, not diagnose.

Module 6: Child Safeguarding & Code of Conduct

1. If a child discloses a concern to you, what should you NOT do? — Promise secrecy or investigate it yourself.
2. Who should you contact after receiving a disclosure? — The designated U.P.A.F.A. safeguarding contact, immediately.

Module 7: Practical Teaching Demo & Feedback

1. How many things should feedback highlight to work on, ideally? — One specific, actionable thing — not several at once.
2. What are the four things the L1 rubric scores? — Clear explanation, correct demonstration, safe organisation, and a live correction.