

Ultimate frisbee PE unit: five lessons

A complete unit for 45-minute lessons and a class of 24–30 students who have never played. About 38 minutes of activity per lesson. Free to print, copy and share.

Why ultimate works in a PE unit

- **Almost nobody starts with an advantage.** Very few students have played organised ultimate, so confident athletes and reluctant ones start much closer together.
- **It is nearly free.** Discs and cones. No goals, no nets, no special footwear.
- **Everyone touches the disc.** You cannot run with it, and the ten-second count keeps it moving.
- **It is co-ed by design.** Mixed play is the norm at every level of the sport.
- **The officiating is the curriculum.** Players call their own fouls — a real, assessable lesson in self-regulation.

One honest caveat: ultimate rewards continuous running. Build in rotation and short points so the least fit third of the class is not walking.

What you need

Item	How many	Notes
Discs	One per two students for skills work; one per game	The adult standard is a 175 g disc. Many youth programmes use a lighter 140–145 g disc for younger or smaller hands.
Cones	8 per field	Four corners and the two end zone lines.
Pinnies or bibs	One set	Or one team keeps shirts on.
Space	See page 4	A soccer pitch, half of one, or a basketball court all work with the right numbers.
Footwear	Normal trainers	Cleats are not needed. On wet grass, shorten the field.

If the budget stretches to one thing, make it enough discs that no student waits for a turn to throw. The seven rules a class needs on day one are on the last page, ready to print.

LESSON 1

The backhand, and catching with two hands

Objective	Every student can throw a flat backhand ten yards and catch with two hands.
Warm-up (6)	Jog, dynamic stretches, then partner catch at five yards with any throw — it shows you who has thrown before.
Teach (8)	The grip: four fingers curled inside the rim, thumb on top. Demonstrate the snap from kneeling so they see the power is in the wrist. Cues: flat disc, step across your body, snap and follow through.
Activity (20)	Pairs, five yards apart, backhand only. Move back a yard every two minutes. At fifteen yards, challenge: ten clean catches in a row.
Finish (4)	Line up and throw one at a time at a cone target. Everyone watches.
Watch for	The front edge tipped up, so the disc climbs and dies: release flat and aim low. Insist on two-handed catches, one hand above and one below the rim.

LESSON 2

The forehand, and moving to catch

Objective	A serviceable short forehand, and the habit of running onto the disc.
Warm-up (6)	Pairs backhand throwing.
Teach (8)	Two fingers inside the rim, thumb on top, wrist cocked back. The whole throw is a wrist snap with the elbow tucked in. Say out loud that it will look bad for a whole lesson — that is normal.
Activity (20)	Ten minutes of forehand in pairs at five to eight yards. Then the receiver runs from one cone to another and catches on the move. Swap every four throws.
Finish (4)	Keep-away, 3 v 1, in a ten-yard square.
Watch for	A big tennis-style arm swing that turns the disc over. Shrink the distance until the wrist does the work.

LESSON 3

The pivot, the stall count, and 3 v 3 keep-away

Objective	Students hold a pivot foot, stay calm when marked, and count a stall.
Warm-up (6)	Pairs throwing, both throws, at ten yards.
Teach (8)	Catch, stop, plant one foot, swing the other to throw past the defender. Then the stall count — the whole class counts together to set the rhythm: one second per number.
Activity (20)	3 v 3 keep-away in a twenty-yard square, no end zones. Ten seconds to throw; turnover on a drop or interception; restart immediately. Rotate every four minutes.
Finish (4)	Ask what was hardest. It will be throwing under pressure. Name it: that is the whole sport.
Watch for	Travelling, and markers counting far too fast. Referee the first two minutes yourself, loudly, then hand it over.

LESSON 4

End zones, the pull, and small-sided games

Objective	A recognisable game of ultimate, played 4 v 4 or 5 v 5.
Warm-up (6)	Pairs throwing, then a minute of everyone practising a pull — a long backhand down the field.
Teach (6)	Walk through one point: both teams on their own end zone line, the defence pulls, the offence picks up where the disc stops and attacks. Score, swap ends, repeat.
Activity (22)	Small-sided games on short fields (see page 4). Games to four points or five minutes, then rotate the whole field.
Finish (4)	Did anyone have a disagreement, and how did it get settled?
Watch for	Everyone chasing the disc in a clump. One rule fixes most of it: at least two players stay behind the disc.

LESSON 5

Full-sided game and the spirit circle

Objective	Play the real game, and close with the part that makes ultimate different.
Warm-up (6)	Pairs throwing, then a two-minute refresher: pivot, stall, no contact, call your own.
Activity (26)	Full games at whatever size the space supports. Substitute after each point. Step back and let the students run it, including the calls.
Finish (6)	The spirit circle: both teams in one mixed circle; each student names one thing someone on the other team did well. It is a real ritual at every level of the sport.

Teaching students to make their own calls

Present it as a procedure and drill it like a throw:

1. **Call it immediately, out loud, by name** — “Foul!” or “Travel!”. Play stops.
2. **The other player answers with one word:** they agree, or they say “contest”.
3. **Resolve it mechanically.** Agreed, it stands. Contested, the disc goes back to the thrower. Nobody wins an argument, so the arguing stops.

Praise it out loud when a student calls a foul on themselves or accepts a call without complaint. That behaviour is the outcome worth assessing.

Fitting it into your space

Players a side	Playing field	End zones
3	40 × 20 yards	5 yards deep
4 or 5	55 × 25 yards	10 yards deep
7 (full)	70 × 40 yards	20 yards deep
Indoors, 3 a side	A basketball court, about 31 × 17 yards	3 yards deep

A class of thirty on one field is a bad lesson however big the field. Run two or three short games side by side and rotate. Twelve cones mark two small fields.

Modifications

- **A class of 35:** three games of 5 v 5 on three short fields, with the rest rotating in after every point.
- **Indoors:** 3 v 3, end zones twelve feet deep, end lines well back from the walls. No diving indoors.
- **Students who cannot throw yet:** let them throw from a knee. It isolates the wrist snap.
- **A big ability gap:** three different players must catch the disc before a point counts.
- **Adaptive and seated play:** extend the stall count to fifteen and shorten the field; the no-contact rule does most of the work.
- **Wet or icy grass:** shorten the field rather than cancelling.

Safety

- **Call the disc.** A player going for a catch shouts “mine”. Most collisions are two teammates who did not.
- **Play the disc, not the person.** Reaching through someone is a foul.
- **No diving in a PE class.**
- **Set boundaries well away from walls, fences and goalposts.**
- **Warm up properly.** The cutting is sharper than in most units.

Assessing it

Strand	What you are looking for	Quick check
Skill	A flat backhand that reaches a partner at ten yards, and a two-handed catch.	Four clean catches out of five throws, in pairs, in two minutes.
Game understanding	Holds a pivot, throws before the count reaches ten, moves to space after passing.	Watch one player for one point in the lesson-4 games.
Self-regulation	Makes a call clearly, accepts calls without arguing, resolves a contest by the procedure.	Note it when it happens. Weight this strand most heavily.

The full unit, with diagrams and the drills for each lesson: ultimatetogether.com/learn/ultimate-frisbee-pe-lesson-plan/. Games for warm-ups and variety: ultimatetogether.com/learn/frisbee-games/

Ultimate frisbee in seven rules

Everything a class needs to start playing. Post it on the gym wall.

- 1 You cannot run with the disc.** Catch it, stop, and keep one foot planted. That foot is your pivot — the other one can go anywhere.
- 2 You have ten seconds to throw.** The defender guarding you counts out loud: “stalling one, two, three...”. Reach ten and the other team gets the disc.
- 3 Score by catching it in the end zone you are attacking.** That is one point.
- 4 The disc changes hands** if it hits the ground, goes out of bounds, or the other team catches or knocks it down.
- 5 Play does not stop after a turnover.** The other team picks it up where it lies and immediately attacks the other way.
- 6 No contact.** No blocking, no tackling, no reaching through someone to get the disc.
- 7 You call your own fouls.** There is no referee. If the player you called disagrees, the disc simply goes back to the thrower and play restarts.

Starting each point: the pull

Both teams line up on their own end zone line. The team that just scored throws the disc down to the other team — the pull — and play begins.

Making a call

1. Call it straight away, out loud: “Foul!” or “Travel!”
2. The other player agrees, or says “contest”.
3. Contested? The disc goes back to the thrower. No arguing needed.