

The Ultimate Frisbee Community and Discourse

By Matt Grabert



“Frisbee is not a sport.” I originally would’ve agreed with this statement until I watched a professional ultimate frisbee game on TV (you would be surprised if you’ve never seen one before). Most people associate playing frisbee with throwing a disc around at a family event and I agree: that activity is not classified as a sport. As fun as that may be, this blog is not about tossing a disk around. I am here to talk about Ultimate Frisbee and the unique discourse used amongst community members. Most people have probably heard of ultimate frisbee but don’t understand the sport, so they don’t bother giving it a shot. Ultimate frisbee is a unique sport, not only the game, but the community it creates and provides for newcomers. The ultimate discourse reflects the community’s values of creating a honest, welcoming atmosphere and promoting physical activity. Although, the discourse may be intimidating at first, it comes with time and acts as an essential part of being a member of the community.

The Lingo Comes with Time

January 27



HUCKS, SCOOBERS AND SWILLY CHUCKERS: A GLOSSARY OF ULTIMATE LINGO

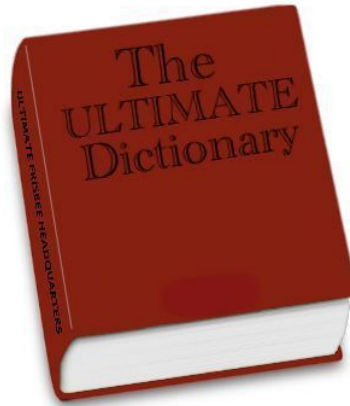
TYPES OF THROWS

ARBORANCE a backhand released with your thumb on the back of the disc, causing it to wobble in the ground and then rise.

BACHHAND the disc is gripped with the thumb on the inside of the disc and the fingers underneath for balance. The back of your hand faces the direction you are throwing. A good throw is made by snapping the wrist upon release. This is the most common throw in Ultimate.

BARBECUE BACKHAND (also called **THE DRILL**): a backhand throw by an inexperienced player who cuts the disc inward and throws with his or her arm instead of the wrist (see **theoretical**).

BLADE (also called **KNIFE**): a throw that is released perpendicular to the ground and comes in perpendicular to the ground.



One chapter of the Ultimate Dictionary discussing several types of throws

Ultimate frisbee lingo often appears foreign to outsiders but acts as common vocabulary for community members. At first, the jargon may appear daunting, but it comes with time. When I started playing ultimate, the coach would go over drills and use phrases such as “cut under” and “force flick”. I did not have the slightest clue to what those meant until I asked one of my teammates to translate or demonstrate our coach’s orders. When the coach said, “cut under” he instructed us to run towards the player with the frisbee. When he called “force flick” he was telling us to stand on the right side of the opponent we were defending so they would have to throw the disc forehand. These terms can be heard over one hundred times each in the span of a weekend tournament. If you don’t know what they mean, you wouldn’t know what to do when your teammates/coaches are calling plays. No worries, you don’t need to spend hours making flashcards to memorize all the ultimate frisbee lingo. The best way to learn the discourse is to surround yourself with experts and ask questions. Community members reflect ultimate values and will be more than happy to translate a phrase. Once you start to get a grasp of the terms, it will improve your understanding of the game and help your on-field play. Not only will you know what to do when your coach or teammates tell you something, you will be able to communicate with your teammates with shorthand lingo AND you will know what the other team is saying when they are calling plays. Beware, some teams acknowledge this and use a different discourse!

We don't bite, we bid

April 19

If you're browsing the internet because you want to get involved with an activity and community but are intimidated by some clubs or sports, you're in the right place! I was once in your position until I met an ultimate frisbee player at a club fair. He generously invited me to their next practice. When I showed up to the practice, he asked me to throw with him. We started with backhand and eventually transitioned to flick throws. Flick is a forehand throw which feels far less natural, but is more common. My throwing partner was fluent in both throws and hit my torso with every pass. Next, our coach yelled "10 I-O's and 10 O-I's". My partner translated the abbreviation into "inside-out" and "outside-in". These throws describe the path of the disc and are primarily used to curve around defenders to complete a pass. Just when I thought I had learned it all, I heard "10 hammers". The hammer throw is best described as a flick throw with an upside-down disc, thrown over your head. Hammers are accessory throws; however, they can come in handy when your defender is putting on a tight mark and is at a high stall count (a stall count is the ten seconds the player must throw the disc after catching it). In this case, a hammer allows you to throw the disc above his mark. My partner stuck by my side for the rest of the practice and truly reflected the welcoming spirit of the game through his dedication in ensuring I had an enjoyable time.



A photo of a "bid". A bid is a full extension or layout for the disk

Love for the Game and Love for our Friends

March 26

Ultimate frisbee is dissimilar from other sports because the rules require full integrity from each player on the field. The sport does not have referees. It is entirely self-officiated which means everyone calls their own fouls and discusses controversies until an outcome is agreed upon. Everyone is out on the field to exercise and play the game they love. The sport is competitive and gives athletes the drive to push themselves to play their best. However, most people couldn't care less about arguing over a foul and would rather keep playing. In some sports, athletes talk trash to each other on the field and intentionally try to hurt one another. In ultimate, you will regularly see two opponents reflecting community values and congratulate each other after an impressive bid or huck. A huck is a far throw to someone running towards the end zone to score, this is the equivalent term to a "Hail Mary" in football. This type of run in frisbee is referred to as a deep cut. If at some point during play someone yells "FIRE, FIRE" it means they are calling a timeout. After timeouts, fouls, and turnovers, players initiate play by tapping the opponent's disc and beginning a stall count or by the person with the disc touching it to the ground and shouting, "Disc in". To acknowledge a foul, a player must yell "foul" which stops play and allows for an opponent to "contest" if they disagree. The game continues once both players agree on an outcome. Mature communication between teams prevents games from getting out of control and almost always ensures games to end on a friendly note. Of course, there are rivalries between teams but that is just part of the fun!



Figure 2 This is an example of two teams discussing a controversy.

Far and Wide, We are One Community

February 19

Ultimate frisbee is an international community which makes intercommunication key. There are smaller communities within larger communities. For example, I am a part of the Ultimate Frisbee community but more specifically the UC Davis Men's Ultimate Frisbee B Team. The discourse will be slightly different depending on the exact community. If you are an expert in one community's discourse, it does not mean you will be an immediate expert in another community. usultimate.org is the primary website for information, news, and events for the ultimate community in the United States. This website is a great resource for anyone from rookies who want to learn the [rules](#) to experts who are looking for tournaments in their region. This website acts as the glue between smaller ultimate communities and larger communities (in the U.S.) by organizing and publicizing tournaments. Communication between national teams is not impaired because ultimate discourse is universal, besides language barriers. Tournaments allow teams to share strategies, face new competition, and encompass community values. Facebook is another key to communication especially amongst college league. Facebook groups are made for most tournaments and contain essential information such as game times, field locations, and results. The international community is becoming more integrated within national communities because ultimate has been a popular topic amongst the International Olympic Committee and is likely to be a future summer Olympic sport.



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Bid Picture

<http://cdn.funcheap.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Ultimate-Frisbee1.jpg>

Sunset

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Huddle

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Self officiated

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Dictionary

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Australia

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Social Media

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