



Training and Drills Guide

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Introduction

Our objective is that every child increases their football, life and teamwork skills through participation in the Play Flag Football League. Following the Code Of Conduct, Coaching Guidelines and individual coaching guides, will ensure life and teamwork skills are developed. Developing football skills takes a more specific set of steps. This document will provide you with the information needed to enable you to teach your players football skills.

Program Objectives

Players at each level should reach each of the objectives shown below as they progress in their football development.

Skill	Introductory	Fundamental	Intermediate	Advanced
Hiking (QB and Center)	Purpose of QB to Center exchange	Stance, grip, direct snaps, release, cadence	Check formation Shotgun snaps	Quick snaps, long counts
Handoffs – QB	Purpose, role, intent	Grip, positioning, delivery	Fakes, reverse, handoffs on the run	Double reverse
Handoffs - RB	Purpose, role, intent	Receiving, putting the ball away	Fakes, reverse, handoffs on the run	Double reverse
Passing	When, where, why	Stance, grip, release	Leading the receiver	Looking off the defender, options
Catching the pass	Why, where, when	Eyes on the ball, hands and feet, putting the ball away	Going to the ball, fighting for position and possession	Tip drill
Running Routes	Purpose, role, intent	Formation, stance, terminology, avoiding coverage	Passing tree,	Audibles, check downs, broken plays
Running w/ball	Holding the ball, running to the line	Run to the outside, don't stop, avoid the defender	Staying on your feet, avoiding collisions	Spinning, reversing course
Running plays	Knowing the play, understanding options	Cadence, formation, receiving the hike	Avoiding the rush, finding the receiver,	Reading the defense, calling plays, check downs
Pulling flags	Purpose, stance, grip	Pursuit, positioning, sportsmanship	Timing, push to the middle, play to the whistle	Angles
Rushing the QB	Purpose, role, intent	Positioning, moving on the snap	Approach, timing, pursuit, safety	QB or the ball, dropping into coverage
Defending the pass	Purpose, role and intent	Positioning, deflecting a pass, playing the ball	Zone, Man-to-Man, short yardage	Using the sidelines, handoffs, reverses, going to the ball



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Introductory

Overview

This is for kids that are just starting out. They will generally be in the younger age groups, but don't be surprised to see older kids needing a refresher. Most of these topics are verbally defined with some demonstration to start with then moves into drills. Cover the basics then move onto individual skills. Discuss each topic then follow up with a drill and then a test or demonstration of the skill.

Basics

Flag Football is different than tackle football in several ways. Players need to understand the difference. Review each of the subjects below with the team asking for demonstration on each of the skills.

1. Flags are worn on the hips and are pulled in place of a tackle. Tackling is illegal and is one of the biggest penalties in the game. Don't do it!
 - a. **DRILL:** Have players put on the flags belts. Ask them to check each other's belts to verify the flags are on their hips, their jersey is tucked in their shorts and there is not any excess belt length hanging off belt. Assist as needed.
2. No Contact mean NONE! No bumping off the line, no shielding, blocking or running with the ball carrier. The defense must have an unobstructed path to the ball carrier.
 - a. **DRILL:** Line up offensive and defensive squads. Demonstrate good and bad habits for each position. Rotate players through each position. As you run plays, spend time reviewing these skills as part of your early practice plays.
 - i. Offensive players should not run towards rusher or go into their projected path to block their line of approach to the quarterback
 - ii. Offensive players should stop running when the running back crosses the line of scrimmage.
 - iii. Defenders cannot stand in the receiver's path when they go into a pass pattern.
3. QB cannot run directly after receiving the snap. The ball must be handed off before any offensive player can run with the ball.
 - a. **DRILL:** Start with one player, have them take the snap and then tell them to run. If they cross the line of scrimmage, blow whistle then ask players what went wrong. Explain what the handoff is for.
4. No blockers means the rusher starts 7 yards away from the line of scrimmage. In addition, the QB must throw the ball within 7 seconds. A handoff nullifies both of these rules.
 - a. **DRILL:** Line up offensive and defensive squads. Have each player play QB and Rusher through a series of plays. Count the 7 seconds out for the QB after they take the snap. Place a rusher 7 yards out with the rest of the team on the line of scrimmage. Have the center delay snapping the ball to check if rusher waits for the ball to move before starting their rush. If they move on HIKE and the ball doesn't, they have to go back or they can't cross the line of scrimmage. Run 5 plays alternating short passing, handoffs and fake handoffs plays. Have players take turns as the designated immediate rusher if ball is handed off. Discuss early rushing mistakes.



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5. Discuss field dimensions and characteristics
 - a. **DRILL:** Bring squad together at midfield. Identify Line Of Scrimmage, Sidelines, Midfield, Goal Line, No Run Zones. Ask players to run to correct spot for each element. Review the Line Of Scrimmage; It's meaning and how to verify correct spot. Run entire team through until everyone has demonstrated knowledge.
6. Discuss positions on offense and defense
 - a. Offense: QB, Center, Running Back, Receivers
 - b. Defense: Rusher, Linebacker, Cornerback, Safety
 - c. **DRILL:** In conjunction with Huddle and Formation Drills, give players position assignments then have them come to the huddle. Leaving the huddle have them go to position location on the line of scrimmage.
7. Discuss the purpose of the huddle which is to plan the next play for the offense and defense. Demonstrate huddle formation. Discuss need to get back to huddle quickly, listening versus talking in the huddle and practice 30 second timing.
 - a. **DRILL:** In conjunction with the Position and Formation Drills, have players run to the huddle from the line of scrimmage. Call a play then have them go back to line of scrimmage. Have players yell, "Break!" at the end of the huddle.
8. Discuss formations with the team. Show them the playbook. Discuss how formations position teams to succeed by setting players in position to get open and run to open areas.
 - a. **DRILL:** In conjunction with the Huddle and Position Drills, show players a play, assign positions to each player and have them move to line. Repeat several times with players moving to different positions.
9. Discuss what a cadence is. Demonstrate different cadence styles, "Ready-Set-Hike" or whatever style you are familiar with. Keep it simple. Discuss how the cadence allows all players to move as a team when the play begins. Review the QB's role as the play caller. They need to check for readiness, make sure players are in place and on the right side of the line of scrimmage.
 - a. **DRILL:** Have players rotate through all five positions and run cadence for each play. Each player should play QB several times.
10. Discuss the method of advancing the ball downfield. Review rules discussing having three plays to achieve first down. Discuss No-Run-Zones. Review third and short tactics.
 - a. **DRILL:** Stand in the end zone. Have players run to first down line, goal line and No-Run-Zone lines. Review PAT lines.
11. Discuss scoring. Review touchdowns, Point-After-Touchdown (PAT) and the value of each. Discuss difference between 1 point PAT from 5 yard line and 2 point PAT from 12 yard line especially the Pass Only Option versus the Run or Pass Option.
12. Discuss importance of good sportsmanship. The reasons to practice good sportsmanship. Review the penalties for bad behavior. Demonstrate good sportsmanship examples after flag pulls, scores or big plays.
 - a. **DRILL:** In conjunction with other drills during practice, remind players of need for good sportsmanship. Get players in the habit of congratulating good plays, handing flags back and behaving in a respectful manner towards other teams.



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Hiking

Hiking the ball is the single most important act of every play. Without a clean exchange between the Quarterback and Center, most plays will result in a loss of yardage or worse. The Quarterback controls the exchange through the use of a cadence along with body and hand positioning. The Center's role is no less critical. They must deliver the ball to the QB cleanly and in the right place. There are two kinds of hikes or snaps. They are shotgun or "T". Demonstrate the two types and review the elements of each. Shotgun gives the QB more separation from the defense, but is not as secure. The "T" allows a direct exchange between the QB and center, but exposes the QB to a quicker rush.

- **DRILL:** Have players answer the following questions:
 - What are the two types of hikes?
 - Who has is more important job, the QB or Center?
 - Who calls the cadence?

Handoffs

The Handoff is the only method allowed for transferring possession of the ball behind the line of scrimmage. Done cleanly, it can help a team change direction quickly while advancing the ball. All handoffs involve two players starting with the quarter back. The Quarterback takes the snap then delivers the ball to the Running Back as quickly as possible. Each handoff should be firmly delivered to a player moving downfield. There can be multiple handoffs on one play. When receiving a handoff, the Running Back should run past the Quarterback in their desired direction. Handoffs can ONLY take place behind the line of scrimmage. They can be forward or backward.

- **DRILL:** Have players answer the following questions:
 - Where can handoffs be made on the field?
 - How many handoffs can you have in one play?
 - Can the ball be handed forward to another player?

Passing

Passing is the primary way to advance the ball in NFL FLAG games. As a result most plays are passing plays. Passing the ball allows the offense to move the ball down field in larger "Chunks" than running plays. All passes must come from behind the line of scrimmage and go beyond the line of scrimmage before being caught. Shovel passes are allowed as long as they are caught past the line of scrimmage. Only one forward pass is allowed per play. Passes can be made in conjunction with handoffs. The two players involved in a passing play are the passer and the receiver. If the QB is the passer, they have seven seconds to throw the ball before the play is dead. Passing clock is nullified if the ball is handed off by the quarterback.

- **DRILL:** Have players answer the following questions:
 - Where do the passes originate or come from?
 - Where should the receiver be standing to receive a pass?
 - How long do QBs have to throw the ball?
 - What happens if there is a handoff?



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Catching a Pass

Catching a pass is one of the most exciting activities in football. Legal passes must come from behind the line of scrimmage and be caught beyond the line of scrimmage. Receivers should attempt to catch every football with their hands as opposed to with their arms. They should focus on “Looking the ball” into their hands before proceeding downfield. After the ball is caught, like runners they should tuck the ball away before running with the ball.

- **DRILL:** Start by having players line up two yards from you. From there toss, the ball underhand to the player. They should catch the ball with their hands and tuck it away. Repeat 4-5 times per player. Have them perform drill at half speed while moving side to side and towards and away from you.

Running Routes

Pass routes are what gives the offensive player an advantage over the defender. The receiver knows where they are going and the defender does not. It also allows the QB to anticipate where the receiver is so they can throw the ball to where the receiver is going not where they are. Discuss basic routes with the players such as slants, curls, ins and outs.

- **DRILL:** Have players demonstrate the four basic patterns individually, then as a group of four at a time. When running the group drill, start all players on the line of scrimmage. Give each one a different route to run. Rotate players through all basic routes.

Running with the ball

Everyone runs with the ball. Key elements of successful running includes firm possession of the ball, hands and arms above the flags and running at the best speed to get past defenders. Demonstrate how to hold the ball securely against the body in the crook of the runner's arm. Runners behind the line of scrimmage want to move to the line of scrimmage quickly then move downfield. While moving downfield, players should look for openings between defenders and towards the end zone.

- **DRILL:** Line up players in two lines three to five yards behind the line of scrimmage. On an alternating cycle, hand the ball to each runner, have them demonstrate secure possession of the ball before running towards line of scrimmage.

Running Plays

Quarterbacks are responsible for running plays. They call the cadence and select where to deliver the ball. A Coaches' Playbook contains many plays that come in two basic types of run or pass. In addition, there are option plays that give players choices of what to do. All players on the offensive squad should focus on knowing their responsibilities each play. The QB needs to know where players are going to be on the field and understand their best options each play.

- **DRILL:** Call a huddle. In the huddle call a play demonstrating to each player what their position and responsibility is. Once lined up, go through the players while they are in position asking each one what their task is. Repeat as you rotate players through each position



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Pulling Flags

Flag pulling is the most important defensive skill a player must have. Flag football is oriented to pulling a flag from the opposing player's hips instead of tackling them. The optimum position for pulling flags is directly in front of the runner. Defenders should then grab at the flag near the top of the flag, grip it firmly and pull hard on it to dislodge it. It is illegal to knock over or hold onto a ball carrier to pull the flag.

- **DRILL:** Pair up players into two lines along the line of scrimmage. Have players take turns pulling their opponent's flags. Replace flags and repeat 5-10 times each.

Rushing the Quarterback

Rushing the Quarterback is the most pivotal defensive activity in football games. Keeping the QB under pressure from a defensive player inhibits their ability to complete a play successfully. In NFL FLAG, anyone rushing the QB must start from 7 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Teams can rush as many players as they like provided all players start 7 yards back. If the ball is handed off, any player can rush from any position on the field. Rushers should focus on pulling the QB's flags, not blocking the pass. Blocking the pass is allowed, however any contact with the QB will be a penalty. Rushers should approach the QB from a direction that pushes them away from the QB's strong side. (Rush a right-handed QB from the defensive left side and a left-handed QB from the defensive right side.)

- **DRILL:** Have players answer the following questions:
 - How many players can rush the QB?
 - Where does the rusher line up before a play?
 - What is the best direction to rush a right handed QB?

Defending Against a Pass

Defending against a pass is the act of knocking down or intercepting a pass from the passer to a receiver. Each defensive player has at least one player to defend against in NFL FLAG. This must be done without making contact with the receiver. Any contact with the receiver is considered illegal and will result in a penalty. Defenders cannot go over the back of a receiver either.

- **DRILL:** Have players form three groups of three. Set up a "Keep Away" with one player in the middle of two others. The purpose of the drill is to knock the ball down so make sure defender and receiver are in a fixed position next to each other approximately 5 yards from the passer. The passer throws the ball and the defender knocks it down. Progress through the drill by allowing receiver and defender move further apart before ball is thrown.



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Fundamental

Overview

Once a player is introduced to flag football and understands its basic concepts, it is time to move on to the fundamental skills of passing, catching, hiking, etc. Developing fundamentals will be mostly physical with some philosophy mixed in. Players should demonstrate skill and then repeat it multiple times. Repetition will enable players to become more comfortable with each skill.

Hiking

Quarterback

The QB should be standing comfortably with directly behind and facing the center with knees slightly bent, hands out and feet shoulder-width apart. As the ball approaches, take possession with both hands and pull it towards their body. Depending on the type of snap, they will be upright several yards behind the center or bent over immediately behind the center.

Center

The center needs to remember the cadence as well the QB. Their accurate timing of the snap will ensure a successful beginning to the play. They should stand behind the line of scrimmage facing the ball. With knees slightly bent, they bend in half to grip the ball with both hands. They should be positioned such that their head doesn't go over or past the ball, but rather just behind it. Looking at the quarterback through their legs, they should release the ball in a controlled motion in a manner much like an upside down handoff to the QB.

- **DRILL:** Set up two lines facing each other. Have players take turns hiking the ball to each other. Start with QB directly behind center and their hands underneath the center's legs. Using a standard cadence of Ready-Set- Hike, have the QB all out the cadence, the center should deliver the ball quickly and accurately to the QB's hands. Once the ball is extended to the QB, the QB should firmly take possession of the ball from the center. Repeat 5-10 times with each player alternating being and center and QB. This is called, a "T" formation hike. Focus on the cadence by the QB, the exchange between the too an dthe Center's body positioning. Players should master this method of hiking before moving to the "Shotgun" formation hike.

Handoffs

Quarterback

The QB should make sure to receive the snap cleanly and have completely control of the ball before moving to the handoff. They have a firm grip on the ball opposite the approach point of the running back. Stepping to the side of the running back's path, they should thrust the ball firmly into the running back's stomach making sure that the running back takes full possession before letting go.



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Running Back

The running back determines the best spot for the handoff through their approach and rate of speed. Their movement through the handoff should remain constant. Arms should be positioned such that they are parallel, 12 inches apart across the player's midsection. The arm on the side of the handoff should be the top arm and the opposing arm is the bottom arm. The top arm should be held close to the body across the chest in a sideways manner. The bottom arm should be held close to the body and bent at the elbow. Both hands should be open and flat. Once the running back takes possession of the ball, they should tuck into their crotch of their dominant arm with a firm grip on the ball. The hand should cover the end of the ball that is away from the body. The arm completes the cocoon by covering the length of the ball.

- **DRILL:** Set up two groups of players with a center, QB and Running back. Have the center hike the ball to the QB who in turn rotates to the left or right to hand the ball to the running back. Rotate the line such that the running back becomes the center, the center becomes the QB and the QB goes to the back of the line. The next player in line becomes the running back. Alternate left side and right side handoffs. Repeat until all players have played all positions. Focus areas are QB grip and delivery, running back approach, arm positioning and receipt of the ball.

Passing

Passing involves the entire body. Players should stand sideways to their target with their throwing arm on the far side of their body. Feet should be placed shoulder-width apart with knees slightly bent. The ball should be held firmly, but lightly with fingers gripping the ball around the laces near the top of the ball. The passers should hold the ball with two hands up near their ear for quick release. Following the receiver with their eyes, a passer should step forward, releasing the ball towards the projected path of the receiver. At the top of their swing, they throw the ball with their arm fully extended. Passers should adjust the speed of their throw for the distance involved. Throwing hard works sometimes, throwing slow does in others. Demonstrate the difference during the drill.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with the Catching Drill, separate the team into two lines 5 yards apart facing each other. Pair players off with each side throwing the ball to the other. Correct stance and body position, then grip, throwing motion and follow through. After 5 throws and demonstrated expertise, move lines apart in 3 yard increments. Repeat out to 14 yards apart.

Catching a Pass

Players should have both feet on the ground as much as possible when catching a pass. If catching the ball on the run, they should keep their stride even-paced and steady. Hands should be held together to form a diamond shape pocket to catch the ball in. Keeping their eye on the ball, receivers should move towards the pass attempting to catch the ball at eye level. If not at eye level, they should keep their eyes on the ball all the way in. Once the ball arrives, they should grab it firmly and put it in position to run with. (See Running With The Ball for more information.) Receivers cannot make contact with defenders while going for a pass. Footballs possessed by two players simultaneously, goes to the receiver.



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- **DRILL:** In conjunction with the Passing Drill separate the team into two lines 5 yards apart facing each other. Pair players off with each side throwing the ball to the other. Correct stance and body position, then hands, and putting the ball away. After 5 throws and demonstrated expertise, move lines apart in 3 yard increments. Repeat out to 14 yards apart.

Running Routes

Running pass routes with precision and consistency is the key to a successful offense. Done correctly, running routes consistently allows the QB to anticipate where players are going to be and throw to a spot as opposed to a stationary target. Pass thrown to a target on the move is tougher to defend than one thrown to a stationary figure. It begins with the formation. Formation allows the offense to position a player in a way to make it tougher to cover them. Each player should stand on or behind the line of scrimmage, not moving with their feet one in front of the other pointing downfield. They should be looking downfield, but glancing at the ball to know when to move out. Don't move until the ball does! When running routes, be sure to avoid running into coverage. Make adjustments to get open as needed, but stick to the route called out. The minute you turn for the pass, look immediately to see where the ball is. Always move towards the ball to keep the defender from stepping in front of you.

Terminology

- Curl – Running away from the line of scrimmage, stop and turn to the left or right depending on the play. A Curl In is a turn towards the center of the field. A Curl Out is a turn to the outside of the field.
- Out – Running perpendicular to the line of scrimmage, stop a designated point and turn at a 90 degree angle towards the sideline.
- In - Running perpendicular to the line of scrimmage, stop a designated point and turn at a 90 degree angle towards the center of the field.
- Slant – From the line of scrimmage, run diagonally at a 45 degree angle across the field to the opposite side.
- Post – Running perpendicular to the line of scrimmage, go to a designated point and begin to slant towards an imaginary point in the center of the back of the end zone.
- Flag - Running perpendicular to the line of scrimmage, go to a designated point and begin to slant towards the corner of the back of the end zone.
- Fly - Run perpendicular to the line of scrimmage downfield until ball is thrown. Go Fast!
- **DRILL:** Set up two lines around the QB, one to the left and one to the right. You are the QB. Have each player round each route at 5-10 yards. After completing one side, they should go to the other to complete the route on both sides before proceeding to the next one. After all players have demonstrated knowledge of all routes, rotate players through the QB position as they show complete their routes. Use the QB position as a carrot to encourage players to learn routes, Make sure EVERY player goes through the QB as well as the receiving positions. Watch for incorrect turns, sloppy cuts and players not looking for the ball.



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Running with the ball

Typical mistakes made by runners involve flag guarding or leaving their feet. Others include moving towards the center of the field instead of staying to the outside, stopping before their flags are pulled and not moving to avoid defenders. Once the taking possession of the ball, runners should attempt to get to the sideline where there are less defenders. Keeping hands and arms away from their flags, keep moving downfield until you hear the whistle. Just because it feels like a flag is pulled doesn't mean it has been. Runners should keep their eyes downfield to see where defenders are and anticipate their movements. Take evasive moves to stay away and/or keep defenders out of position to pull flags. Do not charge defenders or attempt to run over them.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with the Flag Pulling Drill, have players form one line 5 directly behind the middle of the line of scrimmage and a second line 7 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Set up two cones three feet and fifteen feet respectively from each sideline. Hand the ball to the runner. They run towards either set of cones with the defender pursuing to the same point. Runners must pass between the cones while attempting to avoid the flag puller. After the play is over, flag puller moves to the back of the running line and runner moves to back of flag pulling line. Repeat until all players have run through both lines twice.

Pulling Flags

To maximize your effectiveness at pulling flags focus on the player belt while making your approach. Identify the best angle of pursuit then move to a point of interception. Focus on the belt buckle of the player not their eyes or feet. Pull the opponent's flags by running with or in front of runner, pulling flags from one or both sides. Do not swipe at flags. Play through to the whistle blows. After flags are pulled, give the flags back to the runner.

- **Drill:** In conjunction with the Flag Pulling Drill, have players form one line 5 directly behind the middle of the line of scrimmage and a second line 7 yards beyond the line of scrimmage. Set up two cones three feet and fifteen feet respectively from each sideline. Hand the ball to the runner. They run towards either set of cones with the defender pursuing to the same point. Runners must pass between the cones while attempting to avoid the flag puller. After the play is over, flag puller moves to the back of the running line and runner moves to back of flag pulling line. Repeat until all players have run through both lines twice.

Running Plays

As stated before, running plays is the primary responsibility of the QB, but involves all players. After breaking the huddle, everyone should move to their assigned position. Following the cadence and watching the ball, they run their pass or handoff route as called. The QB should check that every player is in the right spot and ready to go and after the play follow the movement of each player through their assigned route deciding the best receiver to throw too. If there is no handoff, the QB has seven seconds to throw the ball. On running plays, the quarterback should make sure the running back is in place before starting the cadence.



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- **DRILL:** As each play is run during practice, reinforce good habits by reminding the QB to check players are ready before starting cadence, reminding players if they take too long or are out of position. Keep the huddles to 25 seconds or less. Teach players to hustle between plays. Count the seven seconds out loud so the QB and the team get used to the seven second clock.

Rushing the Quarterback

Rushers need to set up as instructed by the official. Rushers can start anywhere along the rush line. Rushers cannot cross that 7 yard line until the ball is moved. On the snap, the rusher should move towards the QB at top speed. After crossing the line of scrimmage, begin to slow and close the distance under control. The key objective is to prevent the QB from escaping and getting additional time to throw. Pull the QB's flags using good flag pulling techniques. It is allowed to attempt to block the pass, but the rusher cannot make contact with the QB in anyway. That will be an expensive penalty and possible warning and/or ejection

- **DRILL:** Set up one line of rushers seven yards from line of scrimmage with a center and QB. Hike the ball, have rusher pursue QB for seven seconds or until flags are pulled. QB attempts to elude rusher until 7 second whistle. Rotate rusher to QB, QB to center and center to back of line. Work with players to determine best approach and timing in pursuit of QB.

Defending Against a Pass

Defending against the pass starts with positioning; on the line of scrimmage and with the defender's feet and body. In a No Contact league, defenders cannot obstruct the receiver's pass route so the defender needs to adopt position to the inside of the receiver and run with them. As the receiver goes out remain between them and the goal line. Don't let them get behind you. When the ball is thrown move to an intercept position looking back at the ball and raising your hands to deflect the pass. Do not make contact with the receiver or you will be penalized. Obstructing the receiver's vision without looking back for the ball is also illegal.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with a Passing Drill, set up a line of defenders against a line of receivers. As the receivers go out for a pass, have the defenders practice their mechanics. Watch for body positioning, where feet are, stance and readiness. Observe techniques used to deflect ball.



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Intermediate

Overview

Although development is not linear, many skills need to be learned at the fundamental level before players can move on. At the intermediate level, choices become more varied and it becomes more of a mental game where players need to have their head in game. Drills at this level are equal parts thinking and doing. Take the time to discuss the intent of each skill as well as the mechanics of performing it.

Hiking

The Shot Gun snap is performed with the QB standing 3-5 yards directly behind the center. Instead of a direct transfer the center performs what is essentially an upside down pass back to the QB. Within the activity each player has a role.

Quarterback

The QB should be standing comfortably with directly behind and facing the center with knees slightly bent, hands out and feet shoulder-width apart. As the ball approaches, take possession with both hands and pull it towards their body. Like a receiver catching a pass, the QB should watch the ball into their hands.

Center

As stated before, the center needs to remember the cadence as well the QB. Their accurate timing of the snap will ensure a successful beginning to the play. With knees slightly bent, they bend in half to grip the ball with both hands. They should be positioned such that their head doesn't go over or past the ball, but rather just behind it. Looking at the quarterback through their legs, they should release the ball in a controlled motion in a manner much like an upside down pass to the QB.

- **DRILL:** Set up two lines 3-5 yards apart facing each other. Have players take turns hiking the ball to each other. Using a standard cadence of Ready-Set- Hike, have the QB all out the cadence, the center should deliver the ball quickly and accurately to the QB's hands. Repeat 5-10 times with each player alternating being and center and QB. Focus on the cadence by the QB, the exchange between the two and the Center's body positioning.

Handoffs

Fakes

As with any play, the QB should make sure to receive the snap cleanly and have completely control of the ball before moving to the fake handoff. With their back to the line of scrimmage and holding the ball in their off hand, they move towards the Running Back with the same motion as a regular handoff. Using their empty hand they mime the act of delivering a handoff. Still moving they continue past the running back to a spot where they stand to deliver the pass. Upon stopping the QB should quickly place where the rusher is then look downfield. A progression should be followed to quickly orient on open receivers. Look for receivers closest to the QB to farthest from the QB.



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- **DRILL:** Set up one line of players with a center, QB and Running back. Have the center hike the ball to the QB who in turn rotates to the left or right to fake a handoff to the running back. Rotate the line such that the running back becomes the center, the center becomes the QB and the QB goes to the back of the line. The next player in line becomes the running back. Alternate left side and right side fakes. Repeat until all players have played all positions. Focus areas are QB grip and delivery, running back approach, arm positioning and receipt of the ball.

Reverse Handoff

The Reverse Handoff involves the QB, Running Back and a receiver. It generally takes place on the run. The first part of the move is a regular handoff between the QB and running back. The next step is more complex. After receiving the handoff the running back needs to complete their possession of the ball and prepare to do a handoff to the receiver, all done on the run towards the receiver who is running towards the back. As they approach one another, the running back should always take the front or the side closest the line of scrimmage. The Receiver should go behind the running back or farther from the line of scrimmage. This gives the receiver the opportunity to quickly assess the level of pressure they will have. Standard handoff techniques for QB and Running Back apply at this point only now the Running Back is the QB and the receiver is the Running Back.

- **DRILL:** Set up two groups of players 10 yards apart facing each other. Position yourself knelt down two yards away from the front of one line. Start the line closest first, Hand the ball to the first player coming through. The opposite line will start its first player immediately after the first line starts. Both players run at each other with the ball carrier performing the QB role in a handoff. The second player brings the back to you and both players move to the back of their respective lines. Rotate through the drill until all players practice handoffs to their left and right side. Watch for confusion on which side which player goes to, difficulty preparing the ball for a second handoff and dropped handoffs.

Passing

Leading the receiver is the next passing skill to learn. Passers initially like to throw to a stationary target, but that provides defenders an opportunity to move on the ball for a deflection or worse yet an interception. Receivers need to be precise and consistent in their pass route so the QB can anticipate where to throw the ball. Fundamental passing skills still apply, but the QB must additionally anticipate where the receiver is going and throw to a point along their projected path. This point should allow the receiver remain at a constant speed to get to where the ball is going with ease. This will involve good depth perception, knowledge of a receivers speed, awareness of where defenders are and knowing how to deliver the ball for the easiest catch by the receiver.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with the regular Passing Drill, work with each QB to lead the receiver. First steps involve having the QB throw a cone or marked spot along the receiver's path. In addition, make sure receivers are running routes correctly and in a consistent manner. Work with both kids to help them develop a sense of timing for correct routes and individual capabilities. QBs will need to know that the lead time varies depending on a player's speed. Receivers will need to know precisely where they should be for optimum pass catching opportunity.



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Catching a Pass

Catching a pass can become routine until you have to do it in traffic. Every player going for a pass, offensive and defensive should think the ball is theirs. Being successful in this environment involves body positioning and timing. Don't count on the defense standing by to allow you to make the catch. Receivers need to fight for the ball. The No-Contact nature of NFL FLAG means that players can't run over each other, but it does allow for players to both possess the ball for a short period of time. Players with both hands on the ball have the best chance for retaining possession.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with the regular Catching and Defending Drills Set up two lines around the QB, one to the left and one to the right. Also set a couple of players out as defenders for each line. You are the QB. Have each player run a route at 5-10 yards with the defender covering the receiver. Observe body positioning by both players. The offensive player should be attempting to have inside or closets position to the QB while the defender should attempt remain between the receiver and the QB. Watch for illegal contact, feet positioning and timing on jumps.

Running Routes – Passing Tree

The Passing Tree is a numbered system used to identify passing routes. The passing tree system is designed so that all even-numbered routes (2,4,6,8) are run towards the middle of the field and all odd-numbered routes (1,3,5,7,9) are be run towards or along the sideline. These routes are used for all positions on the field. The running back has extra routes that are always be referred to by name. Since the ball is always placed in the middle of the field, the center faces the dilemma, and all of the center's routes should be based on the play design.

Passing Tree Definitions

1. Quick Out – This is a 5-8 yard route forward where the receiver cuts 90 degrees towards the sideline then looks for the ball
2. Slant – This is a 3-5 yard route where the receiver forward then breaks diagonally towards the middle of the field and looks for the ball
3. Deep Out – This is a 10-15 yard route. It should be run exactly like a quick out only deeper.
4. Drag/In – This is 5-8 yard route forward where the receiver breaks into the middle of the field on a 90 degree angle and looks for the ball
5. Flag – This is a 10-15 yard route then the receiver breaks at a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and looks for the ball
6. Curl – This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver stops and turns to the ball.
7. Post Corner – A combination of the Post and the Flag, this is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle to the middle of the field for a few steps then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and then looks for the ball.
8. Post – This is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver breaks on a 45 degree angle towards the middle of the field and looks for the ball.
9. Fly - This route is run straight up the field with the receiver looking for the ball after he gets past about 15 yards.



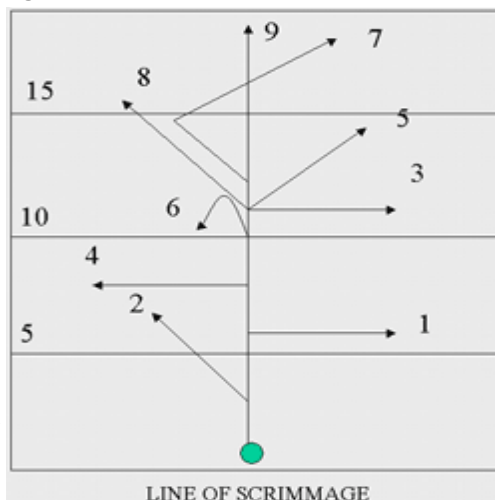
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Passing Tree Diagram

Passing Tree – Routes / Number

- Slant – 2
- Drag / In – 4
- Curl – 6
- Post – 8
- Quick Out – 1
- Deep Out – 3
- Flag – 5
- Post Corner – 7
- Fly – 9

From the right side of the line of scrimmage



- **DRILL:** Set up two lines around the QB, one to the left and one to the right. Call out a number to each receiver one at a time. Observe if they run the correct route. Have the QB whisper the route to you privately to make sure they know. After all players have demonstrated knowledge of all routes, rotate players through the QB position as they complete their routes. Use the QB position as a carrot to encourage players to learn routes. Make sure EVERY player goes through the QB as well as the receiving positions. Watch for incorrect patterns. Correct as needed.

Running with the ball

As mention before, runners need to stay on their feet. It is not only a safety issues and a penalty, but leaving your feet means you lose control over your movement. Runners' first impulse is to try out a few Barry Sanders moves to avoid a flag pull, but the truth is that just running straight ahead will often will work just as well. When trying to evade defenders, runners can jump side to side or back, but never forward. Exuberance can also lead runners to dive across the goal in imitation of pro players. That is a penalty as well. Be LT not TO in your behavior when scoring. Another safety aspect of running is a collision between the runners and defenders. The rule is simple, if the defender has established position, then the runner must go around. This is not tackle so runners can't charge defenders.

- **DRILL:** In Week 2 or 3 of the regular season as players master the Running and Flag Pulling Drills, integrate these aspects into the activity. Counsel players on the Dos and Don'ts of running. Focus on dancing around instead of moving up field, avoiding collisions and evading defenders. Observe their running style in games and use that behavior as examples to get your point across. Be positive when reviewing mistakes and suggesting corrections.



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Pulling Flags

Much of flag pulling is timing. As the defender approaches the runner, they should time their arrival to give them the best opportunity to pull the flag. Attempt to face up on the runner, but do not run through the runner to pull the flags. The optimum method to pull one or both flags is to grab the flag at the top near the belt then firmly yank on the flag. It should pop out. If it does not, then continue to pursue the runner until the whistle. Don't stop until you hear the whistle. Defenders should coordinate and combine efforts to surround the runner. Players on the outside should push the runner towards the middle where they can get help from their teammates.

- **Drill:** As the season progresses, evolve your Flag Pulling Drill into a more sophisticated style by focusing on timing, approach and team pursuit. Alternate the style from a one-on-one flag pulling in a confined space into a full field team drill. Have your best runners go against a defensive squad. Introduce Capture the Flag where squads compete against each other to pull each other's flags.

Running Plays

As players rotate through the QB position, some will take to it quicker than others. The QBs are the main coordinator of each play. While all players need to know what their teammates are doing, it falls on the QB to ensure it happens. It starts with checking the formation before starting a cadence. After the hike, the QB needs to avoid the rush while finding an open receiver. QBs only have seven seconds to throw or handoff the ball. Setting a progression for the QB, having them roll out and setting up outlet receivers give the QB a better chance to succeed.

- **DRILL:** Set up a standard passing play with two receivers on one side and one on the other. Double receivers run slants three yards apart, the center run a 5 yard and the single receiver Have. Have two defenders standing 5 yards five yards out and over from the ball, one at the 7 yard rush line and two more parallel to the front two 10 yards from the line of scrimmage. Run the play. After getting the snap, the QB runs 5 yards to the right. As they are moving tell them who to throw the ball to. Watch their response, timing and execution. Vary the timing of when you call out the receiver. This will force them to avoid the rush. Repeat until all QBs go through the drill.

Rushing the Quarterback

Rushers should set up along the 7 yard rush line on the QBs strong side. Upon the snap of the ball, they should run as fast as possible to the line of scrimmage. After reaching the line they should slow down slightly as they approach the QB. Keeping the QB in front of them they close in while preventing the QB from going around them. Their focus should be on the flag belt. Use good flag pulling technique to sack the QB before they can throw.

- **DRILL:** During course of defensive practice, walk through set up and approach with all players. Demonstrate how to pursue QBs from their weak side and force them to roll out against their throwing arm. Change Flag Pulling Drills to include a specific QB to rusher scenario by having runner stay behind the line of scrimmage and the rusher pursue between the cones for seven seconds. Run plays that focus on the defense and their execution instead the offense.



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Defending Against a Pass

At this level, there really are only two types of defense, Man-to-Man or Zone. Man-to-Man is exactly as it sounds, each defensive player is responsible for one specific offensive player. They stay with them throughout the entire play. This defense is the simplest, but is prone to mismatches and leaves each defender on an island covering a receiver by themselves. Zone defense allows a team to work together, but requires more discipline and better coordination between players. In Zone, each defender is responsible for a section of the field. Standard formations include the Box scheme with two defenders dividing the field between the line of scrimmage and 10 yards downfield. Two more then do the same from 10 yards to the goal line. Another scheme, The Diamond has one player two yards from the center, two players at the rush line and one safety downfield. The short defender has everything in the middle and short. The two defenders at the rush line are responsible for passes immediately in front of them and deep sidelines. The safety is a rover who has deep middle responsibility and will assist where necessary. The most important part of a successful zone defense is “Staying Home”. Players have a tendency to follow a receiver, but they need to remain in their zone in case another receiver crosses into their territory. No matter which defensive scheme you use, when in short yardage or “Goal Line” defenses, players need to be aware of where the line to gain is. It doesn’t make sense to stand 7 yards off the line of scrimmage if the line to gain is only 2 yards away. All receivers will have to do is step across the line to gain and turn around. That will be virtually impossible to defend. Defenders should stand on the inside shoulder of the receiver. They should very close to the receiver, but not step to obstruct them. Playing Man-to-Man is probably the best choice at this level.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with practicing plays for a game, have the defensive squad practice different schemes. Move into Man-to-Man first. Have players cover from different starting positions on the field, (Inside/Outside, Right/Left). Make players call out who they are covering before the play begins. Watch for defenders who can’t stay with their receiver. Then run Zone schemes. Watch for defenders who leave their area of responsibility in Zone. Walk players through the proper methods and positioning, with their feet and with their location on the field.



Training and Drills Guide

Advanced

Overview

The advanced level training is for players with several years of playing. They should have mastered the skill level for every position and have a good sense of the game. While as complex as the skills they might learn in tackle football programs, there are specific areas where players can extend their skill and knowledge of the game.

Hiking

Advanced hiking involves actions that will throw off the defensive team's timing. Teams get used to the cadence and will start their timing to it. Teaching the QB and center to hike the ball on "Ready" or "Set" or hiking on the third hut instead of the first will distract the defense and give your players an advantage. It also is an opportunity for a false start by an offensive player. ALL FIVE players need to be aware of the snap count and hold their position until the ball is moved.

- **DRILL:** As part of your play practices, integrate different snap counts into the series. Get both sides of the ball used to waiting until the ball is hiked to move. Make a conditioning game of it. Have players do 5 push ups every time they make a mistake. Have fun with them, recognize players that do it well.

Handoffs

Double Reverse

The Double Reverse Handoff involves the QB, Running Back and two receivers. It also takes place on the run. The first two parts of the move is the same as a regular reverse. After receiving the handoff the running back needs to complete their possession of the ball and prepare to do a handoff while running towards to the next ball carrier that is running also towards the back. As they approach one another, the ball carrier should always take the front or the side closest the line of scrimmage. The Receiver should go behind the ball carrier or farther from the line of scrimmage. This gives the receiver the opportunity to quickly assess the level of pressure they will have. Standard handoff techniques for QB and Running Back apply at this point only now the Running Back is the QB and the receiver is the Running Back. The final part is the 2nd or DOUBLE reverse handoff. Everything is the same as with the first reverse except the addition of another ball carrier.

- **DRILL:** Set up two groups of players 10 yards apart facing each other. Position yourself knelt down two yards away from the front of one line. Start the line closest first, Hand the ball to the first player coming through. The opposite line will start its first player immediately after the first line starts. Both players run at each other with the ball carrier performing the QB role in a handoff. The second player brings then hands off to the third player; the third ball carrier brings then hands the ball to a fourth carrier and so on. After they hand off the ball, the player goes to the back of the opposite line. Have the entire team continue through the drill until both original ball carriers come back to the head of their respective line. Rotate through the drill until all players practice handoffs to their left and right side.



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Passing

Looking off the defender, options

New QBs have a tendency to take a long look at their receiver before they throw. They also look where they are throwing because they are not familiar with their receiver. Good defenders will watch them to get a jump on the ball. To overcome this tendency, QBs need to memorize the receiver's route and have a plan for where to throw the ball before the play begins. As each play is called in the huddle, establish a progression or priority for who they will throw to. This will most likely be determined by the formation. Based on the first choice, move side to side first, then move onto an outlet receiver. Each play has at least one play with a receiver in that role.

- **DRILL:** As part of the passing drill, have five players line up according to page 3 from the PFF playbook. Run the play four times, calling out a different receiver for the QB to throw to. Then in conjunction with running practice plays, walk the QB through a discussion of the receiving progression. Have them pick their progression and explain why. Arrange the defense so that it gives them different looks and coverages.

Catching a Pass

Passes can change hands several times before they are finally caught or knocked down. Offensive players need to learn to be aware of the ball at all times and keep trying to catch off of a tip or bobble. The ball is not dead until it hits the ground.

- **DRILL:** Arrange players in a circle 10-20 in diameter. Have them tip the ball to each other like they would a volleyball. Have the ball go in clockwise, then counter clockwise rotation. Set up rotations where the ball skips every other player as well. A second drill involves setting up a receiver 10 yards away with another one directly behind them. The remaining players are 10 feet behind them. Throw a slow moving pass to the front receiver and have them bump or tip it to the player behind them. The back receiver moves to the front, the front receiver moves to the back of the line and the front player in line moves into the back position.

Running Routes

Sometimes the best plans will be figured out by the defense. When seeing this, the QB will need to change the play. Receivers need to be alert for changes or "Audibles" and understand what is being called to change their route accordingly. The change will generally be called out during the cadence and the receiver will need to plan their changes quickly. If a play doesn't work, it is a broken play. Receivers need to do their part to help out their QB. Players need to develop insights into one another that can't be coached. It will only come with time. A couple general rules that may help having receivers break off their route and come back towards the QB to give them a closer target. Another is to run in the same direction as a QB on the run.

DRILL: As part of practicing plays, have the QB call an audible and observe receivers to see if they move to the correct route. When running a passing drill, have the receiver receive their route when they line up. Use the Passing Tree system to give each receiver a different route. When receivers complete their route, have the QB hold the ball for a couple of seconds. Blow a whistle to cue the receiver to run back towards the QB.



Training and Drills Guide

Running with the ball

Spinning is probably the best way to avoid getting flags pulled. It is legal as long as runners do not jump up to spin. Players have a tendency to either drop their arms or raise their elbows while spinning. Both actions are illegal and considered flag guarding. The best way to spin is to hold the ball above the waist with both hands. Always keep moving forward and stay on your feet. Another good way to escape a flag pull is to reverse course. Too many reverses will get flags pulled quickly, but done correctly it is very effective. Runners should keep their eyes downfield looking for players that over pursue. In those cases it makes sense to reverse course and go toward the opposite sideline. The same tactics apply going back the other way. Get to the outside and keep your eyes downfield.

- **DRILL:** As part of Flag Pulling Drills, have players run to a specific point before entering the cones. When they reach the defender, have them spin a minimum of three times before proceeding. Watch for feet movement, hands, elbows and arms getting in the way.

Pulling Flags

Another aspect of pursuit and flag pulling is taking the right angle towards the ball carrier. If the defender is coming from behind they should pursue to a point where the runner most likely to break away. Pursuit from the side should be towards a projected intersection point on the runner's path. As the defender gets closer, they should slow down. Care should be taken not to over pursue or allow the runner to get around. Pursuers should never give up, runners have a way of reversing course and coming back to defenders. Play to the whistle.

- **Drill:** Modify the Flag Pulling Drill so that the defender doesn't start with the cones, but rather at different points around the field. Have them start 10-15 downfield from the cones, have them start all the across field from the cones or have them start near the runner, but make the defender go to the front of the cones to pull the flags.

Running Plays

The QB has a lot to do as the play begins. They should check formation, make sure the players are ready to start and finally, check the defensive formation to see if they are anticipating the play. This is called, "Reading the Defense". If the defense seems to be in a strong position to stop the play, then the QB should change the play or "Check Down" by calling an audible. This is typically done by first notifying the team the play is about to change calling "Check, check, then going into announcing the code for the play. As a coach, you should be prepared for these situations and have 3 or 4 plays that the team know by heart that they can implement on the fly. As QBs build competence, slowly turn the offense over to them. Start by give them a playbook of some type they can carry with them. Make sure each play is numbered and call the number out from the sidelines. Second, work with them about situation and game management. Most players over 8 years old should be able to call plays by the end of the season without the coach on the field.

- **DRILL:** As part of running practice plays, discuss game management and situations with the team. Set them up with simulations such as short yardage situations, end of half or game, making the PAT decision for one or two points. After the simulations, appoint squad captains for the practice and have them lead their squad through the practice. Be sure to give equally opportunity to all players.



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Rushing the Quarterback

Rushing the QB isn't always straight forward, especially if their handoffs, fake handoffs or reverses. Rushers should be aware of where the ball is at all times. Part of the defensive scheme should include a plan for handoffs. Each player on the team should know who they are covering in case of a handoff, especially in Man-on-Man. We advise having the rusher go after who ever has the ball. Their momentum is such that it will be difficult for them to reverse course to pursue a receiver. They are usually closer to the situation and can get to the ball carrier quickly, provided they are in position. If there is a defender closer, on the line of scrimmage, the two can switch off and the rusher can drop into coverage either Zone or Man-to-Man. If they do, the new rusher **MUST** wait until the handoff is completed before crossing the line of scrimmage. If they cross before a handoff, it is an illegal rush penalty.

- **DRILL:** Work with players during practice plays and defensive drills to understand their options on a handoff. Discuss the importance of following the ball. Have the offense run specific run plays against the defense. Have the rusher take turns with another defender pursuing the ball or covering the QB. Rotate all players through this drill.

Defending Against a Pass

Coaches at every level, preach to defenders that the sideline is their friend in pass coverage. Receivers lose room to maneuver in their pass routes as they approach the sidelines. Defenders can set up their position between a receiver and the middle of the field. Running with the receiver, they should stay across the receiver path to the middle of the field. They cannot however make contact with the receiver at any time. That would be a penalty. Work with the defensive squad on proper coverage of handoffs and reverses. Make sure everyone know their role and what the proper response to a run, reverse or fake handoff.

- **DRILL:** In conjunction with the Passing Drill, demonstrate proper field positioning for DBs. Demonstrate how to move downfield with a receiver, discuss how to play the ball without touching the receiver.

“It is about the Kids” so lets give them an experience to be remembered.